

Terminology

1. Conflict terms:

Conflict sensitivity means the need to understand the context in which development interventions take place, with a view to avoiding negative impact on the local context and maximising positive ones. (Notion of 'do no harm' and 'do good.')

Conflict prevention is concerned with the outbreak, spread, and recurrence of *violent* conflict. It is the wide range of actions, interventions and measures undertaken by a variety of actors that address the structural causes and conditions giving rise to violent conflict; prevent the escalation of tensions into violent conflict; and prevent the continuation or recurrence of violent conflict. It seeks to strengthen factors and conditions that contribute towards de-escalation while addressing those factors and conditions that contribute towards escalation.

→ Further terms: light / deep prevention; operational / structural prevention

Conflict settlement means ending violent behaviour by reaching an agreement between the parties in conflict.

Conflict management The term 'conflict management' is generally used in two ways:

- It is often used as a generic term that encompasses the whole gamut of (positive) conflict handling, ie any methods or approaches for dealing with conflict. (This use of the term is related to the idea that conflict is a normal, inevitable part of life and can as such, as a generic, social phenomenon, not be eradicated or resolved - it can only be managed.)
- The term is also used at times in a more narrow way, to refer to the limitation, mitigation and containment of violent conflict (ie emphasis on containing manifestations of violent conflict.)

Conflict resolution is a more comprehensive term which means that the underlying causes of conflict have been addressed and resolved. It also seeks to build new, lasting relationships between groups that are hostile to each other. This implies the following:

- there is no more violent conflict behaviour;
- the attitudes are no longer hostile; and
- the underlying incompatible goals have been resolved in an outcome that is acceptable and satisfying to all the parties

Conflict transformation addresses the wider social, political and cultural sources of a conflict. It implies a deep transformation in the parties, their relationships, and in the situation that created the conflict. The term refers to the deepest and most comprehensive level of change in dealing with conflict. It has been suggested that conflict transformation involves change along four interdependent dimensions:

- personal (changes in the individuals involved, in terms of emotions, perceptions, physical and spiritual conditions, etc.)
- relational (changes in the relationships, including recognition of interdependence and improved ways of communicating and interacting);
- structural (changes in underlying causes of conflict, by focusing on basic needs, access to resources, and institutional decision-making processes);
- cultural (changes in cultural patterns of groups and in how they understand and respond to conflict)

2. Peace terms:

Peace can mean the absence of direct, physical violence (referred to as ‘negative peace’) or the notion refers to the presence of conditions for social justice and political equality, and that allow for constructive inter-group relationships (‘positive peace.’)

NB: the notions ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ convey no value judgement; they are merely used to indicate that peace is either defined by the *absence* of certain conditions (negative peace) or the *presence* of certain conditions (positive peace.)

→ Further terms: fragile peace (negative peace); sustainable peace (positive peace)

Peacemaking means moving towards a settlement of violent conflict, by intervening to end hostilities and bring about an agreement between the parties. This generally entails facilitating negotiations between the parties, leading to a ceasefire agreement or a more comprehensive peace accord.

Peacekeeping generally refers to the positioning of (international) armed forces to separate the armed forces or militia of belligerent parties. These forces may be deployed before and/or after the signing of a peace agreement. In both cases, peacekeeping is meant to bring a measure of stability to a particular region or country. Peacekeeping is now also often associated with civil tasks such as policing, monitoring and supporting humanitarian intervention.

Peacebuilding focuses on addressing structural issues, grievances of the past and long-term relationships between parties or groups in conflict, in order to strengthen negative peace and develop positive peace. Discussions about peacebuilding generally emphasise:

- tackling the root causes of conflict within societies;
- developing processes and institutions that can manage conflict in constructive, non-violent ways;
- creating participatory and accountable forms of governance;
- improving relationships and confidence between political adversaries; and developing shared norms and values

NB:

From the above it is apparent that the terminology in this area is pretty extensive and can be somewhat confusing and/or bewildering. This is because of the overlaps in meaning that seem to exist (and often *do*), and the various nuances associated with the different terms. This proliferation of terms and concepts stems from the major expansion in research and practical efforts to reduce violent conflict, taking place after the end of the Cold War as internal conflicts seemed to be on the rise. There is at times little agreement about the meaning of the various terms. Also, additional terms come up as our understanding of the challenges involved and the imperatives continues to grow; new terms are still introduced to better capture the scope and focus of interventions undertaken. For example, the notion ‘conflict transformation’ has become increasingly popular in the last few years; before, terms like conflict management and resolution were more common. The variety in terms relates to the development of the field; growing understanding of conflict and relevant interventions; and tendencies amongst different sets of actors.

The write ups above were drawn from the course ‘Conflict Prevention’ developed for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations System Staff College and Fahamu (by Michelle Parlevliet.) Resources used in coming to these formulations:

Fisher, Simon, Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, Jawed Ludin, Richard Smith, Steve Williams and Sue Williams. 2000. *Working with Conflict. Skills and Strategies for Action*. Zed Books: London, with Responding to Conflict: Birmingham.

Human Rights and Conflict Management Programme, *Training Manual*, Centre for Conflict Resolution: Cape Town.

International Alert, 1996. *Thinking about Conflict. Resource Pack for Conflict Transformation*. 1st edition, Ian Doucet (ed.). London: International Alert. Available from URL: <http://www.international-alert.org/publications.htm>.

Lange, Maria. 2004. *Building Institutional Capacity for Conflict-Sensitive Practice: the Case of International NGOs*. May 2004, Development and Peacebuilding Programme, International Alert: London. (Available from URL: <http://www.international-alert.org>.)

Mennonite Conciliation Service (MCS). 2000. *Mediation and Facilitation Training Manual. Foundations and Skills for Constructive Conflict Transformation*. Fourth edition. Mennonite Conciliation Service: Akron (Pennsylvania.)

Miall, Hugh, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse. 1999. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Conflict Transformation - 10 key ideas & principles

The term 'conflict transformation' has become increasingly popular in the last decade in relation to efforts to address conflict in divided societies. It reflects the growing insight that, in order to address such conflict in a sustainable and effective manner, fundamental social, political and cultural change needs to take place. Conflict in a divided society tends to be both protracted and complex, with dynamics that have developed over long periods of time. Issues of identity, security, access to the political process and to economic resources and opportunities are generally at the core of such conflict. Weak state institutions may compound the situation. Relationships between different social groups are often highly polarised, characterised by mistrust, fear and enmity. Issues are defined in zero-sum, or win/lose terms, where one side's gain is perceived as another side's loss; opportunity and advantage for the one comes at the expense of others.

In contexts like these, 'conflict transformation' is a more appropriate notion than terms like conflict resolution, mitigation, management, or peacemaking. It highlights that substantial change must take place at a number of levels (including the behavioural, attitudinal, and structural), and in a range of spheres, to transform actually or potentially violent conflict into peaceful processes of social and political change.¹ Thus, conflict transformation refers to the deepest and most comprehensive level of change in dealing with conflict. It may involve change within the broader socio-political context; change to fundamental social, economic, political or cultural structures; change in values and world-views; change of or within main actors; a re-framing or transformation of issues; and change in the dysfunctional nature of and communication styles within relationships.

Key ideas:²

1. The change that is sought of in the context of conflict transformation is of a *complex and multi-layered nature*. It also implies that the transformation of conflict is a developmental process: change is not a once-off event but a long-term process.
2. Consequently, conflict transformation must be conceived of as a process involving a range of strategies and activities that are *sustained over a period of time*, and that fit together in an *overall programme of change*. Key notions in this regard are: *interdependence* (between different processes and activities), *comprehensive*, and *coherence*.
3. A conflict transformation process should be driven by a *locally / nationally owned vision of a shared and/or inclusive future* (ie 'begin with the end in mind.'). Transformation can only take place if those affected by conflict own the problems, processes and desired outcomes. This highlights the need to look for, build on, and strengthen local capacity for constructive change.
4. Interventions *must consider the immediate problems to be addressed while at the same time be oriented towards long-term change* by considering the structural factors, patterns and relationships out of which such problems arise: the immediate problems or crises are embedded in larger, more systemic, factors and conditions. Immediate problems can thus be

¹ See H. Miall, O. Ramsbotham and T. Woodhouse, (1999), *Contemporary conflict resolution*. (Cambridge: Polity Press), pp. 21, 156-158; J.P. Lederach (1997), *Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace), pp. 35-48. For a discussion of protracted social conflict, see E. Azar, (1986), "Protracted international conflicts: ten propositions." In Azar, E. and Burton, J. *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf), pp. 28-39; as well as Miall et al, pp. 68-91.)

² Based on Lederach (1997); and Lederach (2005), *The Moral Imagination. The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford: Oxford UP); lecture notes May 2005, Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame. Drawn from concept notes prepared for UNOGBIS by Michelle Parlevliet and Andries Odendaal, 2005 and 2006.

viewed as 'windows' on larger, structural problems (ie immediate crisis is an opportunity to uncover deeper issues & try to impact on more systemic factors and conditions.)

5. *How* the immediate crisis is addressed can either impact positively on root causes, or it can exacerbate them: short term responses to particular problems must be done in such a way that they are geared towards long term change. This means *that it is not only the choice of activity that counts (ie what you do) but also the process of implementation (how you do what you do.)*
6. *Relationships are pivotal* in that conflict happens in relationships and is an expression of the nature of relationships: relationships between different groups and parties are both the result of structural causes of conflict (eg marginalisation, exclusion, etc) and feed into such causes. Hence, relationship-building and developing trust between key groups, are pivotal in a strategy to address root causes of conflict in a divided society.
7. The design of *specific interventions in key sub-systems of society* (such as parliament, the security sector, education, health) presents a manageable way of working towards addressing root causes of conflict while having a short term impact at the same time. (Sub-systems are institutions and social spaces established to order and structure political, economic and social life, and reflect the core structural realities in a society - interventions targeting this level can provide access for actions or strategies into the wider or underlying systems underpinning the functioning of society and organisation of the state.)
8. In seeking to facilitate change, it is essential to look for *key agents of change* (the notion of 'strategic yeast.') Key agents of change should not necessarily be conceived of (or be equated with) the notion of 'critical mass' - it is not the numbers that count (ie quantity) but quality - ie *who* is involved (and quality of their relationships), rather than primarily *how many* are involved.
9. In this regard, it's particularly important to look for actors that have the ability to move *vertically* and *horizontally* in society. Vertical capacity means the ability to move up and down between levels of authority (grassroots, middle level, top level leadership); horizontal capacity means the ability to move horizontally across conflict lines, between different communities and groups.
10. The nature of changes proposed are longer than what projects of 1 to 2 years can achieve - it is important to expand one's time frames in thinking about interventions & design of interventions, and must go beyond the immediate short-term time frame (1-2 yrs) but also consider 3-5 yrs; 5-10 yrs; 15-10 yrs.) Short-term time frames are both unrealistic but also potentially dangerous. Emphasis of external actors should therefore be on capacity-building and facilitating infrastructure & institutions that can take the change process further: building capacities and infrastructures for sustaining capacity to generate change.

(Examples of) Possible Guiding Questions

A range of questions can be considered in designing and implementing strategies and activities (within the context of development assistance and/or thematic programmes on human rights and good governance.) Please note that the list below is not exhaustive - nor is it specifically tailored to Danida programmes (sector or thematic):³

- How can we link the crisis oriented activity/ strategy to longer term change and transformation?
- Can this strategy or activity transfer to a higher level within the conflict system (ie activity on grassroots level in one place that impacts on higher political level) and if so, how can we facilitate that?
- How much does this strategy or activity link the causes/roots and the effects/ manifestations of conflict?
- Does this strategy or activity strengthen our or others' ability to respond and address swiftly to developments in the conflict?
- How can this strategy or activity assist in strengthening capacity amongst actors for constructive problem-solving, negotiation and dialogue?
- What other actors (individuals or organisations) in the local conflict system can we draw on to implement this strategy or activity with us?
- Can this strategy or activity connect to other agents of change and influence (either horizontal, across conflict lines, or vertical, across levels of authority) and if so, how?
- How can we prepare for implementation in such a way that relationships across divides are established and enhanced?
- How can this strategy or activity assist in developing a vision of the future (or facilitating dialogue about the future) amongst diverse groups?
- What is present in the local culture/ traditions/ customs/ belief system that can act as a resource or that we can draw on as a capacity for peace and change?
- How can we use this strategy or activity to help build parties' understanding of each others' interests, needs, concerns and fears?
- How can this strategy or activity assist in furthering parties' sense of responsibility for their own actions and the implications thereof (for others and conflict dynamics in general)?
- How can this strategy or activity assist in challenging narrow assumptions about and understandings of human rights?
- How can this strategy or activity facilitate a common framework of values and principles that groups and individuals across conflict lines can agree to?
- How can this strategy or activity create or facilitate space that is safe for people to engage with one another?

³ Drawn on work from John Paul Lederach, and expanded upon by Michelle Parlevliet.