



# SHARE YOUR PEACE

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

## MODULE 3

### CONFLICT CAUSES, LAYERS AND MAPPING



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## I. Introduction

Conflict is an essential part of human life. It has many different layers and can emerge because of different reasons. This chapter will discuss why a conflict emerges, what the causes of the conflict are and how we can analyse conflict cases. After having defined the different types of causes that lay behind the surge and existence of a conflict, this paragraph will look at how to effectively address and deal with a conflict starting from an appropriate conflict analysis. Even though conflicts are very different among them and every conflict has its own unique and specific features, it is important to set some common principles and core elements to be examined within a conflict assessment. To successfully tackle this challenge, youth workers can employ different conflict analysis tools to analyse different causes, layers and effects of the conflict.

This module will discuss what causes conflicts between people and groups, and what the root causes of these conflicts are. Afterwards, it will shed lights on some of the best conflict analyses tools which can be used to analyse conflicts in depth and draw a causal approach to deal with these conflicts. At the end of this module, the short summary will be given.

## II. Causes of Conflict

All interpersonal relationships, communities and societies experience conflicts at one time or another. Conflict and disputes exist when people or groups engage in competition to achieve goals that they perceive to be, or that actually are, incompatible (Moore, 1996). In order to understand a given conflict, it is fundamental to deepen in and identify potential causes at its roots, which might include a range of different issues which have not been addressed and satisfied by the parties. Since there are many possible causes behind each conflict, it is essential to list the most common ones. It is useful to break down an often large and complex scenario into smaller elements.

Conflict is seen as arising from basic human instincts, from the competition for resources and power, from the structure of the societies and institutions people create (Mayer, 2010). Furthermore, gaining an understanding of the potential causes and dynamics of a dispute as early as possible is fundamental to prevent unnecessary conflict escalation.

Christopher Moore's *Circle of Conflict* is an important tool which helps us to identify five of the most common sources - also called key drivers – of conflict which are:

- Data or information conflict
- Relationships conflict
- Values conflict
- Structural conflict
- Interest conflict.



# Causes of Conflict



Adapted from: Christopher Moore, *The Mediation Process*, Third Edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 2003.

## Data or Information Conflict



Caused by: lack of information; misinformation; differing views on what's relevant; different interpretations of data.

They occur when information is lacking, misinterpreted or hidden among the parties. Issues related to the access to information, as well as the discrepancy on the interpretation of data and information between the disputants fuel the conflict, considering that data and information are used by disputing parties to form opinions, make judgments, or reach agreements that cause tension between them (Moore, 1996).

Additionally, we must keep in mind that humans are very imperfect communicators and sometimes this imperfection can generate conflict. The main aspect to consider here is how difficult it is for individuals to share correct data about complex matters, particularly under emotionally difficult circumstances. Conflict frequently escalates because people act on the assumption that they have communicated certain information accurately when they have not (Mayer 2010).



**DATA OR INFORMATION CONFLICTS VARIETY OF SOURCES**

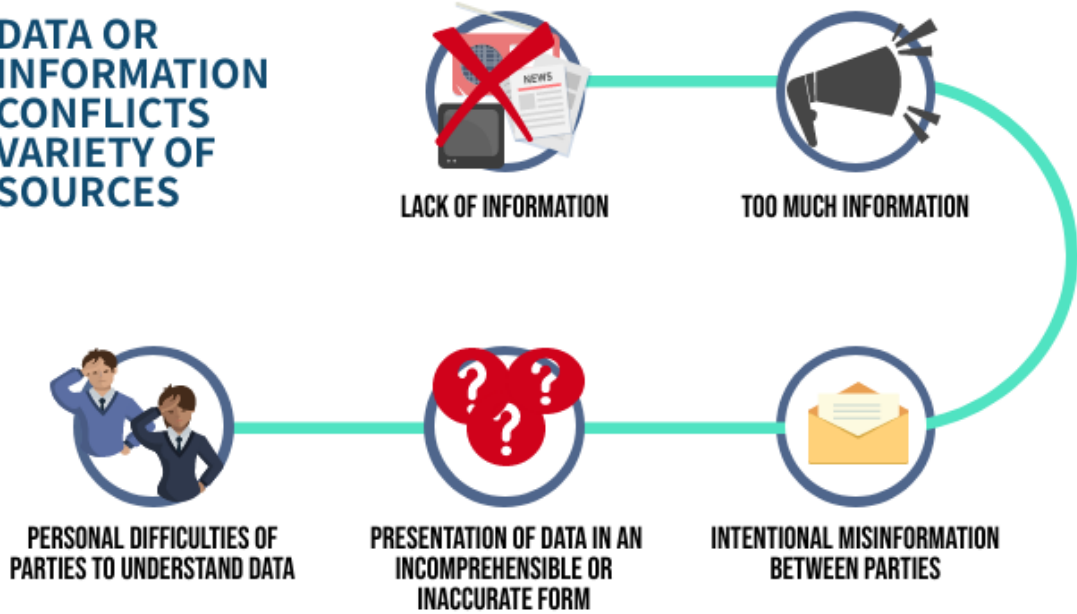


Figure 2 (Adaptation from Moore, 1996)

**Relationship conflicts**



Caused by: strong emotions; misperceptions/stereotypes; poor communications; historical negative past.

Relationship sources of conflict are grounded in parties' shared past. Old and new ties between individuals and groups influence parties' views on past attitudes and behaviors toward their current counterparts in a dispute (Nagev Council, 2014). It is important to underline that parties do not need to be personally or actively engaged in a historical event for it to influence how they think or act in a current conflict: the memory of past violations is enough to negatively influence present relationships. The relationships between or among people in conflict may also be affected by the persistence of tense disputes. In general, rivals may have long-term histories and relationships lasting a number of years, a lifetime, or generation: more grounded is the conflict in the litigants shared past, more the relationship is tense and difficult to resolve (Moore, 1996).



## SOME DETAILS ABOUT POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIP CONFLICTS:

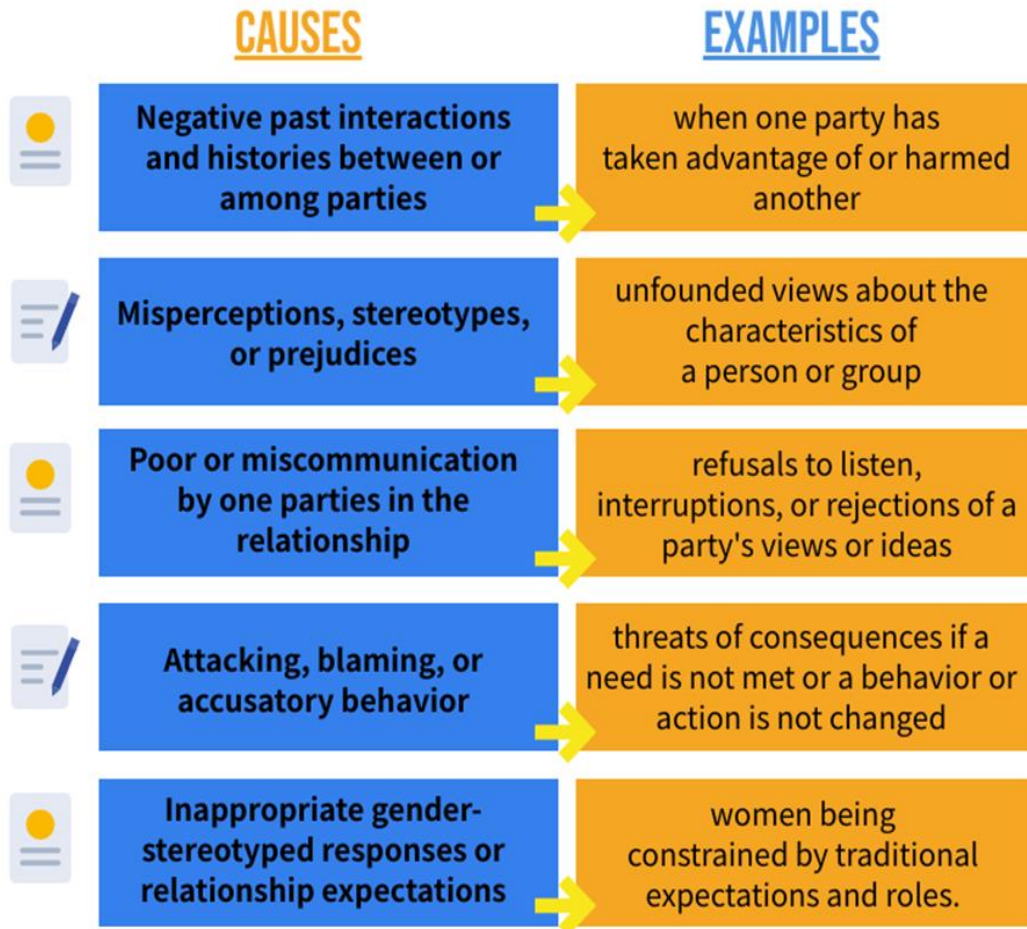


Figure 3 (Adaptation from Moore, 1996)

### Value conflicts



Caused by: different criteria for evaluating ideas or behavior; exclusive intrinsically valuable goals; different ways of life, ideology and religion.

Values are the beliefs we have about what is important, what distinguishes right from wrong and good from evil, and what principles should govern how we lead our lives. People rely on values to inform and guide their actions in the world and with each other. They are



commonly used and applied as standards and criteria to evaluate or judge their own views and actions of others.

**Definition of value:** a value is a central core ideal, principle, or standard held by an individual, group, organization, or other entity. Values are generally considered by those who hold them to be significant, have intrinsic worth, and be worthy of a commitment to promote or defend (Moore, 1996).

When a conflict is experienced as an issue of values, it becomes more tense and intransigent, as people identify themselves with their core beliefs. When the parties or individuals believe these values are under attack, they feel themselves attacked too. It is difficult for people to compromise when core beliefs are at stake, because they feel they are compromising their integrity (Mayer, 2010). The actual or perceived differences in values do not necessarily lead to conflict, it is when values are imposed on groups or groups are prevented from defending their value systems that conflict arises.

## FEATURES OF VALUE CONFLICT



MISUNDERSTANDINGS



MISTRUST



HOSTILE COMMUNICATION



NEGATIVE STEREOTYPING



NON-NEGOTIABILITY

Figure 4 (Adaptation from Moore, 1996)

### Structural conflicts



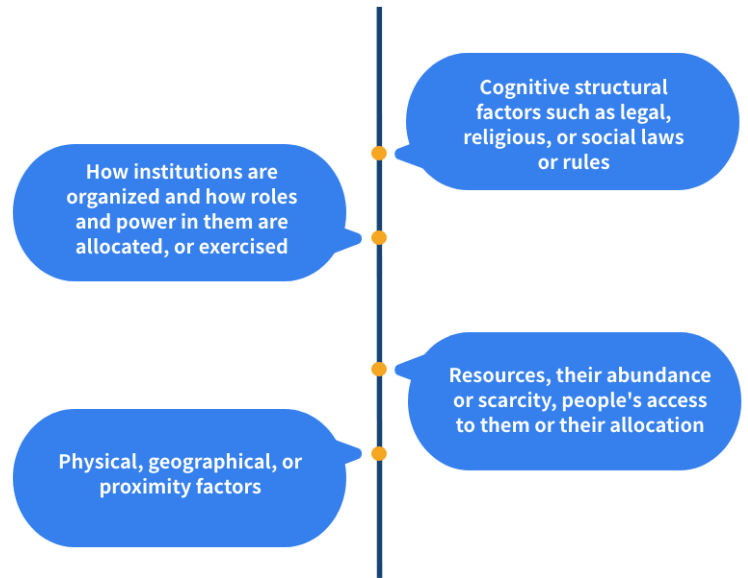
Caused by: destructive patterns of behavior; unequal control, ownership, distribution of resources; unequal power and authority; geographical, physical or environmental factors that hinder cooperation; time constraints.





The structure – the external framework in which a conflictual relationship between groups or individuals takes place - is another cardinal root of conflict. This type of conflict arises when, among parties, there is unequal or unfair distribution of power or resources justified by established institutions or frameworks such as the castes, religious and ethnic groups and so on (Mayer, 2010). Structural conflicts are based on significant differences in power and influence between disputing parties, unequal relationships, and might include forms of oppression or other serious offenses. Frequently, those who are affected by structural conflict have limited or no control over the factors constraining them (Moore, 1996).

**THE MOST COMMON STRUCTURAL FACTORS THAT MAY CREATE TENSIONS:**



**Resources** are often the **major structural sources of conflict**. Some areas where differences in resources may exist include:

- Control of resource such as money, land, property, mineral rights, or other valuable assets
- The occupation or possession of land, a house, or property in general
- The capacity to obtain desired resources in the future.

**Interest Conflict**



Caused by: perceived or actual competition over interests; content; procedures; perception of trust and fairness.

*(Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 5 (Adaptation from Moore, 1996)*

Interests are the needs that motivate the majority of people's actions, they refer to the political, economic, occupational, and social aspirations of individuals and groups which aims are what the parties engaged in the dispute are motivated to achieve. Groups may attempt to benefit only their own narrow interests, while breaching one of the others.





Interests can also be generated by competitive social situations that involve a win–lose dynamic: pursuing material interests, status, power, or privilege at the sacrifice of others is one of the clearest forms of conflict (Ho-Won Jeong, 2008).

In considering parties interests, we will find many types: short-term and long-term interests, individual and group interests, outcome-based interests and process interests, conscious and unconscious interests (Mayer, 2010; Moore, 1996).

## MOORE (1996) SUGGESTS THREE TYPES OF INTERESTS:

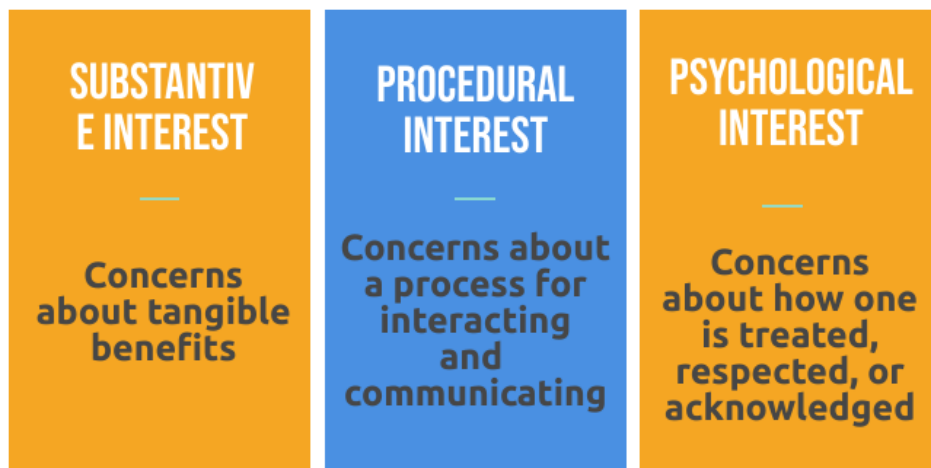


Figure 6



### III. Conflict Analysis and Tools

Each conflict greatly differs in many aspects and no conflict is identical as another. Therefore, the main purpose of a conflict analysis is to help to understand the many variables related to a specific conflict, from its causes to the actions of parties involved, going through the conflict's dynamics, trends and impacts. For this reason, it is fundamental to consider a multifaceted and multidimensional framework in order to comprise the different aspects of an existing conflict (Ho-Won Jeong, 2009).

Conflict analysis provides peacebuilders with the many information on an existing conflict in order to identify and prioritize the causes/consequences of violence and instability, to understand how existing programs interact with the factors linked to violence, and to determine where assistance can most effectively support local efforts to manage conflict and build peace. (Sandole, 2009).



Conflict analysis is defined as a practical process of examining and understanding the reality of a conflict from a variety of perspectives ).

(Fisher et al., 2000)

Something to think about!

Have you ever heard of conflict analysis? What are the key principles and elements that a conflict analysis should take into consideration? Write down what you believe an appropriate analysis should consider.

As for key principles, a conflict analysis needs to be (United Nations, 2016; Herbert, 2017):

- **Multilevel:** looking at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, regional, national and global levels, focusing on their complex interactions;
- **Multidisciplinary:** drawing on psychology, anthropology, politics, sociology, history, economics, law, philosophy, religion, etc.;
- **Multicultural:** identifying conflict as a worldwide phenomenon and conflict resolution as a cooperative international enterprise;
- **Participatory, collective and inclusive to locals;**
- **Flexible and timely:** up to date to changing situations and consistent *monitoring*.

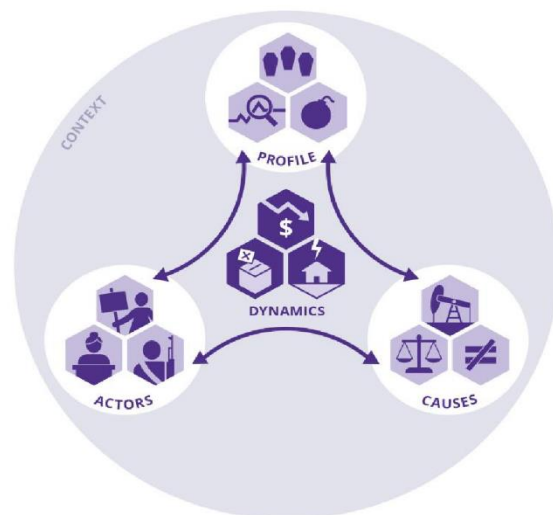
In addition to these principles, conflict analysis must be *balanced* and *comprehensive*, avoiding any kind of oversimplifications and misrepresentations of reality. Lastly, it needs to be *sensitive*, understanding the context in which it operates and avoid potentially exacerbating tensions among the parties involved (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016)[2].

Regarding how the conflict analysis is conducted, even if there is no “correct” method and each specific analysis should be purpose-driven and contextually specific, all of them should be based on a contextual knowledge of four core elements (United Nations, 2016; Oliva and Charbonnier 2016; Herbert, 2017):

1. **Situation Profile:** overview of the historic, political, social, economic and environmental context. It provides an introductory characterization of the context as well as an overall sense of the conflict, highlighting relevant key issues.
2. **Causal Analysis:** understanding the different layers of the causes and drivers of conflict (structural and proximate causes), identifying the key sources of tensions among the parties and the factors that could contribute to promote peace.
3. **Stakeholder Analysis:** who are the main parties that are directly or indirectly affected by the conflict; what is their role and power in the conflict; what are the relationships among them.
4. **Conflict Dynamics:** understanding the dynamics and trends of the conflict over time, allowing identifying its patterns, directions and potential negative or positive consequences.

Whereas the first three core elements are defined as *static*, the fourth is *dynamic*, focusing on the interactions among the static elements (background situation, conflict causes, and stakeholders involved).

In addition, it is important to stress that a conflict analysis should not be prescriptive or linear, as the core elements are strongly interconnected to each other (United Nations, 2016)





### III. Conflict Analysis Tools

Conflict analysis is usually conducted through several *tools* related to the different core elements examined [3]. Here, the focus will be placed on the *static* elements of the analysis (situation profile, causes and stakeholders), explaining the tools most used as starting points for each level of the analysis.

#### Situation Profile: Timeline

Regarding the situation profile, the *timeline* is certainly the most common and widespread tool, as it provides fundamental support to the early process of analysis and the later stages.

The timeline graphically presents the conflict's key events and phases on a set timeframe (years, months or days, depending on the scale), assisting the conflict analysts and stakeholders in examining the history and development of a conflict and improving their understanding of the sequence of events relevant to conflict.

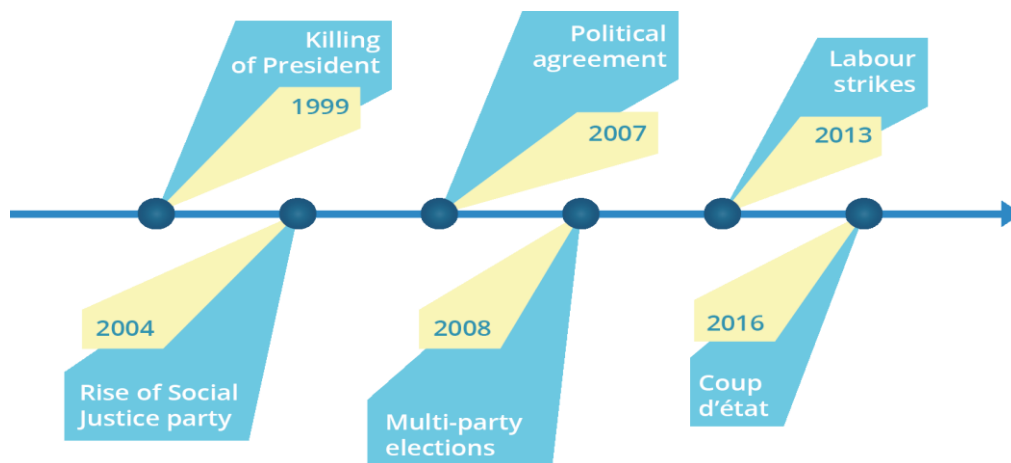


Figure 9 Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016

Since the different parties involved in the conflict may have different experiences and perceptions about their understanding of the conflict's history, the timeline serves as a tool for clarity among stakeholders and analysts, providing different perspectives and interpretations (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016) . For this reason, it would be appropriate to involve in this step all the direct and indirect parties of the conflict.



The timeline allows analysts whether there is a common perception of the conflicts history, or whether there is no single acknowledgement by the stakeholders.



Activity:

- 1) Choose a familiar conflict.
- 2) Create two columns: one is “date”, the other “event”.
- 3) Record the events. Review and reach an agreement on the events, checking order and dates.
- 4) Discuss/reflect on the history of the conflict (what have you learned, what are the most significant events, why, how events affected relationships among parties, why parties acted in a certain way, what are possible solutions?).

### Causal Analysis: Conflict Tree

Within the causal analysis of a conflict, the main purpose is to identify how and why the conflict has originated and developed over time. In other words, what have been the main factors and reasons that lay at the origins of the conflict and those that contributed to its escalation.

The *conflict tree* tool helps to identifying and differentiate such key conflict factors using the image of a tree: the roots represent the non-visible underlying and structural causes, the trunk represents the main manifest issue and proximate cause, the branches and leaves stand for the visible effects, symptoms and consequences of the conflict (Mason and Rychard, 2005; Council of Europe 2012, United Nations, 2016; Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016).



When possible, this tool is best used collectively rather than individually since it can encourage stimulating reflections on different perspectives.

The roots of the conflict tree are static factors that are difficult to be influenced on a short-time basis, requiring a long-term involvement in the prevention of structural violence. On the other end of the tree, the branches and leaves are dynamic factors, representing the escalation of the conflict that can be addressed through short-time timespan interventions.

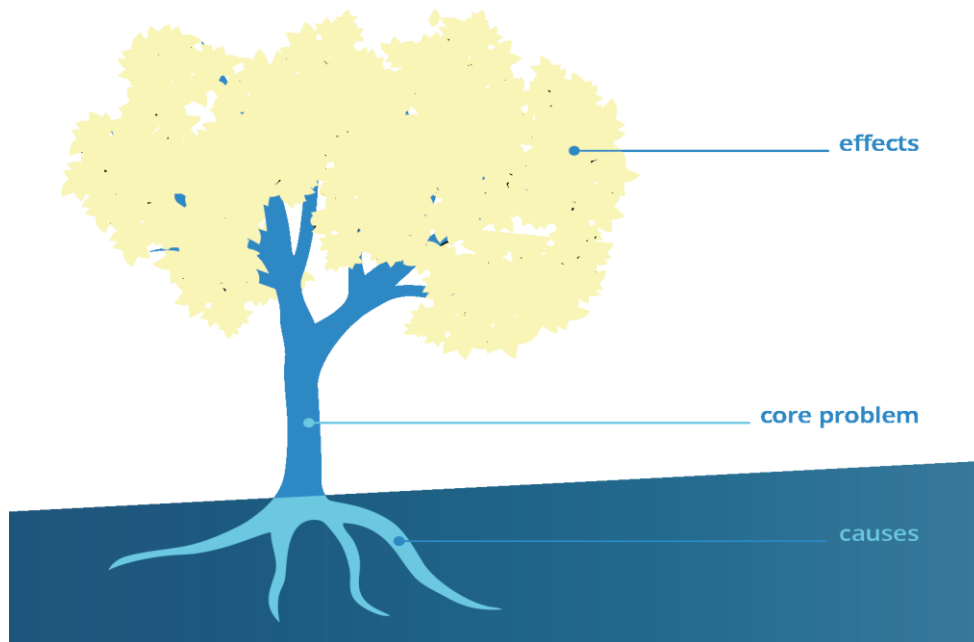


Figure 10 Conflict tree tool, Oliva and Charbonnier (2016), adapted from Fisher et al. (2000)

In this sense, the conflict tree effectively visualises how structural and dynamic factors are linked to each other and how they interact to lead to conflict (through the trunk, i.e. the core problem of the conflict). At the same time, the conflict tree clearly differentiates the time horizons of various conflict transformation approaches and interventions (Mason and Rychard, 2005).

ACTIVITY:

- 1) Choose the same conflict.
- 2) Draw the conflict tree, identify root causes, manifest issues (“topic/problem” of the conflict), dynamic factors.
- 3) Discuss the links between root causes and dynamic factors.

NB: There is no absolute “right” or “wrong”. Placement of factors is partly subjective, may be different in different conflicts, and may change over time. Nevertheless, try as a group to create a common snapshot of the conflict as the group sees it.

## Stakeholder Analysis: Onion Model

The analysis of stakeholders considers all the parties that directly and indirectly influence or are affected by the conflict at different levels, from local actors to regional, national and international. This level of analysis can define and discriminate different aspects of the stakeholders' involvement in the conflict, according to their degree of engagement (i.e. primary, secondary and external), their social level in which they operate (i.e. grass-roots, middle level, top level), and the type of actors they represent (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016).

Beyond the differentiation of the parties involved in the conflict, it is necessary to examine the specific attitudes of different stakeholders in terms of positions, interests and needs (so-called 'PIN'). The *onion model* is here brought into play, using the metaphor of the onion for visualising these three categories of behaviour for each specific actor.

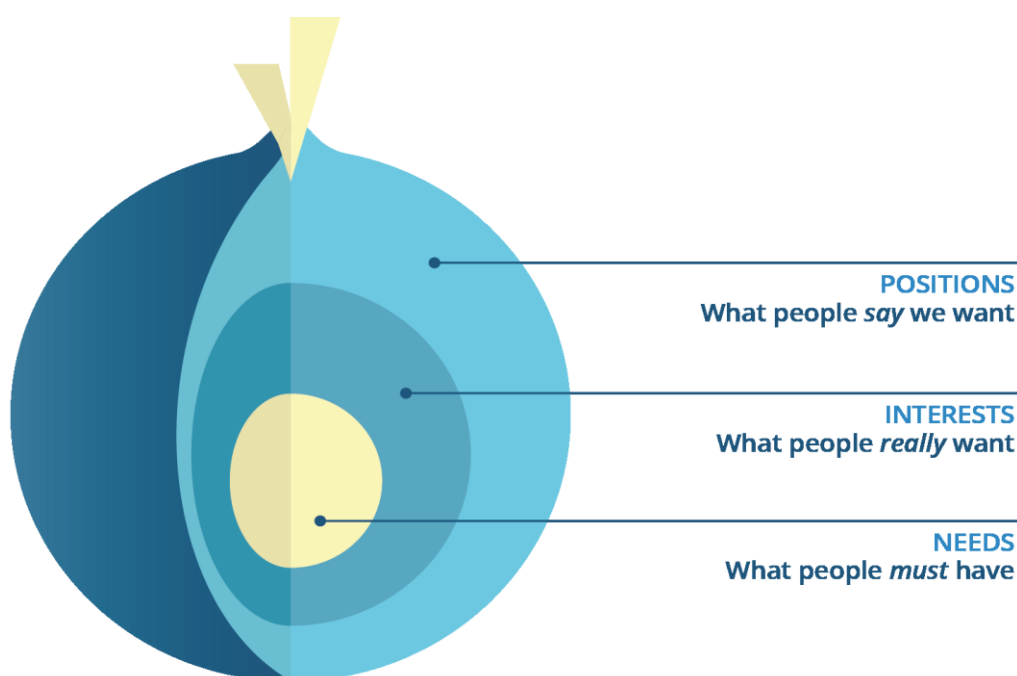


Figure 11 Onion tool, Oliva and Charbonnier (2016), adapted from Fisher et al. (2000)

The point of this tool is to demonstrate graphically that, although in a conflict there are many dynamics and layers to consider, only those on the surface are visible at first. Therefore, it is necessary to “peel away” as many layers as possible in order to reach the underlying needs that drive people’s actions, as they are substantially different from their interests and positions. (Council of Europe, 2012; Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016). The onion model is thus very important to understand the real needs of conflict parties, as they tend to hide them, often altering the perceptions and attitudes that drive their relations. In this sense, the model comes very useful to examine actors’ different behaviours in order to identify possible trade-offs (Herbert, 2017).





#### IV. Conflict Mapping

Conflict mapping is another methods used within a conflict analysis. When intervening in a conflict, conflict mapping represents an important resource to better understand its context, dynamics and actors involved. In the words of Paul Wehr (1979, 18), conflict mapping “gives both the intervenor and the conflict parties a clearer understanding of the origins, nature, dynamics and possibilities for resolution of the conflict.”

In a way, it is like taking a snapshot of the conflict at a given moment in time. Due to the inherently mutable nature of conflict, then, the results are relevant only for a limited amount of time, but can be extremely useful to take a step back, and look at the conflict in a more objective way (Lyamouri-Bajja, et al. 2012).

The Wehr Conflict Map (1979) is one of the most well-known and comprehensive guides for conflict assessment, including many different items of the conflict in its roadmap (Wehr, 2006; IGNOU, 2017; Search for Common Ground, 2013):

1. **Conflict history and context:** information about the origins and major events that have shaped the conflict, as well as about the scope and character of the context.
2. **Parties:** parties differ in their involvement in the conflict and on how much they have at stake. Primary parties are those whose goals are (or are perceived to be) incompatible and who directly interact in the conflict. Secondary parties have an indirect stake in the outcome of the conflict; they are often allies of the primary parties. Third parties are interested in the successful resolution of the conflict: they are usually mediators and peacekeeping forces.
3. **Issues:** conflicts arise because one or more issues emerge between the actors. In general, we can distinguish between fact-based issues, values-based issues, interested-based issues, and non-realistic issues [1].
4. **Dynamics:** the dynamics of a conflict are always changing and may not always be predictable. However, if identified, they help the intervener understand the conflict.[2]
5. **Functions:** the functions of a conflict refer to the positive consequences that a conflict may be having for the opposing parties.
6. **Regulation potentials:** each conflict includes resources to either limit the conflict or resolving it. Internal limiting factors, external limiting factors, interested or neutral third parties, and techniques of conflict management are examples of such resources.[3]

Besides Wehr’s model, many other models have been developed on the topic, and often more than one is used depending on the case. In general, it is important to remember that while conflict mapping is a powerful tool of conflict analysis and can help visualize the



- **Behavior** (physical violence) on the top corner: it refers to the actions undertaken by the actors involved and is the most visible aspect of conflict. Because people react in different ways to conflicts, behavior can include many different elements. Non-action is also one of them, as avoiding action can sometimes have important consequences on a conflict and its development;
- **Attitude** (cultural violence) on the left corner: it refers to the values, feelings and emotions that each actor has about him/herself, as well as towards the other actor; it includes as well the perceptions that each party may have towards the conflict. These perceptions usually differ between the parties and can also change as the conflict escalate;
- **Contradiction** (structural violence) on the right corner: it refers to the cause of the conflict, the issue around which the disagreement emerged. According to the model, there are three main types of “contradictions”: distribution, that is, competition over the resources allocated among the parties; position, namely the competition over a position which can only be hold by one person at a time; and order, which occurs when there is disagreement over the rules that should be followed to regulate an organization, a political system, etc.

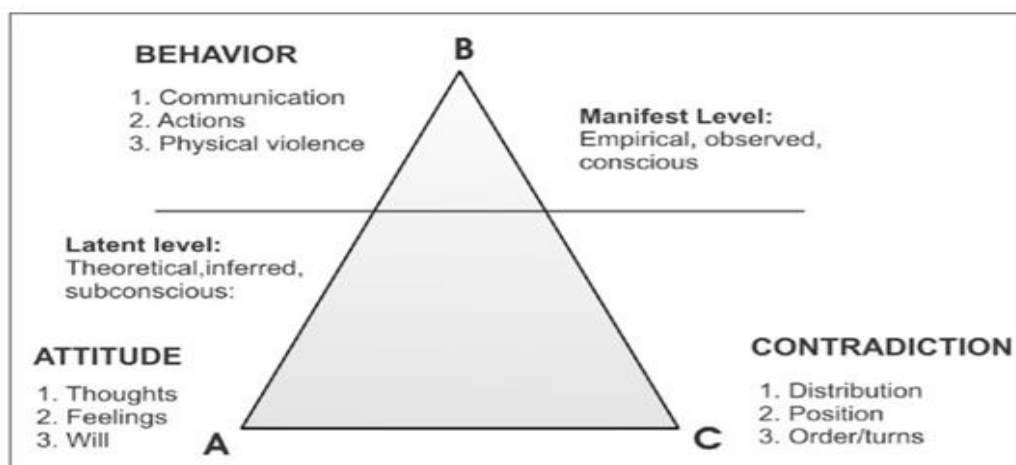


Figure 5. The Conflict Triangle, Galtung J., *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*, Sage, London, 1997, p. 72

As the figure suggests, these three components are extremely interconnected, which means that they all need to be taken into account when analyzing a conflict. In fact, a conflict can start at any corner, but it can also be stopped at any corner. For instance, a dispute may arise when one party behaves in a way that may be offensive from the other party's point of view or is not understood. However, looking at the cause of the conflict can help understand the reasons behind that behavior, and addressing that cause, then, will solve the conflict.



A metaphor that is also often used to understand the three dimensions of conflict, is that of an *iceberg* (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016): the tip of the iceberg, the visible part, is represented by the direct and violent behaviors, while underneath the surface of the water we find what is not immediately visible, which are the values and beliefs of each party (attitudes), as well as the root causes of the conflict (contradictions). If we only look at the tip of the iceberg, we fail to understand what is really behind a certain action, and we may risk repeating the same pattern, and solving the conflict only temporarily.

Something to think about!

Choose a conflict where you were recently involved. Can you tell from what corner it began? And in which corner it ended? Could you have chosen a different path to resolve the conflict?

### The Conflict Pyramid (A Lederach's Model)

The Conflict Pyramid is a model introduced by John Paul Lederach in the context of peacebuilding interventions. When deciding what approach would be appropriate to building peace, we first need to understand who acts at what level and what actions are more suited for each level. Hence, this tool is especially useful to identify the actors involved in a conflict, as well as their level of influence and power, and it can be applied to different settings (Lyamouri-Bajja, et al. 2012).

Three are the levels identified by Lederach (1997):

- **The top elite:** is populated by the actors who occupy a key position in the society and are the leaders of the conflict. They comprise government officials, military, and religious leaders. While they are the main actors involved in the decision-making processes, as a result of their high-profile status, they are also highly visible, which means that they must maintain an image of strength at all times, and cannot settle for anything less than their publicly stated goals;
- **The middle-range:** is made up of actors who are in leadership positions, but are not connected with formal government or major opposition movements. Larger than the top-elite but less than the grassroots, this level includes leaders of the civil society, academics, and experts in different sectors, such as health, education, or agriculture.
- **The grassroots:** is the largest group, representing the masses. They are leaders of local NGOs, indigenous communities, youth and women's groups; they can also be activists, and, in some cases, elders.

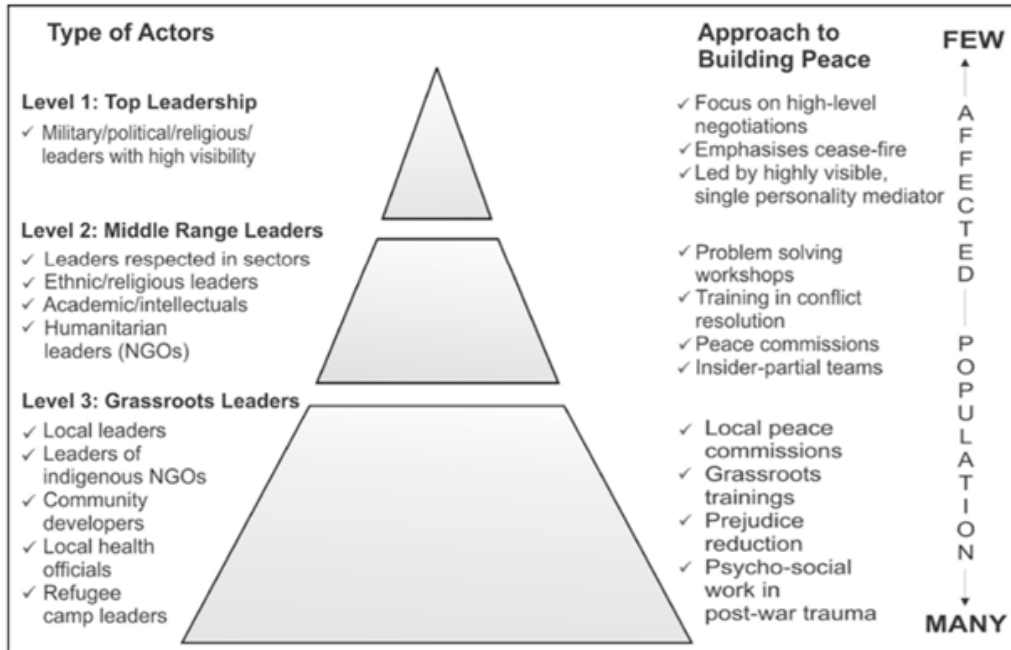


Figure 4. "Peace-Building Pyramid" from Lederach J. P., *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, 1997, p. 39.

Figure 14

Given the different position in the conflict, each level will play a different role in the peacebuilding process, and different approaches must be adopted at each level (Maiese, 2003). Top-level approaches will aim at advancing political negotiations among elites; middle-level approaches will be directed towards the establishment of relationships across the line of conflict; and grassroots approaches will focus on community-level initiatives that are instrumental in helping people deal with the trauma of war.

All these three levels and respective approaches are fundamental in building a comprehensive framework for peacebuilding. However, according to Lederach, the top-elite and grassroots levels usually receive the greatest attention in the resolution of a conflict (Oliva and Charbonnier, 2016), to the expenses of the middle-range leaders, which in turn would be extremely effective in building peace thanks to their unique position in society, linking together the highest and grassroots level.

Something to think about!

Try to apply the Pyramid model to a conflict you have experienced either directly or indirectly. Can you name an actor for each level? Which actor was easier to identify? Why?



## Summary

This model has shown different causes of the conflict and conflict analyses tools. It discussed why conflict may arise between humans or group of people and what underlying reasons are for it. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this discussion is that one conflict cases can have a different causes at the same time. The reason for this is that conflict is never a simple process. It is very complex phenomena with its dynamics and layers. This is why it is very important to analyse each conflict cases in depth when we would like to deal with it. For such occasions, peacebuilders are using different conflict analyses tools such as conflict tree, Onion Model tools. Youth workers also may use conflict mapping as a tool to analyse conflicts at different levels to successfully approach each conflict cases in our everyday life.