CONFLICT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Version 2.0

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) was created in 2002 to expand and improve USAID's capacity to address the causes and consequences of violent conflict. One of CMM's first tasks was to create the USAID Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF).

I am pleased to say that the original CAF was and remains a prime example of USAID's technical leadership and intellectual excellence in American foreign policy and development assistance. The CAF provided users in USAID and beyond with a rigorous and straightforward approach for analyzing and responding to dynamics of violent conflict. At the time of its publication, it was a synthesis of the best that scholarship and practice had to offer.

The CAF remains an excellent resource for our field and the issues it addresses remain relevant today. Deadly conflict continues to exert an unconscionable impact on people's lives and livelihoods, especially in developing countries. Today, 1.5 billion people live in conflict-affected states. Global insecurity continues to threaten U.S. national security and prosperity, and careful diagnosis of conflict dynamics remains a critical first step to effective action through foreign assistance.

Yet, much has also changed over the last 10 years and since the release of the CAF. CMM has conducted over 60 conflict assessments in every region where USAID operates, informing agency policy, strategic planning, programming, and implementation. Our collective understanding of conflict dynamics and their impact has evolved and deepened. Today, developing countries and donors alike recognize the extent to which deadly conflict affects development. In its worst manifestations, violent conflict is development in reverse.

That is why it is so important that the practice of conflict assessment and analysis has now been institutionalized across the U.S. Government and the international development community. Policy documents such as the first Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) and the USAID Policy Framework 2011–2015 show that conflict assessment is at the nexus of the "3D" approach to foreign affairs linking development, diplomacy, and defense. This approach is increasingly being adopted by other donor institutions, informed to a large degree by USAID's experience and thought leadership.

The time has come to update and revise the CAF. This publication presents a framework for conceptualizing development, peace, and security in the interest of more effective and sustainable development action. While the basic intellectual and practical approach remains the same, the revised CAF reflects today's intellectual and policy environment. It provides substantially more guidance on the practice of conducting assessments and generating practical recommendations that seek not only to mitigate conflict drivers but also to bolster social and institutional resilience, effectiveness, and legitimacy.

We have dubbed this revision the "CAF 2.0." The numbering is purposeful—based on the recognition that there is more to learn and that there will be further improvements and refinements in the future. With that caveat in mind, I hope you will agree with me that the CAF 2.0 will significantly advance the assessment capabilities and accelerate the adoption of conflict-sensitive approaches to development. In so doing, we will be better poised to advance the long-term security and well-being of the developing world and the United States.

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Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation
USAID

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1.
INTRODUCTION

Development is a process of economic, social, and political change. Development expands people's choices, broadens their opportunities to prosper, and increases their sense of security from disease, poverty, disaster, and violence. Change, however, creates struggle between old and new, competition for power and resources, debate over what has happened, and what should come next. In short, conflict is inherent to the process of development. As it strives to be the world's premier development agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) must consider conflict in the context of any intervention.

Of course, conflict itself is not a problem. It occurs naturally in all human relationships and societies. It is a necessary outcome of different people pursuing their interests and exercising their freedom, and it can be a powerful force for positive change and growth. It can drive innovation and motivate performance, encourage partnerships, and induce efforts to reduce injustice.

When conflict becomes violent, however, the effect on human well-being is disastrous. War is development in reverse. Armed conflict destroys lives, wastes capital, and directs scarce resources away from productive uses. According to The World Bank's *World Development Report 2011*, some 366,000 people were killed in civil war battles between 2000 and 2008.[1] This same source notes that, as of the end of 2009, 42 million people were displaced as a result of conflict, violence, or human rights abuses.[2] The average cost of a typical civil war to a country and its neighbors is roughly $64 billion.[3] Additionally, in the immediate aftermath of a civil war, economic output declines by an average of six percent.[4]

> War is development in reverse.

Negative outcomes are not confined to the direct targets of attacks. According to World Bank calculations, people living in countries currently affected by violence are twice as likely to be undernourished and 50 percent more likely to be impoverished than their counterparts in peaceful countries. Their children are three times as likely to be out of school.[5] Over the last three decades, poverty rates have been 20 percentage points higher in countries affected by repeated cycles of violence. For every year of violence in a country, poverty reduction lags by nearly one percentage point.[6]

The effects of mass violence extend well beyond the borders of a state involved in civil war. Countries lose an estimated 0.7 percent of their annual GDP for each neighbor involved in armed conflict—as reported in the *World Development Report 2011*—and their own risk of civil war onset increases considerably.[7]

More than a billion people live in conflict-affected, post-conflict, or fragile countries. These same countries receive approximately half of all U.S. foreign assistance.[8]

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1   The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*. (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011), 336–337.

2   The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*, 61.

3   Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

4   Valerie Cerra and Sweta C. Saxena, "Growth Dynamics: The Myth of Economic Recovery," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 98, No. 1 (2008).

5   The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*, 5.

6   The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*, 4.

7   Jack Goldstone, et al. "A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (2010).

8   U.S. Department of State and U. S. Agency for International Development, *Leading Through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. State Department, 2010), 122.

Development and humanitarian assistance can play a powerful role in reducing conflict risks and shaping the trajectories—or possible alternative futures—of fragile states. Indeed, one study in sub-Saharan Africa found that a 10 percent increase in aid to an African country reduces conflict risk by eight percent.[9] Even without specifically targeting key drivers of conflict, development aid not only has the potential to prevent conflict and save lives, but also to conserve and grow resources as well. Indeed, effective aid can create new sources of income in post-conflict settings, which one study estimated a ratio of benefits to costs of 3.5 to 1.[10] At the same time, economic and political progress is often accompanied by societal strains that can engender conflict. There may be more competition for scarce resources, dissatisfaction with a lack of jobs for better educated youth, and increased corruption when valuable resources are discovered or exploited.

> Development and humanitarian assistance can play a powerful role in reducing conflict risks and shaping the trajectories— or possible alternative futures—of fragile states.

For the benefits of development assistance to be secure in the long term, the very real risk of conflict onset and recurrence must be mitigated. This is no small feat. The vast majority—roughly 80 to 90 percent—of conflicts that became active in the last decade were in fact recurring conflicts.[11] And when USAID operates in fragile or conflict-affected environments, it must ensure that its operations do not produce inadvertent negative consequences, such as by entrenching existing patterns of grievance or enabling key conflict mobilizers.

Experience has consistently shown that preparing a conflict analysis is a critical first step in crafting a development and humanitarian assistance program that effectively prevents conflict or speeds recovery and that is designed to 'do no harm.'[12]

Box 1 – Aid and Conflict

Fifty-seven percent of all USAID-administered overseas development assistance (ODA) goes to fragile and conflict-affected countries. Similarly, according to a 2010 report from IRIN, the independent news service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Some 71 percent of aid in 1999-2008 was spent in conflict-affected states." The OCHA report goes on to explore the link between development and security, "Non-humanitarian donor spending on conflict-resolution and peace and security-related activities increased 20-fold between 1998 and 2008, particularly in the areas of peacebuilding and security sector reform, compared with the doubling of humanitarian assistance over the same period."

SOURCES: USAID (2012), IRIN (2010), Global Humanitarian Assistance Report (2010)

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9   Joppa de Ree and Eleonora Nillesen, "Aiding Violence or Peace? The impact of foreign aid on the risk of civil conflict in sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Development Economics* 88 (2009): 302.

10   Paul Collier, Lisa Chauvet and Haavard Hegre, "The Security Challenge in Conflict Prone Countries," April 2008. Available at: http://basepub.dauphine.fr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/5399/security_chauvet.PDF;jsessionid=8AFDC4I7308A45I26CF7IC5IACD4087E?sequence=1.

11   The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*, 2.

12   James Putzel, *Do No Harm: International Support for Statebuilding* (Paris: OECD, 2010). See the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. Available at: http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/. See also the Collaborative Learning Project's "Do No Harm" project. Available at: http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/project_profile.php?pid=DNH&pname=Do%20No%20Harm.

1.1 Why Assess?

A conflict assessment is an analytical process undertaken to identify and understand the dynamics of violence and instability. The CAF 2.0 represents USAID's unique methodological approach for implementing a conflict assessment to help its USAID Missions and operating units better evaluate the risks for armed conflict, the peace and security goals that are most important in a given country context, how existing development programs interact with these factors, how the programs may (inadvertently) be doing harm, and where and how development and humanitarian assistance can most effectively support local efforts to manage conflict and to build peace.

The CAF 2.0 provides a rigorous framework for collecting and analyzing data in an objective manner that can be applied uniformly across conflict settings. The importance of a tool that facilitates dispassionate and objective analysis of conflict cannot be overstated. Conflicts necessarily involve at least two perspectives on an issue or dispute. To avoid unwanted negative outcomes from assistance, such as inadvertently supporting one side against the other, it is essential for international actors to develop an independent, objective view of the conflict. A conflict assessment is a tool to facilitate this process. To be successful, therefore, assessment teams and those who work with them should adopt sound procedures and structures to uphold intellectual honesty and integrity throughout the process, to maintain transparency in the methodology, and to protect sensitive information when it is disclosed. As discussed elsewhere, it is also imperative to actively seek information from diverse stakeholders in a given context.

> **Box 2 – ICAF and Other Assessment Frameworks**
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> The CAF 2.0 is complementary to the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF). The latter is an analytical tool designed to enable a team comprised of a variety of U.S. Government (USG) agency representatives (the "interagency") to assess conflict situations systematically and collaboratively and to prepare for interagency planning for conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization. Although they are adapted to different purposes, the ICAF and various other U.S. Government frameworks all work from fundamentally similar diagnostic premises, models, and terminology.

> The importance of a tool that facilitates dispassionate and objective analysis of conflict cannot be overstated.

Taliban fighters stand near their weapons after they joined Afghanistan government forces during a ceremony in Herat in December 2011. (AREF KARIMI/AFP)

Box 3 – What is the Difference between Conflict Sensitivity, Conflict Management, Conflict Mitigation, Conflict Prevention, and Peacebuilding?

Conflict sensitivity, *conflict management*, *conflict mitigation*, *conflict prevention*, and *peacebuilding* are terms with similar but distinct meanings. Understanding the nuances is important to the diagnosis of and response to conflict, and it is essential for proper application of the CAF 2.0.

Conflict sensitivity refers to the ability of an organization to: (1) understand the context in which it is operating, particularly with respect to inter-group relations; (2) understand the interactions between its interventions and the context/group relations; and (3) act upon these understandings in a way that avoids negative impacts and maximizes positive impacts vis-à-vis the conflict. These effects could be knock-on effects of the program/project impact, or could arise from operational aspects of the implementation. All development activities should be conflict-sensitive, but only some are designed to directly mitigate/manage conflict.

Conflict management activities explicitly aim to address the causes and consequences of conflict, but they are often implemented within a traditional development sector, such as within programs that address democracy and governance, environment, or economic growth. Many of these activities also lay the groundwork for significant longer-term results, and work to build the underlying institutions and systems of resilience that provide alternatives to violence. For example, *conflict management* efforts might include improving the governance of high-value natural resources that are linked to existing political or armed conflict; employment programs designed to reduce the number of available recruits for militias; or post-conflict reconstruction efforts to restore livelihoods. Such activities can also operate as a stand-alone program within a development portfolio.

Conflict mitigation activities seek to reduce the threat or impact of violent conflict, religious and political extremism, and widespread instability. Such activities promote peaceful resolution of differences, mitigate violence if it has already broken out, or establish a framework for peace and reconciliation in an ongoing conflict. Many, but not all, mitigation activities phase out shortly after the instability, or conflict, has abated and stability is reestablished. Projects that strengthen conflict early warning or response, formal and informal peace process undertakings, and various types of reconciliation programs serve as examples of conflict mitigation activity.

Conflict prevention activities attempt to resolve incompatibilities between groups in conflict before outbreaks of violence. From a long-term structural perspective, conflict prevention activities attempt to address the root causes of conflict by ameliorating the deleterious impact of poverty, gender inequalities, or grievances related to access to natural resources. There can sometimes be considerable overlap between the concepts of *conflict prevention* and *conflict mitigation*.

Finally, the terms *conflict management*, *conflict mitigation*, and *conflict prevention* are often used interchangeably to describe *peacebuilding* activities. In this document, *conflict response* is a term used to denote *both* conflict sensitive programming and peacebuilding programming.

SOURCES: Woodrow and Chigas (2009), Conflict Sensitivity Consortium (2004)

A USAID conflict assessment consists of two stages:

1. Diagnosis – An analysis of political, economic, social, and security factors at work within a given country context, with a focus on core grievances and resiliencies; analysis of how key actors mobilize grievances and resiliencies to drive or mitigate conflict; forecasting how these dynamics and related trends might evolve in the future; and anticipating potential triggers or turning points.

2. Formulation of response recommendations – A strategic analysis of existing programming to assess gaps and opportunities with respect to the conflict dynamics. Based on a prioritization of issues and identification of suitable points of entry or leverage, this analysis yields recommendations for response options that support conflict prevention, management, or mitigation.

The analysis is informed by practical consideration of organizational mandate, operational goals, resources, and constraints of USAID Missions.

During the diagnosis, an assessment team will apply a framework to analyze the dynamics in a country that are leading to instability or violent conflict, or, alternatively, that contribute to maintaining peace and stability. In general, the stronger the conflict drivers are, and the weaker the mitigating factors, the greater the risk that violent conflict will occur. After examining the current conflict dynamics, the conflict assessment framework is used as a guide to trace various trajectories of the present into the future. The assessment team will work from the evidence base to articulate possible future scenarios that could lead to changes in a country's risk of violent conflict.

During the response, the assessment team draws on the first stage's rich analysis and consults with the USAID Mission, or operating unit, to formulate actionable options and recommendations. Depending on the intended use, the response stage could: contribute to strategic planning, such as through a Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS); be used to adapt an existing portfolio, such as through 'pivoting' current programs to make them more conflict sensitive; or be used to design new development initiatives. Only rarely do assessments lead to the design of stand-alone programs targeting conflict specifically. More often, the intended goal is to apply development resources in a conflict-sensitive way. *Finally, for more information on assessment planning and implementation, please refer to the CAF 2.0 Application Guide.*

1.2 When to Assess

Conducting a conflict assessment can add value to planning processes in all circumstances and country contexts. The CDCS process is a highly opportune time to undertake a conflict assessment, especially for countries identified as being vulnerable to instability and fragility.

Conflict assessments are recommended in situations of escalating violence, outright war, or post-conflict reconstruction, but they can also shed light on the underlying conditions that support radical or extremist movements, or that fuel pervasive instability short of full-scale conflict. In this latter regard, conflict assessments can complement large-scale program design or evaluation processes.

Even if a country has not experienced violent conflict in the past, conflict assessments can highlight potential areas of concern and can help development programs begin to address destabilizing trends before they reach a stage of crisis. Similarly, the factors leading to the outbreak of violence do not disappear once a peace agreement has been signed. In fact, in cases such as Guatemala's, levels of violence have actually increased following the official termination of hostilities.[13] By helping to prevent conflicts and ensure conflict-sensitive aid, conflict assessments can help USAID to exert greater leverage in terms of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of U.S. foreign assistance.

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13   The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011.*

1.3 What to Assess

For this document, and most conflict assessments in the field, the unit of analysis is the country or nation-state. The vast majority of violent conflicts since 1945 have been intrastate rather than interstate in nature and, as such, the USG is far more likely to find itself responding to a civil war than one directly between or among states (although states frequently intervene in other states' internal conflicts).

Furthermore, USAID Missions generally operate on a country-by-country basis, with some regional offices. Given that these Missions are the main intended audiences and beneficiaries of conflict assessment reports, these assessments also usually focus on the country level.

This consideration notwithstanding, the concepts outlined in this framework may be applied fruitfully to cases of interstate conflict, as well as to subregional conflicts. The framework can also be used to examine subnational conflicts, such as in Mindanao in the Philippines, Aceh in Indonesia, Manipur or Assam in India, the Niger Delta or Plateau State in Nigeria, and so forth.

Figure 1 – Active Armed Conflict, 1946–2010
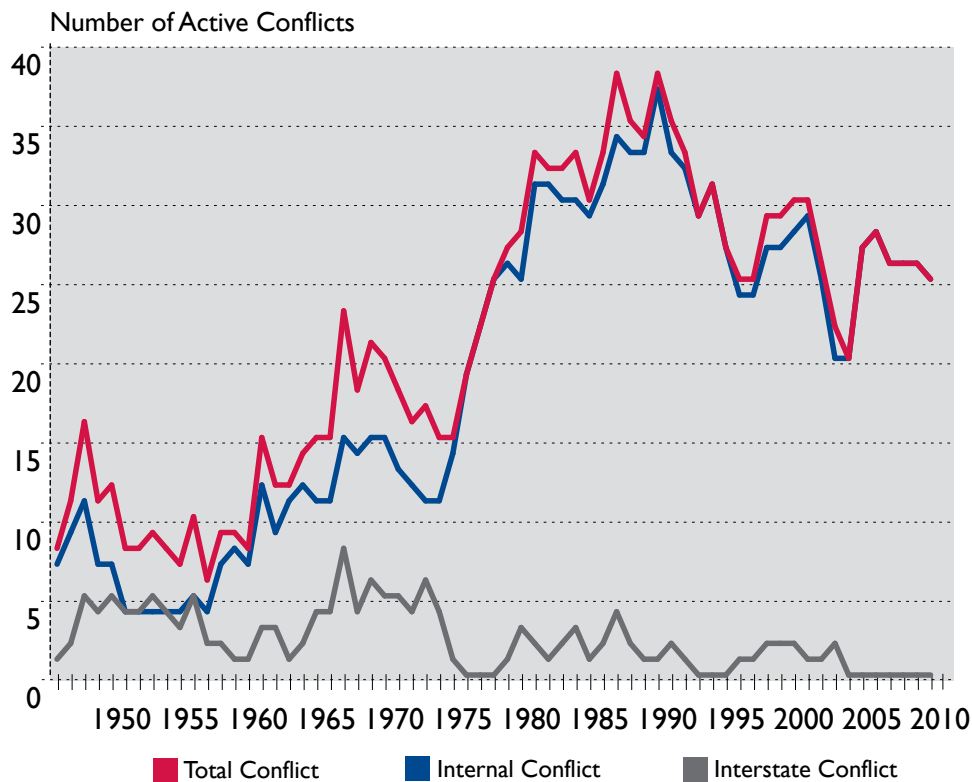
NOTE: Data on armed conflict have been obtained from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (http://www.ucdp.uu.se). This graph has been adapted from Peace and Conflict 2012 (Hewitt, Wilkenfeld, and Gurr, 2012)

1.4 About this Document

The present document describes the revised conflict assessment framework (CAF 2.0), which was developed and applied by CMM in support of its technical leadership agenda. Its purpose is to inform USAID staff and development partners who will be undertaking and utilizing conflict assessments in the course of their work. As such, USAID, its contractors, and its grantees constitute the principal intended audience for the document. However, it has also been made publicly available for the benefit of other U.S. Government agencies, the broader policy community, academic and research institutions, and independent scholars and practitioners of international development and peacebuilding.

The document is organized into four chapters. Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 provides an orientation that presents the core terminology and concepts that provide an analytical foundation for the conflict assessment. Chapter 3 presents the first of two stages in a conflict assessment: the diagnosis. This chapter describes the framework for analyzing current conflict dynamics and future trajectories. Chapter 4, the final chapter, describes the second stage: the development of response options and

recommendations for the client Mission or operating unit. Chapter 4 also addresses the strategic and practical considerations that the assessment team must take into account.

In addition, two annexes have been provided to readers: a listing of illustrative questions that guide inquiry into the main conflict dynamics and an analysis tool for assessing key actors (i.e. key mobilizers) involved in conflict.

As mentioned earlier, this publication should be read in conjunction with its companion document, the *CAF 2.0 Application Guide,* which provides concrete guidance for teams undertaking USAID conflict assessments, including for planning and logistics, field work, data collection, synthesis, writing, and reporting. Throughout the present document, readers will note several common features:

- First, key concepts are accompanied by real world examples that are intended to provide a useful illustration of the idea. The case of Nigeria is referred to throughout the document. Nigeria is also used as a core case study in the Advanced Conflict Assessment Training module that CMM developed as a complement to this document. The result is a consistent example across chapters and products.

- Second, careful use of terminology is essential to successful application of the framework. ***Italicized bold font*** draws attention to key terms when their definition or explanation first appears. Regular *italics* are also used to draw attention to other important phrases or terms.

- Third, text boxes appear regularly throughout the document. The purpose of this highlighted content is to introduce social science research or core policy that has informed the development of the CAF 2.0.

2

ORIENTATION: CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Conflict is endemic to human societies. Conflict arises when people hold incompatible needs, interests, desires, and objectives and, thus, it is a natural outcome of the competition for scarce resources that occurs in human societies across the world. Conflict occurs within families, communities, workplaces, nations, regions and, indeed, within individuals. It may be managed constructively or destructively; it is possible to resolve conflicts peacefully, through negotiation and cooperation, as well as violently through force or threat.

Shan State Army soldiers with machine guns stand by after heavy fighting with Myanmar troops last week at Shan State on the Myanmar border on 15 Febuary 2001. (PORNCHAI KITTIWONGSAKUL/AFP)

When two political parties disagree over the allocation of resources in a government budget, for example, they are in conflict. In a state with functioning institutions, conflict may be resolved through mutual discussion and compromise, or through competition, which occurs at the ballot box in electoral democracies.

In some sense, violence is one tool among many to satisfy one's objectives. As the German military strategist Clausewitz famously remarked, "War is politics by other means." But, as tools go, violence is rarely an optimal choice for reasons detailed in the introduction to this guide. It is expensive, difficult to organize or maintain, and carries substantial risks for all involved. Partly because of the costs associated with it, violence is generally a last resort for most political actors and is limited to situations where people perceive a great threat—real or imagined—to their basic needs for survival, food and shelter, security, or identity.

> ## Box 7 – Armed Conflict
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> A USAID conflict assessment is primarily concerned with large-scale violent conflict and war because that is the type of conflict that is most destructive to human well-being and prosperity and, thus, to the agency's developmental and humanitarian objectives. Furthermore, preventing or mitigating armed conflict through development and diplomatic resources is generally a relatively cost-effective, life-saving means of furthering American interests abroad and maintaining global security.

Unfortunately, peacefully managing or resolving conflicts is challenging, especially when many different parties and interests are involved, as is the case with major disputes on the national or international stage. Although additional parties may increase the possibilities for creative settlement options, each new party at the negotiating table increases the complexity and difficulty of negotiations, and further obscures the path to a viable solution that satisfies everyone. And, of course, there are often parties who benefit from prolonging the conflict, or who stand to gain by manipulating it to their advantage.

Thus, in human societies, conflict management—like development—is fundamentally political. It is a function of the behavior of large numbers of people whose collective action, or inaction, must be channeled toward some end, such as the selection of political leader, the passage of laws or rules, or the allocation of shared resources. Indeed, democracy, governance, law, arbitration, mediation, and so forth are all mechanisms for channeling social conflict into non-violent forms of negotiation and competition. Different social, political, and institutional environments may have different arrangements for managing conflicts and resolving disputes peacefully. In addition to electoral processes, or finding recourse through formal state institutions, the peaceful resolution of conflict can also include very informal, face-to-face negotiations. These may take place in societies based on small kinship groups, as well as patronage-based arrangements in more complex societies where public institutions are still highly personalized. The challenge is not just to understand sources of conflict, but also the institutional arrangements that exist in a given society to manage violence, to resolve disputes, and to organize collective action. It is also critical to understand what obstacles to effective collective action may exist.

Like politics generally, large-scale armed conflict is complex. Frequently, it involves multiple related but distinct disputes; some are more fundamental than others. The nature of these disputes, and the needs and interests underlying them, are themselves often contingent upon wider contextual factors that are liable to change over time. Similarly, parties in a competition, violent or peaceful, adopt a series of tactics and positions to advance their interests. In some cases, particularly when the interests of key actors differ from those they claim to represent, a key actor may purposefully hide or deflect their intentions through rhetoric.

Hence, the first task of conflict management is to distinguish the symptoms of the conflict from its sources. The latter are the fundamental disputes at the root of the conflict. To prevent or resolve a conflict, the parties involved usually must satisfy their needs and interests, at least minimally. In other words, the sources of conflict must be addressed, just as a doctor tries to treat the disease and not just the symptoms.

For example, in Jos, Nigeria, Christian and Muslim communities frequently clash in episodes of violence. Yet, although the symptom of conflict is intercommunal violence along sectarian lines, the source of the conflict will not be found in theology. Rather, the conflict's source is competition for land between a group that perceives itself as indigenous to the area and another seen as more recent settlers. Those who perceive the conflict as a religious war have been unable to gain traction in resolving the conflict because, at its root, it is more about the governance of contested resources.

> In human societies, conflict management—like development—is fundamentally political.

> The first task of conflict management is to distinguish the symptoms of the conflict from its sources.

This is not to say that symptoms are unimportant. On the contrary, in armed conflict, these symptoms are frequently acts of *violence* that lead to loss of life. If development is the process by which an individual's and community's prosperity and freedom are increased, then violence exerts a reverse effect. The toll that *physical violence* takes is evident in the destruction of lives and property. *Structural violence*, however, is almost always invisible. The latter occurs whenever people are disadvantaged by political, legal, economic, or cultural traditions. It may be embedded in ubiquitous social structures and normalized by stable institutions and regular experience.[14]

In addition to the second-order effects of war and fragility, structural violence ultimately means people suffer more from poverty, disease, crime, and oppression than they would otherwise. Both forms of violence are detrimental to development objectives and broad human security. The concept of "human security" emphasizes the security and well-being of people, rather than states, and it includes freedom from fear, freedom from want, and the freedom to live in dignity.[15] Human security, therefore, bridges the three spheres of international affairs—development, diplomacy, and defense—and concerns itself with a wide variety of issues and trends. The related concept of "citizen security," employed frequently throughout the WDR 2011, connotes a narrower focus on citizens' freedom from violence and the fear of violence.

Whether a dispute becomes an armed conflict depends in large part on the means and motives of

Supporters of Alassane Ouattara, who claimed to have won the 2010 presidential election, stand next to the bodies of two men reportedly killed by Ivorian police and army forces loyal to Ivorian leader Laurent Gbagbo in December 2010. (ISSOUF SANOGO/AFP)

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14   Daniel Winter and Dana Leighton, "Structural Violence" in *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology in the 21st Century*, eds. Daniel Christie, Richard V. Wagner and Deborah D. Winter (New York: Prentice-Hall, 2000).

15   United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 22–24. Commission on Human Security 2003.

groups who stand to gain or lose substantially from fighting. These motivations are, in turn, shaped by the political/institutional context, what is at stake, and what factors may exist to mitigate the potential for armed conflict. Real-world actors in a conflict—whether individuals, factions, or groups—are rarely monolithic. Decisions about whether to resort to violence are often as much about internal negotiation among different interests, and perceptions of alternatives to negotiation, as they are about calculations of risk and rewards. How groups become mobilized for violence is the subject of Chapter 3.

When armed conflict does occur or loom, the prospects for effective diplomacy and development are contingent upon the security situation. Experience has shown that there is an ebb and flow to most violent conflicts over time. Active fighting and confrontation is frequently preceded by a period of escalation or failed negotiation, and it is often followed by a period of de-escalation, return to negotiation, or retrenchment. These peaks and lows have been dubbed the conflict cycle and are often depicted heuristically as a curve (see Figure 2 below).[16]

Figure 2: Conflict Curve
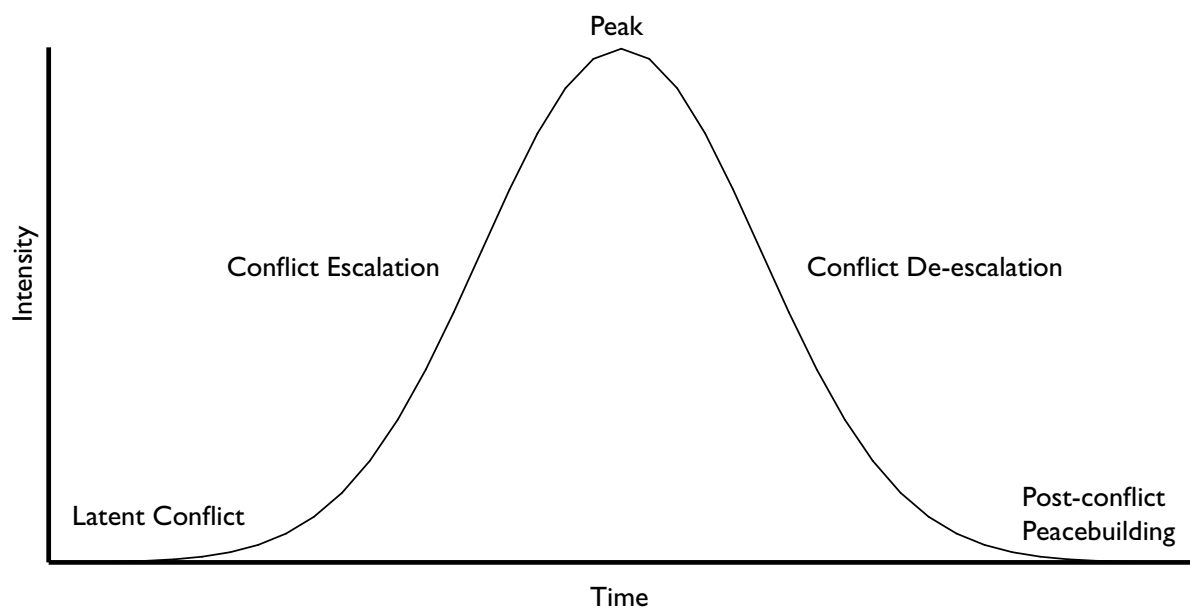
Because conflict is not a linear phenomenon, the **conflict curve** is an idealized model that does not represent the actual unfolding of war over time, nor is it meant to do so. Rather, it helps to signify that conflict occurs along a continuum in which active fighting represents a peak period, but not the whole conflict cycle. The curve underscores that a country which has not yet witnessed bloodshed may, nevertheless, have powerful forces of latent conflict brewing under the surface, which puts it at risk of war. Conflicts may exhibit repeated cycles of violence, or there may be multiple conflicts taking place within a country's territory. Each conflict situation may be at a different point on this idealized curve (as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Similarly, although the guns may have stopped firing, the conflict per se may not be over. During the time it takes a country to recover from armed conflict, the risk of re-escalation is high, particularly when the issues driving the conflict have not been fully resolved.

For actors in the conflict, the risks and potential rewards to violence also vary with time. For example, extremist and criminal organizations often have an interest in escalating or prolonging a war. Thus, it is not unusual to see a de-escalation phase punctuated by major terrorist attacks, as these actors attempt to reverse the trend toward peace. On the other side of the spectrum, political moderates and others

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16   Michael Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996).

advocating for negotiations or peace will often find themselves sidelined as a conflict escalates, only to be bolstered during the peak of fighting and as both sides begin to suffer losses.

The conflict cycle carries important implications for response, which is the second part of any USAID conflict assessment. During peaks of violence, USAID is often highly constrained, focused on humanitarian response, protecting personnel, and adapting existing programs to conserve past gains as much as possible. By contrast, during lulls in violence, the political and operational scope for development programming is likely to be much greater. With an orientation towards preventing escalation or re-escalation of the conflict, early intervention is likely to yield greater returns on investment. Thus, the best time to conduct a conflict assessment is *before* the outbreak of fighting. And while no one holds a crystal ball to predict the future, personnel in the field often have a good sense of when, for example, the political situation is deteriorating. Early warning tools can lend additional evidence to the process of deciding whether and when to assess conflict dynamics. As will be seen below, the CAF 2.0 involves explicit forecasts as to how conflict dynamics will likely trend in the future.

The next chapter offers more guidance on analyzing sources and symptoms of conflicts through analysis of current dynamics and projection of future trends. The final chapter on response returns to the question of how to respond to those dynamics, in the context of the conflict cycle, that maximizes impact and best utilizes USAID Mission resources.

Somali soldiers fighting with the Federal Transitional Government (TFG) ride the back of a pick-up truck past women walking on a street in Mogadishu in August 2011. (ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP)

3

DIAGNOSIS: FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

The analytical power of CAF 2.0 comes from using it as a tool for collecting and organizing data, identifying connections, and distilling patterns. Over the course of a conflict assessment, the assessment team applies the CAF 2.0 to two analytical tasks.

First, the CAF 2.0 is used to diagnose the current conflict dynamics and possible future trajectories. In this framework, dynamics include the factors of grievance, resilience, and key mobilizers. Trajectories consist of trends and triggers for future conflict. The components of this diagnosis are described in detail in this chapter, and summarized in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Conflict Diagnosis
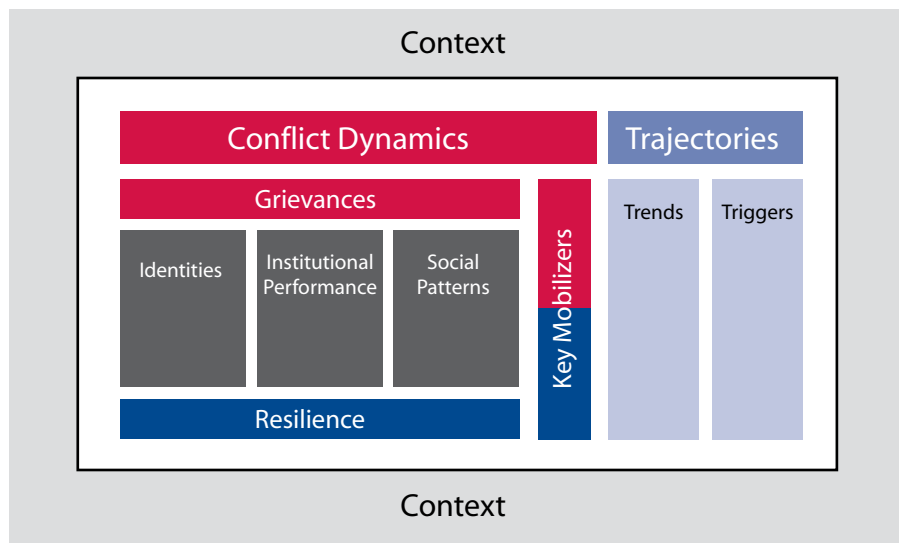
Second, the CAF 2.0 is used to identify and recommend conflict response options appropriate for USAID missions to pursue. As noted in Box 3, *conflict response* is a term used in this framework to denote both conflict sensitive development and direct conflict mitigation, conflict management, conflict prevention (i.e. peacebuilding) programming. An analytical framework for developing these recommendations is described more fully in Chapter 4.

3.1 Conflict Dynamics

The framework's model for conflict dynamics is based upon a theory of how, when, and why violent conflict occurs. This theory argues that armed conflict is driven by **key actors** in society—individuals, but also organizational actors of all sorts—who actively **mobilize** people and resources to engage in acts of violence on the basis of **grievance**, such as a group's perception that it has been excluded from political and economic life. Key mobilizers may have different means and incentives that affect the methods they employ to achieve their objectives; violence is only one tactic among many. In this sense, the "rules of the game," and the resources and factors that drive incentives and decision-making, are informed by the

context. Further, the theory behind the CAF 2.0 recognizes that when the **institutions** of society perform in ways that key **identity groups** consider to be legitimate and effective, then conflict-mitigating **social patterns** may emerge. In contrast, illegitimate and ineffective institutions can drive dysfunctional patterns of fragility and stress. Whether and how armed conflict breaks out depends in part, therefore, on the **resilience** of those institutions, mechanisms, or other factors in society that provide the means to suppress or resolve conflict through non-violent means. Thus, the CAF 2.0 takes both the latent and active dimensions of armed conflict into account, including the given system's predilection toward conflict and the feasibility of sustained, large-scale fighting. The **conflict dynamics** describe the system of interactions and relationships among the framework components described above.

By necessity, the framework focuses both on violent conflict and more broadly on the sources of societal instability (or stability). It recognizes that any analysis of conflict is incomplete without attention to those attitudes, structures, and processes in society that—for better or worse—encourage stability and the status quo or enable peaceful change over time. This dual emphasis is necessary in analysis of the current conflict dynamics, as well as future trajectories.

Before turning to the presentation of the main elements that comprise the conflict dynamics portion of the CAF 2.0, a comment is warranted about the relative importance of any single element. Conflict arises from a complex interaction of multiple forces within social systems. As such, no single set of factors—whether they relate to characteristics of the key actors in the conflict, the level of institutional performance, or features of the broad political or social context—are predominant in terms of their causal impact on the risks of conflict. That is, no factor can be understood to be a singular cause of conflict without an understanding of how its impact on conflict is conditioned by its interactions with other factors. Readers should be attentive to how these connections between these many elements shape the risks for violent conflict.

The following sections outline the components of context, grievance and resilience, and mobilization.

> No factor can be understood to be a singular cause of conflict without an understanding of how its impact on conflict is conditioned by its interactions with other factors.

3.1.1 Context

Context, as it is used here, refers to facts about the country that cannot be changed in the short term: its physical and geographical characteristics, history, socio-economic and demographic characteristics, institutions or "rules of the game," and its relationship and exposure to external forces.

In any given country, conflict dynamics both influence—and are influenced by—contextual factors. Yet, in contrast to other conflict dynamics, such as the shifting means and motives of key mobilizers, context changes relatively slowly and incrementally. Needless to say, no contextual factor is truly static in the long-term. For example, narratives of history change over time, leading to shifting attitudes that individuals may hold about other groups or their own government. Or, changes in the global climate may affect the physical environment, leading to changes in the competitive dynamics among groups sharing the same natural resources. Although contextual circumstances change slowly, certain contextual factors have been proven to increase the risk for conflict (see Box 10 on "Contextual Risk Factors").

For the purposes of a conflict assessment, it is not necessary to produce a comprehensive understanding of contextual elements, but it is important to identify those salient components of the context that directly relate to the conflict dynamics and trajectories. In other words, how do elements of the context

interact with conflict dynamics? In Figure 3, the set of conflict dynamics has been depicted graphically by positioning them inside a larger context that is understood to shape and condition possible outcomes that can arise from conflict dynamics. For instance, "poverty" is often cited as a direct "cause" of conflict. However, we know that many peoples and countries experience poverty, but not all of those people/places have serious conflict. What is it, therefore, about poverty in a particular conflict context that reinforces tensions? Is it extreme wealth disparities (perceived unfairness), differential access to credit/investment, or discrimination in access to education and, therefore, well-paying jobs? The challenge is to understand—more concretely and precisely—which contextual factors are important, and how they are important. Some of the links between certain contextual factors and conflict are reviewed below.

In the case of *physical and geographic characteristics*, climate and susceptibility to droughts or natural disasters may affect how frequently shocks to the society occur, and in what form. Alternatively, the availability of extractable, or "lootable," natural resources—such as minerals, timber, or oil—have played a role in various wars in recent history, as they affect the motivation and capacities of actors to engage in violence.[17]

Although interpretations of *history* evolve over time, the "facts" remain in the past and are beyond the capacity of humans to change. Historical narrative, however, plays an important role in almost all conflicts, and past injustices are frequently cited as cause for present disputes. Histories of state formation–legacies of colonialism and post-colonialism, for example—may be particularly salient to conflict. History, however, can also mitigate violence. In the case of Nigeria, the civil war of the 1970s and the protracted experience with military rule has convinced many Nigerians that a return to such a system would be unacceptable. In both cases, it is important to understand how historical factors are influencing actor's current motivations, perceptions, and behavior.

Helmand province Governor Gulab Mangal hoists the Afghan flag during an official flag raising ceremony in Marjah in February 2010. (PATRICK BAZ/AFP)

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics are also features of human society that change over time. In the short term, however, phenomena like mass poverty, severe economic inequality, disproportionately high numbers of youth or concentrations of the population in urban slums can all put pressures on social institutions and the state, since there is little possibility of any immediate solution. For this reason, socio-economic and demographic actors are considered contextual, but they relate to institutional performance (described below), and they are also likely to feature in the analysis of trajectories. For example, some countries have a large diaspora—an immigrant group that maintains a connection to its traditional homeland—that is almost always relevant to the conflict context (in some cases, diaspora may indeed be salient identity groups or key mobilizers in the conflict dynamics).

Institutions provide the formal and informal rules and practices governing human interactions, such as social norms, laws, and organizations. According to the 2011 World Development Report, institutions "include formal rules, written laws, organizations, informal norms of behavior, and shared beliefs—as well as the organizational forms that exist to implement and enforce these norms (both state and non-state organizations). Institutions shape the interests, incentives, and behaviors that can facilitate violence. Unlike elite pacts, institutions are impersonal—they continue to function irrespective of the presence of

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17   Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and grievance in civil war," *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (2004).

particular leaders, and therefore provide greater guarantees of sustained resilience to violence. Institutions operate at all levels of society—local, national, regional, and global."[18] Institutions affect the context of conflict by shaping the incentive structures, or "rules of the game," that influence the behavior of key mobilizers. (See Box 9 on "Clarifying the Terminology of Institutions" below.)

Box 9 – Clarifying the Terminology of Institutions

The terminology associated with institutions ("institutional context" or "institutional performance") can often be a source of confusion. The following is provided to help clarify the distinctions among these concepts:

As noted above, *institutions* are the formal and informal rules and practices governing human interactions, such as social norms, laws, organizations, and other mechanisms for shaping human behavior. Institutions in this sense should not, however, be conflated with the organizations and actors tasked with implementing laws or other formal mechanisms. For example, the president is an individual tasked with implementing the function of the presidency. If the president is active in mobilizing resources or groups to affect the dynamics of conflict, then the president is a key actor whose incentives and options are shaped by the institutional context, including the institution of the presidency.

Institutional context refers to the "rules of the game" that shape—in particular—the incentives and choices of key actors, as well as the capacity of a given society or group to engage in collective action. Generally, institutions of this type are slow to change.

Institutional performance refers to the extent to which formal and informal institutions produce outcomes that identity groups perceive as effective and/or legitimate. Frequently, institutional performance refers to the capacity of political authority to exercise coercive power, but social relationships and informal processes are also significant. In contrast to institutional context, institutional performance may be more amenable to change in the near term, for example with assistance.

Finally, *external influences* manifest themselves in a great variety of ways, but they are beyond the country-level unit of analysis of a typical conflict assessment. One of the most important external influences that can arise is a "bad neighborhood," or when nearby countries are at war or are otherwise highly unstable. Violence often spills over the border in these cases, for example through the actions of key conflict actors who may mobilize resources in one country to drive conflict in another. Other external influences might include economic shocks in commodity prices or trade volumes, the actions of international bodies (such as at the UN or ICC), or other shifts in a country's geostrategic position. The global dynamics of Nigeria's oil economy—like energy markets and international trade, for example—may not directly affect the country's conflict dynamics, but it is impossible to understand the country's political, economic, social, and security institutions without taking these global dimensions into account.

For more information on diagnosing context, refer to the list of suggested questions in the Annex A.

A Palestinian gunman shoots at Israeli troops in March 2002, in the West Bank city of Ramallah. (Jamal ARURI/AFP)

18   The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*, xvi.

Box 10 – Contextual Risk Factors

The Political Instability Task Force—a U.S. government-sponsored research project—has produced some of the best empirical research examining the risk factors for armed conflict, coups, and other forms of political instability. According to this research, the most salient factors for increasing a country's risk of instability are:

Anocratic regimes, which are neither wholly democratic nor wholly autocratic, but rather operate as "partial democracies;" and, **factionalism** within partial democracies, or when particular ethnic or parochial groups compete politically in order to favor their own groups to the exclusion of others. The Task Force also cites other important risk factors for conflict, including:

- **A recent history of conflict**, given that post-conflict states frequently "relapse." (The 2011 World Development Report notes that 90 percent of violence onsets in the 2000s occurred in countries with a previous conflict.)

- **Bad neighborhoods**, or where one or more bordering states are experiencing armed conflict.

- **Low levels of social or human development**, which is typically tested through the proxy indicator of infant mortality.

- **State discrimination** in political or economic terms, generally on the basis of ethnicity.

- **Poverty**, or low levels of economic development measured as GDP per capita.

Some influential and innovative studies (noted below) suggest a clear link between various contextual features of a country, such as population size, demographic balance ("youth bulges"), mountainous terrain, extractable and salable natural resources, and rainfall, but this evidence remains contested. It may be that these factors serve to reveal pre-existing vulnerabilities, but are not themselves sources of conflict.

SOURCES: Blattman and Miguel (2009); Goldstone, et al. (2005, 2010); Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner (2008); Fearon and Laitin (2003).

The relationship between contextual indicators and any particular country under assessment should not be viewed as strictly conclusive on its own terms. One of the potential pitfalls of conflict analysis is to treat contextual factors as predominant among all possible factors that shape the risks for future conflict. While contextual factors do exert significant influence in shaping the possibilities for conflict, their contribution is only part of the causal story. Contextual factors are best understood as a set of risk factors much in the way that family history and past behavior are understood in assessing the risk of heart attack. They are important, but little can be done in the short term, if at all, to mitigate them. In the meantime, there are many other factors that contribute to risk (e.g., current diet or level of exercise) that are crucial for a complete assessment of risk and can be changed more easily in the near future. Similarly, an understanding of contextual factors, how they evolve over time, and how they interact with existing tensions will inform a conflict analysis, but they are not sufficient for making a full diagnosis.

> While contextual factors do exert significant influence in shaping the possibilities for conflict, their contribution is only part of the causal story.

3.1.2 Grievance and Resilience

The dynamics of conflict are shaped by how key actors mobilize the communal grievances and resiliencies found in all human social systems.

Grievances are deep feelings of dissatisfaction among society's members with how their society is organized and how it impacts their lives. This dissatisfaction arises from the perception (real or imagined) that their needs for identity, physical security, or livelihood are not met, or that their interests or values are threatened by one or more other groups and/or social institutions. Grievances may be upheld by explicit, rational arguments and positions, such as a legal claim to land or sovereignty. However, grievances may also be sustained and transmitted in more subliminal or associative ways through culture, memory, and actual experience.

Grievances are specific claims or complaints advanced by specific identity groups in society, perhaps against other groups, the state, or particular actors. Familiar examples abound in global current events: one political party accuses another of stealing the election, ex-combatants from a lapsed conflict object to the terms of their demobilization, a diaspora group harbors memories of discrimination at the hands of the dominant majority or the state back home, an act of terrorism creates suspicion and fear in one community against members of another, masses of poor and struggling citizens blame the elite for the inequality they see in their country.

Latent grievances almost always precede physical acts of violence. For example, in Nigeria, control of the city of Jos has long been a particular source of tension between the Muslim "settler" Hausas and the largely Christian "indigenes." Although the Hausas are a minority in Plateau state, they are the largest ethnic group in Nigeria overall. Thus, many Berom and other Christian groups voice fears of Hausa domination at the national level. Meanwhile, the Hausa minority harbors similar fears of being forced out of Jos. Rumors abound of threats from both sides, including allegations of "silent killings," weapons stockpiling, and so on. Tensions are so high that any minor incident between two individuals across the religious divide could escalate rapidly, facilitated by the barrage of hate messages and other alarmist texts sent across extensive cellular networks. Occasional outbreaks of violence do in fact occur.

Although grievances are found in all times among all people, they only result in organized mass violence in a minority of instances. There are two reasons for this. First, conflict actors face the well-known problem of organizing collective action (discussed below in *3.1.4 Key Mobilizers*).[19] Second, most societies have political, social, economic, and security mechanisms for organizing social competition, managing conflicts, and resolving disputes without recourse to war. These conflict resolution mechanisms—which may be thought of as institutions—are present in all societies, but they function with varying degrees of effectiveness and legitimacy. For example, elections in democratic societies are a means of organizing mass competition for political power between groups through non-violent means. A less welcome example comes from authoritarian or patriarchal societies, where disputes are resolved either through arbitration by a figure of authority in the hierarchy, or through outright repression. For better or worse, armed conflict is less likely to occur when these stabilizing institutions are **resilient**, or able to withstand shocks and continue performing as usual.

> Although grievances are found in all times among all people, they only result in organized mass violence in a minority of instances.

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19   Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965) and Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Importantly, resilience is not normatively good. Sometimes unjust systems exhibit powerful resiliencies. Similarly, grievances are often constructive. In cases of injustice, people hold grievances for good reasons, and these grievances help them mobilize for positive change.

In short, people hold all manner of dissatisfactions with facets of their lives and communities, as well as their country's social, political, and economic systems. Similarly, any community that exhibits longevity and a degree of public order in the face of change must have strains of resilience. A conflict analyst's task in the assessment process is to examine these patterns of grievance and systems of resilience dispassionately in order to diagnose the most salient dynamics of conflict and forecast the likely future outcomes in terms of mass social action and violence.

Box 11 – Greed v. Grievance

The 1990s and 2000s witnessed a surge of academic interest in armed conflict. Until that time, the dominant explanations for why and how civil conflict occurred focused on the role of ideology and the struggle against injustice, exclusion, and structural violence. However, a new collection of studies emerged that challenged this frame of reference, arguing generally that it was not "grievance" but "greed" that led to conflict.

Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler have done some of the most influential research in this regard. They used econometric methods to argue that outbreaks of conflict are determined more by the feasibility of the rebellion than any underlying grievances. Finding that civil wars were strongly associated with high levels of primary commodity exports in poor countries, Collier and Hoeffler initially suggested that rebel organizations pursue war because of the opportunities for extortion and profiteering that it affords them. While the two authors and their collaborators have regularly expanded upon this idea, and adjusted their position in subsequent research and writing, the case for examining greed rather than grievance has made a considerable impact on the analysis of civil war in the last decade.

If nothing else, the "greed versus grievance" debate resulted in new attention being paid to economic agendas in civil wars. Certainly, looting and the cynical use of violence for economic gain was on blatant display in a number of civil wars at the beginning of the 2000s—such as the fighting over mines in the conflicts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Trafficking in timber, rubber, minerals, drugs, and oil and gas appears to have played a role in conflicts as far apart as Colombia and Afghanistan.

However, several scholars have critiqued the "greed' treatment of conflict. They note conceptual problems in Collier and others' models and question the econometric methodology, which by its nature relies heavily on structural indicators and related quantitative data. In all, Collier and Hoeffler's work has contributed significantly to a more complete understanding of the causal pathways to civil conflict, highlighting the importance of accounting for how the possibilities for mobilizing collective action for armed violence are conditioned through existing patterns of grievance. William Zartman writes in a book on economics of conflict, "to claim that conflicts are matters of greed, or rights, or grievances is profoundly uninteresting. If the claim is exclusionary, it is simply wrong; if the claim is contributory, it is banal. The interesting questions are how these factors relate to each other in causing and sustaining conflict, and how, not whether, conflict is related to these three factors."

The CAF represents a synthesis of these two views. Grievance is explicitly part of the model, while "greed" gets factored in primarily through understanding key actors. Do key actors have the means to mobilize and organize armed violence and is their motive pecuniary (i.e. greed), or ideological?

SOURCES: Blattman and Miguel (2009); Goldstone, et al. (2010); Collier and Hoeffler (2004); Fearon and Laitin (2009); Arnson and Zartman (2005)

Box 12 – Definitions and Dimensions of Resilience

The concept of resilience is attractive to development and humanitarian actors on a number of levels, as it is a common theme across many of the challenges confronted in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Building the resilience of individuals, families, communities, the natural environment, economies and markets, civil society, and the state are all important dimensions of development and conflict management. Yet, it is far from clear whether and how these various dimensions of resilience relate or interact.

On the one hand, it is possible to imagine patterns of resilience being built, supported, or destroyed. In the case of complex crises, such as in parts of Somalia today, a collapse of political order, agricultural markets, and the natural environment itself, has contributed to famine and war. Yet, in another sense, all societies and systems exhibit certain patterns of resilience, even dysfunctional or counterproductive patterns. This is one reason social change can be so difficult to achieve.

A concrete example of "negative" resilience emerged during a recent conflict vulnerability assessment in Kenya. Following the 2008 elections violent conflict broke out resulting in over 1,100 people killed and between 300,000–600,000 displaced. The police were largely perceived as ineffective or simply absent during that time. Today, as a result, police are among the least trusted public institutions in the country, and many vigilante groups and gangs have emerged within refugee camps, Nairobi's slums and informal settlements, and in particular communities along the coast and in the rift valley. These groups refer to themselves as "community police." They routinely resort to violence and have instilled a sense of fear within many of the communities in the name of maintaining security. The result is a degree of community-level resilience and stability, albeit at the expense of formal rule of law.

From the perspective of conflict assessment, perhaps the most salient dimension of resilience is the resilience of those aspects of state and society that support the non-violent resolution of conflict and the redress of grievances. Yet, even here, DCHA/CMM has found that conflict specialists sometimes face steep analytical challenges in properly identifying and accounting for resilience. DCHA/CMM is currently undertaking research to improve its understanding of the dimensions of resilience, and also to provide greater guidance for those wishing to understand other facets of conflict prevention and stabilization.

Meanwhile, resilience is perhaps best thought of as a metaphor for understanding and labeling the systems connecting the various factors comprising the set of conflict dynamics described in the CAF 2.0. To this end, UNICEF unpacked the concept of resilience in its 2011 *Humanitarian Action for Children* report. It identified several commonly-considered dimensions of resilience relevant for humanitarian programming, which may also be useful frames of reference for conflict assessment. These are:

- *Flexibility* – the system's ability to change, including the speed and the degree of adjustment;

- *Diversity* – the variety of actors and approaches that contribute to the performance of a system's essential functions;

- *Adaptive learning* – the integration of new knowledge into planning and execution of essential functions;

- *Collective action and cohesion* – the mobilization of capacities to jointly decide and work towards common goals;

- *Self-reliance* – the capacity to self-organize and use internal resources and assets, with minimal external support.

The most useful means of applying these concepts is through the analysis of the resilience of those institutions and mechanisms in society that directly facilitate the management of social conflicts.

SOURCE: Herman (1997); Weingarten (2004); American Psychological Association; UNICEF (2011).

3.1.3 Unpacking Grievances

Societal Patterns

Those objections that rise to the level of grievance have certain characteristics. First, they are attached to a persistent social pattern. **Societal patterns** are systematic and repetitive forms of interaction and transaction among individuals, groups, and institutions in the community. These exchanges are frequently self-reinforcing or self-replicating, and they may be highly nuanced and complex. Elitism, exclusion, chronic capacity deficits, transitions, and, to some extent, corruption, are all examples of societal patterns that frequently give rise to grievance. (For more detail, see the Box 13 on "Five Key Societal Patterns that Drive Grievance and Fragility".) These are not the only societal patterns, however.

For example, in Nigeria, the oil boom of the 1970s radically increased the levels of government revenues and led to a dramatic rise in the level of corruption. Political elites soon grew fabulously rich. The expanding fortunes of military leaders and their allies allowed them to build vast networks of clients along ethnic, religious, and family lines. At the same time, the private siphoning of wealth and later decline of oil prices drove down government revenues, creating a massive debt and forcing the state to cut social services. The standard of living of ordinary Nigerians fell by 75 percent from 1980 to 1995.[20] The result was a deeply unequal system that created grievances across the country against the Nigerian state. It simultaneously undermined incentives for state-society engagement, or the creation of a social contract based on taxation in exchange for the delivery of public goods.

Systems thinking may provide a useful approach to understanding social patterns. Common system dynamics have been identified in a number of conflicts. These archetypes provide a structural template for analyzing a situation that can help focus attention on the heart of the problem and explain why and how some negative societal patterns are "resilient", or hard to change. Vicious and virtuous cycles, self-fulfilling prophecies, escalation, exclusion and "addiction" are archetypal patterns.[21]

Institutional Performance

Institutional performance can also create and reinforce social patterns characteristic of core grievances and resiliencies. Institutional performance refers to the extent to which formal and informal institutions produce outcomes that members of society consider to be legitimate and/or effective. *Effectiveness* in this context refers to the capability of state institutions to work with society to assure the provision of order and public goods and services. *Legitimacy* refers to the perception by society that the government is exercising state power in ways that are reasonably fair, transparent, and accountable to societal needs.

In the case of Nigeria, the unequal, elitist system of neo-patrimonial politics is reinforced by the federal nature of the state, as well as by the informal expectation that chiefs and "big men" should distribute their wealth to their clans and allies. This arrangement is viewed as illegitimate by large segments of society, including key political and geographic blocs. In the American South of the 19th century, the institution of slavery was upheld both through laws and social codes. The latter included not only explicitly and implicitly racist ideas, but also related notions like the concepts of honor and nobility, which considered work to be unseemly for the elite and which, therefore, encouraged the use of slaves. As is often the case, regardless of the injustice of slavery, different identity groups held different perceptions of the effectiveness and legitimacy of the institution of slavery, which created powerful patterns of grievance.

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20   USAID Nigeria Conflict Assessment Report, 2011, Page 15.

21   USAID has begun to use *systems mapping* as a tool to help synthesize the insights from the diagnosis of conflict dynamics into a coherent analytical narrative that highlights and prioritizes important factors and depicts how they interact to cause conflict. (See Davis 2011; USAID 2011; and Jenna Slotin, Vanessa Wyeth, and Paul Romita, *Power, Politics, and Change: How International Actors Assess Local Context*, New York: International Peace Institute, 2010). Systems thinking is founded on the premise that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In other words, understanding the causes of instability or resilience is not sufficient to understanding the dynamics of a conflict. A systems map helps to identify the connections and interactions among the various determinants of stability and instability, beyond the individual factors themselves. It can be a useful supplement to the CAF 2.0 in helping to avoid common pitfalls of conflict analysis, such as basing inquiry on an incomplete or biased depiction of dynamics. For more information about applying systems mapping in the implementation of a CAF 2.0, please see the companion Application Guide for the CAF 2.0.

Institutions of course do not just lead to grievance; effective and legitimate performance by institutions, especially at the level of the state, is a powerful source of resilience. The state institutions providing security, justice, and livelihoods are particularly important for their role in mitigating violence.[22]

Where institutions are illegitimate or ineffective, however, there will be fewer incentives for people to continue using them. This outcome results in a breakdown of rules and order, forces individuals and groups to re-negotiate their agreements, and brings latent conflicts to the surface—in short, it establishes a dynamic of *fragility*.

The popular uprisings affecting the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, for example, may be partly analyzed as responses to illegitimate institutions. Although the Tunisian government has delivered substantial development gains to its population since independence—life expectancy rose from an estimated 48.6 years in 1960 to 74.5 years in 2009, according to the World Bank—presidential power changed hands only once in that same period. Although Tunisia is a relatively homogenous country with a capable state, young Tunisians nonetheless felt deep grievances against a system which fostered an ossified, corrupt elite class which many likened to a mafia.

Identities

Fragile institutions, like hijacked legal systems or sectarian police forces, often mirror and exacerbate latent conflicts between groups, driving patterns of exclusion that result in grievance. How those groups define themselves, or are defined by others, speaks to the third characteristic of core grievances, which is how threats to individual and group identities and basic human needs are perceived. **Identities** are salient markers of similarity, distinction, or affinity among individuals and groups. Identity is not inherent, but rather emerges from one's relationships to others in a given context or situation. For example, while males and females are clearly different in certain physiological respects, the gender identities of men and women are established through the different roles, rights, and responsibilities defined by society. Not infrequently, there are multiple and overlapping groupings ("concentric circles of identity") that shift in relative importance or salience depending on the context in which individuals find themselves.

In Nigeria, for example, the conflicts around Jos are frequently characterized as being between largely Muslim settlers and Christian "indigenes," but, in fact, there are important distinctions among the Berom, Afizere, Anaguta, and other Christian groups. Similarly, the conflict in the Niger Delta hosts a bewildering array of armed groups and, although the conflict is ostensibly against the Nigerian state, in reality it is a complex system of inter-connected conflicts over the distribution of resources, political power, and even simply turf. Whether the salient identity is religious, tribal, regional, or politically-based depends on the context, as well as on how the various armed groups are framing the issue. There is nothing inherently conflictual about particular identities, but, under

Youths from the town of Namtee stand on a wall to welcome pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi upon her arrival in February 2012. (SOE THAN WIN/AFP)

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22   The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011,* 7.

certain conditions, identity can turn from a relatively neutral organizing principle into a powerful tool for mobilizing mass violence.

Although identity is flexible over time, certain identity markers should be treated largely as fact for the purposes of an assessment. In designing a response, however, the assessment team should look for areas of shared identity beyond the conflict-centered dimensions. For example, during Liberia's civil war, a peace movement comprised of Christian and Muslim women came together to form a movement called "Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace," which played an active, influential role in bringing the war to a close through negotiations. In many Latin American countries during the latter half of the 20th century, the shared religion of Catholicism brought disparate groups together under the banner of "liberation theology," as they worked for social justice and political transition.

Afghan policemen run to disperse demonstrators during a protest against Koran desecration in Kabul in February 2012. (MASSOUD HOSSAINI/AFP)

In certain circumstances, institutions can influence identities. In virtuous circles of resilience, interactions with institutions should re-affirm various groups' trust in those institutions and create societal patterns that serve to mitigate the risk of violence. For example, a fair trial may underscore the legitimacy and effectiveness of the constitutional and legal system, which may, in turn, bolster the resilience of shared national identities. Another example comes from Tunisia's 2011 uprising: when the Tunisian military sided with the protesters over President Ben Ali's rule, this responsiveness to the citizens helped to ensure that certain security institutions and aspects of the state remained essentially legitimate in the eyes of the protestors, even as the ruling elites were forced out of power, thus averting deeper socio-political conflict.

Healthy social patterns, such as those that support rule of law, social mobility, freedom of expression, the forging of inclusive political coalitions, and expansive or pluralist notions of identity and nationhood all play a role in bolstering resilience to violence. During the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, for instance, many of the same grievances that had contributed to the war a century prior were still in place—and indeed there were instances of organized violence along racial lines—but slavery and its related institutions were no longer essential to the Southern economy. Furthermore, these grievances were mitigated by a more powerful and inclusive legal system, a federal system of government, and sense of national identity. Civil society actors were able to mobilize these forces to maintain peace while pushing for large-scale social change.

Box 13 – Five Key Societal Patterns that Drive Grievance and Fragility

USAID has identified at least five patterns that commonly give rise to grievances in fragile and conflict–affected states: elitism, exclusion, chronic capacity deficits, transitional moments, and—as an exacerbating factor—corruption. These are not the only dominant patterns, and the following vignettes provide just a basic window into the ideas, but these patterns provide a basic means for beginning to organize analysis of grievances and societal patterns.

Elitism is a pattern of vertical inequality creating "haves" and "have-nots" and it typically manifests itself as concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few. Elites rarely see their status as an explicit component of their identity in the way that they may understand their profession, religion, ethnicity, geographic origins, or even family. It is rarely the case that a single identity and elite status exactly correspond, even though there are patterns through which some groups will comprise more of the elite than others. Yet, in highly elitist societies, one's position in the social hierarchy determines one's access to power and resources. These hierarchical systems may be quite rigid and, indeed, resistant to change or adaptation.

Exclusion refers to the horizontal inequalities or divisions through which certain groups are prevented from accessing the services, resources, power, and recognition that are afforded to other members of the society. There are political, economic, and social components to exclusion. Such social exclusion is a feature of groups rather than individuals, and is not limited to ethnic or religious identity, but may be based on any differences, including geography, social class, age, and gender, among many others.

Chronic capacity deficits are failures of the state and society to deliver the services and the functions expected of them. These failures vary by context, but are typically ongoing, systematic failures of performance rather than one-off incidents. In some cases, the core problem may concern the management of strategic resources, especially natural resources, such as oil in Nigeria. In other cases, there is a failure to deliver basic services and public goods, particularly security, justice, education, health care, and basic infrastructure. Another capacity deficit occurs when a portion of the state's territory is persistently neglected. While state ineffectiveness is problematic for pure developmental and humanitarian concerns, it can also contribute to grievances or serve as an entry point for conflict actors who seek to exploit the gaps.

Transitional moments emerge following a crisis or dramatic change in a state or society's structure. The post-conflict period is a transitional moment. In such instances, especially in fragile situations, an expectations gap emerges between what citizens expect and what the state delivers. In some cases, particularly when there are concurrent patterns of exclusion, a growing sense of relative deprivation may contribute to deeply-felt grievances among those who feel they deserve more, or were promised more than they have received.

Corruption refers to private abuse of public resources through bribery, nepotism, fraud, and similar illicit behaviors. Properly speaking, corruption is rarely the true driver of grievance, let alone conflict, but corrupt behaviors frequently support and facilitate other destructive patterns—such as when patronage systems facilitate political exclusion and elitism, or when chronic resource "leakage" limits the state's ability to deliver needed services. Corruption is, however, a problematic term because it encompasses a wide variety of behaviors, and social understandings of what constitutes "abuse." What is considered a legitimate use of resources differs somewhat across societies. Patronage systems, for example, are almost always present to some degree in contexts where formal institutions are weak and they are often the expected basis for political competition. Furthermore, ordinary citizens often use the term corruption loosely as shorthand for the other complex problems outlined above. Thus, assessment practitioners should be careful to ensure that their analysis of the corruption and conflict relationship is sufficiently specific and critically understood in the context of the overall analysis.

USAID is currently exploring other societal patterns contributing to social and institutional resilience. Please see Box 12 on resilience for an example of this research.

SOURCE: USAID (2005); Stewart (2003, 2005).

In many countries where USAID works, it may be difficult to identify healthy social patterns that are more often found in developed, highly institutionalized states, such as the members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Many academics and practitioners have tried to better understand developing world environments in an attempt to analyze ways in which these countries may develop (or not) healthier social patterns.[23]

3.1.4 Key Mobilizers

As described at the beginning of this chapter, Conflict Dynamics are comprised of two parts: Grievance/Resilience and Key Mobilizers. This section describes key mobilizers in greater depth. Please note, the terms "key mobilizer" and "key actor" are used interchangeably.

Key Mobilizers, or *key actors*, are individuals or groups that have (or could soon have) the means and motivation to mobilize larger groups or resources to carry out organized violence or engage in political action.

> Every society has influential individuals and organizations, but not all of them are key to the conflict dynamics.

Not all important actors are *key mobilizers*. Every society has influential individuals and organizations ("actors"), but not all of them are "key" to the conflict dynamics. It is their capacity to mobilize and organize collective action around grievances and resiliencies that makes them *key mobilizers*. While charismatic and influential individuals may serve as the face and leading force of a particular group, they nevertheless work through social networks, institutions, and organizations. Examples of possible key actors could include political leaders and parties, religious actors, military and security forces, non-state armed groups such as rebel organizations, civil society organizations, or business organizations.

Mobilization does not occur purely for purposes of conflict. On the contrary, those working to bring a conflict to a close, or to resolve the core disputes through non-violent means, may also be considered key actors. In some cases, mass political action can be ambiguous vis-à-vis the conflict, neither consistently driving nor opposing violence, but shaping the dynamics overall.

A core lesson from USAID's research is that mass violence, and indeed mass political action in general, rarely occurs and can never be sustained without agency on the part of actors who have the means to advance their agendas. These means include leadership, operational capacity, financing, and support networks.

> Armed conflict arises from the interaction of key mobilizers and underlying patterns of grievance and resilience in a particular context.

Armed conflict arises from the interaction of key mobilizers and underlying patterns of grievance and resilience in a particular context. There are several ways in which an actor may mobilize groups and resources to drive mass action. In some cases, key actors *mobilize* themselves by drawing upon resources which are already under their control. For example, when the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)—a militant group operating in the south of Nigeria—uses funds garnered from kidnapping to purchase weapons to engage in further violence, it is mobilizing its existing resources. In other cases, key actors *mobilize* others by appealing to particular grievances related to institutional performance, or they will use longer-term societal patterns

23   Douglass C. North, John J. Webb, Steven B. Webb and Barry R. Weingast, "Limited Access Orders in the Developing World: A New Approach to the Problems of Development," in World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4359 (Washington DC: World Bank, 2007). On the subject of social exclusion, please see Stewart et al, *http://www.crise.ox.ac.uk/SocialExclusionandConflict.pdf*.

to their advantage. For example, MEND frequently seeks to win the material and moral support of surrounding communities by condemning the national government's use of oil resources and pledging to fight for greater allocations of revenue to the delta region.

A discussion of key mobilizers cannot be complete without considering the role of elites—the people who, as a class or set of classes, hold power in society. Political and economic elites in particular play a central role in organizing collective action because of their leadership positions in pre-existing organizations and networks. Elite or otherwise, key mobilizer's incentives are shaped by their interests and the institutional context.

Motivations

Generally, key actors' interests involve some mixture of both public and private concerns and their stated aims and objectives may not be the same as their actual aims and interests. In fact, unstated aims are often more important than stated ones because there are frequently strong political and strategic incentives for key actors to misrepresent their interests and objectives. For instance, the need to motivate large numbers of people, particularly diverse groups of people, leads many politicians—including in mature democracies—to make promises they cannot keep and to change their message depending on the audience. However, to the extent that a particular organization or individual's motivating interests are more selfish or even illicit, then they are more likely to take steps to obfuscate these underlying objectives by cloaking their actions in more admirable rhetoric.

It is worth remembering that those who support peace and stability are also not necessarily doing so out of purely noble motivations, but because the status quo affords them benefits that conflict would put at risk. In other words, whether violence or peace is in a key mobilizer's interest may vary depending on the circumstance; their positions are rarely absolute.

Traditional rulers in Nigeria, for example, feel marginalized in the current federal state structure. On the one hand, they wish to preserve their traditional role as adjudicators of disputes (and in many cases continue to play this role effectively). At the same time, they feel that their status is under threat and it is not unheard-of for them to mobilize their particular constituency to re-assert their autonomy—even if that will lead to violence.

Ultimately, a strong understanding of key actors' interests and incentives will help guide response and intervention. To the extent that leaders are motivated by ideological or political aspirations, responses will necessarily be political. Conversely, for leaders motivated by more cynical or financial ambitions, it will be important to ensure they have a personal incentive to promote peace—if their influence cannot otherwise be marginalized or reduced.

> Regardless of how severely grievances are felt, or how influential key actors are in mobilizing the population, there are at least three things required to prosecute a war for any length of time: operational capacity, financing, and support networks.

Organizing Capacity, Financing, and Support Networks

Regardless of how severely grievances are felt, or how influential key actors are in mobilizing the population, there are at least three things required to prosecute a war for any length of time: operational capacity, financing, and support networks.

Operational capacity refers to organizational characteristics, such as size, command and control structures, sustainability and recruitment abilities. It also includes the ability to access and utilize weapons and technology, as well as its operating space. Besides being able to meet technical needs, there are also social dimensions to this capacity, since ideological, religious, or ethnic ties can serve to bolster mobilization. Sources of power/influence are particularly important here—like allies, moral authority, mobilizing structures—and legitimacy of the actors. For example, the transnational extremist group Al Qaeda utilizes a combination of personal networks and internet sources to reach a large number of potential recruits globally, using a mix of propaganda, financial incentives, and one-to-one contact with would-be terrorists. By contrast, the Lord's Resistance Army in the Great Lakes region of central Africa has relied on forced recruitment to bolster its ranks, using a cult-like tactics to isolate and indoctrinate its members.

Financing is the source of income, which may be internally or externally generated. Internal revenue sources include many of the mechanisms used by states, such as taxes, duties, and tariffs, which rebel groups may carry out as criminalized protection or extortion rackets. External revenue sources could include income generated from the sale of extractable commodities and natural resources such as timber, minerals, or oil, but it may also include direct financial transfers or loans from external actors. Sources of revenue are a key factor influencing behavior. It makes a difference, for example, whether insurgent groups are dependent on support from local populations, or receive external funding.[24]

Box 14 – Sources of Information

Assessing the role of key mobilizers is essentially a form of **stakeholder analysis**. There are a variety of relevant tools available that can assist this process. USAID has adapted one such tool specifically for the purpose of supporting conflict assessments. *See the "Key Mobilizer Analysis Tool" in the Annex B.*

Yet, as desirable as a full-blown stakeholder analysis may be, there is a significant tradeoff between comprehensiveness and the time available to the assessment team. It is **not** necessary or even desirable to conduct a stakeholder analysis of anyone beyond those actors immediately involved in promoting or mitigating the conflict—not even senior political or military officials who, despite holding powerful positions, may not play a significant role in the conflict. Rather, the analysis should prioritize those actors who currently have or could soon have the capacity and motivation to affect the broader conflict dynamics. Certain non-state actors, such as insurgent or terrorist groups, often do not wish to be researched and collecting information about them can be practically impossible. Despite limitations on the quality and quantity of data on these actors, it will be important to include them in the analysis of key mobilizers. (See the application guide for more information).

The assessment team's objective is to maximize pragmatic learning during a limited time frame. Consequently, assessment teams should seek to develop a general understanding of the interests, aims, and capacities of only the most immediately pertinent key actors.

In the case of a recent conflict assessment in Nigeria, while it may have been interesting to examine the means and motivations of leading politicians, it was sufficient for decision-making purposes to recognize merely that—in general—their interests were to retain their seats through elections in order to maintain access to power, resources, positions, and influence. Controlling the elections process (including through violence) is an accepted and standard strategy among these elites. To have undertaken a more detailed analysis of any particular key politician would have been unnecessary from the standpoint of the assessment, and a drain on scarce staff resources.

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24   Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Relationships with states and transnational networks in particular provide state and non-state armed groups alike with support related to obtaining weapons and funds, which supply capacity to states or rebel groups. However, linkages within the country or abroad can also provide key mobilizers with avenues for expanding their influence or bolstering their legitimacy.

Usually, the state's capacity to mobilize for war vastly exceeds that of insurgent groups. Indeed, one of the characteristics of effective states is their ability to maintain security within their borders. Fragile states, however, typically lack this capacity to some degree and, therefore, they are more vulnerable to challenge and instability.

Fighters with the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) prepare for an operation against the Nigerian army in Niger Delta in September 2008. (PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/AFP)

In the context of conflict-affected countries particularly, it is also important to consider diaspora actors as a potential key actor. In these environments, diasporans can be at once conflict entrepreneurs, competing interests, and contributors to stability and development (Brinkerhoff 2011). Diasporans may either be collective contributors to the efforts of key actors in their country of origin or they may be key actors themselves. Diasporas are important resources for key actors in terms of helping them access the means necessary to mobilization: operational, capacity, financing, and support networks. Diasporans' ability to provide these means is largely dependent on their locations of residence and, to some extent, the degree of socio-economic success they have been able to achieve (as above).

3.2 Trajectories

As stated earlier, the diagnosis portion of the conflict assessment comprises analysis of current *conflict dynamics* and future *trajectories*. The previous section described the analytical components of conflict dynamics, including grievances and resiliencies, as well as the role of key mobilizers. The present section describes the latter. **Trajectories** describe the possible alternative futures for a country as a whole and their potential impact on conflict. Trajectories are *broad scenarios* that chart the main possible pathways a society is likely to follow and, thus, that will largely determine the levels and focus of its conflicts. Trajectories are comprised of two basic components: **trends** and **triggers**. The analysis of trajectories should extend roughly five years into the future.

In considering trajectories, the goal is not to produce numerous, overly detailed or rigid scenarios. Rather, it is to consider how overall national trajectories might affect conflict. In most cases, these trajectories would be one of three types:

1. Trajectories that maintain the status quo with regard to conflict;

2. Trajectories that are likely to be conflict-inducing (and may produce new types of conflict); or

3. Trajectories that are likely to diminish the likelihood of conflict.

Based on projecting trajectories, the assessment team should be able to identify a limited number of benchmarks and corresponding indicators that would help a mission, over time, to determine the direction of country's evolving trajectory and the broad implications for conflict.

3.2.1 Trends

Trends can be thought of as relatively durable dynamics and patterns that influence developments—such as the propensity for violent conflict—over an extended period of time. Trends may be discerned in any or all of the basic dimensions of conflict: context, grievances, resiliencies, key mobilizers, and the dynamics among these components. Trends may be enduring, they may evolve over time, or they may change quite rapidly. Additionally, the relative importance of a particular trend may increase or decline. It is useful to look for such dynamics and patterns because they may forecast how conflicts might look in the immediate future.

There are essentially three levels of analysis for trends and how they relate to the components of the conflict dynamics:

1. Contextual factors and their development (e.g. environment, economic changes, demographics, etc.);

2. The grievances and resiliencies, drivers and mitigating factors in the system, and how these patterns evolve; and

3. Key mobilizers and their potential actions.

Identifying key trends enables the team to extrapolate from past patterns to make informed judgments as to the likelihood, intensity, manifestations, and effects of conflict in the coming years. This analysis makes it possible to formulate appropriate responses to these trends. Responses may seek to influence the direction of change, or, if the forces driving the conflict are largely uncontrollable, to mitigate their adverse impacts.

It is important for a team to consider both existing and emerging trends. Some trends reflect long-standing, established patterns that have been found to be especially significant for anticipating conflict and, thus, may likely do so in the future. Examples include population changes such as demographic shifts, urbanization, and migration; economic factors such as growth rates, unemployment, poverty, and income distribution; access to natural resources; trends in governance, including the capacity of the state to respond to or repress grievances; and societal relationships such as intergroup trust or hostility.

Other relevant trends may still be forming and are harder to judge and, yet, seem likely to exert a significant influence on conflict dynamics in coming years. Examples of emerging trends may include: the increasing influence and use of social media technology; the transmission of ideologies and values across countries and regions; the impact of global climate change; and changes in how the international community responds to conflicts.

When identifying these trends, it is important to consider whether any resiliencies that helped to mitigate conflict in the recent past will continue to do so in the future. The team should also consider whether any new mitigating factors may be coming into play. Examples of such positive trends might include: the emergence of an autonomous civil society that advocates for or engages in actions that facilitate peaceful relations; growing public dissatisfaction with the costs of conflict; growing influence of reformists within government; and diplomatic overtures by regional bodies or neighboring countries.

3.2.2 Triggers

While trends have continuing influence over extended periods of time, triggers occur at specific points in time. Triggers are immediate and are usually observable actions or events that can provoke acts of violence, suppression, or conflict—such as disputed elections or terrorist attacks. When diagnosing the dimensions of conflict up to the present, a conflict assessment will cite past triggers (or windows of vulnerability) that have led to changes in conflict. It is also crucial to be on the lookout for possible triggers that can affect future conflict.

Anticipating triggers can be valuable because they represent decisive moments at which conflict dynamics could escalate or de-escalate. Yet, sometimes the trigger will be impossible to predict, even though it may seem clear in retrospect why a particular occasion proved to be influential. Further, a series of triggers may be needed before violent conflict will arise or persist. The metaphor of a "tinderbox" reflects a situation when several conflict risk factors, particularly grievances, are on the increase. In those circumstances, it may take a relatively small triggering incident to bring about a big change, or the spark that lights the tinder. However, triggers need not present only dangers; they may also provide openings for positive change. The analyst also needs to consider what windows of opportunity may exist to take action that might steer the course of events in a desired direction.

Some triggers are predictable because they are scheduled to occur at some future date. Examples of triggers that may be on a society's "calendar" are upcoming elections, planned commemorative holidays, religious ceremonies, marches by political groups, and planned future changes in the political system—such as revising a constitution or decentralizing government. However, other triggers cannot be predicted. These might include: natural disasters; assassinations of political figures; unexpected legislative changes such as budget cuts; sudden economic reforms such as withdrawn subsidies; controversial court decisions; and economic shocks that result from global changes, such as rapid increases in food or energy prices or declines in remittances. The self-immolation of Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010, for example, could not have been predicted, but it triggered a wave of non-violent action in his country that resulted in similar uprisings across the region to varying effects. Like grievances, there are far more potential triggers than actual decisive moments of escalation or de-escalation. Policymakers, however, naturally fret about political consequences of economic shocks and natural disasters. These effects should always be considered against other elements of conflict dynamics in the analytic framework.

A team should make an effort to outline the likely broad impact of triggers that: a) can be anticipated, and b) may have a major impact. Developing detailed scenarios, however, is beyond the scope of an assessment. In order to best judge what might be expected as a result of triggering events, the assessment team can use data collection methods such as interviews with key actors and observers, Delphi panels, and focus groups.

Indeed, as we conclude Chapter 3 on conflict diagnosis, we note that these data collection methods will serve a central role for gathering information on all elements of conflict dynamics. While the supplemental Application Guide provides additional guidance about this, a detailed listing of sample questions designed to probe pertinent areas of inquiry has been included as an appendix to this document.

> Anticipating triggers can be valuable because they represent decisive moments at which conflict dynamics could escalate or de-escalate.

4

RESPONSE: DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

The fundamental purpose of a conflict assessment is to improve the effectiveness of USAID development and humanitarian assistance by providing Missions with guidance to better understand conflict, to ensure that programs are sensitive to drivers of conflict, and to prevent, manage, and mitigate deadly conflict through their programs and operations. In the course of conducting an assessment, a team develops an analytical narrative out of the findings of its research. The threads of this narrative include analysis of the key contextual pressures and variables, as well as of grievances and resiliencies that are informed by understanding the relationships between identities, incentives, institutions, and societal patterns. The team identifies key actors and assesses their means and motivations, paying particular attention to those with the capacity to mobilize larger groups. Furthermore, the team identifies trends that seem to be presently underway or are realistically possible. And, finally, the team considers how conflict dynamics are likely to evolve over time, as well as identifying potential triggers.

Thousands of guns are destroyed in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua State, Mexico in February 2012. (Jesus Alcazar / AFP)

This rigorous analysis of the conflict dynamics and potential trajectories—the diagnosis—constitutes only the first portion of the conflict assessment. The necessary next step is to formulate a response—a process that involves consideration of multiple factors, including analytical, strategic, and organizational considerations.

Every situation will require somewhat different kinds of response options and will largely depend on the needs and stated interests of the Mission. Response options will generally entail the following:

- Some degree of **prioritization** of issues based on the diagnosis and capacity for response, including a feasible identification of potential **points of entry or leverage** where targeted interventions can create more systemic change;

- Discussion of how **existing programs** funded by USAID (and others) affect and are affected by the dynamics of conflict (directly or indirectly). This exercise includes analysis of, and recommendations on, the **conflict sensitivity** of existing programs; and

- Based on the above, **options for integrating conflict response initiatives into USAID's assistance**, including through the CDCS or new/existing programs.

There can be no simple checklist or one-size-fits-all guidance for formulating responses to support conflict prevention, management, and mitigation. While there are indeed similarities among certain conflict contexts and approaches to building peace, each situation is ultimately unique. However, it is an all-too-common tendency to look to models that appear to have worked in other contexts without sufficient regard for the country-specific conditions and dynamics. **Conflict programming must be rooted in local dynamics if it is to be effective.** This section provides analytical tools to help assessment teams and Missions balance the "art" and "science" of developing a strategy, and a set of approaches, to address the conflict dynamics identified by the assessment.

> Conflict programming must be rooted in local dynamics if it is to be effective.

This chapter is divided into two parts. First, it presents four different, albeit complementary, approaches for generating strategic and programmatic responses. Second, it outlines a number of other considerations that a team should weigh in the course of determining a realistic and actionable set of responses.

Although the different approaches are presented distinctly and in linear fashion, both the social reality in the country and the analytical process which tracks it will be fluid and complex. The team's formulation of possible scenarios and responses is likely to be dialectic and rapidly iterative and, thus, to involve both analytical and creative thinking modes. Soliciting multiple perspectives and voices is important to the processes.

It is imperative to think through the whole analysis and response options carefully and strategically before rushing to select a particular tool or response. This process need not be—nor is it likely to be—linear. Rather, the essential point throughout is for each of the different concepts of the assessment framework, including those outlined in this section, to be considered.

4.1 Four Approaches to Identifying Effective Responses

This section offers four approaches that can be used to identify and weigh possible responses to the conflict dynamics identified in the assessment. These are:

1. Building on the analysis generated by the CAF;

2. Ensuring responses are based on one or more credible "theories of change;"

3. Ensuring responses are informed by an understanding of what is required for effective peacebuilding; and

4. Identifying and supporting "bright spots."

Approach 1 ensures a strong connection between the diagnosis and the possible responses. Approaches 2 and 3 ensure that the possible responses are developed and considered in light of best practice.

Approach 4 is intended to ensure that due consideration is given to supporting what may already be working.

In addition to the following paragraphs, USAID/CMM has produced a number of publications (available on the website), including its popular Toolkit series, offering more detailed guidance for conflict program design and implementation.

Approach 1: Strategies for Addressing Key Conflict Factors Identified in the CAF

The first and most obvious method to begin formulating response options is to return to the CAF itself, which involves recognizing that every one of the components identified through the diagnostic is a potential target or entry point for peace programming. Indeed, in the abstract, most peace programs generally do seek to change at least one element of the framework, be it related to grievances, key mobilizers, trends, or triggers. The diagnostic assessment identifies which of these factors are most salient to peace and/or conflict, so it is logical for the response to address them.

For example, the overwhelming source of vulnerability to conflict in Nigeria remains the poor performance of the Nigerian government itself at all levels, and its corrupt neo-patrimonial overlords. Pro-violence groups from Boko Haram to militias in the Niger Delta all share a common narrative of anger over the nation's poor governance. Thus, a natural response would be to infuse USAID's overall country strategy for Nigeria with adherence to principles for good engagement in fragile states. Two illustrative goals include continuing and expanding the USAID state-focused strategy to improve state service capacities and working to enhance the service delivery capacity of local governments in lead states. However, a technical approach may also be complicated by political factors that might resist and prevent positive change (i.e., a 'negative resiliency'). A systems approach would help assess any negative resiliencies that may hinder the effectiveness of a USAID program and set appropriate expectations for change.

> Every one of the components identified through the diagnostic is a potential target or entry point for peace programming.

Thinking about responses from the perspective of the CAF allows one to consider how to access resources from other sectors. For example, if the Mission has substantial resources to support social services, and if institutional performance is an important part of the conflict dynamics, then targeting these institutions might be a very appropriate strategy to address conflict. Likewise, there may also be opportunities to leverage funds from other USAID initiatives like Global Climate Change or Feed the Future as a means of addressing important trends. It is important to determine, however, how agency initiatives might play a stabilizing or destabilizing role.

Often, it is the Democracy and Governance (DG) portfolio that provides the greatest number of opportunities for addressing conflict issues, such as through improving national or local government effectiveness, increasing access to justice, civil society and political party strengthening, professionalizing the media, and so on. Governance, civil society, and media programs seek to improve institutional performance at the same time that they engage with key actors for peace and conflict. Indeed, DG tools typically are among the few *development* resources available for directly engaging these key actors (in addition to diplomatic and security resources). However, DG programming tools do not offer a panacea for addressing conflict issues. Some DG programs are complex and focused on long-term changes. Other projects or activities may in fact lead to more conflict—in circumstances where programs advocate for early elections when a conflict has not yet subsided, for example.[25]

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25   James Putzel, *Do No Harm.*

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that the time frame within which one can affect any of the key variables differs considerably, as does the ability of the USG or other international actors to influence a situation. For example, it may make sense to develop a short-term program to help a country navigate a particular triggering event like a potentially violent election. However, addressing the grievances and structural problems that make the election potentially violent is likely to take substantially longer and is not something that external actors alone can influence. Short-term responses generally do not address these deeper problems, so a program focused exclusively on addressing triggers probably will be ineffective and inefficient over the long term. A longer-term approach that focuses on underlying patterns, however, is likely to carry substantially larger risks—financially, politically, and in terms of overall performance and results. Thus, one must acknowledge that a certain tension exists between short term and longer-term responses and that there are often no easy solutions.[26]

Approach 2: Designing Responses Based on One or More Credible "Theories of Change"

While the CAF provides valuable information about what potential targets for intervention might be—information which can be highly refined through the field work and diagnosis process of an assessment—it offers less guidance on how such interventions should be prioritized and structured. Deciding that one "needs to do something" about key conflict actors only advances the response formulation process so far.

By thinking about conflict and response in causal terms, it is possible to establish early on an explicit reason (a theory or logic) for supposing why a proposed intervention will lead to an intended result. A logical explanation about how and why an intervention will change the dynamics of conflict will provide the basis for a compelling justification for that recommendation. This explanation—a logically connected set of claims about how and why an initiative will work to change the conflict—is a *theory of change*.[27]

A simple example would be, "if I add more fuel to the fire, then it will burn hotter." The concept is analogous to a "development hypothesis." As applied to peace and security programming, theories of change refer to the assumed connections between various actions and the result of reducing conflict or building peace, both at an activity level and at a strategic level. For instance, a common conflict mitigation strategy entails bringing representatives of belligerent groups together to interact in a safe space, with the expectation that the interactions will put a human face on the "other," foster trust, and eventually lead to the reduction of tensions. This strategy relies on a theory of change known as the contact hypothesis, and can be stated as: "If key actors from among belligerent groups are given the opportunity to interact and get to know each other, under certain conditions, they will reduce prejudices or stereotypes. That, in turn, will lead to more cooperative behavior with the other side and a reduction of hostility and hostile behavior." The contact hypothesis is just one theory of change among many for resolving conflict.

> Consideration of theories of change helps to weed out unrealistic ideas while clarifying and refining those that are worth further consideration.

Consideration of theories of change helps to weed out unrealistic ideas while clarifying and refining those that are worth further consideration. It also can bring to light certain approaches and response options which may not be obvious solutions to the problems and factors outlined in the CAF. For example, organizing structured or mediated negotiations between the different parties is one common intervention,

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26   Roland Paris and Timothy Sisk, eds. *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

27   OECD DAC Guidance on Evaluation of Peacebuilding Programs http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/52/3/39660852.pdf.

especially among diplomats, although development actors also have an important role to play. However, although formal mediation can be a means of targeting key actors in the conflict, as well as institutions (through settlements), it would not necessarily emerge just from consideration of the CAF.

An effective theory of change should pass two tests: *coherence* and *correspondence*. Coherence refers to the logic of the theory itself: is it plausible to infer that "if *x*, then *y*"? There is always a degree of uncertainty in any program design, but it is nevertheless essential for assessment teams to try to establish a clear narrative about causes and consequences.

To facilitate this process, DCHA/CMM has catalogued existing theories of change identified by scholars and practitioners of conflict resolution through its Theories and Indicators of Change (THINC) Project. While not every theory identified through THINC is appropriate or reasonable in every context, the project serves as a useful template for understanding what a coherent theory looks like and what has been tried before.

Correspondence refers to the degree to which theories of change link to the real world of the conflict. Is the theory of change appropriate to this country, this conflict, this context? Some general theories of change have greater degrees of social science evidence supporting them than others. Further, if the theory cannot be connected back to the conflict diagnosis, it may be a plausible, coherent theory, but it probably does not correspond to the issue at hand.

Theories of change can be relevant at different levels of intervention, from the strategic- to the program- to the activity-levels. The task of assessment teams is generally to propose recommendations at the higher strategic- or portfolio-levels, but also to suggest ideas for particular projects or programs that could be designed or improved. The core element of this design in terms of effective conflict mitigation (or conflict-sensitive development) is to articulate clearly and coherently why certain activities will lead to real change in the corresponding dynamics of conflict as diagnosed through the assessment.

Approach 3: Testing Theories of Change and Exploring Alternative Strategies for Effective Peace Building

The third approach to formulating strategic and programmatic responses includes two frameworks for examining the range of existing responses and, in light of this, identification of possible additional initiatives for effective peacebuilding. The first is the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Matrix and the second is the RPP Criteria of Effectiveness.

RPP Matrix

One of the most important lessons learned from peacebuilding practice is that there is no single solution to resolving violent conflict, and, indeed, interventions which exclusively target one aspect of the conflict are unlikely to achieve long-term impact in bringing about peace. For instance, assistance for institutional reform of land tenure laws may appear worthwhile from the assessment and field work, and may be feasible from the USAID Mission's standpoint. However, such a program will be unlikely—on its own— to bring about overall peace, if it is not complemented by other efforts to address related factors, such as other institutions at the elite level, social norms and practices associated with land holding, access of citizens to mechanisms of justice and conflict resolution, and so forth. At the same time, the conflict assessment process should have located land tenure issues within the broader conflict context, suggesting ways that work on other key drivers of conflict may influence land tenure, and

One of the most important lessons learned from peacebuilding practice is that there is no single solution to resolving violent conflict.

vice versa. A systems map can help identify how land tenure is related to other forces and dynamics in the conflict, and, consequently, what additional efforts might be supported to enhance the impacts of work on land tenure.

The RPP Matrix, which emerged from research by the Reflecting on Peace Practice Program, provides one way of comparing different approaches within the same area (e.g., land tenure) and identifying linkages with other programs and issues that can enhance the effectiveness of USAID programming.[28] RPP has shown that for peacebuilding efforts

Fighters from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) hand over their arms to African peacekeepers and United Nations officials in the faction's headquarter town of Gbarnga 25 January 1996. (JAMES DORBOR/AFP)

to be effective, they must **link change at the individual/personal level to change the socio-political level.** The individual/personal level includes attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, skills and interpersonal relations—which can affect issues of grievance, identity, and institutional performance, among other things. The socio-political level includes relations among social groups, public opinion, social norms, societal institutions, and deeper elements embedded in social and economic structures and culture. RPP found that programming that focuses on or achieves change at the individual/personal level, but is never connected to or translated into action or results at the socio-political level, has no discernible effect on peace.

The profound transformations in attitudes, perceptions, relationships, skills and trust of participating individuals are significant for the broader peace only if they are translated into action at the sociopolitical level—the public, political or institutional sphere of activity. The reverse is often also true: efforts that promote change at the socio-political level—such as new policies, support for infrastructure of police or judicial institutions, or for constitutional development—often must also link to or be supplemented by change in attitudes and skills to be sustained.

RPP also found that for peacebuilding efforts to be effective, they also must link change in the mass public to change among important conflict actors or "key people"—those who have the power and influence to decide for or against progress towards peace.

The matrix below (Figure 4, the RPP Matrix), adapted from research from the Reflecting on Peace Practice Program of CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, provides a simple way to assess these two dimensions of program strategy: the *level of change* (individual/personal or socio-political) and the *constituency engaged* (more people or key people).[29]

For instance, a trauma healing program would generally be found in the upper left quadrant, since it aims at changing individuals in the broader population. On the other hand, a dialogue effort among influential clan elders would most likely be in the upper right quadrant, as it strives to change attitudes and perceptions among the participants—who are, themselves, key people. If that effort later resulted in an agreement amongst elders to establish a dispute resolution mechanism, then it would move to the lower right hand quadrant. Finally, if and when more people began to use the mechanism, it would shift to the lower left hand quadrant. Work on various forms of social mobilization or efforts to change

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28   Mary B. Anderson and Lara Olson, *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners* (Cambridge, MA: Collaborative for Development Action, 2003); and *CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, Reflecting on Peace Practice: Participant Training Manual* (Cambridge: 2009).

29   Anderson and Olson, *Confronting War*, page xxx; and *CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, Reflecting on Peace Practice*.

Figure 4 – RPP MATRIX

CONSTITUENCY ENGAGED

"More People"   "Key People"

Trauma Healing   Clan Elder Dialogue

Individual or Group Capacity Building

LEVEL OF CHANGE

Attitudes, Skills, Relationships

Institutions, Social Norms, Public Opinion, Culture

Mobilization of Women
for Peace Advocacy

Adoption of
New Constitution
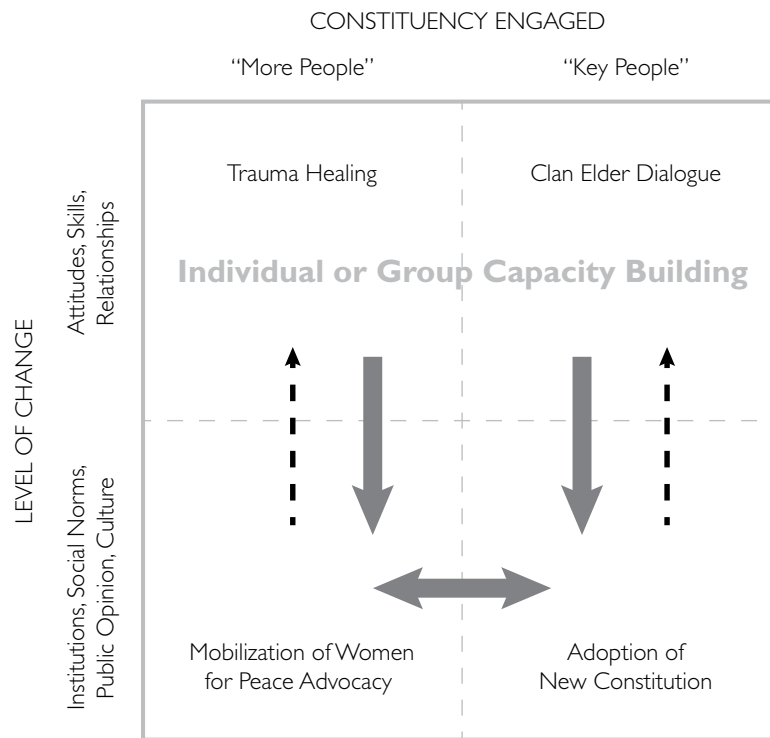
NOTE: Each cell contains an example of a program type or activity that illustrates different combinations of levels of change and type of constituency engaged.

social norms in whole communities or constituencies would be found in the lower left quadrant. While efforts to pass new laws, a constitution, or to reform the military would be examples of work in the lower right quadrant.

The matrix can be used to analyze a single program or project, or a portfolio of programs. It can be applied to a country, a particular geographic region in a country or to a particular type of conflict. Assessment teams should attempt to map the current spectrum of programs for peace and development, and recommended responses onto the RPP matrix.

To examine the overall strategy of a single program, the phases and activities can be traced on the Matrix. For instance, a program aimed at passage of an anti-discrimination law might start with capacity building among potential citizen animators (upper left hand quadrant), proceed to various forms of dialogue among key opinion leaders (upper right hand quadrant), move to organizing local groups (lower left hand quadrant) that then initiate lobbying efforts to influence policy makers and parliament to pass the desired law (lower right hand quadrant). The process might not stop there, but proceed to work on the necessary changes in attitudes underlying discrimination (i.e., additional work on individual change) and ensuring enforcement of the new law (i.e., accountability mechanisms at the socio-political level). Each of these activities or phases may be found in a different quadrant of the matrix, tracing the strategic pathway of the effort.

Assessment teams can "map" the current portfolio of programs or the spectrum of efforts for peace and development onto the RPP matrix to locate them in the appropriate quadrant. This would look somewhat like the matrix shown above. The results would likely show that some quadrants will be more populated than others, based on existing policies and funding priorities. Further discussion might conclude that the marginal return, in terms of results, from any new effort in those already heavily populated quadrants, would be less than in those which have not yet been tackled. For example, if a conflict-affected country

already has considerable levels of activity in reforming public institutions, another such program may not be of much added value. If it is found that these reforms are being stalled by key politicians' behavior, however, a program that focuses on key people dialogue and agreements might be useful in enhancing the impacts of institutional reform efforts. This strategic discussion must be informed by the conflict analysis.

We should also note, however, that areas of relative neglect may be that way for a reason. Some

Men sit and stand on top of a wall at a USAID help center next to a refugee camp on the outskirts of Goma, in the North Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo in October 2008. (ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP)

types of responses are simply less feasible or politically expedient than others. The RPP research showed, for example, that peace efforts were often biased toward "doing good" rather than "stopping bad." That is, peace practitioners preferred programs which brought opposing sides together to work toward common goals, sought to broaden various groups' understandings of the other side or interpretations of identities, and so on. Yet, if the assessment showed that pernicious key actors are trying to monopolize access to natural resources (such as mineral wealth), the most relevant intervention may seek to limit those actors' power and influence. USAID or its implementing partners may not be able to carry out this kind of intervention on its own. Here again there is a clear role for interagency cooperation among development, diplomacy, and defense.

RPP Criteria of Effectiveness

Finally, assessment teams should consider the goals that responses are designed to achieve, avoiding goals that are overly broad (e.g., "promote co-existence") or specific (e.g., "bring youth together"). RPP found that effective programs formulate peacebuilding goals as **statements of desired changes in the socio-political realm** (even if the activities are not at that level). Programs that formulate goals in this way are more likely to connect their activities to the desired changes, make effective linkages between attitudinal and socio-political level change and connect their programs to the conflict analysis. The RPP process identified five "criteria of effectiveness" for peacebuilding for doing this. They represent intermediate objectives or building blocks towards peace—the kinds of changes at the socio-political level that can indicate meaningful positive impacts on peace, short of achieving the larger end goals.[30] The five criteria are:

1. The effort results in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances in situations where such grievances do, genuinely, drive the conflict.

2. The effort contributes to a momentum for peace by causing participants and communities to develop their own peace initiatives in relation to critical elements of context analysis.

3. The effort prompts people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence.

4. The effort results in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security.

5. The effort results in meaningful improvement in inter-group relations, reflected in, for example, changes in group attitudes, public opinion, social patterns, or public behaviors.

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30   CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, *Reflecting on Peace Practice.*

These criteria should be adapted to the particular context being analyzed and considered in program planning and design, during implementation and as a component of evaluation.

Approach 4: Identifying and Supporting Existing "Bright Spots."

One final approach to generating response options is to look for *bright spots* and find ways to replicate them. Bright spots are instances of "positive deviance," or where a few individuals or groups are exhibiting uncommon practices and behaviors that enable them to achieve better solutions to problems than their neighbors who face the same challenges and barriers.[31] The premise of this approach is that communities have assets or resources they have not yet tapped and that communities themselves can bring about sustainable behavioral and social change by identifying solutions that have already been applied elsewhere. In short, bright spots are changes worth emulating.[32]

In the case of peacebuilding, leveraging bright spots might include scaling up local-level initiatives, using the existing capacity and reach of the private sector for peacebuilding, and capitalizing on popular forms of media to project peacebuilding messages. Bright spots can be identified through an analysis of resilience, including mapping existing capacities for peace—be they key actors or, importantly, informal institutions seen as legitimate by society.

> Bright spots are instances where a few individuals or groups are exhibiting uncommon practices and behaviors that enable them to achieve better solutions to problems than their neighbors who face the same challenges and barriers.

For example, the line dividing Nigeria's 50–50 split between Muslims and Christians runs directly through Kaduna state whose capital Kaduna City is, historically, the administrative capital of the North. Like Nigeria as a whole, Kaduna is nearly evenly divided between Christians in the south and Muslims in the north. Tensions between ethnic, religious, and associated political groups escalated to violence in 2000. In 1999–2000, twelve Northern states imposed Sharia law and Kaduna proposed to follow suit. Sharia had previously been only a matter of civil law (particularly inheritance and divorce) and was only applicable to Muslims, but Christians were anxious that they too would be subject to the code and tensions soon boiled over. In 2002, violent riots—triggered by a provocative newspaper article—broke out again between Christians and Muslims based on these latent grievances. However, Kaduna's governor brokered a political agreement known as the Kaduna Compromise, which has held since 2002. As Christian-Muslim clashes have raged in nearby states, Kaduna has faced tensions and occasional fighting, but has remained relatively peaceful in the face of extremist provocations. One neighborhood in southern Kaduna, Barnawa, is particularly remarkable for having remained peaceful throughout the 2000 and 2002 crises. In both instances, Christians and Muslims worked together to protect each other and to prevent outsiders who were intent on engaging in conflict from coming to their neighborhood. Identifying what factors have allowed Kaduna, and Barnawa in particular, to manage their conflicts and then working with these communities to replicate those factors elsewhere, if possible, is the essence of the bright spots approach.

The search for such bright spots should be a component of the diagnostic process and may be related to an analysis of resiliencies, as well as identifying key mobilizers for peace and potentially positive trends. To the extent then that there are such positive trends underway or positive actors operating, USAID

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31   Tufts University, *Basic Field Guide to the Positive Deviance Approach* (Boston: Tufts University, 2010), page 2.

32   Heath Chip and Dan Heath. *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* (New York: Random House, 2010).

and the USG may seek to find ways to support them, either directly or indirectly, by working through local actors. This approach forms a possible starting point for developing response recommendations.

4.2 Prioritizing Possible Responses

The previous section outlined four different, albeit complementary, approaches for identifying and thinking about possible responses. This section discusses additional factors that should be considered in the process of prioritizing responses. Some of the considerations presented below have been alluded to in the previous paragraphs—the timing and sequencing of response, the state of play among actors and interveners, and partnerships with USAID planning and policy. Here they are discussed in greater detail.

The Mission's Priorities and Time Horizon

A conflict assessment typically will be used by a Mission to inform its thinking and planning at one of two levels: (1) the strategic level, for instance as part of a Country Development Cooperation Strategy; or, (2) the program and project level. In practice, an assessment can and should inform both levels, but one or another will likely be the overriding concern for the Mission.

Proposed responses should be informed by, and be responsive to, both the Mission's immediate priorities and its time horizon. The notion of a "conflict curve" was introduced in Chapter 2 of this document. A USAID Mission's priorities, concerns, and constraints will differ depending on where a country, or parts of a country, falls on the conflict curve, and the level of conflict intensity. In a post-conflict recovery phase, for instance, the issue of response may be more or less predetermined through some previously negotiated political settlement or peace agreement, which donors will be asked to support by way of program implementation. In situations of early escalation or basic fragility, meanwhile, there is generally both greater flexibility and greater uncertainty because the risk of violent conflict is less imminent. In some cases, parts of a country may still be in active conflict, while others may not be. By contrast, in countries with full-fledged insurgencies, responses may be limited by the threats and barriers posed by the conflict. No situation is static, nor is there always an obvious trajectory, much less a linear path, between phases. Yet, the status of the conflict and its intensity has practical implications across the board.

Missions may face trade-offs between a short-term program to uphold stability or a longer-term effort to transform the conflict. Focusing directly on key actors by seeking to reduce their means for mobilizing armed groups is an example of common near-term interventions. Such interventions seek to limit these groups' access to finances, arms, recruits (e.g. through employment programs), and illicit revenue-generating activities (like drug trafficking).

Another near-term approach might be to try to initiate a peace process of some kind, either through Track I diplomatic efforts, or some form of Track II or III diplomacy. This strategy requires diplomatic coordination, but development actors can play a key role in providing necessary support and training. These processes might be initiated in a matter of weeks or months, rather than decades.

Women sit under a banner reading "Yes, Mr President we are for reconciliation and peace" before the arrival of Ivory Coast's President in Duekoue in April 2012.

Recall that those factors that can be more easily addressed in the short term are often more superficial to the core dynamics of the conflict. Mitigating a trigger effect may avoid a possibly destabilizing event, but, if the underlying issues are not subsequently addressed, another such event will likely occur in some other form in the future. So, a deeper analysis is also critical. To illustrate, USAID has often made investments in supporting the preparation for, and administration of, elections. This activity has frequently been done with the expectation (implicit sometimes) that, if there is less controversy over the fairness and accuracy of the election, then it will be less likely to feed grievances or provoke some form of violent response. But elections are only one trigger among many. Because external actors like USAID can often have the most influence on preventing and mitigating short-term shocks, focusing on elections is quite attractive diplomatically. It is important to recognize, however, that a strategy of focusing on elections alone will not prevent violent conflict. Though it is often challenging for external actors to address longer-term conflict dynamics and root causes, it is essential.

When it comes to longer-term interventions, all the above options still hold, but one can also begin to think about addressing institutional performance and societal patterns, altering incentive and resource structures in the system, or seeking to affect global trends. Indeed, development tools may be the most effective foreign policy arm for carrying out these interventions. Long-term thinking naturally complements the sort of holistic analysis implied by the four lenses discussed above.

The Mission's Financial and Human Resources

Recommendations for responses must also take into account the resources—broadly defined—that are available to the Mission. Typically, conflict-specific funding is likely to be scarce, or difficult to access. Therefore, one of the Mission's challenges is to figure out how to utilize those resources which *are* available through other sectors in order to help address conflict dynamics. In fact, any development program can be used to address conflict, at least minimally through improving institutional performance. For example, a DG program might focus on legislative strengthening, which could help strengthen an institution that may use policy to address conflict issues. This approach is not restricted just to political governance writ large, but could also include institutions that shape access to natural resources like water or land, or that provide key services like health and education. Moreover, there are frequently important trends and contextual features that USAID can play a role in shaping over time, such as programs related to climate change, demographic trends (e.g. family planning), and food security. Furthermore, all development interventions are likely to have a bearing on conflict. Thus, the analysis generated by an assessment can be used to make all programs across the Mission's portfolio conflict sensitive.

The Mission's available human resources must also be considered. For example, are the proposed responses executable by the existing staff, or would they require additional staff or staff with different expertise? If the proposed responses involve cross-sectoral or multi-donor approaches, does the Mission's staff and management have the time needed to ensure successful collaboration and coordination?

The Mission's Partners and Partnerships

The variety and nature of the partners with whom the Mission works is another factor to consider in response formulation. Conflict-related programming requires implementing partners that possess both country knowledge and expertise in conflict mitigation/peacebuilding. The Mission may have established relationships with various local and international implementing partners. The familiarity and trust that can come with these relationships can be a very valuable asset. Although, relying too heavily on longstanding partnerships can also result in an unfortunate narrowing of perspectives and approaches. Undoubtedly, it is important to explicitly recognize that, potentially, there is a trade-off, and seek to balance it accordingly.

The Mission's Relationship with Other Development Actors and Agencies

Finally, the USAID Mission also needs to consider the role of other development actors and USG agencies. Assessment teams, and the Missions they advise, need to think not just about what development actors and development tools can accomplish, but also about what roles diplomatic and security actors may play. This nexus is particularly relevant for conflict, particularly given the technical concerns raised by the RPP Matrix and Criteria of Effectiveness discussed above.

In intervening, one must be aware of the political overtones of 'who does what.' Historical trends, including legacies of colonialism and past interventions, contemporary geopolitics, and domestic political discourse will all affect the ability of different international actors to operate. In some contexts, internationals may be better able to maneuver than local ones, but the converse also holds. Indeed, in some conflict contexts, only certain actors widely seen as legitimate by the local population will be suitable for some purposes.

Some states are more willing than others to engage officially with insurgent groups. The U.S. Government has often labeled one or more of the belligerents in conflict as terrorist groups. This designation creates an immediate constraint on how USAID and the U.S. Department of State are able to engage in the conflict.

Finally, and of particular relevance to conflict contexts, USAID has limitations on how it is able to engage with various religious and security sector groups, which arises, respectively, from the Establishment Clause and the Leahy Law of the Foreign Assistance Act.[33] There is not a complete ban in either case, but USAID must carefully consider its obligations under the law and work thoughtfully with its partners at the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Defense to craft appropriate interagency strategies.

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33   More info on SSR at USAID *http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/SSR_JS_Mar2009.pdf*. USAID/ CMM's *Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding* toolkit provides additional guidance for engaging with religious actors. It is available at *http://www. usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/Religion_Conflict_and_Peacebuilding_Toolkit.pdf.* The interagency *Security Sector Reform* guide produced with input from DCHA/DG provides guidance for engaging in the security sector.

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ANNEX A:
DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

The questions listed in this Annex are provided to illustrate the specific areas of inquiry to be explored for a comprehensive conflict diagnosis, as presented in Chapter 3. These questions are not intended as a substitute for undertaking the analytical process presented in this guide, nor are they questions to be used necessarily in interviews. Rather these questions are provided as prompts to conflict analysts to ensure the assessment is comprehensive.

The questions are organized according to the major analytical categories.

CONTEXT

Historical

- Has the country experienced prior violent conflict? If so, what was it about and how did it end?
- Has the country undergone crises (natural disasters, coup) or periods (colonization, conquest, repression) in its history that continue to shape attitudes?

International

- How stable are the countries that border this country? What is the state of international relations between them, including high-level government politics and low-level people to people interactions?
- To what international and regional organizations does the country belong? How do they engage in the country?
- How actively engaged is the international community (state, non-state, and multilateral actors) with the country in terms of security, diplomacy, and development?
- Is there a history of international involvement in the country's internal affairs?

Geographic

- What are the key geographic/topographic characteristics of the country?
- Is the country being significantly impacted by climate change?

Economic

- What has been the recent history of economic growth (growing, stagnant, or declining)? By what percent? Review the country's economic and poverty statistics.
- How significant is international trade to the economy (percentage of GDP accounted for by imports plus exports)? Are remittances a factor? By which groups?
- Is the economy heavily dependent on primary commodities? Are these commodities easily 'lootable'?

Demographic

- What is the demographic profile of the country, in terms of ethnicities, age, sex, urbanization, and religious affiliation? What are the trends over time? Are there significant variations between subgroups or regions?

- How many people have migrated to the country in recent years? How many people have migrated from the country in recent years (diaspora)? Have these trends changed recently? Is there a significant diaspora outside the country? What are the characteristics of this diaspora?

- Is the country hosting large numbers of refugees? Does it have large numbers of IDPs? Are refugees/ IDPs of the same identity group as their hosts?

- What is the ratio of the population to land, food supply, or other life sustaining resources?

Institutional

- What are the major formal institutions in the country and how stable are they? How are these institutions viewed by the population?

- Are there informal institutions that could also be considered part of the context?

IDENTITY GROUPS

- What are the key identity groups in the country? (It is important to obtain a full range of the self-defined identity groups.)

- Are there identity groups outside the country that define themselves in relation to some aspect of the country?

For each identity group ask:

- Is the identity self-designated or attributed by others? Is it constructed to keep people out or to bring people in?

- How is the identity group sustained (associations, schools, media, NGOs, religious institutions, etc.)? Has the group adapted over time?

- Where does the identity group live and in what numbers? Is the group concentrated in regional pockets or dispersed? If they are concentrated, do they form a majority or a minority in the area?

- Does the identity group's settlement patterns cross international borders? Are cross-border settlement patterns accompanied by separatist demands?

INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

Note: Both informal and formal institutions must be considered. For each question consider whether institutional performance differs across different parts of the country or across identity groups.

Governance

Formal Government

- Is all of the country's territory under the central government's administrative control?

- What kind of formal governance regime is in place (democratic, authoritarian, or partial democracy)? How long has the formal government regime existed in its current form?

- Is there is system of checks and balances in the political system? How effective is it? Is there a legislative and judicial branch? How independent are they from the executive?

- Is there a constitution? When did it come into force and through what means? What influence does the constitution have on political activity? Does it provide for peaceful succession of power? How easily or frequently has the constitution been amended?

- Are there clauses in the constitution that endorse equal treatment for all populations or that could affect groups unequally?

- Is the government able to provide basic services throughout its territory? How decentralized is service delivery (national versus local)?

- How are local governments resourced? Can they independently mobilize resources or are they dependent on the central government?

- How large is the civil service? Are they paid regularly and well? Is entry into the civil service transparent and predictable?

Elections and Political Parties

- Is the chief executive chosen through elections or other participatory processes? Are they regular, competitive, and transparent?

- If the country has a legislative system: What electoral system is utilized (proportional or plurality)?

- Are elections used to select leaders at sub-national levels?

- How many political parties are there? Are they organized along identity lines? Is there a history of party coalitions? Are there opportunities for women and youth to hold leadership positions within the political party?

- How do diasporas influence political competition?

Judicial

- How many legal systems are operating in the country (including traditional, religious, formal)? How complementary are these systems? Are there clear rules for determining which disputes are directed to which system?

- Does the country have a well-articulated legal code? If the country has recently transitioned from one form of rule to another is it clear which laws are applicable?

- Does the legal system enforce contracts and protect property rights?

- Are citizens able to bring cases to the courts or informal justice system for rapid and unbiased adjudication?

- Do those charged with crimes receive rapid and unbiased hearings? Is there an established system of criminal procedure?

- Are there mechanisms for the oversight, discipline, and removal of judicial officers?

Traditional Systems and Leaders

- Are there traditional political institutions? How important are they?

- How well are traditional political institutions functioning? Have they been affected by recent conflict?

- Do people consider traditional political institutions to be fair, or are they known to favor one identity group over another?

- Is there a role for traditional leaders in the governance system? Are traditional leaders looked to as a forum for dispute resolution?

Civil Society and Human Rights

- How large is civil society? How professional is civil society? Do NGOs exhibit good governance (transparency, accountability and efficiency)?

- What roles does civil society play (service provision, watchdog, advocacy)?

- Are civil society organizations representative of the identity groups in a country or is there an imbalance between civil society organizations and identity groups?

- To what extent does the government control civil society activities? To what extent is civil society incorporated into governance structures?

- Is there an enabling legal environment for civil society organizations?

- Are civil society organizations able to peacefully express their differences with the government?

- Where do civil society organizations get their resources?

- Are civil, political, and human rights (including freedom of speech, movement, religion, and assembly) respected? Are there significant variations in the respect for rights between subgroups or regions?

Security

- Is the possession of weapons legal? Are weapons regulations enforced? What is the ratio of firearms to people?

- What is the role of any intelligence gathering government agencies? Is there surveillance of the population? Are people encouraged to monitor one another? Have intelligence gathering activities resulted in a level of general paranoia in the population?

- Are there divisions and competition within the security sector?

- Are certain identity groups clearly linked to particular components of the security sector?

- What percentage of the population is incarcerated? Is there a preponderance of certain groups in the prisons?

Law Enforcement

- What is the level of crime in the country? What is the level of violent versus non-violent crime? Do levels of crime and criminal activity and violence vary across the country? Does the level of criminal violence seriously impact freedom of movement or livelihoods?

- What percentage of crime is linked to organized criminal groups?

- How large are the law enforcement agencies? How are they organized?

- Are law enforcement agencies subordinate to civilian government authority?

- What is the level of funding for law enforcement and where does it come from?

- Are certain identities disproportionately represented in law enforcement agencies?

- How professional are law enforcement agencies – for example, do they have standards of admission, regular training, is promotion based on merit?

- Do law enforcement agencies have a history of human rights abuses or abuses of political and civil rights?

- Do law enforcement agencies have an orientation to community policing and local dispute resolution?

- Does a system of professional responsibility operate to ensure that misconduct and corruption by law enforcement agencies are investigated and appropriately punished? Do internal oversight mechanisms exist for monitoring, investigating and prosecuting misconduct by law enforcement? Are they effectively used?

- Are law enforcement staff paid a living wage?

Armed Forces

- What is the level of political violence? Do levels of political violence vary across the country? Does the level of political violence seriously impact freedom of movement or livelihoods?

- How large are the armed forces? How are they organized?

- How independent and professional are the armed forces?

- Are the armed forces subordinate to civilian government authority?

- What is the level of funding for the armed forces and where does it come from?

- Are certain identities disproportionately represented in the armed forces?

- How professional are the armed forces – for example, do they have standards of admission, regular training, is promotion based on merit? Does another country have significant involvement in training the armed forces?

- Do the armed forces make force contributions to peacekeeping efforts?

- Do border-control and customs services secure national borders, so as to deny access by hostile actors and prevent the flow of illicit goods and persons?

- Do the armed forces have a history of human rights abuses or abuses of political and civil rights? Does a system of professional responsibility operate to ensure that misconduct and corruption by armed forces are investigated and appropriately punished? Do internal oversight mechanisms exist for monitoring, investigating and prosecuting misconduct by military forces? Are they effectively used?

- What is the level of cooperation or rivalry between entities within the security sector? Is there a clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement and the armed forces?

Non-State Security Actors

Non-state security actors could include but are not limited to peacekeepers, private security companies, community security arrangements, vigilante groups, militias, violent extremist groups, religious police, and traditional structures.

- Do non-state actors play a significant role in providing security services?

- Are peacekeepers present and what is their relationship between international peacekeepers and in-country security entities?

- Has a DDR process been undertaken? What is the status of former combatant groups?

- Does the government encourage and/or support non-state actors?

Economic

Macro-Environment

- What is the government's overarching economic policy (balanced growth, pro- international investment, protect strategic industries, etc.)?

- What is the extent of governmental control over the economy? Is the government able to exert economic control over the territory of the state or are there large pockets of autonomous economic activity?

- What is the level of unemployment? Are certain groups disproportionately represented among the unemployed?

- Does the country have a history of food insecurity?

- What level of control does the government have over its currency? Do currency fluctuations contribute to economic instability?

Fiscal policy

- How does the government generate revenue? Do taxes or other policies fall disproportionately on particular groups?

- Is the budget process transparent at the national and the local level? Are government revenues and expenditures in balance?

Sectoral

■ What is government policy towards key economic sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, petroleum, and natural resources? How effective is the government at managing key strategic resources? What is the level of control in those industries? Are there special incentives or subsidies? How are profits from those industries treated? Do policies address issues of sustainability?

■ Are land tenure and property rights systems functioning effectively?

■ Are certain economic sectors controlled by particular identity groups?

■ Are there large parastatal companies that receive preferences?

Finance

■ What is the level of government ownership, control, and investment in the banking sector? Is government engagement based on economic viability?

■ To what extent does the government regulate the banking industry? How effectively are money-laundering and suspicious controls implemented?

■ Do individuals, small businesses, and private farmers have access to credit?

Social

Media

■ Is reliable information accessible to the majority of the population?

■ What are most people's primary sources of information? To what extent are these sources subject to control, manipulation or intimidation by the government and/or other groups?

■ Are there competing sources of information? To what extent are they organized along the lines of identity?

Service Delivery

■ How effective is social service delivery, (including education, health, water, electricity, etc.)?

■ Are there regions or identity groups that are particularly underserved?

■ Who is delivering these services (government, political entities, NGOs, CSOs, etc.)?

■ To what extent are the recipients of services engaged in determining their types and qualities of services to be delivered?

Non-Formal Structures

■ Do informal social support structures play a significant role in establishing norms and providing meaning as well as providing services or resolving disputes?

■ How robust are these structures? Have they adapted over time?

■ Does the government have any discriminatory social policies that limit language or traditional forms of education, etc.?

SOCIETAL PATTERNS

How would you characterize the relationship between the state and the population? Look across the interplay of context, identity and institutional performance for the range of patterns which characterize the relationship between the state and the population.

Apply the following statements to the institutions discussed above:

■ What is each identity group's perception of the effectiveness of the outcomes or results of the institution in question?

■ What is each identity group's perception of the legitimacy of the outcomes or results of the institution in question?

■ Are there differing perceptions across identity groups? Is deprivation described as absolute or relative?

■ *Some questions you may ask to ascertain identity group's perceptions are:*

■ What are the various identity groups' perceptions concerning their security, identity and recognition? Do they believe their needs are being ignored, frustrated, or satisfied?

■ Who does each group hold responsible for meeting or threatening their needs?

■ How do groups express their frustration/anger regarding perceived or threatened deprivation of their need for security, identity and recognition?

■ How do groups express their support for institutions that meet their needs for security, identity, recognition?

■ What is the narrative that these identity groups use to describe their own aspirations and to describe other groups and their aspirations?

KEY MOBILIZERS

Please refer to the Key Mobilizer Analysis Tool for questions related to this component.

TRAJECTORIES

Triggers

■ Are major government reforms planned that could result in shifts in political or economic power (e.g., decentralization, anti-corruption, security sector reform)?

■ Are contentious elections approaching?

■ Is extremist ethnic or religious rhetoric increasing? Are elites beginning to create or promote ethnic 'myths'?

■ Is the country vulnerable to natural disasters? A sharp economic decline?

Trajectories

■ For each of the identified patterns and given the associated key actors' capabilities is the expectation that the pattern will increase, decrease or stay the same into the future? Are the patterns reinforcing, diminishing, or self-regulating?

ANNEX B:
KEY MOBILIZER ANALYSIS TOOL

Key Mobilizer *Who mobilizes?*	Motivation *Why do they mobilize?*	Means *Can they initiate and sustain mobilization?*	Methods *How do they mobilize, and to do what?*
Who plays a central role in translating grievances or social or institutional resiliencies into collective action, whether peaceful or violent? Include both corporate actors (organizations, government agencies, religious bodies) as well as individuals. Be specific. Clearly-defined actors make targeting easier, which allows us to be more strategic, effective, and efficient. For example, "civil society" is not specific enough. For groups, identify the leader(s). Consider the role of foreign actors such as other U.S. Government agencies, donors, international NGOs, and corporations.	Describe their goals and interests. Are they narrow or broad? Are they personal or communal? Are they financial, political or ideological? How stable are those motivations – do they evolve over time? What determines their role and current course of action? Think about… **Institutional factors —** Consider current formal and informal institutional arrangements and the incentives they create for the actor. How does this actor benefit/lose within the current structure? Do they have any incentive to change? What decision-making constraints do they face? **Internal factors —** Self-efficacy, fears, social norms. What do they care about? What are their values and core beliefs? What motivates them? (Think also about which of these beliefs must be over-come, or which should be supported and leveraged.)	What authority do they have that allows them to mobilize people? Is their authority religious/traditional, charismatic, or legal/rational? How much influence do they have? What is their organizational capacity? Technical skills (military, etc.), an effective recruitment strategy, informational capabilities (text messaging, internet, radio), etc. Is their organization licit or illicit? Is it a legal structure or is it informal and/or illegal? Are they pursuing a military strategy (acquiring weapons and military training)? How do they finance their activities? Is that financing licit or illicit? Can they mobilize their resources quickly and effectively? How can they use their resources to change or bolster this pattern?	What is their role within the pattern of grievance or resilience? How do they contribute to it? What are their "hot" issues? Are they a potential reformer, spoiler, bridge builder? Explain why. What are their key messages and how do they communicate them (messengers, channels, tone)? What behaviors stem these goals and interests? Think about… **Non-violent tactics —** Negotiation strategies, patterns of behavior, channels of communication, protests, coalition building, conferences, peace processes and negotiations, existing strategies, peace activism. **Violent Tactics —** Terrorist attacks, forced conscription, violent protests, militia groups, hate speech, organized crime.