

Psychosocial Conflict Analysis

Tool

A tool for evaluation and self-evaluation that combines and integrates the «Do No Harm»-approach with the psychosocial approach.



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Responsible Felix Wertli | Yvonne Buschor

Authors Office for Psychosocial Issues (OPSI): PD Dr. David Becker,
Kathrin Groninger, Claudia Luzar

Editor Charlotte Nager

Design grafikcontainer, Luzern

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Contact www.fastenopfer.ch | www.sdc.admin.ch | www.opsiconsult.com

The documents about the psychosocial conflict analysis can be downloaded from the following website: www.fastenopfer.ch/conflictanalysis

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About the Structure of the Tool

The psychosocial conflict analysis is an evaluation and self-evaluation tool for projects and institutions. It is designed as an aid to analyze and evaluate one's own work in the context of the surrounding social conditions and with regard to one's own state of mind, one's personal way of dealing with the tasks and problems. In the process, it enables past mistakes to be recognized and remedied, successes to be understood and secured. It means that in future, relevant problems can be identified early on and tackled creatively.

All projects, regardless of whether they are concerned with infrastructure problems (e.g. road building), with social processes and institutions (e.g. supporting trade unions or building democratic community structures), or with psychosocial problems (e.g. trauma or educational measures), always work directly or indirectly with and around social conflicts. The work is shaped by these conflicts and in turn influences the course of the conflicts. But successes and failures are also influenced by how we feel personally, how satisfied or dissatisfied, how stressed or relaxed we are, how well we manage to work in the team. We don't leave our personality at home when we arrive at work. It is precisely because we don't only use our brains, but also our feelings, that we can work successfully. In itself, our personal, subjective point of view is neither bad nor unprofessional; it is simply an important factor in our work. If we want to try and analyze the project work as well as possible and understand it, then we must both analyze the conflicts around us and consciously include ourselves as individuals with our own personal conflicts. So the conflict analysis suggested here takes into account both social and personal factors, and thus enables the projects to develop their work as effectively as possible.

Conflicts can be very destructive and, if they involve violence, do permanent harm. But they are not a priori a bad thing, because they are also one of the most powerful motors of far-reaching processes of change and development, both at the social and the individual level. Conflicts reveal divergent interests, the difference between what is desirable and what is actually achievable, or sometimes just the two sides of the same coin. The conscious transformation of human conflicts is thus an important resource in enabling people

to live together. For those involved, however, it is often difficult to escape the destructive potential of the conflicts. Instead of succumbing to hatred and violence, they have to find the strength to investigate the causes of the conflicts and use them to improve people's lives. However, since conflicts are embedded in complex worlds and interwoven with cultural customs and have developed over a long period of time, change is difficult and often surpasses the power of the individual.

The obstacles that stand in the way of analyzing and transforming conflicts are many and varied. Often, the destructive power of conflict is exaggerated («we can't change anything about it anyway») or they are denied («we are working on a practical issue, which has nothing to do with conflicts»), or the conflict is claimed to involve everyone else except oneself («it's the others who are in conflict, we are only helping»). Quite often, an apparently neutral standpoint is adopted. As a seemingly external party, one claims one doesn't want to interfere, even though one has, of course, long been involved. This is a frequent issue in political institutions and with international NGOs: Should third parties intervene or not, and if yes, how? Whether as bystanders, passive followers of others, active participants, helpers, we always all share responsibility for the suffering endured by the victims of a conflict. Working through conflict is always associated with danger and can trigger fear. It also happens that, although conflicts are acknowledged, their dynamic and the connections with social conflicts are not understood. This can heighten frustrations and feelings of aggression, impotence and helplessness. What is even more difficult is the transformation and changing of the conflicts so they become a productive resource, i.e. dealing with threatening situations, recognizing the positive potential of conflicts, and finally resolving and developing the conflicts in a positive sense.

This tool offers the opportunity to understand one's own project work in a conflict-transforming sense and thus improve it. It is aimed at organizations, projects and teams. It gives them a method of investigating the area of conflict they find themselves in and which is relevant for their project work, and to understand the conflicts in their individual, socio-cultural and socio-political contexts and to evaluate the impact of the project on these conflicts. Only by recognizing the con-

flict dynamics is it possible to exploit and develop their potential rather than, as happens so often, expose oneself unconsciously to the dynamic of conflicts, and by this intensify violence.

A good conflict analysis must link individual, socio-cultural and socio-political levels. To exaggerate slightly, one could say that staff sometimes talks about personal problems, but this is not considered as a work-related discussion. Or vice versa, when the situation is supposed to be analyzed, the discussion focuses on social power relationships rather than mentioning the personal concerns. This Tool helps to establish psychosocial links, that is the joint understanding of the individual and the societal dimensions. The analysis always starts with one's own relationship to the conflict. From there, it moves on to increasing one's understanding of the interaction of the different levels, and then to sharpen one's ability to reflect and understand the conflicts of others, whether in «one's own», or in the «outside» context.

On this basis, the Tool can be used to improve structures of communication and organization, to adapt project goals and activities in relation to the conflict, and institutionalize support structures to safeguard psychosocial stability.

Structure of the Tool

The Tool consists of five Building Blocks. These are briefly introduced and summarized, and are then followed by the detailed task descriptions. If all the five Building Blocks are implemented in accordance with the instructions, the total time taken will be 15 hours or three rather than two days. This sounds like a lot of time, but it isn't if one considers how complex the work and the conflict situations usually are. As a rule, an effort should always be made to try and work through all five Building Blocks, but it will certainly be possible for one or another team to either curtail or omit one or another intermediate step. In Building Block 1, for example Step 1 does not always have to be carried out, and Steps 2, 3 and 4 can be summarized fairly briefly if a team already knows the main points on which it wants to work. But Step 5 should then always be completely worked through.

In principle, a facilitator is needed when using the Tool. However, this task can also be shared out amongst the team, e.g. two or three people

specifically prepare for the implementation of one Building Block and then lead the particular section. This way, not only is the responsibility effectively distributed among the group, it also ensures that some of the participants will have looked very closely at the respective Building Block and are well prepared. This makes the implementation more dynamic, and sometimes also more efficient.

In Building Block 1, *A Personal Perspective*, we start with the members of the team to be evaluated. We ask about their own experience with conflicts. Together, they name the key conflicts that define the macro-social environment, and what the most important conflicts are in the immediate project work. On this basis, a central (conflict) topic is chosen and defined, which will be used in the other Building Blocks to examine the project work. Finally, the conflict topic is described from the viewpoint of different actors to get a more specific focus, and is enacted in a role play.

In Building Block II, we sketch a complete *Conflict Landscape*. We use the conflict chosen in Building Block I for this purpose. We identify the actors in the conflict, determine the conflict levels and examine the economic, cultural, political and subjective conflict dimensions. We also examine the key psychosocial components in relation to the dual concepts of threat/fear, destruction/trauma, loss/grief. The aim is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the conflict landscape in which a specific project and its staff operate, consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally.

The purpose of Building Block III, *The Function and Mechanisms of the Conflict*, is to make us more aware of and understand the dynamics of the conflict defined in Building Block I and described in more detail in Building Block II. We identify the dividers and connectors in the conflict landscape and try to comprehend the conflict history. Uncovering the conflict dynamic helps us to form hypotheses about the «how» of the conflict, and thus about the future development of the conflict landscape.

In Building Block IV, *The Impact of the Project on the Conflict and Vice Versa*, we want to look

closely at the project work. The results compiled from Building Blocks II and III provide us with indicators that help us to check how conflicts are handled in our project work. Are we really helping to transform the conflict with our work, or are we intensifying it without having intended to? Are there any positive, albeit unintended effects from our work? Whether and how our existing approach works, and whether or not it causes harm is the central question.

The aim of Building Block V, *Conclusions: What Should Continue? What Must Change?*, is to implement the results in practice, and in a satisfactory way, in the project work. That is why four conditions must be taken into account, which could impede the processes of change: The political framework, the finances, the organizational structures and the personal availability of the staff. We want to find out where the project has to acknowledge these limits, and where changes are appropriate and also possible. The point is to make decisions about what to keep and what to change. This affects the areas of project planning, work sequences and structures, the institutionalization of reflection processes, and the examination of processes of change.

Psychosocial Conflict Analysis



Building Block I: A Personal Perspective

The interpretation of a conflict depends on the position of the observer. We examine our subjective views, identify conflicts in the project and in the country, and choose one conflict, which is to be analyzed and through which we want to evaluate the project work.



Building Block II: Conflict Landscape

We systematize and examine the conflict landscape, defining the key actors at different levels, defining different conflict dimensions (economic, political, cultural, subjective) and describe basic psychosocial issues (fear, trauma, grief).



Building Block III: The Function and Mechanisms of the Conflict

We determine dividing and connecting factors that contribute to the transformation or non-transformation of the conflict and analyze the history of the conflict.



Building Block IV: The Impact of the Project on the Conflict and Vice Versa

We relate our project work to the conflict and with the help of the results we achieved in the previous Building Blocks we now judge the impact of our work on the conflict.



Building Block V: Conclusions: What Should Continue? What Must Change?

What needs to continue in the current way of working because it is good and makes sense, and what has to change because it does not enhance or maybe even inhibit the transformation of the conflict?

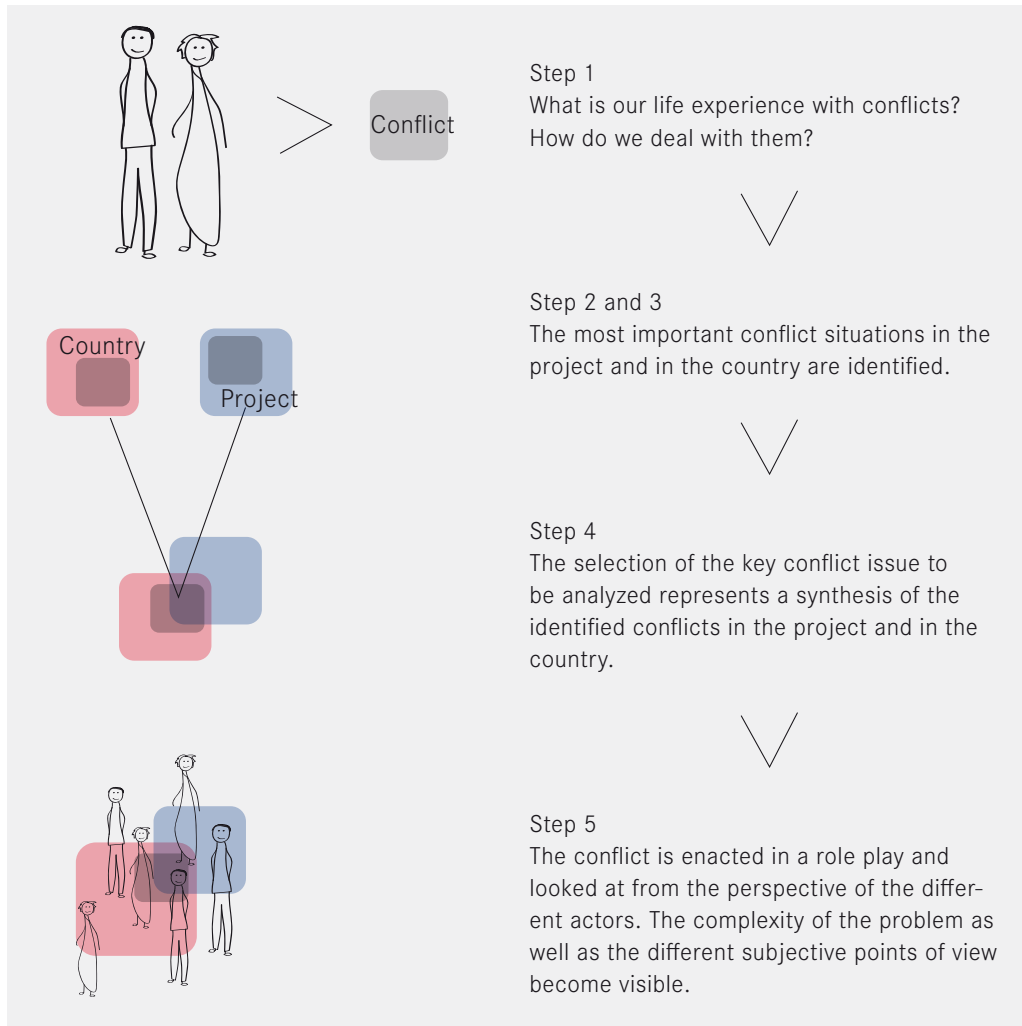
A Personal Perspective



Duration: 235 minutes in total

Conflicts determine our lives and our work. What happens to us in these conflicts, and how we can deal with them, depends not only on these conflicts, but also on our own, subjective life situation and on the special perspective we have because of our own history, our convictions and the groups we belong to. Thus, a good conflict analysis must not only clearly identify the conflict, it must also focus on the person analyzing the conflict, or on the respective group. That is why we start the process of analysis both with ourselves and with our initial conflict definitions.

Our personal view of the conflicts surrounding us always involves emotions. In our work, we often believe that we should adopt as neutral an attitude as possible, seemingly appropriate to the objective reality. Emotions are often judged as negative in a working context. It is considered unprofessional to be sad, angry or anxious. We believe that the opposite is true, namely that such emotions are felt in any case, and that rather than inhibiting them, it is a question of understanding them, and of working consciously with them. The same applies to neutrality. We believe that one comes closer to an objective statement and a professional understanding of the situation if one's own subjective view is also consciously reflected.



Step 1: Our initial focus is the personal viewpoint. We talk to each other about our experiences with conflicts (small and big ones) and present each other to the group in terms of our conflict history.

Step 2: We consider the conflicts in our daily working life and draw up a list of conflicts at the project level that we consider important. From this list, we choose the most important current conflict situations to which we give a concise title. The titles are again collected in a list.

Step 3: We identify key conflicts in the country in which the project is being implemented. The group works on assumptions and perceptions about the conflict, collecting them in a brainstorming session. Here, too, a list of conflicts is elaborated.

Step 4: Now follows the selection of the conflict, on which the group wants to continue to work and to analyze the work of the project. For this purpose, the most important conflict identified in Step 2 is chosen and is put into relation to some aspects of the list elaborated in Step 3. This leads to the definition of a key conflict, which covers dimensions of the one as well as the other list. In this fourth step, the *Summary of Results 1: The Conflict* is produced. It contains a brief description of the chosen conflict (a synthesis from both lists).

Step 5: The chosen conflict is enacted in a role play, in which the varying perspectives of the different actors are elaborated. Together, we can reflect on the complexity of the conflict and our personal attitude towards the conflict.



Step 1: My Perspective (approx. 35 min)

Briefly tell your partner, who you are. Explain your motivation to work in the project. Through what experiences have you learned something about conflicts? How do you handle interpersonal conflicts? Do you tend to fight out conflicts, or do you tend to try to pacify the situation? What experiences have you had with war, persecution and flight? Report to each other, each of you noting down a few key words about the other. You have a total of 15 minutes for this. Afterwards, each member of the group presents his/her respective partner (approx. 3 min per person).

Step 2: Conflicts at the Project Level

(approx. 40 min)

Go back to the same small groups of two. Take five minutes and think about conflicts in the project. What do you think, which are the key conflict situations in your work context at present? Make a small list for yourself. Describe to your partner the two most important conflict situations. Together, try to find a meaningful title for each situation that describes and summarizes your experience. Write down the titles. You have 15 minutes for this. Present at least two titles to the group. The facilitator records the full list of all titles on the board or on a flipchart (approx. 20 min).

Step 3: Conflicts in the Country (approx. 30 min)

Identify and briefly explain the key conflicts in the country of your work assignment. Discuss your views. Jointly develop a list with the most significant conflicts, but don't start yet to analyze the conflict!

Step 4: Selection (approx. 30 min)

Jointly consider both lists. What connections do you find between the lists? What common points are on both lists? Choose now the two conflicts from the project conflict list that you consider the most important ones. Find out, whether there is a clear selection, or whether the most frequently mentioned topics are related to each other. Check whether there are also links between the selected main topic and the list of conflicts in the country. Together, define now, as a sort of synthesis, a key conflict constellation that you want to explore further in the process of the analysis. Write down the title and a brief description of the central conflict topic. This leads to the *Summary of Results 1: The*

Conflict. (The Summaries of Results will become important for the further analysis later on in the process.)

Step 5: Rashōmon 羅生門 (approx. 90 min)

A Japanese film from 1950 teaches us that objective reality is always fractured by extremely subjective views. Rashōmon is the film's title, and at the same time the name of an old gate. The events take place sometime in the middle of the 12th century in Kyoto, when the gate was already severely damaged due to earthquakes and decay, and stood in a not very salubrious residential area. The figures, a monk, a woodcutter and a commoner, meet at the Rashōmon gate during a heavy thunderstorm, seek shelter and spend the rainy hours together in this ruin. The woodcutter tells the story of the rape of a woman and the murder of her husband, a samurai, to the others. This story is repeated four times from the perspective of the involved persons. The different perspectives present the viewer the different versions of memory, truth and guilt. Although the same thing happens each time – rape and murder – it is never the same story, and it remains impossible, right to the end, to establish one single truth.

First, determine together all important figures/actors who form part of the conflict, influence it, are affected by it. You could let the person who knows the specific conflict situation best talk a bit more about it. Then determine the most important figures (minimum three, maximum as many as there are people in your group). Then either sit down in small groups or alone and try to understand the situation from the point of view of the person you are going to impersonate. Define the characteristics of this figure (milieu, living situation, background in terms of experience, e.g. unmarried woman, 16 years of age, with an eight months old baby, living in a rural area, no school-leaving qualification, father in prison, mother HIV positive) and consider: How would this person experience and explain the conflict? How would she want to, and be able to, deal with it? Develop the version of the conflict, this figure would tell that, in the small group. It doesn't matter if you don't have a lot of detailed knowledge. Simply try to empathize as much as possible with the person whom you are supposed to portray. Take 15 minutes for this process. Afterwards you, or a member of the small group, adopt the role and act it out in a group role play. You start with one figure. He/she moves to the centre of the room and



tries to adopt a physical posture that expresses something of the particular person's emotions. Then, one after another, the other persons join the first figure. Pay attention to closeness to and distance from the other figures, and always try to give a physical expression to what your figure feels. Feel free to exaggerate a bit, so one can see what you want to convey. Experiment until you think you have found the right way of expressing the situation. When everyone has taken their place, each figure speaks in sequence and tells «his/her» story: «I am ...» After that, you can ask each other questions, discuss, experiment a little with how the conflict might develop, what is helpful and what isn't, etc. Use this opportunity to not only do something, but also to be able to ask the individuals what impact this action has on them. The whole action is a scenic play, like a sculpture or a small theatrical event through which we can jointly understand the many different viewpoints, and thus the related emotions, of the persons involved. Such a scenic process must be led by a director who manages the process and brings out the different points of view in the scenic play. He/she also makes sure that the respective emotions are clearly displayed. You can find practical suggestions regarding how to implement this role play in the Guide to the Tool. If you have never been involved in such a play-acting, it is quite natural that you feel a little uncertain and anxious. But this is not a public theatre production, but rather a scenic presentation that helps us to

better understand what is at issue, and it is a better and more concentrated way than just talking all the time. So, take the courage to try out this form, though a bit unusual. The presentation will take 30–40 minutes. Thereafter, you can spend another 35 minutes discussing the implications of the «play». After such an action, the discussions are usually very exciting and interesting, because the group is active and emotionally involved.

Summing up (approx. 10 min)

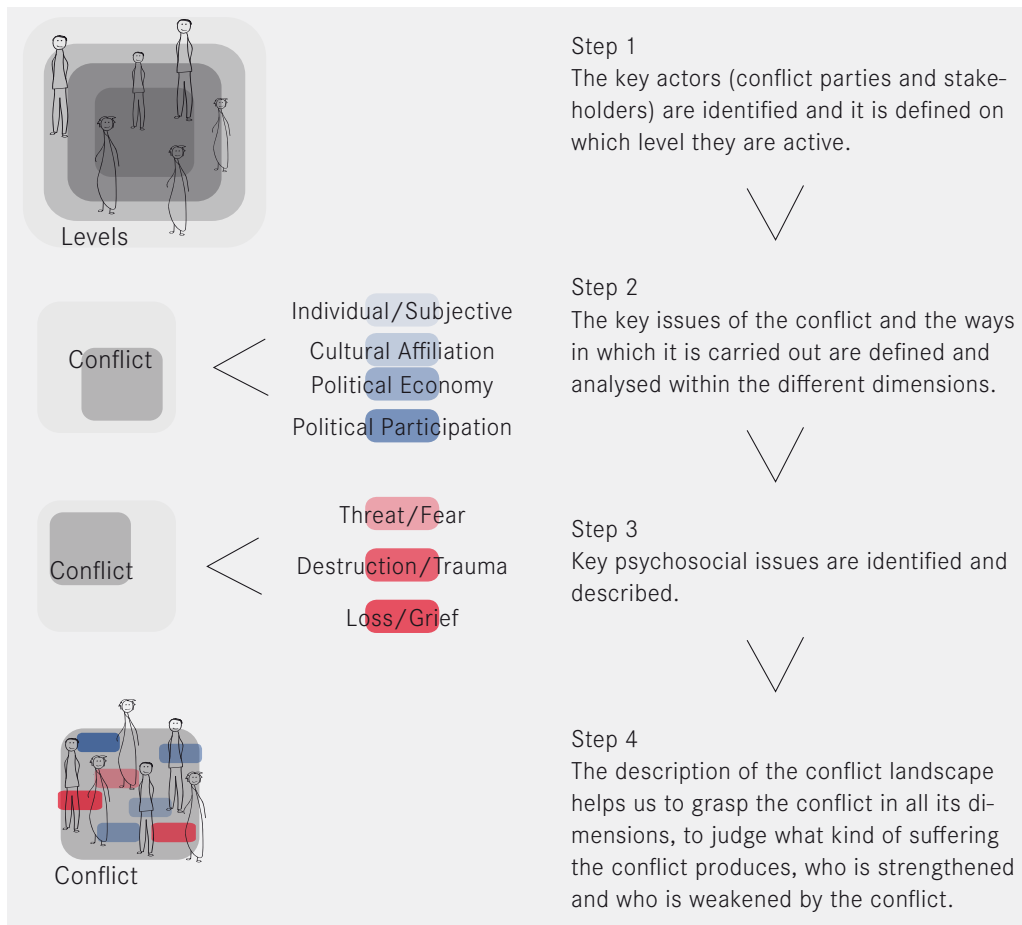
The facilitator summarizes the discussion process and the results and reviews once more the *Summary of Results 1: The Conflict*. If there are new insights as a consequence of the Rashōmon exercise, the text can be amended.

Conflict Landscape



Duration: 155 minutes in total

In our daily work, it is difficult to grasp a conflict situation like the one we have described in Building Block 1, *A Personal Perspective*, in all its social complexity and reflect on its causes and effects. Therefore we want to introduce to our analysis of the conflict a system that we call *Conflict Landscape*. We will look at several different aspects of the conflict: We determine the key actors of the conflict, i.e. the broad range of people and institutions that are active on different levels: the level of the individual and the family, the community level, the national and the international level. We will also describe and systematize the different conflict dimensions: political economy, cultural affiliation, political participation, and the subjective/individual. Here we determine what the conflict is about. Some of these dimensions we have already thought about a lot. Maybe they were in the centre of our analysis right from the beginning of our project work onwards. Other dimensions, we maybe know about, but we thought that they do not relate directly to our work; or we think that they are too personal or lack importance. We now want to paint as complete a «landscape» as possible, and therefore try not to avoid one or the other valley or hill. Finally we will also define the key psychosocial issues, like fear, trauma and grief. Then we sum up our understanding of the conflict landscape.

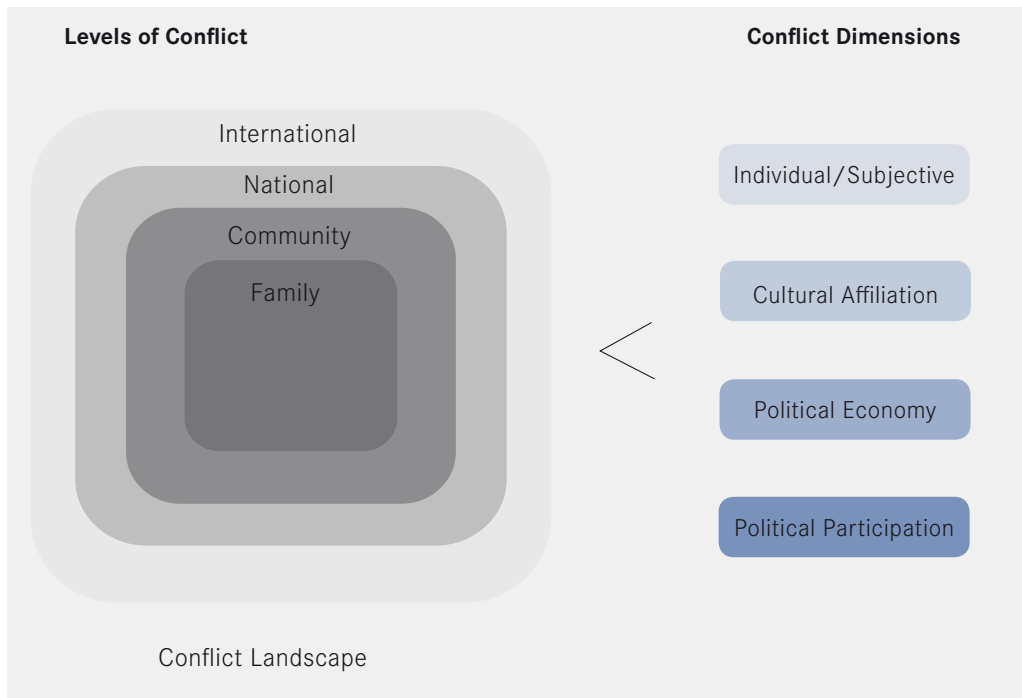


Step 1: The key actors and stakeholders are named in reference to the level at which they are active: international, national, community, family/individual. The levels that are most important for the project are identified. In this step the *Summary of Results 2: Key Actors According to the Conflict Level* is produced.

Step 2: We check the goals and interests of the conflict parties and analyze the issue of the conflict in the different conflict dimensions (subjective/individual, cultural affiliation, political economy, political participation). How do the parties to the conflict exert their power? In this step we produce the *Summary of Results 3: Conflict Issue According to Conflict Dimension*.

Step 3: The psychosocial processes of the actors in the conflict are discussed using the key conceptual pairs threat/fear, destruction/trauma, loss/grief. In this step we produce the *Summary of Results 4: Key Psychosocial Issues/Weakened and Strengthened Groups*.

Step 4: The results of this Building Block are summarized and jointly looked at. This overview helps to check and sharpen once more the perception of the key conflict.



Categories of Conflict Dimensions

Individual/Subjective

We live in social networks. We are all subjects who exist in relation to each other. We perceive ourselves as persons with goals and desires, frustrations, troubles, etc., and exist in relation to others who are important or unimportant to us, whom we like or dislike, who have power over us or not. We define ourselves in relation to others, and are also defined by others. All this creates multiple possibilities of conflict, partly in the context of, and in relation to, our own personal development, our maturing process, but partly also in the contradiction between our desires and what we are allowed to, or prevented from, achieving by our social environment. An important motivating factor is the basic need for recognition. As humans, we are social beings who need the sympathy of others. At the personal level, what we want from others in all spheres, the private as well as the professional and public spheres, is always recognition. Instead of giving people recognition and encourage their psychological development, the social environment can also disregard individuals and destroy their psychological structure and traumatize them. These central experiences of conflict shape our actions and determine our ideas of justice and injustice. The individual experience of suffering has a strong influence on how we react to threatening situations, and on our further psychological development. Social conflicts are not fought in abstract, but rather concretely on, in and over bodies. This is doubly important because all conflicts are suffered individually, and because after all, they are at the same time shaped by people. That is why the individual's perspective is particularly important in an analysis of the conflict landscape.

Question: What makes people feel satisfied? What do they suffer from and how do they show it? What are they afraid of? Do they feel they are treated justly?

Keywords: Dependency, autonomy, care, identity, feelings, trauma, self-worth

Cultural affiliation

People are inevitably born into cultural communities. They develop their identity not only as an individual with distinguishing features, but also always in terms of affiliation to a group with a value system, that embodies ways of forming relationships, life expectations and perspectives for action. The group usually describes the criteria for affiliation in terms of ethnic, national, religious and socio-economic aspects, drawing boundaries from one group to another. Here, it usually transpires that cultural affiliation is presented and perceived as more established and traditionally fixed than in fact is the case. Moreover, in most cases, multiple affiliations exist. For example, a person may be at the same time a Christian, a Hutu and a citizen of Rwanda. Frequently, cultural affiliations and attributions become the apparent central focus of a conflict, even though the background and the real reasons for the conflict are quite different. In a conflict, it happens regularly that the multiplicity of cultural affiliations is denied, disputed and suppressed.

Questions: Who is defined as a majority, who as a minority? Who is reduced to his/her cultural affiliation and by whom? What evaluation or devaluation follows from this?

Keywords: Culture, religion, affiliation, stigmatization

Political economy

In this dimension, the issue is the distribution of social resources between different groups in state and society, as well as the mechanisms through which their accumulation is secured. Beyond that, and particularly in the era of globalization, the issue is also about cultural hegemonies, ideas, values and interests that are enforced universally. On the one hand, the question is about material circumstances, but on the other hand, it is also about quasi-structural elements that seemingly have nothing to do with economic issues, but are part of existing global conditions. For example: The requirement for everyone to own a television, or the trend to turn even water into a commodity.

Questions: Are there jobs or not? Who owns the companies? Do the people own their houses or do they rent them? Who is rich, who is poor and why? Who benefits from the conflict?

Keywords: Economic problems, poverty, social and cultural marginalization

Political participation

In this conflict dimension, the issue is participation, i.e. the way in which citizens are involved in the political process. For example, democracy postulates the active participation of the population in the central decision-making processes. In democracy, therefore, self-determination and self-realization is an important social goal. But political participation is something that is not expressed solely in, for example, free elections, but also in people's immediate sphere of existence, in their villages and communities.

Question: What forms of co-determination exist? Who has authority? Who makes the decisions? Do enforceable rights exist? Is the existing legal system based on principles of equality and the inviolability of the human being's dignity?

Keywords: Participation in social processes, power structures and power relationships



Key Psychosocial Issues

| Social Reality | Corresponding psychological term |
|---|---|
| <p>Threat Who is being threatened? By whom? Since when? How strong is the threat? How predictable is the threat? How controllable is it?</p> | <p>Fear Is the fear temporary or chronic? Is it expressed clearly or concealed? How is fear being experienced (examples)?</p> |
| <p>Destruction Has there been existential threat and destruction? Torture? Killing? Rape? Destruction of homes? Expulsion and displacement? How much of this destruction is currently taking place? How much belongs to a closer or more distant past? Who is affected by all this (examples)?</p> | <p>Trauma Are there typical trauma symptoms (flashbacks, hyper arousal, numbing)? Are there other symptoms that those afflicted associate with the destruction they have experienced (for example not being able to work, headaches, digestive problems, insomnia)? Are these things talked about in the community or is silence prevailing?</p> |
| <p>Loss Which losses of persons occurred? Who lost family members? Were these losses surprising and traumatic? Were the dead buried? What other kinds of losses (home, property, convictions, cultural affiliations) occurred?</p> | <p>Grief Are difficulties in the mourning process occurring? If yes, what kind of difficulties (examples)? Are the difficulties more related to the acknowledgement and acceptance of the losses or more to a feeling of never again being able to stop mourning? Is the process more recent or related to a more distant past?</p> |



Step 1: Key Actors (approx. 15 min)

Start out from the just finished game of «Rashōmon». Name once more the key actors of the conflict. If possible try to differentiate between active conflict parties and other parties that might be affected by the conflict but are not key actors. For example, when parents quarrel, the children are not active conflict parties, but they clearly are affected by the conflict. Assign the different actors to the conflict levels at which they are active: international, national, community, family/individual. Check on which level your project intervenes. Also check which actors influence your work, although you might not directly deal with them. The individual level is always important, because always persons with their feelings are involved. Thus, the individual level should be described in all cases. Document the results and produce *Summary of Results 2: Key Actors According to the Conflict Level*.

Step 2: Conflict Issue and Ways in Which the Conflict is Carried out (approx. 60 min)

The facilitator briefly introduces, with the help of short examples, the four conflict dimensions subjective/individual, cultural affiliation, political economy, political participation (5 min.) Form four small groups, one for each dimension, and discuss how the conflict can be described from the perspective of the dimension your group is looking at. Is this dimension important for the conflict? What are they fighting about in this dimension? What are the issues of power in this dimension? What do the participants of the conflict want to achieve, prohibit or change in this dimension? What means are being used? If you want to, use the additional explanations given above about the conflict dimensions in order to answer these questions (30 min). Present the results of your work to the plenary and discuss them (25 min). Then jointly produce the *Summary of Results 3: Conflict Issue According to Conflict Dimension*.

Step 3: Key Psychosocial Issues

(approx. 60 min)

Psychosocial dimensions are important in all conflicts. This has already been discussed a bit in Step 2, in reference to the subjective/individual dimension. Now we want to go a little deeper. In the graph introduced at the beginning of this Building Block three key psychosocial conceptual pairs are presented. The group is now divided into three small groups. Each small group discusses for about 30 minutes one of the conceptual pairs and tries to define their importance for the actors of the conflict. Always define first the social reality and then the corresponding psychological issue. Discuss in your group if some people are helpless victims of the conflict. Which kinds of suffering occur and are important in your specific conflict? Decide jointly which groups are weakened and disempowered and which groups benefit and are strengthened by the conflict. Document the discussion and present it to the plenary (30 min). Together you should now produce the *Summary of Results 4: Key Psychosocial Issues/Weakened and Strengthened Groups*.

Step 4: Consequences and Summary

approx. 20 min)

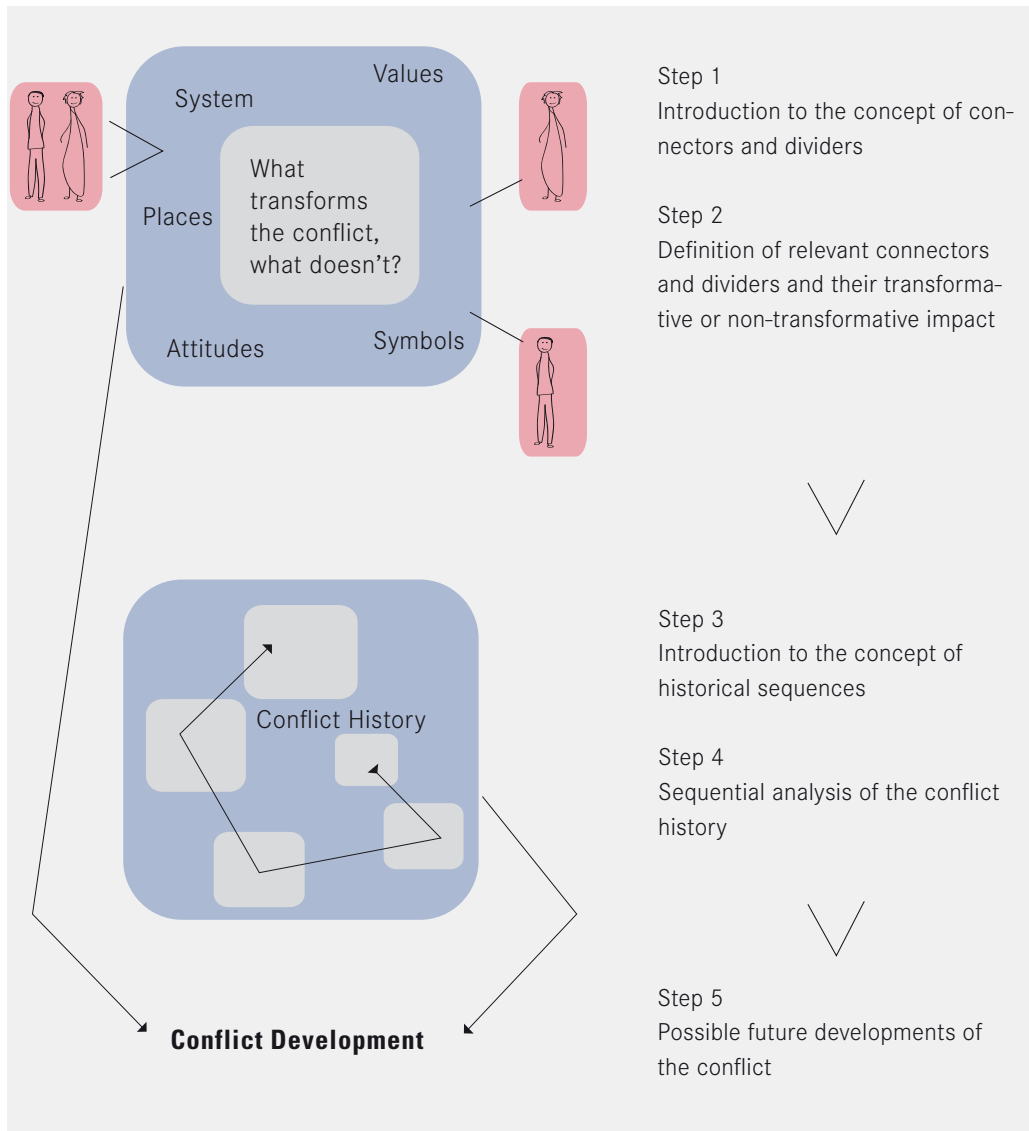
The facilitator summarizes the discussion process and the results (Summary of Results 2, 3 and 4). Jointly the whole conflict landscape is looked at again and discussed. If necessary some amendments are added to the different Summaries of Results and some comprehensive ideas are documented.

The Function and Mechanisms of the Conflict



Duration: 120 minutes in total

The whole purpose of the Building Block *The Function and Mechanisms of the Conflict* is to reveal and understand the conflict dynamics of the defined conflict laid out in the previous Building Blocks. The intention is on the one hand to define the dividers and connectors, i.e. to show which factors separate and which connect people, and finally decide how these factors either help to transform the conflict or on the contrary prevent transformation. On the other hand, it is important to understand the history of the conflict in its different sequences and to follow up on the development of the emotional processes of the different actors, which lead to certain behaviours. Last but not least, on the basis of this analysis we will try to deduce possible future developments and discuss our vision of conflict transformation.



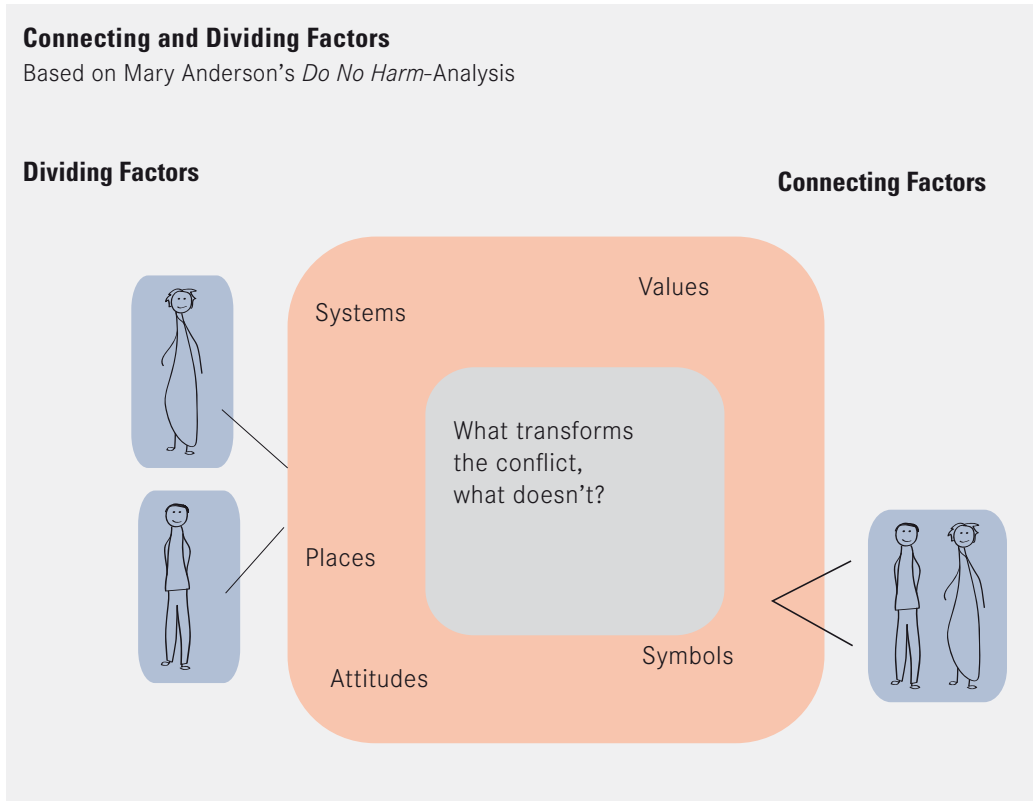
Step 1: An introduction to the concept of connectors and dividers is presented.

Step 2: The definition of relevant connectors and dividers explores the question what enhances conflict transformation and what doesn't. In this step the *Summary of Results 5: Connecting and Dividing Factors* is produced.

Step 3: An introduction to the concept of historical sequences is presented.

Step 4: We identify the sequences of the conflict history. In this step the *Summary of Results 6: Conflict History* is produced.

Step 5: Possible further developments of the conflict are discussed. Moreover, an assessment of the impact of the conflict on the development processes is carried out. In this step the *Summary of Results 7: Future Developments* is elaborated.



By differentiating between dividing and connecting factors, we find out about the different key moments of the conflict that can each be helpful, or not, for a transformation of the conflict. To do this, we are guided by the categories of systems, places, values, attitudes and symbols shown in the diagram. These categories help us to analyze the numerous aspects of a conflict context in a structured way. However, we cannot simply equate dividers with negative and connectors with positive influences on a peaceful conflict development. Sometimes, the same issue can be

connecting and dividing. However, a clear understanding of connecting and dividing factors is important for evaluating conflict behavior, and in order to develop options for action. So we must ask two questions, first what divides people from each other and what connects them, and secondly, which of these connectors and dividers is more likely to not transform the conflict or to contribute to its transformation.



Sequential Analysis of the Conflict History

Based on the concept of Sequential Traumatization of Becker & Weyermann¹

First sequence – Before the start of the conflict

Every conflict started at some stage. There is always a history, which itself may have been more or less conflictive. In retrospect, this phase is often seen as having been completely whole/normal/healthy. For many parties to a conflict, it remains an important, if frequently idealized, reference point. We must thus determine when the conflict started and what the prehistory of it was.



Second sequence – Beginning of the conflict and chronification

The first signs of conflict become evident and sometimes the conflict escalates, but the threat is not yet so direct and absolute. Many conflicts remain at this level for a long time and become chronic, i.e. they don't get resolved, but they also don't get better. Sometimes, after a long time, there is a sudden and rapid deterioration, or a brief, frightening eruption, which is then followed again by a general calm.



Third sequence – Acute threat/massive escalation

This sequence is marked by direct, existential threats and destruction processes, i.e. a massive escalation of the conflict. It usually involves war or war-like situations, and/or threat to life or physical well-being. Not all conflicts reach this level. But also in non-war conflicts there are such massive escalations in which the conflict feels war-like.



Fourth sequence – Chronification of the acute threat/massive escalation

Closely related to the previous sequence and sometimes alternating with it, phases of calm occur repeatedly within the framework of war and persecution or existential dangers. Conflicts that have escalated to an extreme degree frequently contain individual, but also social moments of acute terror as well as of latent terror, of apparent calm, while waiting for the next disaster.



Fifth sequence – Period of transition

When conflicts come towards an end, official or informal «peace negotiations» may take place. Sometimes life gets a little better, but often it gets even worse for a time. The transition from conflict to post-conflict can be short or long, it presents a strange mixture of danger and hope. During the transition, a vision of the future becomes possible for the first time, while at the same time the impossibility of changing the past is confirmed. It is a time of radical change and personal crises. Some conflicts develop directly from the second sequence to the fifth sequence.



Last sequence – After the conflict

The last sequence is psychologically the most complex. Although the conflict is over, its after-effects are present. Only now is a real processing of the conflict history possible. But frequently, the foundations for the next conflict are laid here, through silence and failure to solve the upcoming problems.

The sequences presented here serve as a guide to identify where we are in the conflict. They help us determine the history of the conflict. Not every conflict has already been through all these sequences. The duration of the individual sequences can vary greatly, they can repeat themselves, or result in chronification. They encom-

pass different degrees of threat and experiences of suffering and enable us to appropriately identify emotional processes in connection with the historical context. Some non-war-like conflicts can only be allocated metaphorically to the different sequences. But this can also be useful.



Step 1: Introduction to the Concept of Connectors and Dividers

(approx. 10 min)

The facilitator introduces the concept of connectors and dividers.

Step 2: Identification of Connectors and Dividers (approx. 30 min)

The group jointly compiles a list of dividers and connectors for the selected conflict, including the reasons why they are being assigned to one or the other category and why they are judged either transformative or non-transformative. Document the results. Here, the *Summary of Results 5: Connecting and Dividing Factors* is produced.

Step 3: Introduction to the Concept of Historical Sequences (approx. 10 min)

The facilitator introduces the concept of sequential historical development.

Step 4: Course of the Conflict (approx. 30 min)

Try to position your conflict historically in the graphic of the sequences. What is its past history? What are the salient characteristics of the current sequence? What historically evolved emotional processes are the most important for the actors (fear, anger, hate, grief)? Check how the strengthened and weakened groups defined in Building Block II (see Summary of Results 4) have changed in the history of the conflict. Always remember that, on the one hand, historical processes relate to entire societies, but that, on the other hand, they are always experienced by individuals. Try to take both aspects into consideration. Document all of this in the *Summary of Results 6: Conflict History*.

Step 5: Future Developments

(approx. 30 min)

The group divides into two working groups. Using the current analysis, one group develops a conflict-transforming scenario, i.e. a positive vision of the future development of the conflict. The other group develops a non-transformative, i. e. a negative scenario (20 min). Present the result to the plenary. You have five minutes each for this. Discuss together your assessments of the possible conflict development and formulate a common vision of its future. The agreed upon

results of the discussion will be documented in the *Summary of Results 7: Future Developments*.

Summary (approx. 10 min)

The facilitator summarizes the discussion process and the results. He/she also secures the Summaries of Results 5, 6 and 7 and leads over to the next Building Block.

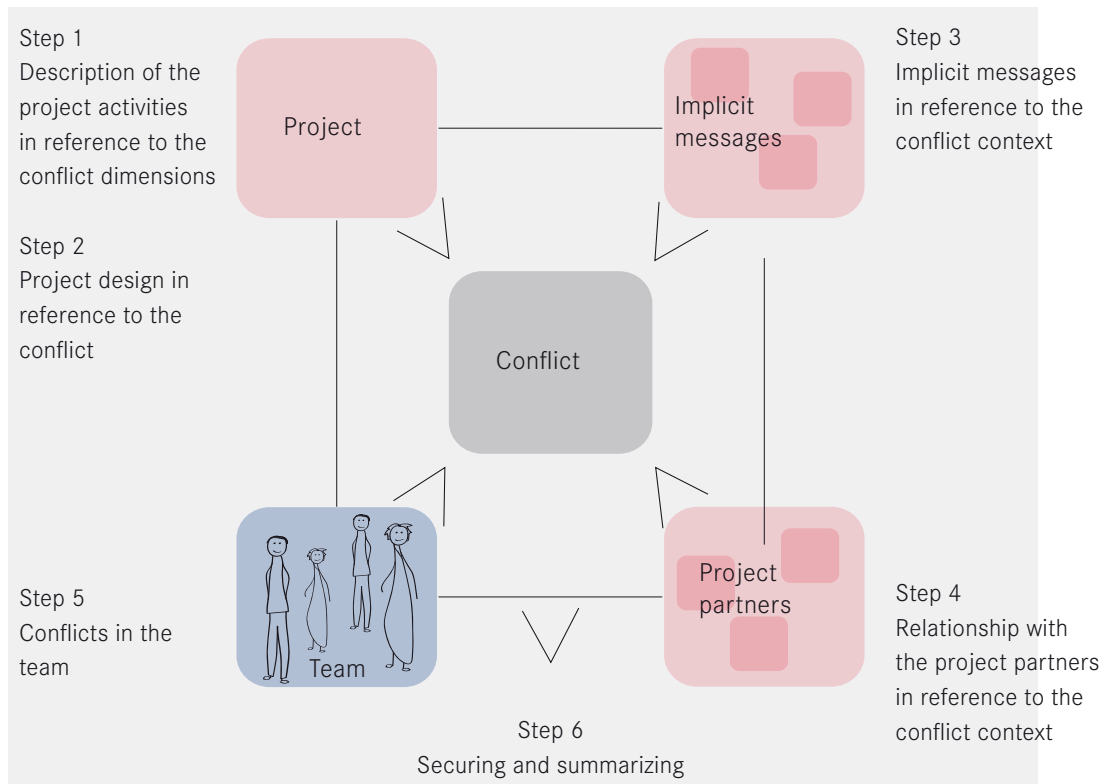
¹ Becker, D. & Weyermann B., 2006, Gender, Conflict Transformation and the Psychosocial Approach. Toolkit. Bern: Swiss Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The Impact of the Project on the Conflict and Vice Versa



Duration: 210 minutes in total

In Building Block IV, *The Impact of the Project on the Conflict and Vice Versa*, we examine the relationship between the project work and the described conflict. We analyze the relationship between project and conflict context by using the results of the Building Blocks *Conflict Landscape* and *The Function and Mechanisms of the Conflict* as indicators, and place them in relation to our practical project work. Do we really help to transform the conflict with our work or are we intensifying it without having intended to? Are there unintended, but possibly conflict-transforming consequences from our work? The people who work in the project act in the conflict context and try to deal with different demands, which is often associated with great stress and efforts of adjustment. Since the psychosocial stability of the staff members is not a private or personal issue, but the responsibility of the whole institution, we also want to examine conflicts in the team. The fact that conflicts in the team exist is first of all normal.



Step 1: We describe the project activities in reference to the different tasks we have in the team and determine the conflict dimensions (individual/subjective, cultural affiliation, political economy and political participation) that the project considers. By identifying the conflict dimensions it becomes visible which of them are relevant for the project. At the same time, it can also become visible which possibly important dimensions are faded out. In this step the *Summary of Results 3: Conflict Issue According to Conflict Dimension* is further developed.

Step 2: We examine the project design in relation to the conflict context. Projects can do good, but they can also do harm. Potential harm is not only associated with the project's intentions, or with its technical quality, but above all with the relation between the project and the context. In this step the *Summaries of Results 4: Key Psychosocial Issues/ Weakened and Strengthened Groups* and *5: Connecting and Dividing Factors* are further developed.

Step 3: We examine implicit ethical messages of our actions in relation to the conflict context. Unintended or unconsidered ethical messages of the project staff can have conflict-transforming

as well as intensifying effects on the conflict context. In this step the *Summary of Results 8: Implicit Ethical Messages* is produced.

Step 4: We examine the relationships of cooperation in relation to the conflict context. Cooperation can develop synergies for a common goal of change, but it can also bring innovations and development processes to a halt. In this step the *Summary of Results 9: Cooperation with Partners* is produced.

Step 5: We discuss our team communication in relation to the conflict context. Organizations and teams can ensure the psychosocial stability of the staff, but they can also increase the danger of burn-out and emotional reactions of stress. In this step the *Summary of Results 10: Team Problems* is produced.

Step 6: We summarize and secure all the Summaries of Results we have elaborated.



Step 1: Project Activities in Relation to the Conflict Dimensions (approx. 40 min)

Who does what, when and with whom? Please describe your work processes and activities as detailed as possible, taking into account your different roles and tasks. Describe intervention, goals and results as precisely and as practically as you can and determine which conflict dimensions (individual/subjective, cultural affiliation, political economy and political participation) are considered in the project. Take the *Summary of Results 3: Conflict Issue According to Conflict Dimension* and mark in which dimensions you intervene with your project or how you take the different dimensions into consideration or not.

Step 2: Effects of the Project on the Conflict (approx. 30 min)

How does your project affect the conflict context that we have described in detail in the Building Blocks II and III? Consult the *Summary of Results 5: Connecting and Dividing Factors* and check how the project relates to these factors. Add this information to the existing text and complete the Summary of Results. Which groups profit from which support coming from the project (material support, training and advanced training etc.)? Have a look at the *Summary of Results 4: Key Psychosocial Issues/ Weakened and Strengthened Groups* and add how the project relates to the groups. Does the project directly and consciously address them or not? Which effects are intended, which are unintended? Again add this information to the text. Also have a look again at the *Summary of Results 6: Conflict History* and check the adequacy of your intervention with regard to the current conflict sequence. Discuss to what extent your project contributes to the transformation or non-transformation of the conflict.

Step 3: Effects of the Implicit Ethical Messages on the Conflict (approx. 40 min)

What pretensions do you have towards the conflict parties and the strengthened and weakened groups? Who do you like/dislike? Which personal interests do you have regarding the conflict? What are the interests of the project? What implicit messages are transmitted in connection with the cultural characteristics and the living standard of the project staff, with the use of resources, with the withdrawal of co-responsibility, etc.? Refer to

the activities and roles in the team as described in Step 1. What effects do these dividing and connecting factors have? Who benefits from, and who is harmed by the presence of the staff? Who gains respect, security and possessions through our daily cooperation and who loses them as a result? Who is dependent on us, and who are we dependent on? Develop a list with the implicit ethical messages. This will be the *Summary of Results 8: Implicit Ethical Messages*.

Step 4: Effects of the Relations Between the Project Partners on the Conflict

(approx. 20 min)

What role does the conflict context play in cooperative relationships? Does a critical examination take place, or is agreement reached about the positions and interests of the contractual partners regarding the assessment of the conflict and its transformation potential? How is the relationship presented to the outside? What message are you sending to those around you through your involvement with the partners? Document the results of your discussion thus producing *Summary of Results 9: Cooperation with Partners*.

Step 5: Dealing with Conflicts in the Team

(approx. 60 min)

How do you deal with conflicts in the team? Do you communicate your experiences with the described conflict in team discussions or with staff members? Do you also talk about stress in your work environment as well as about social processes of threat, destruction and loss and psychological experiences of fear, trauma and grief? What is your conflict culture in the team? Do you tend to keep silent about conflicts, do you try to harmonize, or do you rather argue actively? The intention of this discussion is not to solve all problems within the team but rather to form a diagnosis of what needs to be solved. Document the results, thus producing the *Summary of Results 10: Team Problems*.

Step 6: Securing (approx. 20 min)

Take the ten Summaries of Results and check if they are complete and if they reflect the process of the discussion appropriately.

Conclusions: What Should Continue? What Must Change?



Duration: a minimum of 180 minutes

The aim of the last Building Block, *Conclusions: What Should Continue? What Must Change?* is to implement the results concretely and in a satisfactory way in the project work, so that the project will have an improved conflict-transforming effect. This last task is not easy because the results of the Building Blocks I to IV do not yet define the necessary changes, but rather show where changes need to happen. For concrete suggestions, which can be implemented and will lead to a long-term change within the project, decisions are necessary that have to be discussed. In this process, we must take into account that both political and/or underlying financial conditions, organizational structures, and indeed also the availability of the staff impose limits. It is therefore important to consider where the project has to acknowledge these limits and where changes are appropriate as well as possible. The process of change is never complete. Consequently, strategies must constantly be re-examined and newly adapted to the conflict dynamic. The propositions that have to be worked on in this Building Block, refer to the areas of project planning, organizational and working structures, the methods and the definitions of target groups, the relationships to partners, public relations, and last but not least the institutionalization of processes of evaluating and thinking through the ongoing work. The last point is of crucial importance because observation, communication and understanding, adaptation and the repeated planning and implementation are important working processes, that can only be fruitful if self-evaluation is taken seriously and if those procedures are institutionalized by the organization. This is the only way in which the project can position itself in relation to the conflict again and again, and thus remain capable of changing.



Based on results of the analysis of Building Block IV, which in turn put the results of the first three Building Blocks in relationship to the ongoing work of the project, now a decision will be taken on what should be kept in the project, because it is good and efficient and what should be changed, because it is either not conflict-transforming or conflict-ignorant. Thus this Building Block is very important for the project planning. However, it does not contain detailed steps to follow, since what has to happen now is too dependent on the actual project and the results of the former Building Blocks. The Building Block *Conclusions: What Should Continue? What Must Change?* is thus based on key questions and on the ten Summaries of Results, which were elaborated in the course of the conflict analysis. They assure that all results are considered in this planning process. According to its specific needs, the team might give priority to some of the key questions. It is, however, recommended that also those aspects which seem unimportant or boring at first sight will be considered. Sometimes these are exactly the points where important changes are possible.

Key Questions

1. How does our project relate to the conflict? Adequately? Too restricted? Too general? Too specific? What do we take up? Do we have to change something? What is dropped? Does the project take into account all conflict di-

mensions in the necessary degree, so that a positive vision of conflict development is possible?

Check these questions using the *Summary of Results 1: The Conflict, 3: Conflict Issue According to Conflict Dimension, 4: Key Psychosocial Issues/Weakened and Strengthened Groups, 6: Conflict History and 7: Future Developments.*

2. Which dividing and connecting factors should be reduced, which ones should be strengthened? Which implicit messages must be changed, withdrawn or made explicit?

Check these questions using the *Summary of Results 5: Connecting and Dividing Factors, 6: Conflict History and 8: Implicit Ethical Messages.*

3. Goal definition: Which goals do we retain, which ones do we adapt to the conflict context, and which goals do we redefine and in what way, in order to strengthen conflict-transforming elements through our project implementation?

Check these questions using the *Summary of Results 1: The Conflict, 3: Conflict Issue According to Conflict Dimension, 5: Connecting and Dividing Factors, 6: Conflict History, 7: Future Developments and 8: Implicit Ethical Messages.*

4. Target group: Regarding the target group definition and reaching the target groups, what options for change in the project approach follow from this?

Check these questions using the *Summary of Results 4: Key Psychosocial Issues/Weakened and Strengthened Groups*, *5: Connecting and Dividing Factors* and *6: Conflict History*.

5. Methodical approach: What has proved to be particularly helpful in our methodical approach up to now? What difficulties have occurred in applying the methods in relation to the conflict context? What changes should be made? Which of these changes can be implemented in practice?

Check these questions using the *Summary of Results 3: Conflict Issue According to Conflict Dimension*, *4: Key Psychosocial Issues/Weakened and Strengthened Groups* and *5: Connecting and Dividing Factors*. Take into account that the methods we use play an important role with regard to the possibility of achieving change. As long as the methods are conflict-ignorant, neither a sensitive definition of the goal nor a good project planning will be able to facilitate conflict transformation.

6. Is the relationship to the donor and to other partner organizations useful and does it help the transformation of the conflict? What are constructive elements of the different partnerships and in the public communication of the project? What should be continued, what should change? How can the relationship to partner organizations become more trustful? What cannot be achieved?

Check these questions using the *Summary of Results 2: Key Actors According to the Conflict Level* and *9: Cooperation with Partners*.

7. Are the project structures effective in achieving the goal of conflict transformation? Are the monitoring and evaluation procedures, the internal team structure and the budget (especially the income structure of the team members) suitable for conflict transformation?

Check these questions using the *Summary of Results 10: Team Problems*.

8. Institutional safeguarding of psychosocial stability (conflict culture, self-protection): What formal and informal possibilities exist in the organization to deal with stress in the workplace and with team conflicts? What functions well? What demand exists? What measures for the institutional safeguarding of the psychosocial stability should be pursued and can be implemented?

Check these questions using *Summary of Results 6: Conflict History* and *10: Team Problems*.

