

# POLICY AND PRACTICE PAPER

Bridging the participation gap:  
developing macro level conflict  
analysis through local perspectives



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**Cover image:** 'Murulla - A Face of Children Alone'. Displaced from his home by war and then separated from his parents, Venance Murulla (10) is a vulnerable figure, aimlessly wandering in a wasteland of destruction near Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. © 2002 Alison Preston/World Vision

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# Acronyms

CAF	Conflict Analysis Framework
CDA	Conflict-Related Development Analysis
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	UK Department for International Development
JACS	Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability
MSTC	Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	Peoples Peacemaking Perspectives
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	US Agency for International Development

# Executive summary

Poorly-planned aid can exacerbate the underlying causes of conflict. Equally when well-designed, aid interventions can help to prevent violence by helping to address these drivers of conflict. Conflict analysis is used to identify the main causes of conflict in any given context. This is essential for ensuring that humanitarian and development interventions do not make conflict worse (conflict sensitivity), and where appropriate actively seek to bridge the divides between conflicting groups to build peace (peacebuilding). Effective conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding work requires focused attention to the drivers of conflict at both micro (community) and macro (national or regional) levels, and co-ordinated responses at all levels. Conflict analysis therefore needs to take place at both levels.

Participatory approaches have an important role to play in effective conflict analysis. They help local people come together to identify key challenges that communities face, unlock local knowledge and empower people to find and act upon realistic solutions to address these challenges. Participatory approaches ensure that analysis and action are informed by the experiences and perceptions of all relevant groups, including those who hold power as well as those who do not.

A participation gap exists between micro and macro-level conflict analysis practice. Many non-government organisations and civil society organisations use local level conflict analysis methodologies, often incorporating participatory approaches. They generally do not conduct structured, macro-level analysis. Donors on the other hand, tend to focus more on macro-level analysis, but rarely make use of participatory approaches. This gap is critical; it can undermine conflict sensitivity. Failure to include local perspectives in macro-level analysis can limit the degree to which the analysis captures the multiple drivers and competing narratives of conflict. It can also be difficult to translate analysis into action if ownership is limited to a small group of external experts, most of whom are unlikely to be responsible for implementation of recommendations. Furthermore, 'traditional' analysis focuses primarily on the final product, and does not account for the potential impact of the conflict analysis process itself can have upon the context. This paper will show that participatory approaches can help overcome these limitations.

This paper draws upon over ten years of experience with World Vision's macro-level, participatory conflict analysis methodology, 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts', complemented with lessons from other available methodologies and existing literature. The paper argues that participatory approaches can:

- Improve the overall quality of conflict analysis by including a broad range of actors in the analysis and shedding new light on 'standard' narratives about a conflict.
- Improve implementation and sustainability of recommendations by ensuring that findings are developed and owned by local people, making recommendations more realistic, sustained and likely to be implemented.
- Improve inter-agency co-ordination and collective impact by bringing agencies together to develop common understanding of conflict causes and shared action plans.
- Contribute towards peacebuilding objectives by bringing groups together to help build collaboration across conflict fault-lines and promote inclusion. It can help participants to understand their own roles in a context, empowering them to become active change agents.

## **Key recommendations for humanitarian and development actors include:**

- All programming in fragile contexts should be informed by macro and micro-level conflict analysis.
- Participatory approaches should be used to complement traditional methods of macro-level conflict analysis.
- Macro-level participatory conflict analysis methodologies should be widely available and support provided to ensure sufficient skills and resources are available to ensure that they are used.
- Agencies should develop joint, collaborative conflict analyses using participatory methodologies.

# I. Introduction

**‘Without peace, there can be no development. Without development, there can be no enduring peace.’** *United Nations (2013)*

Poorly-planned aid can exacerbate conflict (Bush, 1998)<sup>1</sup>. It can contribute to increased divisions between competing groups, undermine local conflict resolution or management institutions, embolden those in power and entrench the powerlessness of the most vulnerable. Equally, well-spent aid can help break cycles of conflict. It can bring conflicting groups together to work towards a common purpose, strengthen systems that help prevent or manage conflict, and empower vulnerable people to demand access to essential services and rights (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012)<sup>2</sup>. Conflict analysis can help humanitarian and development agencies identify those factors that contribute to conflict, and plan activities that can at a minimum avoid making conflict worse (conflict sensitivity), or actively contribute towards peacebuilding.

The practice of conflict analysis has grown steadily since the mid 1990s in the aid sector. In the post-Cold War years, changing patterns of armed conflict, and international response have placed assistance workers in more direct contact with conflicts across the world. Since 2000, the global discourses on terrorism and growing reliance on armed international intervention have brought even greater political complexity into the work of relieving suffering. In recent years, humanitarian and development actors have become more aware than ever of the relationship between conflict and poverty. The World Development Report 2011 for example found that ‘No low income fragile or conflict-affected country has yet to achieve a single United Nations Millennium Development Goal’ (World Bank, 2011). The impact of violent conflict also falls most heavily on the most vulnerable, including children; UNHCR estimates that more than half of the 2 million refugees to have fled Syria in the last 2 years are children, three quarters of whom are under 11<sup>3</sup>.

Many development agencies therefore now recognise the need to better understand contextual factors when working ‘in conflict,’ and the opportunity to work ‘on conflict’ through active peacebuilding. Numerous donors and non-government organisations (NGOs) are committed to conducting conflict analysis to inform their interventions in fragile contexts. NGOs and civil society have tended to focus their analysis at the community, or micro-level, often making use of participatory processes. National, or macro-level conflict analysis is relatively scarce (Schirch, 2013; Anderson and Olson, 2003). Macro-level analysis is crucial to allow agencies to understand national and regional level drivers of conflict, and to maximise their potential impact on these drivers by identifying strategic entry points for intervention.

Where macro-analysis is practiced, it tends to be done by government officials or technical ‘experts,’ with minimal input from affected people and local civil society. This participation gap can undermine conflict sensitivity. Local perspectives are essential for developing a holistic understanding of the multiple drivers of conflict at any level. Including local actors in conflict analysis builds ownership of the analysis, making it more likely that it will be used to inform better planning and practice. Furthermore, there is a growing consensus on the key role of civil society in promoting peace, yet conflict often reduces civil society’s opportunity to affect change (Poskitt and Dufranc, 2011). Including local actors in all stages of development interventions, including macro-level analysis, can empower them to affect change, thereby contributing to peacebuilding goals.

This paper argues that current practice in macro-level conflict analysis should be complemented by increased use of participatory approaches. Doing so will shed new light on conflict dynamics and improve ownership of the analysis, making recommendations more realistic and sustainable. Furthermore the process of participatory conflict analysis can help build peace in its own right, by promoting inter-group collaboration and structural inclusion.

Following the introduction, Section 2 of this report unpacks the key components of a participatory approach to macro-level conflict analysis. Section 3 discusses the relationship between participatory conflict analysis and key policy debates relating to fragility. Section 4 discusses current approaches to macro-level analysis and introduces World Vision’s macro-level, participatory conflict analysis methodology

- 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts'. Section 5 identifies common trends and patterns from 42<sup>4</sup> 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshops conducted between 2003 and 2012. Section 6 identifies strengths and challenges associated with conducting macro-level participatory conflict analysis. Section 7 presents recommendations for humanitarian and development actors.

## Key terms used in the paper

### **Fragility**

Definitions of fragility are contested. Common characteristics include state unwillingness or inability to provide for citizen security, political representation and/or public services; lack of perceived government legitimacy; compromised rule of law and/or territorial control; poverty and inequality; prevalence of 'grey' economy or organised crime; proneness to conflict and violence; and in some cases state 'failure' or collapse<sup>5</sup>. Fragile contexts differ from fragile states in that fragility does not conform to state borders. Relatively stable states may encompass fragile regions, fragile states may contain zones of stability or fragile contexts may cross borders.

### **Conflict analysis**

*A structured process of analysis to better understand conflict (its background/ history, the groups involved, each groups perspective, identifying causes of conflict) (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012).* In some situations, it may be too contentious or sensitive to openly conduct a conflict analysis. In these cases, the broader term 'context analysis' is often used. However it is important to differentiate between analysis that actively seeks to identify conflict drivers and broader analysis that focuses on a wide range of social, cultural, political and economic factors, without a specific focus on conflict.

### **Conflict Sensitivity**

The ability of an organisation to: understand the context it operates in, understand the interaction between its intervention and that context and act upon this understanding in order to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict. It differs from peacebuilding in that a conflict sensitive approach does not necessary seek to actively address underlying causes of conflict.

### **Drivers of Conflict**

The underlying factors that contribute towards the emergence or perpetuation of conflict.

### **Participation**

Participatory approaches seek to increase the level of activity and autonomy by local actors. Participation may vary along a continuum, ranging from generation of data, to data analysis, to interpretation of findings and decision-making on next steps. Participation always means going beyond a simple consultation or extraction of data, and implies that participants ownership over the outcomes. In a participatory approach, the process is as important as the end result.

### **Macro-level analysis**

A large-scale analysis normally conducted at the national level. It may be applied to a sub-national region, e.g. North-East India, or to cross-border regions. In contrast, micro-level analysis normally refers to a specific community, district or project or programme implementation area within a country.

### **Local actors**

Those who are relatively close to the context, for example, national actors rather than international actors; civil society groups based outside of capital cities or major centres, rather than well-connected, capital based organisations or individuals; 'regular citizens' rather than development agency staff.

## 2. What is macro-level, participatory conflict analysis?

This section discusses the key concepts underpinning macro-level, participatory conflict analysis; conflict analysis, macro-level analysis and participatory approaches.

### What is conflict analysis?

The primary objectives of any conflict analysis are to:

- 1) identify the factors that can lead to or exacerbate conflicts
- 2) catalyse action that at a minimum seeks to avoid making the conflict worse, and ideally seeks to address the underlying causes that contribute towards the conflict

As such, failure to conduct and regularly update conflict analysis can result in humanitarian and development interventions that inadvertently strengthen conflict drivers and increase the risk of violence breaking out, which can ultimately undermine or reverse development gains (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012).

Conflict analysis can, and should be conducted at multiple levels. 'Micro' level analysis refers to a neighbourhood, village or town, or even a collection of likeminded individuals, often simply labelled as 'the community'. 'Macro' level analysis is usually national, but sometimes applied to a sub-national or cross-border region where violent conflict is concentrated.<sup>6</sup> Effective conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding work requires focussed analysis of the drivers of conflict at both micro and macro levels, and co-ordinated responses working at all levels (Ricigliano, 2012, p. 8-9).

This paper is primarily concerned with macro-level conflict analysis. Whilst far from being universally applied, many NGOs and civil society organisations use local level conflict analysis methodologies, including the 'Do no harm' framework (Anderson, 1999). Many of these incorporate participatory approaches. Donors on the other hand tend to focus on macro-level analysis, but rarely make use of a participatory approach. This paper seeks to draw attention towards the potential for greater use of participatory methodologies for conflict analysis at the macro-level.

**'Every effort should be made to integrate local perspectives- both elites and those without power- into the analysis, even when time and resources are short. Such perspectives are crucial to ensure policy is geared towards meeting citizens' needs and expectations'** *Barakat and Waldman, 2013, p274*

### Why make conflict analysis participatory?

Participation matters because development and conflict involve power. Since the end of the Cold War the role of civil society has expanded in a 'global associational revolution,' (Salamon, 1994)<sup>7</sup> and international NGOs have greatly extended their reach. The aid system now reaches more people, yet it is increasingly perceived as externally-driven and top-down (Anderson, Brown and Jean, 2012). Such trends have prompted development actors to reflect on who holds power in this system, and toward which ends. The question of 'who is the analyst', and consequently 'who holds power to shape the findings of analysis' are particularly important when addressing conflict because it explores highly sensitive themes including inter-group relations, socio-politics and security.

Participatory approaches help local people come together to identify key challenges that communities face, to unlock local knowledge and empower local people to find and act upon realistic solutions to address these challenges (Folkema, Ibrahim and Wilkinson, 2013). They commonly make use of a range of tools and visual methods intended to facilitate a process of collective analysis and learning that combine sharing insights with analysis, and provide a catalyst for the community to act on what is uncovered (Chambers, 1997). They also present an opportunity to gather a wide range of views and perceptions from different stakeholders. When used effectively, they can ensure that analysis and action is informed by the experiences and perceptions of all relevant groups, including those who hold power and those without power. As such, analysis conducted using participatory approaches can add invaluable perspective to the broader analytical efforts of the international community.

Participatory tools need to be carefully facilitated to ensure that they capture the true views of participants. They require the 'expert' leading the process to leave behind the role of chief analyst, and instead facilitate a process that draws out the rich contextual knowledge of insiders. The role of participants may vary along a continuum, ranging from generating data, analysing data, to interpreting findings and decision-making on next steps (Nazneed and Greenwood, 2001).<sup>8</sup> Different levels of participation may be appropriate in different settings. Participation agreements must be mutual and genuine. As Robert Chambers argues, true 'participation has implications for power relations, personal interactions, and attitudes and behaviours.' (Chambers, 2013)

For practitioners of conflict analysis, the question of 'who is the analyst' has profound implications. Technical 'experts,' who usually come from outside the context, dominate traditional macro-level conflict analysis. This results in analysis that inevitably reflects the worldview of the analyst, and can unwittingly reinforce existing power dynamics. Furthermore, the analysis is likely to be 'owned' by the analyst who, as an external actor, is generally not well placed to affect sustainable change in the context.

In contrast, a participatory approach focuses on eliciting local perspectives and relies on the experience of non-experts. When local actors conduct conflict analysis, they are more likely to use it to inform better planning and practice with their own context. The inclusion of multiple perspectives can help to ensure that the voices of those without power or influence are heard, and that the dominant discourse about a context is challenged. At the same time, a conflict analysis approached with an open mind can challenge and transform the analyst's own paradigms and perceptions.<sup>9</sup>

Within societies vulnerable to conflict, there is mounting evidence that political inclusion is an essential ingredient of sustainable peace (Call, 2012). In other words, who is involved and included in key processes can be as important as how they are managed, and what the outcomes are. Institutional legitimacy requires inclusion of not only the decision-making elites from opposing or marginalised groups, but also the social groups associated with those elites, and the broader citizenry including women and youth (Barakat, 2013). According to Call, after a civil war, 'the shifted norms regarding popular voice and participation in processes determining post-war politics require broader participation.' In any form of analysis that is being used to inform governance or development planning, the inclusion of local actors is important to disrupt the patterns of exclusion that lie at the heart of so many violent conflicts (Call, 2012, p. 274).

# 3. Participatory conflict analysis and current policy

This section discusses the relationship between participatory conflict analysis and current policy issues relating to fragile contexts. It focuses on the relevance of participatory conflict analysis for on-going debates including statebuilding, peacebuilding and the 'New Deal'<sup>10</sup> politicisation and 'policy coherence', and resilience.

## Statebuilding, peacebuilding and the 'New Deal'

Fragility discussions tend to implicitly focus to the state. State-centred definitions naturally lead to state-centred solutions, including the re-orienting of development and peacebuilding assistance toward statebuilding goals (OECD-DAC, 2008)<sup>11</sup>. Some civil society actors advocate a broader definition that goes beyond fragile states to fragile contexts, and recognises the influence of both state and non-state actors (Fischer and Schmelzle, 2009). Some newer state-centred analysis frameworks, such as the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) combined statebuilding and peacebuilding approach, do acknowledge that good state performance requires attention to the state's relations with society (Slotin et al., 2010)<sup>12</sup>. Nonetheless, these diverging conceptions of fragility imply somewhat different analytical approaches: a state-centred governance analysis (see for example, Versteegen et al., 2005) is distinct from a context-driven analysis such as Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts, with the latter more likely to mobilise input and contribution among civil society actors.

That said, civil society can contribute valuable perspectives to a state-centred analysis. The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding's New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States<sup>13</sup> is breaking new ground as its country-led protocols call for governments to convene multi-stakeholder 'joint fragility analysis' to drive development planning. This is a welcome shift away from externally-driven analyses, which can be both disempowering and fragmented due to the large number of external stakeholders. Pilot fragility assessments carried out in 2012<sup>14</sup> have demonstrated the potential to bring together various actors, and yielding a shared understanding of context that is now informing the renegotiation of development compacts<sup>15</sup>. However the pilots have varied in their level of political openness and inclusive participation. As additional countries initiate their own processes, new opportunities will emerge to build on pilot experience by developing an inclusive consultation process that involves not only civil society, but also the private sector<sup>16</sup>.

## Politicisation of aid and donor 'policy coherence' agendas

Many donor country governments are increasingly emphasising 'policy coherence' agendas; comprehensive whole government approaches in which all agencies, including those involved in international aid, work towards common objectives. For donor governments, such coherence represents an efficient streamlining of resources and influence. For aid recipients, however, coherence can result in aid priorities that are externally-driven. In many cases, coherence involves promotion of donor political priorities such as democratization, which may or may not be seen as priority by locals. For local and international humanitarian actors who accept government funding, 'policy coherence' can also provoke concern over humanitarian principles including neutrality and independence (Collinson and Elhawary, 2012).

Where donors are concerned with stability and security, matters become even more complex. The current focus on fragile states is informed in part by donors' own security needs, because violent conflict can spill across national borders and zones of poverty and lawlessness are seen as linked to terrorism and crime (Duffield, 2001). Aid is seen as way to stem those negative trends, so can become a means to a securitized end. Where donor countries engage in armed intervention, they may also see aid as a support to military goals. Thus humanitarian anxiety reached fever pitch when the then US Secretary of State Colin Powell

referred to humanitarian NGOs as a 'force multiplier' (Powell, 2001) supporting US military efforts around the world. When faced with such contentious issues, participatory conflict analysis can provide a vehicle for making local voices heard. On any given issue, local opinions may vary just as international views do; yet it is likely that participatory conflict analysis will challenge the assumptions that underpin donor strategies aimed at furthering their own political and military objectives.

## Resilience

This is another important concept that is currently being applied to fragile states<sup>17</sup>. Resilience can be described as the ability of a system (or community) to anticipate, absorb, manage and mitigate a range of shocks and stresses, without significantly impacting on the well-being of the population (Aditya, Ibrahim and Tanner, 2013). Violent conflict can be experienced by communities both as a shock (a sudden, disruptive change) and as a major *stress* factor, which increases vulnerability and decreases wellbeing over time. Furthermore, the strategies that vulnerable people employ to manage or adapt to shocks and stresses can increase the likelihood or intensity of violent conflict. This in turn can undermine institutions that contribute towards conflict management or resolution, leading to a spiral of decreasing resilience in many fragile contexts (Harris, 2012). For example, the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon appears to be overwhelming the capacity of Lebanese institutions to manage, and possibly contributing towards increased conflict inside Lebanon (Midgley and Eldebo, 2013). Approaches aimed at building resilience in fragile contexts must therefore be based on a solid understanding of the underlying factors that can contribute to conflict. Failure to do so inevitably risks exacerbating underlying conflict issues, and can ultimately undermine resilience.

Approaches to building resilience seek to empower local people to identify potential shocks and stresses, and build upon existing capacities and resources to tackle drivers of risk (Ibrahim and Midgley, 2013). As such a wide spectrum of stakeholders, and especially local people and marginalised groups, should be included in the identification and analysis of key risk factors, in order to improve appropriateness, effectiveness and accountability of interventions (Anderson and Wallace, 2012). Participatory conflict analysis can therefore be seen as a core tool for promoting a resilience approach in fragile and conflict affected contexts.

**BELOW:** Participants map actor group relationships in Ethiopia. © World Vision Staff/World Vision



## CASE STUDY LEBANON

### Participatory, macro-conflict analysis updates equip World Vision Lebanon for regional volatility

In January 2012, World Vision Lebanon conducted a national level conflict analysis using the 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' methodology. This was a timely and useful exercise, taking place as regional tensions were rising. In addition to informing the internal development of World Vision Lebanon's sector strategies and civil-military policies, the 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' findings have helped World Vision Lebanon adapt to the escalating emergency in neighbouring Syria. The analysis was conducted at a time when the impacts of the Syrian crisis on tensions within Lebanon were relatively minor (compared to how they were to unfold during 2012 and 2013). However, the scenarios identified during the workshop proved to be very useful in focusing attention on how a Syrian civil war could undermine the hard-won peace of Lebanon.

As the conflict in Syria worsened, World Vision Lebanon hosted a half-day of reflection on the 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' scenarios for senior representatives of partner international NGOs and donors in October 2012 for. This interagency group identified two scenarios that projected how increasing Sunni-Shia conflict in Syria would likely be reflected in sectarian relationships within Lebanon. World Vision then updated its operational plans, in order to ensure that World Vision Lebanon interventions were actively enhancing intentional and balanced relationships with Sunni and Shia groups inside Lebanon. The use of participatory approaches allowed the managers and team leaders to discuss the contextual challenges, and develop unified action plans.

In May 2013, as the Syrian crisis deepened, World Vision Lebanon produced another 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' update, this time identifying key new changes in the context, as well as updated scenarios. These findings detailed the growing dominance of Syrian actors (including refugees) in the Lebanese context, the drivers of increased violence in northern Lebanon, and the possibilities of further cross-border escalations of violence. The analysis highlighted the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, and the emerging tensions between refugees and their host communities.

The findings of the analysis discussed in the workshop have been used for both organisational and programme planning for World Vision Lebanon. Organisationally, the scenarios have informed contingency planning for the relief operations, including ensuring that World Vision Lebanon is adequately prepared for possible scenarios that include further escalation of conflict.

Given the rapidly changing context, World Vision Lebanon redesigned its national strategy in July 2013, drawing upon the 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' findings. Strategic objectives have been updated, including an increased focus on programmes for host communities, aimed at mitigating the increasing tensions between refugees and host communities and to contribute to social cohesion.



**LEFT:** Participants in Lebanon discuss causes and symptoms of turbulence. © 2013 World Vision Staff/World Vision



Peace camps in Abkhazia: In the spring of 2009, World Vision brought youth together from across four regions of Abkhazia to discuss and share their experiences of conflict. Bringing people from different backgrounds together in such 'transformative platforms' can have important peacebuilding impacts.  
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## 4. Donor and civil society approaches to macro-level conflict analysis

This section briefly outlines current practice in macro-level conflict analysis. It discusses widely-applied donor conflict analysis frameworks, as well as two participatory approaches to macro-level conflict analysis, World Vision's 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' and Saferworld and Conciliation Resources' Peoples Peacemaking Perspectives (PPP).

### Donor Approaches

Donors and multilateral organisations use a wide range of macro-conflict analysis frameworks. These do not generally emphasise a participatory approach. DFID's Strategic Conflict Analysis, the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF 2.0) and the World Bank's Conflict Analysis Framework only mention the possibility of local participants contributing to the fieldwork phase of an analysis conducted by experts (DFID, 2002; USAID, 2012; World Bank, 2005). Where participation does take place, it is generally at management's discretion and is not an integral part of the analysis process. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Conflict-Related Development Analysis (CDA) is an exception in that it aims to be participatory (UNDP, 2003); it does not comment however, on who should participate or how. CDA processes also emphasise state over non-state partners (Burton, 2012), which is understandable given UNDP's intergovernmental mandate. Indeed, each of these tools is fit for its purpose, yet there remains a significant gap in the use of participatory approaches to engage civil society in conflict analysis at the macro level.

### The UK government's Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability

The Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) is the UK government's new inter-departmental conflict analysis methodology. It is intended to provide a basis to support integrated planning, policy and resource allocation across the UK's diplomatic, development and defence activities in key fragile states.

An important principle for implementation of JACS is that it should be based on information from all relevant sources, including local interlocutors, NGOs, academic sources and local partners. It recognises that in order to develop a holistic understanding of the drivers of fragility, it is essential to *'integrate local perspectives, both elite and importantly those without power'*.

However, no specific guidance is provided on how to gather these voices or ensure true participation of local actors. Furthermore, the analysis is not necessarily shared back with the informants, since it is likely to be considered confidential. Lessons learned from application of participatory methodologies such as PPP and 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' could be used to ensure that JACS analyses include local actors.

### Civil society approaches

NGOs and civil society have historically not made significant use of existing macro-level conflict analysis frameworks. Two significant exceptions can be found in World Vision's 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' and Saferworld and Conciliation Resources' PPP. Both use participatory approaches to develop macro-level analysis of drivers and causes of conflict.

'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' analysis is usually framed at the national level, and occasionally focused on a sub-national region within a large and highly complex state (e.g. North-east India, Aceh Province, Indonesia)<sup>18</sup>. The tool focuses primarily on conflict and the related factors that interact with conflict to create turbulence. It is used in war-affected contexts as well as in less volatile settings where latent tensions risk escalation. It is increasingly used to promote collaborative analysis, with several workshops already held in multiagency format as well as being provided for partner international NGOs such as CARE.

'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' is conducted in a workshop format, through which the contextual knowledge of 25-28 local participants is harnessed in an intense four-day analysis process. Participants are carefully selected for their depth of contextual understanding, and diversity of perspective across variables such as identity and culture, gender, political views, region of origin, organisational role and function. The participants are both the source of data and the analysts. This diversity is therefore essential for triangulation and balance. It is desirable to include representatives of the government, the UN and academia. While most participants must be nationals, the addition of a few external experts, such as long-term resident expatriates also brings a useful perspective.

A team of three or four facilitators guides 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' analysis. The team leader usually comes from outside the context due to the specialised facilitation expertise required. The workshop analyses the conflicts' actors, political economy, trends and triggers in a structured process that aims to capture both 'grievance' (socio-cultural) and 'greed' (economic) factors<sup>19</sup>. The modules provide a step-by-step path as described in Box 3 below.

A related approach to participatory conflict analysis is captured in Saferworld and Conciliation Resources' recent collaboration on the EU funded People's Peacemaking Perspectives project (PPP; Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, 2012). These two agencies conducted 18 participatory conflict analyses across 26 countries. As did 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts', the PPP engaged a wide range of local actors, including civil society, government and private sector, in order to build up a holistic picture of drivers of conflict at the macro-level (national or cross-border).

'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' and PPP are closely related but distinct approaches. PPP analysis employed a highly flexible design, with different tools and approaches being employed in different contexts in order to gather the data and conduct the analysis. 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' on the other hand employs a consistent workshop format, making it more easily replicable, but also potentially less flexible. The two approaches are targeted at different audiences. Whereas 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' serves primarily the humanitarian and development assistance sectors, PPP is more explicitly focused on peacebuilding. Further, there are differences in the scope and nature of participation. In all cases, PPP collected large samples of micro-level input, which was then interpreted and applied at macro-level, either by project staff or when possible in collaboration with local partners. This allowed the analysis to take in a very wide range of actor groups and perspectives, but limited the degree to which the analysis can be conducted by participants themselves. In contrast, 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' relies on a comparatively modest number of workshop participants working together to analyse the conflict, interpret it, and even take significant strides towards identification of action steps.

'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' and PPP are therefore complementary approaches and both have much to contribute to the broader international community.

## Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts analysis process

**Rapid historical analysis** identifies the key historical phases that have marked the context. This provides a common frame of reference, and an opportunity for preliminary observations about cycles, trends and catalysts of change.

**Actor group and characteristics analysis** identifies the actor groups that have the strongest influence on turbulence in the context, and analyses their background and key characteristics. Increasingly, this module also includes an identification of actor groups without influence, so that marginalised voices can be considered throughout the analysis.

**Actor group relationships analysis** probes the interactions between and within those actor groups, with attention to how the relationships are evolving and what factors are likely to provoke change.

**Symptoms and root causes of instability analysis** begins by identifying the most prominent problematic signs of turbulence. Examples may include riots, internal displacement, inflation, or 'brain drain.' Participants then deepen analysis by discussing the root causes that underlie these symptoms.

**Political economy of instability analysis** is an extended module that captures economic aspects of conflict. Participants identify the key resources that influence turbulence, and then trace out the economic activities and actor group interests related to each resource. This allows participants to specify where actor groups are motivated to compete or collude, and who are the 'winners' and 'losers', in order to unpack how resources and power fuel turbulence.

**Mapping** is the midpoint of the process. It consolidates the insights of the previous modules into a visual diagram of the current situation, which often prompts new insights about socio-political structures and relationships.

**Trigger events and scenarios** build on the current analysis to project into the future. Participants identify 'trigger events' that are highly likely to catalyse significant change within one to three years. Each trigger event is then developed into a scenario that describes likely changes in actor group interests and relationships, and probable impact on the symptoms of instability and the lives of citizens.

**Strategic needs** represent the unique factors required to move a given country or region towards its preferred future. Together they provide a visionary strategic platform towards which international NGOs and other actors should aim to contribute in the medium to long term.

Finally, the **operational implications** module concludes the workshop by beginning the application of 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' findings to the work of participating agencies. Participants consider the implications of the strategic needs and scenarios for their own organisational plans, and develop preliminary recommendations<sup>20</sup>. In multi-agency workshops, the implications can include recommendations for joint approaches to action and advocacy.

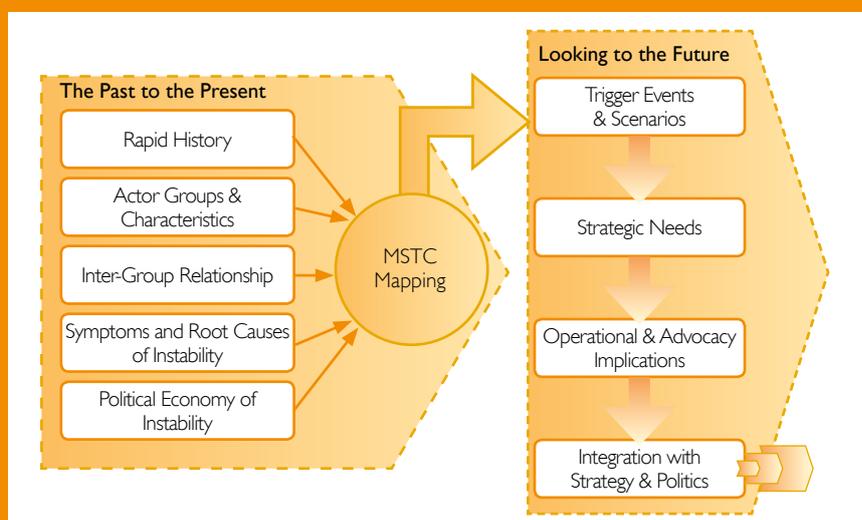


Figure 1:  
MSTC analysis cycle



Women and a child walking down a city street with masks on their faces to hide unpleasant odors. Lebanon.  
© 2007 World Vision Staff/World Vision

# 5. Trends and findings from ‘Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts’ analyses

World Vision has conducted 50 ‘Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts’ workshops, in 22 countries between 2003 and 2013. In 2012 the findings from 42 of these workshops were reviewed and common trends and patterns identified<sup>21</sup>. This analysis identified four common strategic needs, as well as four cross-cutting themes<sup>22</sup>. ‘Strategic needs’ are defined as key factors that must be addressed in order for a country or context to reach its preferred future. Four major trends in strategic needs were identified by participants.

**1) Good Governance.** The need for improved governance was identified by participants as a strategic need in over three quarters of the workshops reviewed<sup>23</sup>. Some common components of good governance included: addressing corruption; functioning rule of law institutions; respect for human rights; improved government transparency and accountability; capacity and coordination of government and local governance systems; and reducing nepotism and patronage politics<sup>24</sup>.

**2) Increased and more effective civic participation.** Participants from roughly two thirds of the workshops identified the need for civil society to increase its voice and effectiveness in order to better hold government to account. For example, in Georgia/Abkhazia, participants identified the need to ‘increase the governments accountability to its citizens’, in Haiti participants discussed the need for greater dialogue between government and civil society, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, discussion focused on coordination of government, NGO and civil society policies. Whilst increased civic participation is clearly related to ‘good governance’, it has nonetheless been widely identified as a strategic need in its own right.

**3) Equitable distribution of resources.** Roughly two thirds of ‘Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts’ analyses identified distribution of resources as a key strategic need. Many pointed to the perception that resources are generating profit for one segment of the population, usually powerful elites, while local communities are excluded from sharing in the benefits. In Kenya, participants discussed the inequitable distribution of resources as ‘power is concentrated in the small political elite.’ Nepali participants noted equitable access and control over natural resources, as being a strategic need to help stabilise the context. In South Sudan, they viewed the overdependence on oil revenues as a root cause of turbulence, while in Bolivia participants identified the trend towards a closed economy as precipitating instability.

**4) Peacebuilding and reconciliation.** Participants in just over two thirds of workshops identified the need to actively seek reconciliation between communities as being key to sustainable peace. The need for some form of national level dialogue for reconciliation, including transitional justice mechanisms such as truth and reconciliation commissions has been identified as a key strategic need in many workshops. In Lebanon, participants discussed the need for formal reconciliation efforts that include ‘elements of truth-telling, addressing past wrongs and extending forgiveness’. The need to develop a common identity was identified in several workshops, to bridge divides between groups. In Pakistan, participants discussed the fact that both Pakistani leadership and citizens need to value and respect ethnic diversity, looking at it as a common bond rather than a divider.

In addition to the strategic needs identified, the 2012 findings identified human rights, gender and environmental issues as recurrent themes in ‘Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts’ reports. Over half of the reports identified human rights violations as either a driver or a symptom of turbulence. Gender was identified as a significant conflict-related issue in approximately one-third of the workshops, including all of the recent analyses in South Asia. Environmental issues were mentioned in nearly half of the reports and were characterised in two broad categories: climate and disasters. Participants in several contexts identified natural hazards as a possible trigger event for increased turbulence, whilst recent workshops in Mali, Somalia and South Sudan noted climatological conditions and competition over resources as being part of the underlying conflict drivers in their contexts. These findings underscore the need for conflict analysis methodologies to be sensitive to themes such as human rights, gender and environment.

**‘There are children who have been impacted by conflict all their lives. It is all they have seen. If these children are to take up leadership of this country what would be the future of this country?’** *Anonymous participant, ‘Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts’, Uganda, 2012*

Analysis of the findings also highlights the disproportionate impact of conflict on children<sup>25</sup> Over three-quarters of the reports identified particular impacts on children, primarily under discussion of the symptoms of turbulence, but occasionally relating to strategic needs also. Participants identified both direct impacts (including involvement in physical violence, trauma from witnessing violence, etc) and indirect impacts (including malnutrition or migration resulting from turbulence). Whilst these findings could be influenced by the high proportion of World Vision staff participating in the workshops analysed<sup>26</sup>, they highlight a clear trend relating to the vulnerabilities children face in fragile contexts.

Despite being independently developed, the findings from the ‘Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts’ analysis largely correspond with a range of commonly employed conflict analysis frameworks. For example, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development identifies four broad areas of intervention for conflict prevention activities, which correspond broadly to the key strategic needs identified. The World Bank, DFID and USAID also emphasise good governance, equitable economic management, reconciliation (including access to justice) and civil society empowerment as core to sustainable peace within their own conflict frameworks (DFID, 2002; World Bank, 2005; USAID, 2012). None of these frameworks claim to identify all of the underlying drivers of conflict; conflict is always the result of many inter-related factors and underlying vulnerabilities that can only be understood in relation to a specific context. However, the common factors identified by these frameworks do indicate that the analysis derived through participatory processes is consistent with and complementary to wider thinking in the conflict prevention field. Participatory conflict analysis can therefore provide a solid base upon which to base strategic planning in fragile contexts.

**BELOW:** Participants in Haiti discuss key actor groups © 2013 Jean-Wickens Merone/ World Vision



## CASE STUDY: MULTI-AGENCY 'MAKING SENSE OF TURBULENT CONTEXTS' IN KENYA, 2012

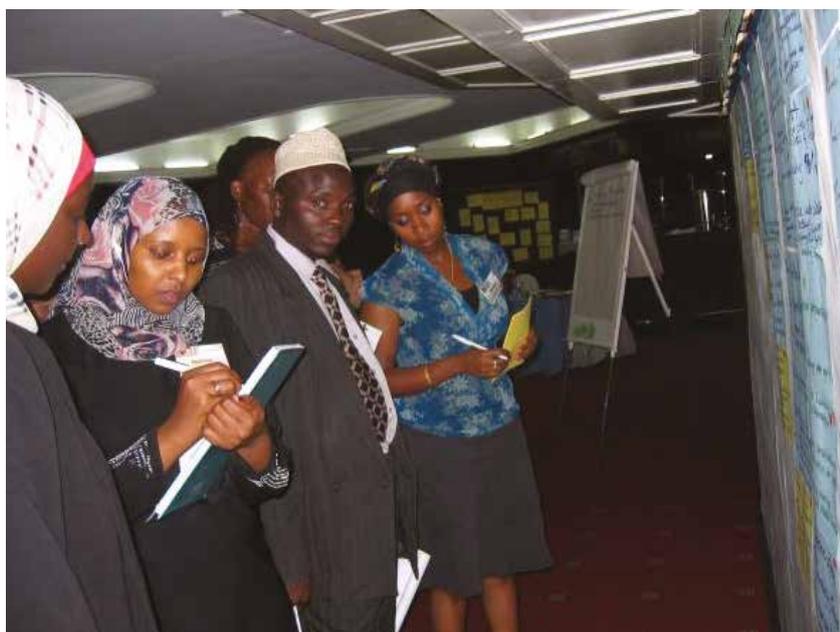
In April 2012, World Vision convened the first fully inter-agency 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshop. It brought together 14 agencies, including international NGOs, local organisations and government officials to develop a common understanding and analysis of the key strategic needs for peace and stability in Kenya. The workshop findings helped prepare agencies for the March 2013 general election.

As a result of the workshop, World Vision Kenya updated its operating plan to increase the focus on conflict prevention related to possible election violence. As this was Kenya's second 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts', the original Context Monitoring Group was re-established and tasked with regularly updating the analysis by drawing from selected external analysts and the observations of World Vision staff in Kenya. This enabled World Vision Kenya to respond to increases in tensions between groups by putting appropriate measures in place. For example, the advocacy team increased its engagement in public messaging around voter education, whilst the peacebuilding unit increased its programme of capacity building for conflict-sensitive journalism jointly with the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium<sup>27</sup>. World Vision Kenya also engaged Christian and Muslim leaders to champion non-violent transition of power, as well as a peaceful resolution to unrest in sensitive areas such as Coast Province.

The follow-up was as collaborative as the original analysis. The analysis recommended a joint civil society platform to address Kenya's strategic needs, including '*a culture of peace and nationhood*.' In response, World Vision Kenya facilitated a one-day coordination workshop organised by the Kenyan government's National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management. Participants completed an organisational mapping exercise to highlight how each agency is contributing to pre-election peacebuilding efforts, so that they can communicate or even cluster their activities. In August 2012, World Vision Kenya conducted a mini analysis in Isiolo with participants from eastern and north-eastern Kenya, including pastors and sheikhs, district peace committee representatives, and NGOs and developed concrete action plans. The participating development programme representatives also developed pre- and post-election plans which they updated in their monthly reports.

This analysis has also been used to influence donor activities in Kenya. World Vision Kenya representatives briefed colleagues from the US government's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. The scenarios provided valuable ground-level insights about the specific mechanisms through which election processes were most likely to lead to violence. This has helped World Vision Kenya to prepare itself and its partners for the March 2013 elections and has informed US donor policy.

**RIGHT:** MSTC participants in Kenya review their analysis.  
© 2012 World Vision Staff/World Vision



## 6. Strengths and challenges of participatory conflict analysis

This section draws upon available literature and the experiences of 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' facilitators to identify common strengths of participatory approaches to conflict analysis, as well as a number of challenges that practitioners face.

### Key strengths of macro participatory conflict analysis

Participatory approaches can both improve the overall quality of macro-level conflict analysis and generate strong ownership from participants, making recommendations more realistic and sustainable. In addition, the process of participatory conflict analysis may also help build peace by providing a platform for groups to discuss issues related to the conflict and build trust.

**'International actors should be careful not to make assumptions about the expectations of different groups in society'. DFID, 2010**

### Participatory processes can improve the overall quality of conflict analysis

Participatory approaches amplify the voices of the people most affected by a conflict. They can help ensure that a wide range of voices are heard, and that more detailed and accurate information is available to those with ultimate responsibility for decision-making (Babuard et al, 2011). Without such analysis, international actors run the risk of making dangerous assumptions about the needs and views of different groups in society (Barakat and Waldman, 2013). A recent 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshop in Haiti for example revealed a large and growing divergence between local and international perspectives on the effectiveness and influence of UN peacekeeping deployments.

In conflict-affected contexts, this is doubly important. These contexts are characterised by a large number of competing, often contradictory narratives about the causes and dynamics of conflict (Van Brabant, 2010). Traditional analyses often lack space for capturing the multiple view points of different actor groups impacted by a conflict. They can also discount perceptions and view points at odds with established or verified 'facts'. In doing so, they run the risk of limiting understanding to a narrow view, often removed from the common perceptions of those people most impacted by, and often most likely to continue the perpetration of conflict or the pursuit of peace.

Participatory conflict analysis on the other hand seeks to identify the range of popularly-held views about the conflict, and the reasoning behind them. It does not seek to arrive at one coherent narrative, but rather should be seen as an iterative process of acknowledging the differing discourses that feed into the conflict. It is designed to offer compelling programmatic choices, not a master narrative of the causes of the conflict.

As Mary Anderson reports *'The best analysis is based on broad, continuing consultations with many people, from many parts of society, in a conflict region ... Limited consultation always results in limited understanding. Broad consultation always results in broader understanding. In the experience of peace practitioners, the latter is essential for effectiveness.'* (Anderson and Olson, 2003)

Conflict affected contexts are characterised by a high degree of mistrust and suspicion. People may be reluctant to speak openly about what they really think and have experienced, or may seek to influence the analysis according to their own objectives. The methods and tools used in participatory conflict analysis can help to build trust between participants, as well as with facilitators. This can increase the degree of 'disclosure', contributing to more insightful and honest analysis (Conciliation Resources and Saferworld, 2012).

## **Including key local actors in analysis can build ownership and improve implementation and sustainability of recommendations**

Lack of implementation and sustainability of recommendations have been major challenges for many agencies conducting conflict analysis (Barakat and Waldman, 2013). For example, a review into the implementation of 20 conflict analyses by various agencies commissioned by the World Bank, found that *'use of analysis findings, and subsequent potential impacts, have been weak partly due to limited country operational team buy-in and disconnect between the conflict analysis team and operational users*. The same study went on to find that where conflict analysis was conducted in partnership with local agencies, ownership was significantly increased and recommendations were more likely to translate into changes on the ground (World Bank, 2006).

Participatory approaches can improve ownership and application of recommendations. In 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' for example, the analysis is carried out entirely by participants, a significant proportion of whom will also be responsible for 'operationalising' findings. They leave the process with a very strong sense of ownership over the findings, and often a personal commitment to ensure that the findings are translated into action when they return to their 'day-jobs'. In a comparative analysis of this and other conflict analysis methodologies, Freeman and Fisher (2012) found that the *'workshop(s) illustrates how (much) more effective it is to develop strategies when the assessment activity is sponsored by an organisation with the mandate and resources to implement them'*<sup>28</sup>.

Participatory conflict analysis can improve inter-agency co-ordination and collective impact: Despite there being widespread recognition that large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination (Kania and Kramer, 2011), efforts to improve co-ordination between agencies working in fragile contexts have often met with limited success. This has been down to a number of reasons, including high staff workloads and the perceptions and reality of inter-agency competition (Barbolet et al, 2005). As Thania Paffenholz (2004) asserts *'everybody wants to coordinate, but nobody wants to be coordinated!'*

Conflict analysis can provide a platform for improved co-ordination by developing a common understanding of drivers of conflict and promoting co-ordinated action to address these (Barbolet et al, 2005). Using participatory methodologies can be particularly effective, since they ensure that outputs are equally owned by participating agencies. The process of working together to create the analysis can also build strong bonds of trust and mutual understanding between agencies, making future collaboration and strategic alignment more likely. Multi-agency 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshops have been used to develop a joint analysis in Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan.

## **The process of participatory conflict analysis can contribute towards peacebuilding objectives**

In highly contested and fragmented societies, the process of bringing people together to conduct a conflict analysis can have a peacebuilding value in itself. It may for example create what Lederach terms a 'Transformative Platforms'- an on-going and adaptive space within a conflict which provide an opportunity of actors involved in the conflict to work on strategic long-term constructive change in systemic relational context (Lederach, 2003).

At the local level, World Vision has found that participatory 'Do No Harm' analysis among both youth and religious leaders in the Philippines has helped to catalyse new relationships and reshape mutual perceptions. At the macro-level, the PPP found that, workshops and discussion groups created opportunities for dialogue, reflection, interaction and building of trust between people from different groups. They report that *'in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where ethnic division persists, many young people expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to meet their peers from different ethnic backgrounds and understand each other's perspectives. In Senegal, the discussions were, according to participants, the first time that non-state and state actors had met to reflect on conflict issues'* (Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, 2012). Such examples underlie the fact that in the midst of social division, conflict analysis can do more than simply analyse the context; it can help to change relational networks within the context itself.

By giving participants an opportunity to gain an understanding of the perceptions and views of other groups, participatory approaches may also help them to gain a new perspective on their own views and beliefs. At a recent 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshop in South Sudan, participants from each



Amal's (age 9) house was destroyed while her family was sheltering with extended family members. Her parents have now rented a small breeze block shed which they are living in. Gaza City. © 2009 Sarah Malian

of the states reported that that their district was more marginalised than the others in terms of resource allocation from the centre. This was identified as a significant grievance for many people in each state. The realisation that participants' from other states were facing the same issues as they were helped build mutual understanding and fostered a sense of common purpose.

The process of bringing diverse groups together to discuss conflict can also have a profound impact on participants' perspectives of their own capacities to affect change within the conflict. As Barbolet et al (2005) explain, 'A conflict-sensitive approach must engage project participants or beneficiaries – at a minimum in the analysis and implementation phases (...). Through so doing, community members begin to understand that their own actions towards people from other ethnic, religious, social, economic, cultural or linguistic communities have a direct bearing on what they formerly understood as a disconnected macro political issue'. An external evaluation of the 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' methodology backs this up. It reports that participants felt that process enabled them to reflect on their contexts in a different ways, and challenged their assumptions about conflicts in their countries, and their role in potentially addressing it (International Alert, 2010).

Finally, participatory conflict analysis may also contribute towards peacebuilding objectives by guarding against the exclusion of particular groups that is a trait, and often a driver of conflict in fragile contexts (Stewart, 2008). Ensuring that marginalised voices are included in every stage of development planning and implementation, starting with analysis at both macro and micro-level, can at a minimum avoid the perpetuation of patterns of exclusion between groups; thereby avoid 'doing harm'. At best such inclusion may contribute towards a reduction in these inequalities, thereby opening up a space for greater co-operation and collaboration across potential conflict fault lines.

## Key challenges of participatory macro conflict analysis

There are a number of key challenges associated with conducting participatory conflict analysis, many of which are common to participatory research methods in general.

### Participant selection

Identifying the right mix of participants is essential in conducting any participatory process. This challenge is arguably even greater when conducting conflict analysis due to the contested nature of the issues being discussed. Failure to ensure a balanced participation can at best lead to inconclusive or prejudiced analysis, and at worst exacerbate conflict by resulting in unbalanced recommendations for operational agencies.

Participant selection must be based on existing knowledge and understanding of the key fault lines and conflict dynamics in the context. Aid organisations with a long-standing local presence in the communities can identify the appropriate mix of participants for 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' analysis<sup>30</sup>. However it has sometimes been difficult to get the right balance of participants. In some cases, World Vision has been over-reliant on participation from those geographic areas or social sectors of the country in which it has a programmatic focus. This can result in a skew towards certain dynamics and issues, and inhibits the development of truly national level analysis. Agencies that have sought to undertake participatory conflict analysis without an established long term presence have found it difficult to verify findings, whilst it has taken much longer to set up and conduct the research (Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, 2012). Having trusted local partners, able to identify potential pitfalls in participant selection is therefore essential.

Ensuring the right mix of skills sets and knowledge within participatory workshops can also be a major challenge. In 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshops, most participants come from the country being analysed, and are drawn from both the local level (generally from Civil Society Organisations (CSO), partner organisations and local government) as well as capital based organisations (often international NGO representatives, academics and central government). This can result in strong, nuanced analysis of key local actors, such as local militia or identity groups (often much stronger than would be possible with external analysts), but can also lead to relatively shallow or unrealistic analysis of other, more distant actors, such as the UN or international community. There can also be a lack of knowledge about some of the 'backroom' negotiations and motivations driving some potential behaviours. Such knowledge can often

only be uncovered with focused and nuanced political analysis that can be difficult to achieve through participatory processes alone.

### **Upholding true participation and participatory ethics**

In a truly participatory process, participants have the right to own their outputs and make decisions about what is done with them. Given the often sensitive nature of conflict analysis, this can mean that circulation of outputs may be limited to a small number of agencies and actor groups. This can limit agencies' ability to maximise the impact of the analysis. It is important that agreements are reached with participants before or during workshops about how the outputs will be used; as it can be difficult to change permissions after the process.

Facilitators working in fragile and conflict areas face particular challenges to ensure true participation. Participatory methodologies such as 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' can be very time intensive processes, leaving facilitators under pressure to complete exercises. Facilitators need to be aware of the danger of inadvertently leading participants towards their own views ('facipulation') rather than eliciting true opinions of participants<sup>31</sup>. They also need to be aware of, and actively manage the potential for severe disagreement or conflicts erupting between participants. Many participants hold very strong and contradictory views, or will have been directly affected by the conflict that they will be discussing. A sensitive and nuanced facilitation approach is required<sup>32</sup>.

Triangulation of participants' findings through external sources is essential for any conflict analysis. However, this must be done in a way that does not obscure or dishonour the voice of the participants. It can be useful to position the participants' view side-by-side with that of external analysis, to illustrate the diversity among equally legitimate perspectives on a key issue.

### **Competing objectives**

There is a potential trade-off between objectives of participatory conflict analysis. 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' facilitators have noted that the process can contribute to building the capacity of participants to critically analyse their context, helping them develop new ways of thinking about conflict dynamics and their role in addressing these<sup>33</sup>. However, the primary objective is to produce high quality analysis to inform strategy and programming. There can be a tension between these objectives; high quality analysis is more likely to come out of participants with existing capacity for critical and analytical thinking. Participants unfamiliar with considered analysis techniques may benefit disproportionately from the analysis, but often at a cost to the quality of analysis (World Bank, 2006).

There may also be a trade-off between the possible peacebuilding value of participatory conflict analysis and the quality of final outputs. In order to maximise the potential peacebuilding value, participant selection would need to be carefully chosen to include key actors from groups involved in conflict, with significant influence over their communities. Tensions and disagreements within the workshops are likely to be significant, which will necessitate a highly flexible approach that emphasises relationship building and mutual understanding over completing specific exercises and discussing pre-selected topics.

'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' on the other hand is a structured methodology, with a number of specific tools and modules that must be worked through in order to get to a stage where specific 'operational implications' can be identified. Freeman and Fisher (2012) argue that this may actually support the peacebuilding value of such workshops, by focussing participants on outputs and preventing constant recycling of the same debates. This remains however as an untested hypothesis.

## **'There is no such thing as a quick and dirty participatory conflict analysis'**

*Teresa Dumasy, Peoples Peacemaking Perspectives Project Manager*

**Time and resource intensive approach:** Conducting participatory conflict analysis can be time and resource intensive. Selecting participants, arranging and facilitating workshops and consolidating data can be more expensive, slower and more complicated than traditional conflict analysis methodologies (Freeman and Fisher, 2012). This can place significant limits on the breadth and depth of participation. Country



Signs calling for peace and reconciliation line the front of the crowd listening to prayers from major religious leaders, including the Archbishop, members of each major Christian denomination, and a prominent Imam. Peace Prayer Gathering in Odek, hometown to LRA leader Joseph Kony. © 2005 Jon Warren/World Vision

Offices seeking to conduct national level analysis may therefore be forced to opt for either a participatory or a more traditional form of conflict analysis, rather than combining the two. Humanitarian aid programmes will require less participatory approaches during the initial rapid response to an emergency, but they can employ participatory conflict analysis during the pre-emergency preparedness phase, and also when the response begins to enter its second phase (Zicherman et al., 2001, Garred et al., 2007).

## Conclusions

Participatory processes can improve the quality and the impact of conflict analysis, whilst contributing to social inclusion and ultimately helping to build peace.

Quality is improved by ensuring that analysis is informed by a wide range of stakeholders, including those who are most impacted by the conflict. Participatory processes recognise that conflict analysis (whether participatory or 'traditional') is never 'value free' (Van Brandt, 2010). They counter this through the inclusion of multiple voices, which can help to identify previously unrecorded issues. This approach has the potential to highlight how multiple and competing narratives about a conflict can form, and how these inform deeply held grievances that can fuel conflicts over generations.

Participatory approaches can also improve the impact of conflict analysis by ensuring that it is owned by local people, making recommendations more realistic, sustainable and more likely to be implemented. Furthermore, by bringing groups together to discuss conflict issues, participatory conflict analysis can help build mutual understanding and develop linkages across conflict fault-lines. This can play an important role in helping participants to understand their own roles and potential impacts within a conflict, thereby empowering them to seek to become active agents of change.

The failure of some 'traditional' forms of macro-level conflict analysis to use participatory methodologies may in fact contribute to the perpetuation of the very social exclusion that lies at the heart of most violent conflicts. In many fragile contexts, there is a real gap between local people's perceptions and experiences of the conflict, and national level analysis of that same context. National level analysis often reflects the views and perceptions of capital-based elites or the accepted wisdom of accumulated academic and practitioner knowledge. As such, they are likely to be unduly influenced by a limited range of narratives about the conflict. Failure to intentionally seek out and amplify the voices of distant or marginalised groups is therefore likely to result in their further marginalisation.

However it is important to remember that perceptions do not tell the whole story about a conflict and can be misleading. Participants can lack in-depth and nuanced understanding of how certain systems within a conflict operate. Simplistic assumptions may be made about very large and diverse groupings of actors (such as 'the international community' or 'the private sector'). Some alliances and agendas may only be uncovered by focused, in-depth political analysis, whilst stereotypes and prejudices can colour even the most balanced of participant groups. Furthermore, no participatory process can claim to capture the full diversity of perceptions within a context. It is therefore important that it should be presented and understood as deriving from a snapshot of the perceptions of those people engaged in the process.

Ultimately, participatory approaches should complement rather than replace other forms of conflict analysis. Agencies should not rely entirely on participatory approaches to develop comprehensive conflict analysis, since further analysis of key political, social and economic trends is often. However, traditional forms of conflict analysis have a significant gap, in that they do not typically reflect the views of those most affected by conflict. Participatory analysis can help bridge this gap, and in doing so, strengthen both the quality and the impact of the analysis, whilst also having important peacebuilding implications. Bridging this participation gap is critical to ensuring that humanitarian and development interventions are as effective as they can be.

# 7. Recommendations

Based on World Vision's experience of implementing macro-level participatory conflict analysis in more than 22 countries for over 10 years, complemented by the analysis presented in this paper drawn from secondary data, several recommendations are offered:

**All humanitarian and development aid actors working in fragile contexts should:**

- **Ensure programming and activities are informed by conflict analysis at both the macro and micro levels**, including participatory analysis alongside more 'traditional' approaches.
- **Support participatory macro conflict analysis as a peacebuilding initiative**. Agencies should seek to maximise the peacebuilding impacts of conflict analysis, by including participants from excluded and marginalised communities and bridging gaps between communities in conflict, for example. Further research should be undertaken to better understand how to capture peacebuilding impacts.
- **Ensure that conflict analysis and peacebuilding interventions consider good governance, equitable distribution of resources, empowerment of civil society and reconciliation between conflicting groups**. In addition, conflict analysis frameworks should also be sensitive to human rights, gender and environmental issues, and the impacts of conflict on children and other vulnerable groups.
- **Collaborate in support of the New Deal** by implementing principles of participatory conflict analysis to maximise civil society's contribution to multi-stakeholder fragility analysis and all stages of the New Deal process.

**When conducting macro-level participatory conflict analysis, humanitarian and development actors should:**

- **Carefully select participants to ensure a representative balance** from across different identity groups (social, cultural, ethnic groups), gender, region of origin, political views. It is important to include a wide range of stakeholders, including local leaders, CSOs, government, academia, and sometimes multilateral or bilateral donors. A largely unexplored area for greater research is the inclusion of the private sector in conflict analysis<sup>34</sup>.
- **Ensure careful and sensitive facilitation**, including trust-building between participants and facilitators, and awareness of potential conflicts between participants. Training in inter-personal conflict management and resolution should be encouraged.
- **Pay particular attention to upholding participatory ethics**. Facilitators must seek to avoid unduly influencing participants according to their own views. Agreement should be reached before or during the analysis about how mutual roles will be defined, and how the outputs will be documented and shared. Data should be triangulated against external sources, but without obscuring the findings of the participants.
- **Ensure sufficient time and resources to complete analysis** whilst ensuring that the timetable allows for rich discussion of topics.

**Donors should:**

- **Include participatory macro conflict analysis within broader conflict analysis frameworks**. For example, lessons learned from application of the 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshops and PPP could be used to ensure that donor conflict analysis frameworks (including UK JACS, USAID CAF 2.0 and WB CAF) are truly inclusive of local actors.
- **Provide support to implementing partners in fragile contexts** to conduct conflict analysis to inform programming, making use of participatory approaches. This includes making funding available during programme design and assessment stages for conflict analysis at both micro and macro levels, supporting the development and dissemination of participatory conflict analysis methodologies and promoting

capacity building amongst local and international civil societies in the use of participatory conflict analysis methodologies. This could include training in the use of 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' methods or other approaches as appropriate.

**Peer NGOs and operational agencies should:**

- **Ensure that the existing participatory conflict analysis methodologies are widely available**, particularly those that address the macro level where tools are currently scarce. Provide capacity building for agencies wanting to make use of them. This may include developing a resource pack or central website where participatory conflict analysis tools can be accessed<sup>35</sup>.
- **Ensure that conflict analysts and specialists receive facilitation training, and are comfortable using participatory tools and methodologies**. Currently conflict specialists do not routinely receive facilitation training. Similarly, most facilitation experts have limited knowledge about socio-political drivers of conflict.
- **Work with local partners in fragile contexts to develop a pool of trained facilitators able to lead participatory macro conflict analysis workshops**. In some cases, facilitation team leaders may need to be drawn from outside the context, due to the specialised facilitation expertise required. However many of these lead facilitators may be drawn from the Global South and can facilitate a South-South exchange.
- **Develop joint macro-level conflict analysis**, making use of participatory methodologies such as the 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts'. Developing a common understanding of the drivers of conflict will help improve NGO co-ordination, and act as a platform for common action.

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# Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bush, Kenneth, 1998. A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of Development Projects in Conflict Zones. International Development Research Centre; Anderson, Mary B., 1999. Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace – or War. Rienner.

<sup>2</sup> Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012. 'How to' Guide for Conflict Sensitivity.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, 2013, Number of Syrian refugees tops 2 million mark with more on the way, published on <http://www.unhcr.org/522495669.html>

<sup>4</sup> 50 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshops have been completed to date, but only 42 were available for analysis during the 2003-2012 period.

<sup>5</sup> Based on World Vision International definition, WVI, 2011

<sup>6</sup> Macro-level conflict analysis is rarely pitched at the global level, except in reference to specific issues. For example, global analyses of governance and aid systems (e.g. Duffield, 2001) and causes of civil war (e.g. Collier et al, 2003)

<sup>7</sup> Salamon, 1994

<sup>8</sup> Nazneed and Greenwood, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Barbolet et al., 2005, p.5. Garred with Castro, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> The 'New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States' sets out a series of steps and commitments endorsed by donors, fragile state governments and international organisations at the Busan High-level forum on development effectiveness in 2011. It seeks to establish 'a new development architecture and new ways of working, better tailored to the situation and challenges of fragile contexts, are necessary to build peaceful states and societies.' (p1. [www.newdeal4peace.org/new-deal-snapshot/](http://www.newdeal4peace.org/new-deal-snapshot/))

<sup>11</sup> OECD-DAC, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Slotin et al., 2010, p.8

<sup>13</sup> [www.newdeal4peace.org](http://www.newdeal4peace.org)

<sup>14</sup> Pilot assessments were implemented in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Timor Leste. Several reports are available at [www.newdeal4peace.org/new-deal-pilots/](http://www.newdeal4peace.org/new-deal-pilots/)

<sup>15</sup> These are agreements between country governments and relevant development actors intended to guide partnerships between all parties towards the achievement of stipulated 'Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals' [www.newdeal4peace.org/new-deal-snapshot/](http://www.newdeal4peace.org/new-deal-snapshot/)

<sup>16</sup> World Vision has proposed to a variety of policy makers a specific proposal for a phased participatory process to make local understandings of fragility more accessible to New Deal policy makers.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see DFID 2013, USAID 2012 and EC 2013

<sup>18</sup> 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' is designed to dovetail with local-level analysis tools such as 'Do No Harm / Local Capacities for Peace,' which World Vision emphasises as part of its 'Integrating Peacebuilding and Conflict Sensitivity' (I-PACS) approach.

<sup>19</sup> INGOs have often been prone to overlooking the political economy factors in conflict. 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' tool development was influenced by Philippe LeBillon (2000); other influential works include Pugh et al (2004).

<sup>20</sup> After the workshop, the participating agencies continue the process of applying the MSTC recommendations to their strategic and operational plans. World Vision recommends ongoing context monitoring to keep the findings updated. The full 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' analysis is repeated every 2-10 years, depending on the pace of change in a particular context.

<sup>21</sup> World Vision conducted a review in 2009 and updated this analysis in 2012. At the time of the 2012 analysis, only 46 workshops had been completed and only 42 reports were available for review. See Freeman (2009) and Bell (2013).

<sup>22</sup> The analysis was based on desk reviews of 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshop reports, with only limited access to participants or facilitators who could help provide interpretive meaning. Common trends were based on counts of mentions of key issues across reports. This should not be taken as a precise indicator of relative importance, but as being broadly indicative of significant trends.

<sup>23</sup> More broadly, 100 percent of 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' reports to date mention the importance of good governance, although only three-quarters of the participant groups have elevated good governance to the level of a strategic need.

<sup>24</sup> In a few cases participants agreed on a definition of good governance, although in the majority of cases this was not explicitly stated.

<sup>25</sup> These findings are not captured in the meta-trends analyses of Freeman (2009) and Bell (2012), but derived from later analysis of the same source materials.

<sup>26</sup> World Vision is a child-focused organisation

<sup>27</sup> The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium is a DFID funded project bringing together 35 agencies from four countries, working together to capture best practises and improve conflict sensitivity in development, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding programming. For more information, see [www.conflictsensitivity.org](http://www.conflictsensitivity.org).

<sup>28</sup> It is important to recognise that this has not resolved all challenges of translating 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' analysis into action. Whilst ownership by participants is generally high, World Vision has sometimes struggled to integrate key findings into strategic plans. This situation has improved steadily over the past ten years, and is expected to make another significant advance in the coming year as 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' becomes linked in to the strategic planning cycle for offices working in fragile contexts.

<sup>29</sup> With regard to faith leaders see Garred and Castro (2011).

<sup>30</sup> Participants are carefully selected for their depth of contextual understanding, and for diversity of perspective across variables such as identity and culture, gender, political views, region of origin, organizational role and function, etc. National Offices seeking to conduct a 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' workshop receive structured support during the preparation process to ensure that the right balance is struck.

<sup>31</sup> For facilitators who come from within the context being analysed, this often means making an extra effort to hold back one's own opinion. For external facilitators, there is a delicate balance in pre-reading to gain familiarity with the context (which is strongly encouraged) while not introducing external views into the participants' analysis process. Facilitators aim to elicit key themes by asking good questions, rather than by sharing their own ideas.

<sup>32</sup> 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' seeks to manage this through ensuring participants have opportunities throughout the workshop to share their personal experiences of being affected by the conflict. These exercises can act as a release for participants dealing with often painful memories and discussing personally difficult topics.

<sup>33</sup> Based on International Alert's 2010 evaluation of 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' and discussions with facilitators

<sup>34</sup> CDA and Geneva Peacebuilding Platform are actively exploring modalities

<sup>35</sup> 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' resources are due on line in 2014, and the accompanying facilitator training programmes are increasingly interagency in composition.

## World Vision resources promoting resilience

World Vision UK's approach to resilience, overview paper

Promoting Resilience in Development Programming: World Vision UK's Approach. 2013.  
[www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience)

Disaster Risk Reduction Toolkit: DRR and CCA Integration into Area Development Programmes. 2013.  
World Vision. <http://wvasiapacific.org/drr/>

Landscape, Engagement, Spatial and Systems Analysis (LEnSS). 2013 World Vision. Laura Fontaine and Josh Folkema.

Participatory Learning Approaches for Resilience: Bringing Conflict Sensitivity, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Together. 2013. Maggie Ibrahim, Tim Midgley, World Vision UK.  
[www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience)

Participatory Scenario Planning for Community Resilience. 2013. Anna Addison and Maggie Ibrahim.  
World Vision UK. [www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience)

Promoting Local Adaptive Capacity: Experiences from Africa and Asia. 2012. Maggie Ibrahim and Nicola Ward. World Vision UK. [www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience)

Towards the Resilient Future Children Want: A Review of Progress in Achieving the Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction. 2013. Emily Bild and Maggie Ibrahim. Children in a Changing Climate Coalition.  
[www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/fragility-resilience)

World Vision's Resilience Programming: Adding Value to Development. 2013. Josh Folkema, Maggie Ibrahim and Emily Wilkinson. Overseas Development Institute.  
[www.odi.org.uk/publications/7680-world-visions-resilience-programming-adding-value-development](http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/7680-world-visions-resilience-programming-adding-value-development)

## Further World Vision Conflict and Resources

Conflict Sensitivity: How to Guide. 2012. Conflict Sensitivity Consortium.  
[www.conflictsensitivity.org/content/how-guide](http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/content/how-guide)

Journalling for Peace: Children's Energetic Voices on Peace, Conflict and Peacebuilding. 2012. Elly Musafiri and Valarie Vat Kamatsiko.  
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Conflict Sensitivity in Emergencies; Learning from the Asia Tsunami Response. 2007. Michelle Garred.  
[www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/2007\\_tsunami\\_report/\\$file/sensitive\\_context.pdf](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/2007_tsunami_report/$file/sensitive_context.pdf)

A Shared Future: Local Capacities for Peace in Community Development. 2006. Michelle Garred and Mohammed Abu-Nimer.  
[www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/LCP.pdf/\\$file/LCP.pdf](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/LCP.pdf/$file/LCP.pdf)

Small Feet, Deep Prints; Young People Building Peace with WV East Africa. 2005. Valarie Vat Kamatsiko.  
<http://wvi.org/africa/publication/small-feet-deep-prints>

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