Module 4

Coordination
on Conflict Assessment

This module provides security forces, security policymakers and civil society with shared tools for researching and carrying out a conflict assessment and designing a basic intervention plan. A multi-stakeholder process can bring together diverse stakeholders to undertake a conflict assessment process together. Coordination on conflict assessment can improve the ability for coordination to plan and implement joint human security programmes. Without a shared understanding of the particular challenges of a given conflict, there can be no comprehensive strategy or coordination to support human security.

Lesson 12: **Conflict Assessment Research** identifies the importance of civil-military-police coordination on conflict assessment.

Lesson 13: **Conflict Assessment Tools** provides practical tools for carrying out a conflict assessment.

Lesson 14: **Moving from Conflict Assessment to Planning** provides tools for improving joint civil-military-police planning to support human security

Lesson 12
Conflict Assessment Research

Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:
- Identify the purpose of conflict assessment
- Compare and contrast different types of assessment
- Identify different methods of data collection
- Describe how to design participatory research
- Identify characteristics of conflict-sensitive assessments
- Identify how to identify data quality

This lesson identifies the purpose of conflict assessment and the problems that often accompany conflict assessment processes. This lesson identifies different types of data collection methods and describes how to design participatory research.

This lesson is adapted from the book Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning.[48]

1. What causes conflict and violence?

People often believe in "cause-effect" explanations for violence that sound like this: "Bad guys cause conflict. Good guys kill the bad guys." Often people point fingers at some group of people who they think are simply "evil." In reality, what one person describes as evil or terror may look differently to another person. Groups that use violence almost always have a complex set of grievances and motivations. Stopping violence is not so much a matter of "killing all the bad guys" if there are grievances and motivations that spur more people to use violence. Conflict assessment attempts to understand the broader factors that influence conflict and violence.

2. What is conflict assessment?

A <u>conflict assessment</u> is a systematic research process to understand a range of factors including context, stakeholders, motivations, and means and timeline that are driving or mitigating conflict.

You can compare doing a conflict assessment to a visit at the eye doctor. The doctor provides corrective lenses to obtain a better vision of a range of characters. In conflict assessment you use different types of lenses to obtain a clearer and more profound understanding of the dynamics of the conflict – although unfortunately – unlike eye glasses, your conflict assessment glasses will never enable you to see perfectly sharp. This lesson includes a variety of conflict analysis "tools" or "lenses" that provide clarity on who, what, why, when, where and how conflict takes place.

WHERE	Where is the conflict taking place?
WHO	Who is driving the conflict and who is supporting peace?
WHY	Why are the key stakeholders motivated to drive conflict or support peace?
WHAT	What are the factors driving and mitigating conflict? What are the threats and vulnerabilities facing civilians?
HOW	How are key stakeholders using power to drive or mitigate conflict? What are their capacities and sources of power?
WHEN	When is conflict likely to get worse or when might the chances for peace improve? When are their "windows of vulnerability" or "windows of opportunity?"

Figure 27: Conflict Assessment Questions

3. What is the key purpose of a conflict assessment?

Conflict assessment is important to human security in several ways.

a) Conflict assessment is necessary to prevent violence through the development of "conflict prevention" strategies. <u>Conflict Prevention</u> aims to prevent violence from starting by addressing key immediate and long-term factors driving conflict toward violence and mass atrocities. Operational prevention focuses on short-term crisis response, including preventive diplomacy. Structural prevention focuses on long-term efforts to address root causes such as economic, social and political exclusion of some groups.

b) Conflict assessment improves the success of "peacebuilding" interventions in a conflict aimed at improving human security. <u>Peacebuilding</u> refers to a range of activities at any stage of conflict to prevent, mitigate, or transform conflict.

c) Conflict assessment improves "conflict sensitivity" to prevent second and third order unintended impacts. <u>Conflict Sensitivity</u> is an approach to programming and policymaking that recognises the potential influence for any type of intervention to cause harm. Conflict-sensitive policies, programmes and projects aim to minimise unintentional negative impacts that may drive conflict and cause further social divisions while maximising positive impacts on the context that mitigate conflict and bridge social divides. Conflict assessment and self-assessment research is central to conflict sensitive policies, programmes and projects in human rights, humanitarian assistance, development and related efforts.

4. There are important differences between intelligence gathering, context assessment and conflict assessment.

Most states conduct both intelligence analysis to identify potential threats and conflict assessment to understand the context where threats develop. Intelligence often identifies individuals and groups that may cause harm to state interests. Conflict assessment is a broader research process. It maps a broader array of both stakeholders driving conflict as well as those mitigating conflict. It also seeks to understand broader social, political, economic and other factors that may be contributing to violence or the threat of violence. Complex environments require research-based assessment to discover and understand the stakeholders and the conflict dynamics. Conflict assessment can increase the effectiveness of interventions and reduce the chance that an intervention will cause harm or be counterproductive.

The chart below compares and contrasts intelligence analysis with conflict assessment. These methods differ regarding their objectives and their levels of secrecy**.** The security sector has traditionally focused on intelligence to identify information and locations for stakeholders considered to be enemies. Military and police leaders are increasingly identifying a need for better conflict assessment processes.

Governments and militaries conduct assessments to understand complex environments. Military assessment tools such as ASCOPE (assesses the Area, Structures, Capabilities, Organisations, People, and Events) and PMESII (assesses the Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, and Information) are context assessments, not conflict assessments. Conflict assessment is more specific than context assessment. Advanced research on theories of conflict bring more specific insights on key actors, motivations, positive factors or resiliencies, and insights from local voices that makes conflict assessment a distinct form of research. Many governments have their own conflict assessment frameworks. Most of these are very similar.

The chart here compares and contrasts intelligence and conflict assessment research processes.

Figure 28: Comparison of Intelligence, Context Assessment and Conflict Assessment

Intelligence	Context Assessment	Conflict Assessment
All aim to understand complex environments		
Focus on threats to national security	Focus on understanding the context to achieve security goals	Focus on threats to human security
Emphasis on identifying enemy targets	Emphasis on understanding social, political, economic and environmental context	Emphasis on understanding social, political, economic and environmental root causes to violence
Secretive process and product, with information private and classified	Closed processes and product, information not shared	Open and public process and product, with information shared

5. There are two main types of lenses for conflict assessment.
Conflict assessment is a research process to map out those factors that drive conflict and those that support peace.

Conflict Drivers are people, institutions, or forces that increase divisions and threaten political, economic, security, justice and social factors related to human security. *Factors driving conflict* include a range of lenses to map stakeholders and their means, motivations, and core grievances; to map issues and driving factors; and to identify issues arising from the local context and windows of vulnerability given the historic legacy of the conflict. A conflict driver can be something like a famine, unemployment, easy access to weapons or religious extremism that motivates individuals or groups to engage in conflict. Conflict drivers tap into and mobilise grievances related to the **root causes** of conflict in existing political, economic, and social relations.

Conflict Mitigators are people, institutions, or forces that support political, economic, security, justice and social factors related to human security. *Factors mitigating conflict* include a range of lenses to map stakeholders supporting peace; to identify local traditions, values, and institutions supporting peace, resiliency, and social capital; and to assess possible windows of opportunity. The terms resilience and local capacity for peace refers to the capacity of a system to survive, adapt, absorb or respond to a crisis or severe change. An individual, community and institutional is resilient in as much as they can adapt, be agile, learn quickly and improvise new survival methods in a changed environment.

6. Conflict Assessment is necessary for conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes to improve human security.
Conflict prevention and peacebuilding have three components:

a) *Address the immediate drivers of violence* (eg operational efforts such as preventive and crisis diplomacy, intergroup dialogue, media strategies, economic sanctions, observer missions or rapid response forces).

b) *Transform the structural root causes of violence* (eg economic and political reforms, developing infrastructures to support peace and manage conflict, justice and security sector reform and development.)

c) *Support mitigating factors that foster resilient responses to conflict* (eg supporting voices of moderate religious actors, women, youth, and other civil society actors) and recognise that cycles of violence can cause widespread societal trauma that decrease a community's resilience.

7. Too often well-meaning efforts to foster peace and security result in unintended and counterproductive impacts.

The gap between intent and impact is a challenge facing all organisations who make assumptions about how they can intervene to support peace and security. These assumptions develop from personal experiences, media narratives, or academic training. Organisations tend to see the problem that their organisation can fix. Rigorous research can test organisational assumptions underlying the design of their projects, programmes, or policies. Theories of Change, introduced later in the next lesson, help to make underlying assumptions more explicit, so they can be tested with research.

8. Different assessment goals, frameworks and research methods lead to different understanding of conflict.

- Different stakeholders use different data collection methods. Governments, including military and police, tend to use large data sets. Civil society organisations conducting conflict assessments tend to use local interviews, local focus groups and town meetings.

- Different stakeholders collect different or even contradictory data. Even groups using the same conflict assessment frameworks can populate the framework with different data leading to different understanding of the drivers and mitigators of conflict.

- Different stakeholders have different levels of acceptance and access to conduct research. Civil society organisations usually have a long-term relationship and trust in the communities where they are conducting research. Government, military and police may not have these relationships to facilitate research.

- Data quality depends on the perception of those being assessed and whether they provide accurate information or information that supports their interests to researchers. People being interviewed may tell a researcher what they think that researcher wants to hear. If they are fearful of the military or police, they may be especially prone to providing information that will not affect their safety. This may mean they are unwilling to provide information if they think either an armed opposition group will retaliate against them or if providing information about a security threat will lead to an attack on their own towns or villages.

- Different security protocols limit access of some researchers. Military and police may be restricted by rules of engagement, force protection, diplomatic security protocols. CSOs may also be restricted by security threats that could impact their researchers. Limits on government-affiliated researchers may be different than the limits on civil society researchers. They each may be able to reach different groups to carry out their research.

9. Shared conflict assessment is essential to civil-military-police coordination

Conflict assessment is essential to designing strategies to achieve human security. A shared understanding of conflict assessment is an important foundation for civil-military-police cooperation. Without a shared understanding, there can be no civil-military-police coordination to support human security.

Figure 29: Shared Assessment and Planning for Coordinated Action

If one unit in a government identifies terrorist groups as the root cause of the problem, they will attempt to kill and contain these groups and send military weapons to support the national government. If another unit in a government identifies government corruption and economic inequality as the root cause

of the problem, they will develop a completely different intervention to hold corrupt governments to account and reform the political system. These interventions may not complement each other. Two units in the same government that hold different assumptions about the root causes of conflict may actually work against each other. The same is also true of civil society, military and police. If they do not share a similar understanding of conflict, they cannot plan or coordinate to support human security.

10. There are six common problems with conflict assessment research in complex environments.

Good Framework ≠ Good data	• We ask the right questions, but our data is biased, is not valid or triangulated
Fear of Data Overload	• We are afraid of "analysis paralysis"
Organizational Interests	• We see the problem that we can fix
Overconfidence	• We don't know what we don't know
Intent vs. Impact	• We assume good intent will lead to good impact
Faulty Assumptions	• We jump to conclusions based on media reports, limited experience, or group think

Figure 30: Problems with Conflict Assessment

<u>Framework vs. Data Quality</u>: Conflict assessment frameworks offer helpful set of questions and tools for analysing conflict. While researchers may ask the right questions using these frameworks, the framework alone does not guarantee good data. Early conflict assessment processes emphasised the quality of the framework and not the quality of the data used to answer the questions or tools in a framework. In a rush to action, many groups would simply fill in a conflict assessment framework themselves, without conducting any rigorous, on the ground research. Aid agencies would sit in capital cities and fill out a conflict assessment framework based on their own guesses of what was happening in a far off country. An accurate conflict assessment is not possible with data that lacks validity, triangulation, or that is biased toward a small set of experiences or media reports.

<u>Data Overload:</u> Research shows that when people have too much information or too many choices, they tend to psychologically freeze up and suffer from "analysis paralysis" that makes them unable to make decisions.[49] Research finds that most business leaders suffer for lack of a way to make sense of the data they have, not necessarily for having too little data.[50] Groups may analyse a situation so much that the complexity becomes overwhelming, paralyzing them from taking any action. All conflict assessment processes face time and resource constraints, but skimping on conflict assessment wastes time and resources. A conflict assessment framework can help to organise data, to improve decision-makers ability to make sense out of it.

<u>Organisational Interests:</u> Most people see the problem they can fix. Development specialists are more likely to see unequal development as driving conflict, while political scientists are more likely to see political power plays doing so. Military forces are more likely to see a military solution to the conflict and so on. People who do not stand to gain any organisational interest in the outcome are more likely to produce an accurate conflict assessment.

<u>Intent vs. Impact</u>: Good intentions do not always lead to good impacts. Conflict assessment is necessary to make sure the logic behind an intervention to improve human security will actually accomplish that goal. Many times, people with good intentions unintentionally cause harm. Module 7 on Civilian Assistance goes into more depth on the "Do No Harm" approach, also known as "conflict sensitivity," that urges all groups working in complex environments to conduct an extensive conflict assessment so they

can better translate the good intentions of their programmes or efforts and avoid unintended impacts that often occur because people overestimate their understanding of the local context.

Overconfidence: A can-do, eager-to-get-to-work attitude leads people to want to spend less time on research and more time actually doing something to foster change. People tend to be overconfident about what they know and underestimate what they do not know about a conflict. For example, overconfidence that unemployment is driving insurgent recruitment - without verifying this through independent research - can lead to designing programmes that may in fact have little to do with local people joining or supporting insurgents because of their frustration with government corruption or their anger at foreign troops in their country. Researchers should recognise the dangers of overconfidence, and the benefits of humility about what they do not know.

Faulty Assumptions: A misinformed conflict assessment leads to ineffective, wasteful, and even harmful policies and programmes. Government agencies sometimes use "red-teaming"—also known as a "sceptics core"—to address the problem of groupthink and tunnel vision. When gathered to discuss an issue, a designated group identifies and challenges the dominant themes and assumptions. The red team provides different points of view.[51] However, red teaming cannot replace how someone from another culture or another side of a conflict actually thinks. Without having people of diverse backgrounds involved, red teams are an inadequate substitute for people with different life experiences and different perceptions of the conflict.

11. Data Collection Research Methodologies

There are many research methods of collecting data for use in a conflict assessment. *Data* is raw material gathered from primary sources (e.g., interviews, focus groups, and surveys) and secondary sources (e.g., newspapers, blogs, publications) through qualitative (data that is descriptive) and quantitative (data that can be counted) methods.
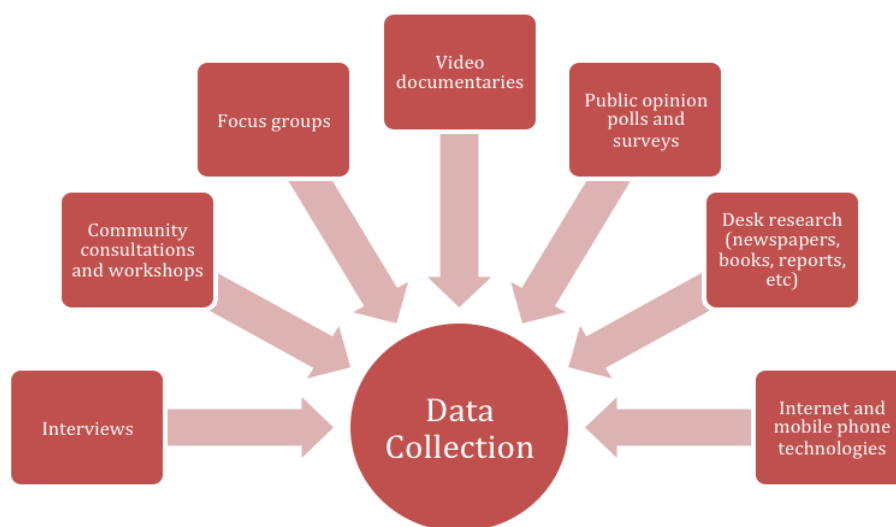

Figure 31: Data Collection Methods

Interviews ask key research questions of a wide range of diverse local stakeholders from different identity groups, including religious, ethnic, class, education, region, sex, language, age, and other identity groups.

Community consultations and workshops ask diverse groups to participate in both generating and sorting data into categories for the conflict assessment, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks. These community workshops can take various cultural models. For example, in Central Asia, community *shuras* or *jirgas* are a familiar way of organising discussions at the local level. Some groups use these traditional forums as their community consultations or focus groups.[52] In the United States, a methodology called Listening Projects[53] uses trained facilitators to ask open-ended questions that help people in communities express their fears, hopes, needs, and solutions. Such workshops are effective ways to gather information for a conflict assessment, while at the same time they can also serve as a first step to transforming difficult relationships. As participants begin to better understand their own and other's points of view

through the discussions, they may open their minds to new ideas and possibilities that may make them more likely to find common ground with opponents.

Focus groups can include people from the same region or cultural group (women, youth) to help generate, sort, and prioritise data into categories. Data from focus groups can help shape questions for larger surveys and polls. After collecting survey and polling data, focus groups can help interpret this data as well. But the effectiveness of focus groups is highly dependent on the culture of their participants. People of some cultures feel safe to share different points of view in a focus group. Other cultural groups may feel a certain pressure to conform and prefer not to share their dissent within the group. This is especially common in places with active violence, where people may be silent and too traumatised to talk. In some regions where identity conflicts play an important role, narrowing the focus even further and having a so-called "identity caucus focus group" may be helpful so that members who may feel impeded to speak freely in a mixed setting are encouraged to express themselves. For example, in a focus group that includes men and women, a separate women's caucus may help women share more freely their insights into conflict. Or in a women's focus group that includes representatives of ethnic majorities and minorities, it may make sense to have a minority caucus group. Rapidly changing events impact how focus groups respond. On the day before a marketplace bombing, a group of elders may feel hopeful and positive about the future. On the day after a bombing, another similar group of elders may share different perspectives.

Video documentaries can be helpful research methods for documenting a range of diverse opinions and perspectives. They can create a mirror or self-portrait of a conflict-affected region, helping researchers, local people, and donors listen to diverse points of view. Videos can be shown later to the same focus group to reflect on changes over time, or to invite them to build on their analytical discussion. Or the video can be taken to new focus groups to invite them to respond or to feel empowered and comfortable to take part in a difficult conversation. Researchers can show a video to large audiences to invite them to reflect on the conflict-affected context. A facilitator can ask large groups of people to reflect on whether the video is an accurate mirror or portrait of their context, or whether something is missing in the analysis. Videos then serve as a way of checking on the accuracy and reliability of the data.

Opinion polls and surveys ask a limited number of exact questions to large numbers of people to develop quantitative data. Pilot testing carefully formulated questions with focus groups can help ensure that the survey questions do not contain any biases.

Desk research can find conflict assessments carried out by other organisations in a conflict-affected region. Many different groups carry out conflict assessments without ever knowing about other researcher's efforts. International and local universities, NGOs, and think tanks publish conflict assessment reports or research that contains data that support conflict assessments.

Internet and mobile phone technologies allow individuals to write SMS text messages, tweets, and blogs that provide eyewitness accounts and analysis of conflicts. New technologies allow data sources to come from satellites, computer-generated information collection, or crowdsourcing when people use their mobile phones or the Internet to share their perspectives on conflict. Mobile phone technologies allow researchers to conduct surveys more easily and cheaply with populations that may otherwise be difficult to reach. Mobile phones allow individuals to share their photos and videos that illustrate their account of conflict dynamics. These technologies also allow people to make visual geographic maps of where crowds are gathering, where attacks have happened or where violence is happening, and where humanitarian crises are unfolding.

For example, FrontlineSMS collects and shares reports on incidents of conflict collected from people who text message information. Kenyans used a crowdsourcing technology called Ushahidi during the 2008 electoral violence to gather data from citizens who texted information on where violence was occurring from their mobile phones to a central location. Ushahidi[54] now works in many other places using geospatial mapping to inform early warning and conflict assessment. This type of data can help to indicate if violence is spreading.

12. Data quality impacts the quality of conflict assessments.
The research process for conducting a conflict assessment requires a methodology that is reliable, accurate, and triangulated.

<u>Reliable:</u> Data is reliable if it comes from dependable, respected sources. Data is most reliable when it comes from a primary source (directly accessing the source on location) and the researcher identifies all information as coming from primary, secondary, or tertiary sources. Data is least reliable when it relies on secondary or tertiary sources (more than one or two degrees of separation from the source or source material) and researchers fail to identify the source's reliability.

<u>Accurate:</u> Data is accurate if it can be gathered repeatedly with the same results. Data is most accurate if the research methodology clearly identifies the data providers (interviewers, pollsters, and collectors) and they can be reached for queries. Data is least accurate if no information is available about the data providers. Accuracy also relates to the sampling frame. At best, researchers are transparent, clear, and logical about whom they choose to interview in the sampling frame. At worst, researchers interview only a small sample and are not explicit about reasons for choosing that group. The quality of a conflict assessment relates to the diversity and accuracy of the sources of the information. Do the researchers or participants completing a conflict assessment speak the local languages? Do they read local daily newspapers? Do they spend time with diverse stakeholders from within the context to learn more about their perspectives?

<u>Triangulation:</u> Researchers triangulate data by comparing data from three or more reliable sources. Researchers fact-check data by comparing it to other data sources and then having it peer reviewed by internal and external reviewers. Ideally, data from quantitative sources can provide a numerical scale on how large numbers of people think about some aspect of the conflict. Qualitative sources can examine how smaller numbers of people provide their own, more personal perspectives about conflict.

Triangulation of data sources increases the quality of the conflict assessment. Conflict assessment can easily become an exercise in futility if relatively uninformed participants with a limited range of opinions and experiences use these exercises to make decisions about programming. Too often, conflict assessments include a single person's opinion as evidence that ultimately guides policy or programmes.

13. Conflict assessment can never be completely accurate or objective:
The parable of the five blind people and the elephant holds true for conflict assessment. Each blind man describes the elephant differently. The one holding the trunk, the tail, the leg, or the side of the elephant describe it as a water hose, a rope, a tree, or a wall, respectively. In the same way, five different conflict assessment teams could all research the same conflict and easily come up with five different conclusions.

Contradictions are inevitable. People on different sides of a conflict have different perceptions of what is driving the conflict or what is supporting peace. A conflict assessment process aims to capture not the one truth about the conflict, but rather to map and describe all the different perceptions of diverse stakeholders.

In conflict-affected contexts, people differ in their perceptions of what is driving a conflict. There is not one truth but rather many different truths for different stakeholders. No one is without bias, although some perspectives are more biased than others. Identifying key issues where disagreement persists can be an important part of conflict assessment. These issues may be important for learning more about the experiences, values, and beliefs that lead groups to hold to different perspectives. Identifying common ground and points of difference is also an important step in developing the curriculum for a dialogue or setting out the issues for a formal negotiation. In this case, triangulated data should support the different perceptions to determine each one's validity or coherency.

14. The identity of the group collecting the data impacts the quality of the data.
In many cultures, people tell data collectors what they think the researchers want to hear. Respondents may do this to be polite, to ensure that aid money continues coming to their community regardless of whether it is resulting in effective programmes or not, or because they fear for their safety or position if they explain their true feelings about what is driving the local conflict. Many donors still use a model of outsider teams of experts who go into a community to interview local people. This model does not fully consider the possibility that locals will not provide accurate and complete information to outsiders. Given that local people perceive that many donor countries and outsiders have their own political and economic interests in a conflict, the probability that local people will not give accurate information is high. Outside assessment teams regularly collect distorted data that in turn leads to programmes and policies that are not effective in preventing, managing, reducing or transforming violent conflict.

Second, data distortion also comes through translation. Conflict assessment questions themselves may be politically charged or offensive to interviewees. A translator may misinterpret the question, or may not be able to fully translate a response to a question. The translator may even come from a particular ethnic or ideological group and intentionally misinterpret a response so as to shape the data.

15. People tend to hear and see what they expect or want to believe.
People's worldviews shape and filter the world that they see. Research on conflict is particularly challenging, as people with an interest in a conflict tend to filter data to fit into their current worldview. Everyone participating in a conflict assessment is subjective—including researchers and research subjects. No one person or group can conduct an accurate conflict assessment. These expert outsider teams often fail to conduct a self-assessment of their own biases shaped by what they have read in media reports about the conflict and their own political assumptions and perceptions of their interests in the conflict. Without a clear self-assessment, researchers are often blind to their own biases and are more likely to hear what they want to hear. Assessment teams on tight budgets and with tight timelines may look for shortcuts to quickly articulate a concise statement of what they see as key drivers of a local conflict. By necessity, conflict assessment is a process involving a wide variety of diverse voices and perspectives. At every step of conflict assessment and planning, an important question to keep in mind is "Whose perspectives are shaping the discussion?"

People desire *cognitive consistency* or a steady, predictable understanding of the world. Second, when people perceive something that is inconsistent with their past experiences or beliefs, they seek to hide or deny it from existence. Contradictions or new information that goes against one's current worldview is stressful. If individuals perceive the world in a way that is incongruent with their worldview, they experience *cognitive dissonance*; they have anxiety and discomfort about a new experience or idea that does not fit with their current understanding.

People maintain cognitive consistency and avoid cognitive dissonance in two ways:

    a.   Filter the world
People filter their experiences with the world in a way that only retains the information consistent with their current way of viewing a complex environment. People reinforce pre-existing views of what the conflict is about based on personal experience or professional expertise. Humans selectively perceive information by either discarding dissonant information or distorting it to fit into current understandings. For example, conflict assessment teams may discard information suggesting that their own identity group is driving conflict. A person from the conflict may discard or distort information that appears to show positive qualities of an adversary. A person from the conflict may repress memories of growing up peacefully beside their adversary. People may see only the bad things others do and disregard the good.

    b.   Shape the world
People actively shape a complex environment in the way they expect and want it to be. People jump to conclusions about what is best to do in a conflict based on the programmes or resources already available or what one's own organisation would like to do. People create their own sense of reality by *projecting* their current beliefs and values onto the world. People may project their biases and stereotypes of other groups onto others. For example, researchers may project untrustworthiness on illiterate people, depending on their biases. People in conflict may project untrustworthiness onto their adversaries. The more distrustful people are of others, the less likely an adversary is to actually attempt building trust. In conflict, the psychological process of projection may become a self-fulfilling prophecy as groups labelled as "terrorists" become more committed to using violent strategies if others exclude them from political processes.

Another factor to consider is groupthink, which happens as people within a group start to reinforce each other's' points of view. Researchers may start to think alike, reinforce false assumptions, and fail to see alternatives. Group members may minimise conflict with each other by not asking critical questions about a dominant point of view, by permitting "mind guards" to censor anyone who veers from unanimity, or by promoting self-censoring of views that deviate from the group consensus. In groupthink, people become overly optimistic with a sense of invulnerability and an inherent belief in their morality. Foreign policy analysts detail how groupthink is responsible for failure to predict major international crises because policymakers were too likeminded and failed to ask critical questions of each other's' assumptions.[55]

All of these psychological processes are at work in each person on a research team, in the organisations they work for, and in all research subjects. Skilled researchers recognise the psychological tendencies and seek out dissonant information that can challenge their own perceptions.

16. Research Ethics

Research processes are an intervention that changes conflict dynamics. While the final outcome of any conflict assessment will never be perfect, the discussion and learning that happen in the research process can either produce better intergroup understanding or it can bring harms by fuelling further conflict. Some basic ethics of research processes include the following:

Participation: Invite people to participate in owning and shaping research about the environment where they live. Every conflict has people who bridge different communities. These insiders are often best placed to help design the research process so that it accurately gathers information from all sides of the conflict. Outsiders may inadvertently bias the design of the research process itself and entirely miss the diversity of perspectives necessary for understanding the context. A research team's choice of location and interview subjects creates perceptions about the fairness of the process as well as the political interests behind those carrying out the research.

Accountability: How are researchers and their organisations accountable to local people in sharing their assessment? Researchers should be aware of elements of power and coercion in collecting data. Who will benefit from the research? What are possible political and economic interests in the outcome of the research? Those who participate in an assessment process may do so because of their hope that it will bring financial or political rewards to their community.

Confidentiality: People participating in an assessment want to know what happens with the information they provide. Assessment teams should provide an explanation of what happens with the information. Will the community see a public version of the assessment? Will the assessment team decide on which communities receive funds for programmes? Will the assessment team give information to the military or armed forces that may decide to use the information to target individuals in the community?

Transparency: Identify researcher's obligations to subjects including transparency of the goals, methods and motives of the research, the benefits to subjects, the ability of subjects to voice their perspectives themselves, and recognition of potential harms that may come about through the research process. Interviewees want to know who is carrying out a conflict assessment and what interests lay behind the process. All research projects involving human subjects require an ethic of transparency.

Sensitivity to Trauma: Research questions can re-traumatise people or increase the conflict. Asking questions of people experiencing trauma or having lived through traumatic experiences is delicate, if not dangerous. Victims can feel re-victimised if researchers attempt to evoke an emotional response by asking questions about how they feel about a tragic experience. Research questions can raise sensitivities and even increase local conflict. If outsiders come into a community asking about ethnic divisions, inequality, or gender relations, they may change the way local people view their own problems and issues. Assessments can change the relationships between groups of people. If planned and managed as an intervention itself, conflict assessment can be a valuable part of a larger peacebuilding effort. But if assessment teams are not aware of the sensitivity of their questions, they can do harm to local people without ever understanding or knowing what they have done.

The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma advises researchers to ask questions like "What did you see?" and "Who was there?" rather than "How do you feel?" Questions asking for facts are less likely to cause harm and more likely to elicit an accurate story about what happened. The Dart Center suggests journalists always asking a series of self-assessment questions before interviewing victims: Is it necessary to immediately interview those who have suffered a traumatic event? Is there a value of intruding on people when they are grieving, disoriented, shocked, and frightened that makes the interview worthwhile to prevent future violence? If I were chronicling events directly affecting my family, would I alter the wording of my question in any way? Is it necessary to include graphic descriptions or images in the research? Could any of the research prove harmful to any of the people involved? [56] Their recommendations also include:

- Be sensitive to the emotions and trauma of people providing information.
- Plan security measures to ensure the safety and anonymity of people talking to researchers,
- Ensure confidentiality of data. Protect their anonymity and safety.

REVIEW

This lesson identified research methods and principles to improve the quality of conflict assessments. In includes ethnical guidance on conducting conflict research and detailed the dangers and traps that organisations conducting conflict assessment can weaken the credibility of the research.

Citations

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[51] "Red Team Handbook." Vol. 5, no. 15. U.S. Army: University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies, April 2011.

[52] Duncan Hiscock and Teresa Dumasy, *From Conflict Analysis to Peacebuilding Impact: Lessons Learned from People's Peacemaking Perspectives. (*London: Conciliation Resources and SaferWorld, March 2012), 17.

[53] See The Listening Project website at http://www.listeningproject.info, accessed January 2016.

[54] See Ushahidi website at https://www.ushahidi.com, accessed January 2016.

[55] Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983).

[56] Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, "Self-Study Unit 2: Covering Terrorism"
http://www.dartcenter.org/training/selfstudy/2_terrorism/05.php

Lesson 12   Learning Exercises

Anchor   *10 minutes*

Anchor the content in this lesson with an open question. Participants can share in groups of two or three people their response to this question:

- Where do you get information to inform your opinions about what is fuelling conflict or violence?
- Have you ever researched the factors driving conflict or violence?
- What is an example of a research methodology that led you to feel confident that you knew the most important factors driving conflict or violence?

Add   *20 minutes*

Present the PowerPoint slides or ask participants to discuss the lesson readings in a small group.

Apply   *25 minutes*

The goal of this exercise is to practice designing a research methodology to carry out conflict assessment. Create "mixed research teams" with one person from each stakeholder team. Each team should design a research methodology plan to identify the three most significant drivers of violence. How will you gather data? How will you interpret data? Have each research team present their plan to the other mixed teams.

After 20 minutes of team discussion, each team shares their strategy with the other teams. The facilitator asks the entire group for their observations. Ask the group to vote for which research team's methodology they think would achieve the highest quality data.

Away   *5 minutes*

To end the lesson, the trainer can ask participants to divide into groups of 2 or 3 people. Participants can share with each other their reflections on this lesson.

Lesson 13
Conflict Assessment Tools

Learning Objectives:
At the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:
- Identify six tools for conflict assessment
- Determine which tool to use to answer six questions related to conflict.

This lesson provides a set of six tools or lenses useful in conflict assessment. These include the *Where, Who, Why, What, How, and When* questions that journalists often use when investigating a story. Illustrative tools and participatory processes outlined in the last lesson help to improve the quality of conflict assessment research.

This lesson is adapted from the book Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning.[57]

1. Conflict assessment requires robust research

There are many different conflict assessment frameworks. The framework offered in this lesson is a synthesis of the types of questions found in most conflict assessment frameworks. There are six interrelated lines of inquiry related to understanding conflict.

<u>Where</u> is the conflict taking place - in what cultural, social, economic, justice, and political context or system?
<u>Who</u> are the stakeholders – the people who have a stake or interest in the conflict?
<u>Why</u> are the stakeholders acting the way they do? What are their motivations?
<u>What</u> factors are driving or mitigating conflict?
<u>How</u> is conflict manifested? What are the stakeholders' means and sources of power?
<u>When</u> does conflict take place? Are historical patterns or cycles of the conflict evident?

The purpose in this lesson is to gain familiarity with the basic six questions that guide any conflict assessment. There are many conflict analysis tools or conflict assessment "lenses" to help answer each question. This lesson introduces only one lens for each question to provide an introduction to conflict assessment.

2. Context Lens: Where is the conflict taking place?

In any complex environment, there are "dividers" and "connectors.[58] **Connectors** refer to everything that links people across conflict lines, particularly those forces that meet human needs. **Dividers** are tensions or fault lines that refer to those forces that alienate people or interrupt their human needs. Dividers include sources of conflict, or the issues in conflict.

Connectors		Dividers
List of Connectors that links people across conflict lines, particularly those forces that meet human needs	*Design programmes that decrease the dividers and increase the connectors between groups*	List of **Dividers** or the tensions or fault lines that divide people or interrupt their human needs

Figure 32: Connectors and Dividers Analysis Tool

An intervention should be "**conflict sensitive**" and "**do no harm**" by reducing the possibility that it could have unintended consequences or second order effects that would increase divisions between groups and increase the likelihood of violence. An intervention also should foster resilience by increasing the connectors between groups. The purpose of this lens is to examine the broad context of connectors and dividers that exist within a society. There are five categories of connectors and dividers.

Systems and institutions: Systems and institutions—like markets, power lines, water pipes, bridges, roads and communications systems—can connect people across conflict lines. If systems and institutions serve some people and not others, they may increase divisions between groups. For example, if oil pipelines travel through a community but the community does not benefit from the pipelines, the pipelines are an example of a "divider."

Attitudes and actions: Even in the midst of war and violence, some individuals behave in surprising ways, such as adopting abandoned children from the opposing side in the conflict or continuing a community soccer group across the lines of conflict. Attitudes and actions can be "connectors" helping groups see the humanity of those on the other side of the conflict. Other people can display hateful behaviours, write graffiti or call people names on the other sides of a conflict. Attitudes and actions can either divide or connect people.

Shared values and interests: Shared religious or moral values, such as a belief in protecting children or the environment, can connect people across the lines of conflict. UNICEF, for example, has negotiated days of tranquillity in conflict zones based upon the shared value warring parties placed on inoculating children against disease.

Common experiences: The experience and effects of war on individuals can provide linkages across conflict lines. Citing the experience of war and suffering as "common to all sides," people traumatised by war sometimes create new anti-war alliances across conflict lines. In other situations, a common experience of trauma can divide people, as each group is unable to function emotionally.

Symbols and occasions: National art, music, historical anniversaries, national holidays,

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CONNECTORS AND DIVIDERS EXERCISE

1. Draw the table above and make a list of dividers and connectors in the local context. If some forces are listed as both connectors and dividers, try to qualify them. For example, if "water" is listed in both categories ask the group "Why? It could be that wells are connectors, as communities share these public spaces. But lack of water for farmers may be a divider, as community members involved in agriculture don't have enough water to irrigate their crops.

2. What projects support the connectors? Which efforts increase the dividers?

3. If you work for an organisation, how would you redesign or change the work to increase connectors and reduce the dividers?

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monuments, and sporting events (e.g., the Olympics) can divide people by prompting memories of past traumatic events, bring people together or link them across conflict lines, or some combination of the two.

3. Stakeholder Lens: Who is driving the conflict, and who is supporting peace?

In Lesson 1, this *Handbook* described the process of stakeholder mapping. This is an example of an analytical tool to organise information related to the second question of "Who is driving conflict and who is supporting peace." Stakeholder mapping can also include categorising stakeholders according to their characteristics. In the chart below, stakeholders can be rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being low level and 10 being high level.

- Identify stakeholders that contribute to conflict and violence.
- Rate those that contribute to human security. Some stakeholders are simultaneously increasing conflict or violence while also asserting a desire to improve human security.
- Rate stakeholders who have high or low levels of legitimacy with other stakeholders and a significant or insignificant capacity to influence change.
- Rate stakeholder's capacity to contribute (their expertise, funding, local knowledge, language capacity)

Stakeholder Analysis				
Stakeholders	Level of negative impact on violence	Level of positive impact on human security	Level of legitimacy on other stakeholders and capacity to influence change	Capacity to contribute and willingness to get involved in

Figure 33: Stakeholder Analysis Chart Tool

4. Motivation Lens: Why are the key actors motivated to drive violence or mitigate conflict?

People engage in conflict for various reasons. These motivations range from illegitimate greed to legitimate grievances. People often decide to fight and die to protect their basic human needs for dignity, respect, identity, and economic and physical safety.

Stakeholder mapping can help to analyse each stakeholder's motivations, including their needs, interests and positions.

Stakeholder Motivations			
Stakeholders	Needs or grievances	Interests	Positions

Figure 34: Stakeholder Motivation Analysis Tool

People's motivations for engaging in peacebuilding efforts to mitigate conflict are also diverse. In the "onion" diagram here, needs and interests are often hidden underneath public positions.

Positions are what people say they want in public. These can be political demands or conditions under which they will stop fighting.

Interests are desires, concerns, and fears that drive people to develop a public position.

Needs are the most basic material, social, and cultural requirements for life that drive people's behaviour and their positions and interests.
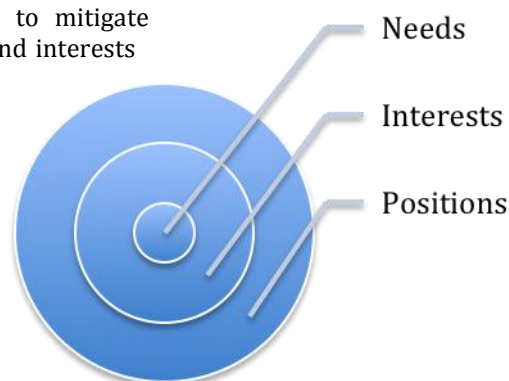

Figure 35: Onion Analysis Tool

There is no evidence of a hierarchy of needs[59] (some may remember Maslow's pyramid of human needs). Context seems to shape which of these takes precedence over others. Some people may be willing to give

up their need to eat, but not their need to exercise their religion. Others may be willing to sacrifice their lives, but not their identity and dignity.

The drive to satisfy core human needs shapes human behaviour. Conflict occurs when people perceive that others are obstructing or threatening their needs and rights. Depending on how threatened people feel, they may be willing to fight, die, or harm others to satisfy their needs. People fight to preserve their sense of identity just as much if not more than to obtain power or resources. Threats and punishments are ineffective at changing the behaviour of people trying to satisfy what they perceive to be their basic human needs.[60] Negotiation processes help people identify underlying needs and rights to develop creative solutions.

Human needs and human rights are similar. People have a "right" to what they "need"; including food, water, shelter, education as well as dignity and respect for their right to life.[61] People may satisfy their needs in different ways. People "need" and have a right to food and shelter. They may take a *position* that they must have a certain type of food or shelter. Positions are not rights.

- *Material needs and rights* include basic physical safety, food, shelter, health care, and the necessary resources to survive physically.
- *Social needs and rights* include a sense of dignity, respect, recognition from others, belonging to a group while having a sense of participation, and self-determination in decisions that affect one's life.
- *Cultural needs and rights* include finding meaning in one's own identity, through cultural and religious beliefs that help people make sense of the world.

Core grievances develop from a deep sense of frustration that emerges out of persistent social patterns that obstruct human needs. Grievances emerge as people perceive a social pattern of *discrimination or exclusion of some groups* in favour of an elite group. Grievances shape people's perceptions of what they see as just and fair. Sometimes these grievances look illegitimate to others. People experience justice as a satisfaction of these basic human needs.

Greed is a term that refers to people who meet their own interests at the expense of others. For example, some armed groups use violence to take resources away from other groups so that they can increase their own personal wealth and finance further armed struggle. Sometimes people act in ways that harm others in an effort to defend or achieve their needs. Greed may stem from material shortages, perceived economic interests or "internalised superiority." Some people *perceive* that their lives are worth more than others, and therefore it is "just" for them to have more resources and power. This *internalised superiority* develops from cultural values and is shaped by one's sense of identity of self and other. Most people view themselves as good and their own motivations as legitimate. People tend to avoid seeing their own actions as greedy. Instead, they justify the reasons for their actions, describing them as legitimate grievances.

5. Drivers Lens: What are the drivers of violence and what can be done to impact them?

Root causes are the broad institutional and structural factors that create an environment where violent conflict is possible. Economic inequality, for example, is a root cause of many violent conflicts. "Conflict drivers" are the immediate triggers that increase the possibility of violent conflict. Climate change or environmental shocks such as droughts that destroy crops, the abundant supply of cheap weapons, or violent extremists who use religion to gain recruits are each examples of conflict drivers.

In many cultures, there are types of trees or plants such as the cassava plant or the raspberry bush that regenerate even after their tops are cut off. These plants are a metaphor to illustrate the ability for "roots" to regenerate and spread, despite efforts to eliminate them.
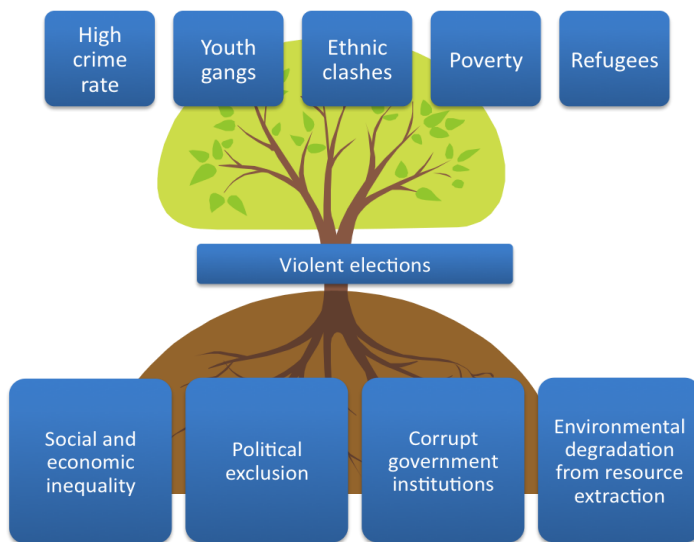
Figure 36: Tree Analysis Tool

The tree below illustrates this. Efforts to address the presenting issues without addressing the latent root causes will have little effect on the system. Sustainable peacebuilding requires addressing root causes. For example, Figure 35 illustrates social and economic inequality and government corruption as root causes of violent elections. The branches of the tree are symptoms of the root causes. These symptoms also fuel more conflict and violence. It is important to address the conflict drivers of violent elections include a high crime rate, youth gangs and ethnic clashes. But addressing these factors might not change the underlying structural conditions or root causes of election violence.

Another metaphor to understand the relationship between factors causing violent conflict is to think of violent conflict as a fire. The firewood is the root cause, such as political exclusion of one group in society. Gasoline and the match that lights the fire are the conflict drivers, the factors that cause a fire to erupt, such as a drought that makes it difficult for people to feed their families. The smoke from the fire is the violence that is seen. Some analysts, for example, see violent extremists as the "smoke" and not the "fire." They suggest addressing political governance and economic issues are essential to preventing violent extremism.

When analysing the root causes and drivers of violence, it is also important to identify threats to and vulnerabilities of civilians. Civilians themselves need to be part of any process to assess these risks and vulnerabilities. Where do people feel unsafe? What will help them address these vulnerabilities? Preventing mass atrocities requires using an "atrocity lens" to identify potential signs that a group is preparing to carry out mass atrocities against civilian populations. A conflict assessment can identify the context, stakeholders, motivations, means, and methods and timing of a potential atrocity (where, who, why, how, what, and when). This assessment can provide an "early warning" that a crisis is impending and requires preventive diplomacy or other intervention.

6. Power Lens: How are key actors using power to drive or mitigate conflict?
There are many sources of power. Stakeholders in a conflict can mobilise any of these sources as a means to fight others, given they have access to them. People can also use or create these sources of power in peacebuilding efforts.

- Physical or military strength
- Identity (gender, ethnic background, family of origin, position, or authority)
- Personal ability (such as communication skills or professional competency)
- Economic resources
- Information
- Education (knowledge and skills)
- Moral or spiritual power
- The personal power of charisma
- Social capital, including networking abilities, relationships with others, and the ability to mobilise masses

Social capital refers to the quantity and quality of relationships between people and groups. It is based on the idea that social networks have value.

Balanced and Unbalanced Power: People often have different levels of power in conflict-affected systems. People can feel disempowered, as if they have no or little power, when they have a difficult time influencing decisions that affect their lives. People tend to feel especially disempowered when they are not consulted or included in a social process that affects their lives, when others devalue their right or

ability to participate in that process, or when they feel that they can have no impact on the world and that death is inevitable.

Misperceptions of who has the "most" power are frequent. People tend to become angry and threaten others when they sense others have more power. Assessing the power each stakeholder has to influence other stakeholders requires a thorough understanding of their degree of interdependence. The power of any stakeholder is related to how dependent others are on him or her. The power of A over B is equal to the dependence that B has on A and vice versa.

Domination and Control versus Sharing Power
Power over is the *destructive* use of power to impact and influence others' lives without their consent. Domination, control, submission, defiance, threats, and counter-threats are examples of "power over" strategies. They suggest, "If you do not do what I want, I

will do something you do not want." Attempts to dominate over others often are drivers of conflict. Most human beings want to participate in decisions that affect their lives. This is why democratic governance is considered the most stable form of government. When a dictator or armed force imposes and controls other groups of people, those people almost always resist in a violent insurgency or nonviolent social movement.

Power with is the *constructive* use of power to shape the environment with others' consent and participation. Productive power is the power to do and create things and the power with others based on exchange relationships that suggest, "If you do something I want, I will do something you want," or integrative power to create something with others, such as "I will do something because I care about your well-being." These forms of power are conflict mitigators. When people work together to solve problems with the goal of achieving a "win-win" solution that meets everyone's underlying interests and needs, sustainable peace is possible.

A government's political power, for example, ultimately depends on the consent and cooperation of its citizens. All governments depend upon the cooperation of others to participate and consent to governance. The more citizens deny a government's authority and legitimacy, the less power that government can exercise.

7. Timeline Lens: When has the conflict been less or more challenging in the past? Will the conflict be less or more challenging in the future?
In a complex environment, groups of people often have completely different experiences and perceptions of history. Research on how different groups perceive history illustrates that different lived experiences shape the worldviews of groups interpreting history. Not all groups remember historic facts the same way. Some groups focus on chosen traumas where their group suffered and chosen glories where their group prevailed.[62]

The timeline lens illustrates how different stakeholders understand the significant points in history. The goal of using the timeline lens is not to detect the "correct" or "objective" version of history but to understand people's perceptions of past events. People generally remember the things that have affected them, had an impact on their lives, or shaped their worldviews. People on opposing sides of the conflict emphasise different events, describe history with different narratives or stories, and attach contrasting emotions to events. This lens helps people understand how different stakeholders view history.
Developing a timeline of the history of the conflict enables stakeholders to identify those moments in the conflict that created a sense of "trauma" or "glory" for a group. A "trauma" is an event or series of events that caused significant disruption and pain. A "glory" is something that groups are proud of and are important to the group. This process of analysing the emotional impact of past events may also help stakeholders of opposing groups to understand more about the psychological impact particular memories may have had on the other group and they may perhaps more readily be able to acknowledge and even apologise.

This lens can also identify potential future "windows of vulnerability." For example, if violence often happens during elections, a timeline can highlight the potential danger for times in the future when elections are held. The lens can also identify "windows of opportunity" when there may be opportunities for peace, such as anniversaries or sports events that bring people together.

TIMELINE EXERCISE

Ideally a timeline is constructed in a large group made up of key stakeholders from different sides of the conflict. This process brings the most insight into symbolic meaning attached to events by different groups.

1. Divide the group according to the various "sides," key actors, or identity groups in a conflict.

2. Ask people in each small group to share the major events that have shaped how they see the conflict today. They can start as far back in history as they want to begin telling their story of what has happened.

3. Write a brief, three- to five-word summary of each significant historical event, moment of glory, or moment of trauma on a separate sheet of paper.

4. The facilitator will lay down a line of rope or tape on the floor to mark the line of history along with sheets of paper to mark dates along the timeline. Each side of the conflict will lay down the history in chronological order along the rope line. The historical dates need to be marked so that each group's chronology matches up along the line.

5. When each group is finished laying out their key historic dates, ask everyone to silently walk along the line and read each side's understanding of history. Note how each side remembers different events and has a different interpretation of events as traumatic or as a glory.

6. After everyone finishes silently observing the timeline, reconfigure small groups made up of different identity groups. Ask them to share with each other what they noticed in terms of commonly perceived events versus differences in perceptions. Allow space for people to ask questions of each other about their different perceptions.

7. Identify the key points in history where there are shared memories and key points where there are disparate memories in which one side's trauma may be the other side's glory. How can these memories create opportunities for transforming the current crisis by memorialising, acknowledging and/or apologising for past events?

REVIEW
This lesson provided six tools or lenses for conducting a conflict assessment research process. The tools help to identify the Where, Who, Why, What, How and When related to a specific conflict.

Citations

57 Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning: Toward a Participatory Approach to Human Security*, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014).
58 *The "Do No Harm" Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict: A Handbook*, (Boston, Massachusetts: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2004).
59 John Burton, *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).
60 James Gilligan, *Preventing Violence* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001).
61 Lisa Schirch, "Linking Human Rights and Conflict Transformation: A Peacebuilding Perspective," in *Human Rights and Conflict: Exploring the Links Between Rights, Law, and Peacebuilding*, edited by Julie Mertus and Jeffrey Helsing (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 63–95.
62 See Vamik D. Volcan, *The Need for Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationships* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Publishers, 1988).

Lesson 13　　　　　　　　　　　Learning Exercises

Anchor　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*10 minutes*

To begin the lesson, anchor the content in this lesson with an open question:

- What are five different things you need to know about a conflict in order to understand it?

Add　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*20 minutes*

Present the PowerPoint slides or ask participants to discuss the lesson readings in a small group.

Apply　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*25 minutes*

The goal of this exercise is to practice using conflict assessment tools to improve understanding of conflict dynamics. Create "research teams" with one person from each stakeholder team. Each team should choose one conflict assessment lens and practice it. For example, one group will do a lens to explain the Where, Who, Why, What, How or When lens. If the group has not done stakeholder map (see Lesson 1) then this should be included here. If there are not enough stakeholder teams, then eliminate one of the lenses. If there are too many stakeholder teams, then two teams can do the same lens and compare if they are similar or different. Each team can present their tool to the other groups. This exercise potentially could use a full hour or more. Facilitators will either need to be strict time keepers or shorten another lesson to allow for more time on this.

Away　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*5 minutes*

To end the lesson, the trainer can ask participants to divide into groups of 2 or 3 people. Participants can share with each other their reflections on this lesson.

Lesson 14
Moving from
Conflict Assessment to Planning

Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify differences in civilian and military planning processes
- Define how theories of change inform the planning process
- Identify the components a planning cycle

This lesson compares and contrasts military, police and civilian planning processes. It introduces the concept of "theories of change" – also known as "strategic narratives" - that detail the strategic narrative that explains the purpose of a programme or activity. The lesson describes the link between assessment and planning, and the utility of conducting assessment with a set of questions that link directly to the planning phase.

This lesson is adapted from the book Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning. [63]

1. Distinctions between Military, Police, and Civilian Planning

Military and police planning is distinct from organisational cultures in government civilian agencies and in civil society organisations. The chart below provides a general illustration of some of the planning distinctions between some military and civilian organisations.

There is wide variety within military forces or police departments, some having access to much larger budgets than other. There is also wide variety within government civilian agencies and civil society organisations. Some have far more resources and predictable funding than others. Government and military planning depends on both having resources and authorities to use the resources. Depending on

the level of civilian oversight of the security sector, the military may be told by civilian leaders to plan or not plan for specific interventions.

In general, military, police, and government civilian agencies have large dedicated planning teams that follow precise procedures for planning complex operations. Civil society organisations (CSO) rarely have dedicated planning personnel. CSO staff at all levels may take part in planning.

A third distinction is that military and police planning tends to be hierarchical. Strategic leaders at the top take information and intelligence and decide on strategic priorities and "lines of effort." Military planning flows from strategic level to operational level to tactical level planners on the ground. Each level of planning responds to top-level leadership. On the other end of the spectrum, civil society organisations tend to decentralise decision-making. In large CSOs with head offices, there may be strategic planning processes and planning may be more hierarchical. But in smaller CSOs, information and planning is more likely to flow up from the ground level to the top level, or planning may be a consensus-based process involving all or most of the staff.

Military and Police Planning	Government Civilian Planning	Civil Society Planning
More predictable funding -- Funding less unpredictable
Dedicated planning teams--No dedicated planning teams
Hierarchical decision making---Decentralised decision making

2. Why link conflict assessment to planning

Too often, conflict assessment does not adequately inform planning. In agencies with separate planning teams, these teams may know very little about a specific context. Planning should include self-assessment, conflict assessment, identifying theories of change, designing and planning programmes, and monitoring and evaluation.

A conflict assessment process ideally generates ideas that can aid in planning for what to do about a conflict. A conflict assessment can help identify who and what are important factors driving or mitigating conflict. As noted in lesson 12, research-based analysis, not untested assumptions, should shape planning.

If government leaders believe that there is an evil enemy that can only be stopped by violent threats, this assumption about the conflict will shape the military and police mandates. If civil society leaders believe government corruption is driving violence by non-state armed groups, this has a completely different set of assumptions about how to respond to violence. Analysing conflict drivers and connects can lead to different and often conflicting assumptions about how to improve human security. Here are examples of how conflict assessment results can shape planning.

If unequal distribution of wealth is driving conflict, development efforts supporting marginalised populations or advocating for policies for equal economic opportunities may be necessary.

If religious actors are mitigating conflict, interreligious education, reconciliation workshops and dialogues may be an appropriate peacebuilding effort to expand their efforts.

If military raids and house searches are driving conflict, advocacy related to changing military strategies may be an important peacebuilding effort.

If political power struggles by a repressive and corrupt elite class are driving conflict, a civil society movement supporting democracy may be important.

If women's markets are mitigating conflict between ethnic groups, strengthening the voices of women may be important.

Without understanding who and what is driving and mitigating conflict, planning what to do about conflict reflects the biases and limited perceptions of the group doing the planning.

3. Conflict Assessment builds on a self-assessment.

Self-assessment is a process of identifying one's own cultural biases, perspectives, interests, and assumptions about a conflict, and then identifying one's own resources, capacities and networks to prioritise planning on what is possible and pragmatic. Are we overconfident about what we think we know? Do we know what we don't know? Are we more afraid of not acting than of making mistakes resulting in second order effects? How are we articulating and testing our assumptions about what is

driving conflict and our theories of change to reduce conflict? How are we ensuring that we are not looking for problems that fit the solutions we already have available to offer?

4. "Theories of Change" or the "strategic narratives" refer to the logic of an effort.

Organisations work according to their own set of ideas about the nature of the challenge they are addressing. Increasingly, civil society and governments are all using a conflict assessment research process to identify security challenges – including the root causes and drivers of violence. Yet even when using similar conflict assessment frameworks, groups still tend to understand security challenges differently.

What are "Theories of Change"?

A "**theory of change**" (ToC) is a statement – a **strategic narrative** - about how to address a particular challenge. Every organisation has an implicit or explicit theory of change that articulates how some type of strategy or intervention will address the challenges they identify.

Theories of change have three parts. A theory of change is about how some driving or mitigating factor identified in a CONFLICT ASSESSMENT can be changed with some INTERVENTION PLAN to achieve an IMPACT

Conflict Assessment: Research on what is driving or mitigating conflict

Intervention Plan: How an intervention will address conflict drivers and mitigators

Impact: Hypothesis of the impact of the intervention on the conflict drivers and mitigators

Figure 37: Theory of Change Components

5. Integrated Programming

More than one cause or factor drives conflict and violence. Ideally, planners can develop programming that addresses more than one factor. Integrated planning identifies programmes that will impact more than one factor driving violence. This is sometimes referred to as "killing two birds with one stone." For example, if lack of employment, government corruption, and easy access to weapons are three factors driving conflict, an integrated programming could train and employ people to monitor government corruption and document weapons caches.

6. Principles of Moving from Conflict Assessment to Planning

- Ensure that the categories of conflict assessment research will directly feed into the planning process. The chart on the next page illustrates this principle. The six questions on the left of this framework create continuity from self-assessment (see lesson 4) through conflict assessment and planning. Consistent use of the same conceptual frameworks creates an easier transition across each category.
- Identify evidence-based theories of change. Be explicit in naming how your theory of change is influencing your programming or intervention.
- Identify SMART goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely.

Planning requires deciding whom you will work with, what you will do, and where and when you will do it. Ultimately, if all stakeholders intending to improve human security coordinate with each other through these stages of assessment and planning, the variety of their efforts are more likely to synchronise and harmonise.

7. Pocket guide to moving from conflict assessment to planning

	Self-Assessment	Conflict Assessment	Theory of Change	Planning
WHERE	How well do you understand the local context, language, cultures, religions, etc.? Where will you work?	Where is the conflict taking place - in what cultural, social, economic, justice, and political context or system?	If x parts of the context are at the root of conflict and division or provide a foundation of resilience and connection between people, what will influence these factors?	**How will the context interact with your efforts?** Given your self-assessment, identify your capacity to impact the elements of the context that drive conflict and to foster institutional and cultural resilience.
WHO	Where are you in the stakeholder map? Where do you have social capital? To which key actors do you relate?	Who are the stakeholders – the people who have a stake or interest in the conflict?	If x individual or group is driving or mitigating conflict, then what action will incentivise them to change?	**Who will you work with?** Given your self-assessment, decide whom to work with to improve relationships between key stakeholders or support key actors who could play a peacebuilding role between key stakeholders.
WHY	How do stakeholders perceive your motivations?	Why are the stakeholders acting the way they do? What are their motivations?	If x group is motivated to drive or mitigate conflict, what will change or support their motivations?	**Why will you work?** Given your self-assessment of your motivations and how stakeholders perceive your motivations, identify how these align with the motivations of key actors. What is your goal?
WHAT	What are you capable of doing to address the key drivers and mitigators of conflict?	What factors are driving or mitigating conflict?	If x power sources are driving and mitigating conflict, what actions will influence these factors?	**What will you do?** Given your self-assessment, identify which driving and mitigating factors you will address.
HOW	What are your resources, means, or sources of power? How will these shape your efforts?	How is conflict manifested? What are the stakeholders' means and sources of power?	If x power sources are driving conflict, what will influence these sources of power?	**How will you shift power sources in support of peace?** Given your self-assessment, identify and prioritise your capacities to reduce dividers and to increase local capacities for peace.
WHEN	Do you have an ability to respond quickly to windows of vulnerability or opportunity?	Are historical patterns or cycles of the conflict evident?	If x times are conducive to violence or peace, what will influence these times?	**When is the best timing for your peacebuilding efforts?** Given historical patterns, identify possible windows of opportunity or vulnerability and potential triggers and trends of future scenarios.

REVIEW

This lesson compared and contrasted military, police and civilian planning processes. It introduced the concept of "theories of change" and the link between assessment and planning, highlighting the utility of conducting assessment with a set of questions that link directly to the planning phase.

Citations

[63] Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning: Toward a Participatory Approach to Human Security*, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014).

Lesson 14 — Learning Exercises

Anchor
10 minutes

Anchor the content in this lesson with an open question. Participants can share in groups of two or three people their response to this question:

- What is your most frequent response to conflict? Do you back away, do you get angry, do you attempt to negotiate? Do you use another method to try to change the situation?
- How does your personal response to conflict shape how you think your organisation or even your society should respond to conflict or violence?

Add
20 minutes

Present the PowerPoint slides or ask participants to discuss the lesson readings in a small group.

Apply
25 minutes

The goal of this exercise is to practice using conflict assessment reports to develop theories of change and to plan programmes and efforts. Each research team should identify a "theory of change" based on their conflict assessment. How does the conflict assessment identification of three drivers or root causes of violence translate into a hypothesis about what type of intervention might address one or more of the drivers. Each team should present their theory of change and the intervention design that stems from their conflict assessment.

In the large group, debrief by voting for which team's theory of change and intervention design is most likely to change the drivers or root causes of violence. Teams that create interventions that address more than one driver or cause of violence through one programme may be given extra points for creating 'integrated programming.'

Away
5 minutes

To end the lesson, the trainer can ask participants to divide into groups of 2 or 3 people. Participants can share with each other their reflections on this lesson.