

DPPA Gender/Women, Peace and Security Training Gender-sensitive Political/Conflict Analysis Frameworkⁱ

Introduction

Conflict analysis is a systematic study of the structures, stakeholders and dynamics of conflict to provide a better understanding of causes, triggers and forces promoting violent conflict or sustaining peace. It identifies critical actors and priorities to inform conflict resolution strategy and mediation process design. Ongoing conflict analysis and monitoring is also crucial to anticipate and prevent conflict, to strengthen a nation's resilience to conflict and to transform conflict dynamics, e.g. through support to key actors committed to non-violent conflict resolution. Gender perspectives should be applied throughout the analysis.

A **gender-sensitive conflict analysis** goes beyond documenting practices of discrimination, exclusion and the gendered impacts of conflict. It assesses underlying gender dynamics – political and economic power dynamics between men and women within a society – and their links to peace and security. It also helps identify opportunities and capacities for peacemaking.

Relations between men and women intersect with many other elements of social cleavage, such as class, race, ethnicity, geographical location, economic inequality and access to resources. Sexual and gender-based violence against women or men can trigger violent defensive reactions or acts of vengeance, e.g. when armed groups systematically commit acts of sexual violence against particular groups, creating a cycle of violence. The analysis should also assess whether the (informal) influence of women may have increased when they take on social and political leadership roles in their communities during men's absence as result of the armed conflict, as this also affects their relative capabilities to intensify or resolve conflict. **Gender dynamics** thus create unique opportunities and challenges for peacemaking and must be analyzed, understood and used for strategic advantage.

Women as agents: women play different roles in a society in times of conflict. Women may be combatants or provide services to combatants, or women may be peacebuilders resolving conflict in their communities. Women may be significantly affected by violent conflict, being driven from their homes and enduring physical harm, including from sexual violence; e.g. the majority of IDP and refugee communities comprise women and children. Yet, the tendency to see women primarily as **victims** of violence has overshadowed many other roles women play in either pursuing conflict or in building peace. Consultations with women's groups, women business owners, mothers or wives of combatants, politicians and professionals can provide critical information, alternative views and entry points to combatants. This can contribute to increased understanding of the situation and enhanced ability to resolve conflicts and explore alternative solutions.

The **purpose** of this political analysis framework is to support political officers. It is intentionally brief, providing broad sets of questions for consideration, as experience with analytical tools suggests that the longer and more complex they are, the rarer their use. The main focus of the analysis depends on the circumstances and the intended purpose, e.g. Talking Points, Secretary-General's Reports to the Security Council, Mediator's assessment etc. Hence, this framework provides a starting point for analysis, intended to be adapted to the specific context.

A **Conflict Analysis framework** has commonly three major components:

- Analysis of the context (actors, power dynamics, issues, causes and capabilities);
- Understanding of dynamics and manifestations of conflicts as they unfold (Escalatory and stabilising dynamics; catalysts or triggers, requiring scenario-building to assess trends);
- Formulating strategic choices and actionable recommendations about remedies and responses.

Relations between women and men, however as unequal and unjust they might be, are rarely a root cause of violent conflict. Gender-based injustices against women or men, on the other hand, can sometimes be a catalyst for conflict, e.g. systematic sexual violations against men and women by a rival group can trigger violent reactions. Gender-based injustices can also be one of the significant manifestations of conflict, e.g. systematic exploitation and/or use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as a tactic of war.

Framework for Gender-sensitive Political Analysis

Context

- How the current political situation has been shaped by the past, what led up to it, any trends that have emerged, which should be noted to help understand the current situation. Reference should also be made to ethnic, religious and class cleavages in the society.
- Impact of non-traditional or new threats to peace, such as environmental degradation, natural resource exploitation, conflict-related sexual violence, drugs/organized crime, migration/refugees, HIV/AIDS, etc.
- Geography (e.g. landlocked, mountainous, fertile, environmental degradation)
- Political scene (e.g. how is power distributed, exercised and overseen? What is the level of respect for human rights, equal women's rights and the rule of law?)
- Women's political participation: how are women represented in elected and appointed positions? What technical and administrative bottlenecks are hindering women? Any Temporary Special Measures in place to ensure women's political representation?

Roles of men and women and differential needs

- Is there a distinct division of labour between men and women? Was this altered by conflict?
- Is there equal control over and access to resources, land and property inheritance?
- What is the differential impact of conflict on men and women? (economic, social, security, etc.). Systematic occurrence of conflict-related sexual violence? Identify specific post-conflict needs.

Parties/Actors (e.g. states, armed groups, major opposition movements)

- Who are the primary parties? Is each party a "unitary actor", able to rationally pursue identifiable objectives? Or is the behaviour more erratic, influenced alternately by competing constituencies and demands?
- What are the current and historical relationships between the various parties?
- What is the military capability (strength, technology, chain of command); and the state of morale, cohesion and discipline in the Security Forces?
- What is the legitimacy and capacity of governance institutions? Do certain entities, e.g. Ministry of Interior, Defence or Natural resource management, have a disproportionate influence on the State's behaviour? Assess influence of major opposition and rebel movements, and political parties in power here as well.
- What is the role of non-state actors (e.g. trade unions, private industry, women's organisations, identity groups, diaspora, "value-based" groups)?
- Role and potential influence of media, religious and traditional leaders, academic institutions?
- Who are the relevant external actors (e.g. neighbouring states; cross-border ethnic, religious or other identity groups; regional organisations; international organisations; foreign powers)?
- What roles do women/men play in reduction of conflict and peacebuilding?

Issues

- What are the main issues in dispute from the perspective of the various parties? To what degree are the issues malleable? Can they be transformed to be more easily addressed?
- Are the conflicts man-made, natural, or both? (E.g., level of poverty and inequality, conflict exacerbated by natural disasters like drought)
- What are the main dynamic causes of the conflict (i.e. current and relatively recent events that are driving the conflict)?
- What are the main structural causes of the conflict (i.e. political, economic, social and cultural root causes embedded in the institutions and structures of the society)?

- Have issues been confronted previously? Are they transient? Latent? Are there effects of trauma, fear, insecurity, hatred of earlier conflicts? Are there data on early warning or lessons learned?
- Are the domestic, regional and international causes of the conflict inter-related?
- Is the conflict escalating in intensity, scope and/or number of parties, or is it stable or de-escalating?
- Who are the affected groups? (e.g. ethnic or religious communities; IDPs and refugees, differentiate between women and men).

Involvement of UN or other relevant actors

- What has the UN been doing in this context? Identify the actors, including the UNCT and relevant intergovernmental structures.
- What is the UN's comparative advantage in a particular situation?

Assumptions and most likely scenarios (expected outcomes)

- What is likely to happen in the absence of third party involvement, and why does it matter?
- What are the consequences for the populations directly concerned? (assess effect on women).
- Will the consequences affect men and women differently? How?
- What are the implications for regional stability/economy/political relations?

Possible third party roles

- Is there a need and opportunity for third party involvement? (e.g. good offices, mediation, arbitration, preventive action, peacekeeping, enforcement, etc.) If so, which entities are best placed to play this role? (UN, Regional Organisation, Member States, INGO)
- What are the "entry points", including with other parts of the UN system?
- What are the pre-dispositions of the government or main actors towards a UN role? What are the potential risks of UN (non-) involvement?

Recommendations (with options if needed)

- Formulate a strategy (objectives and estimate required resources).
- Define what is politically feasible and achievable, what is not, and why (through the principles in the UN Charter, Security Council resolutions, as well as in the real time political context).
- Formulate explicit strategies for more inclusive consultative processes and effective women's participation; consider need for Temporary Special Measures in political and dialogue processes and ensure gender expertise.
- Determine a course of action and mobilise political, financial and popular support.
- Determine/establish the legal basis, if required, for further action.

Sources

Common sources of information for political officers include mission code cables, newspapers, academic reports, internet sites, other UN entities and DPPA divisions, including the Gender, Peace and Security Unit, and personal networks in the field. It is important to engage with a wide range of sources on a regular basis, to collectively enhance the depth and accuracy of real time conflict trends and the parties' positions. Such sources could include the parties themselves; interlocutors close to the parties' leadership; the diplomatic corps; country experts in governments, UN and other international bodies; high calibre policy institutes; civil society organisations and local women's groups; journalists and researchers active in conflict and peace studies.

Expertise

UN field missions and mediation support teams would need dedicated staff including gender advisors, to gather, study and present critical information for envoys to better plan, strategize and make decision. In the context of complex and protracted conflicts, it might be beneficial to set up a dedicated monitoring and analysis unit.

ⁱ The Framework for Gender-sensitive Political Analysis was drafted based on five UN documents, including: DPA Framework for Strategic Analysis (2008); DPA/EAD Checklist on Gender and Electoral Assistance (2012); UN Women Sourcebook on WPS (2012); Conflict analysis: an Introduction (DPA/DPKO Conflict Analysis training hand-out, 2013); Briefing Note on Conflict Analysis and Ripeness for Mediation (UN High-level Mediation Course, 2013); and UNDP Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies (2017).