

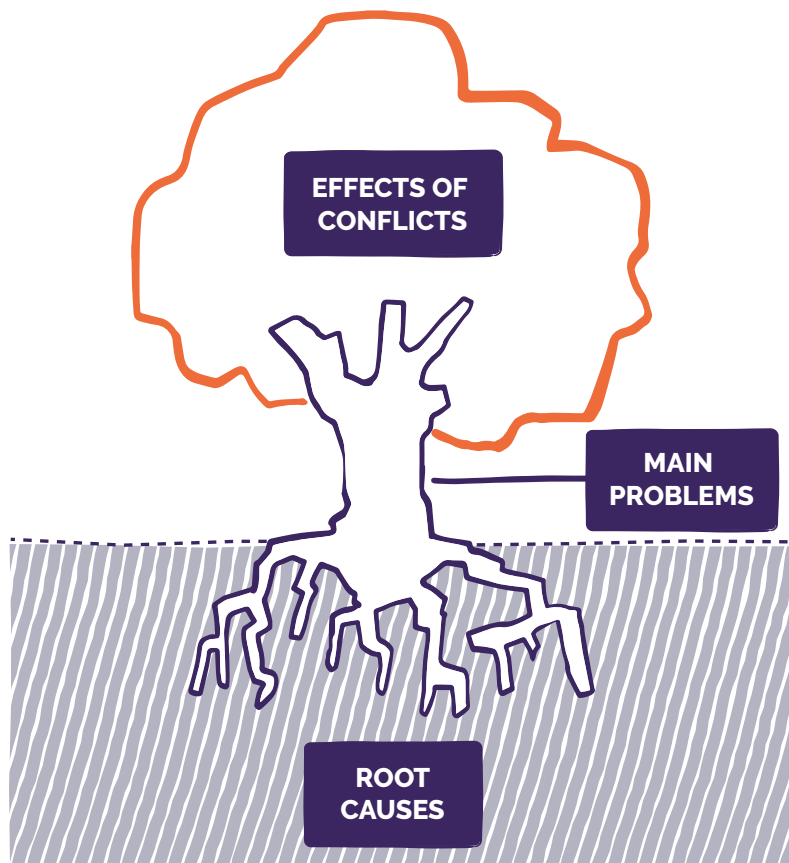
## Conflict analysis

After your group is clear on the basic concepts of conflict, violence and peace, a second step that you may want to take with your participants is to understand the importance of analysing a conflict. Why? Because **before attempting to address any conflict (apparent situation of disagreement) you must understand its context, the actors involved, needs and interests from the different actors, what divides them, what connects, etc.**

It might be particularly beneficial that you explore, with your group, the tools of conflict analysis. Bear in mind that each tool will not provide the same type of information, some tools can be more reflective on the actors involved, on the root causes or on the phases of the conflict.

- **Conflict Tree:** again, as simple as imagining a tree. The trunk represents the core issue (the conflict), the roots are the causes and the branches are the results/consequences of the conflict. It sounds simple, right? Well, be aware that this is not so easy. Depending on the complexity of the conflict, you might realise that the consequences might also be root causes and vice versa. For this reason, if you have a beginner group this is a tool that is usually recommended as it is really visual but make sure to ask your participants to select some common conflict from their everyday life rather than a very complicated conflict. For an advanced group, you can add: Flowers: successes; Thorns: challenges; Fruits: legacy; Bird's nest: External stakeholders.

**Primarily provides information on: the root causes and effects of the conflict.**

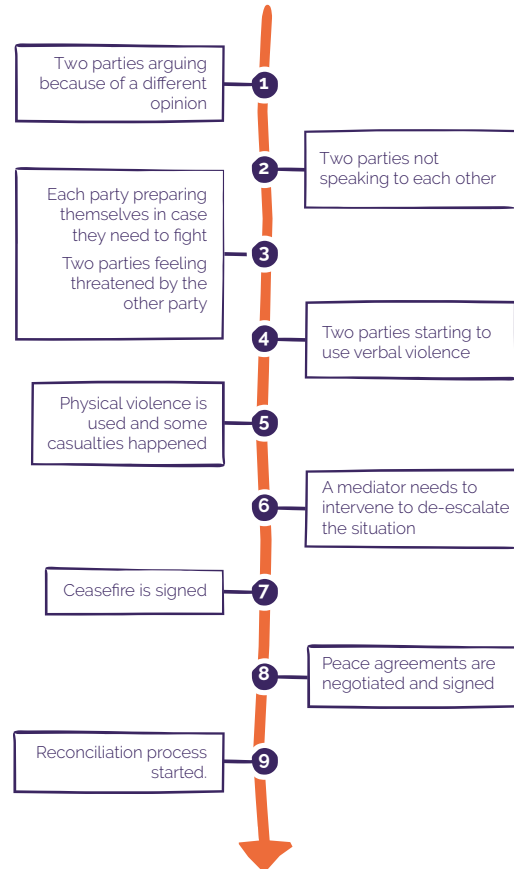


- **Conflict timeline:** this tool will allow the participants to dig into the conflict from a time perspective. When did it all start? What were the key moments? Key incidents that compose the conflict? Drawing a timeline and visualising these key moments might support the understanding of the conflict and how it might have been escalating over time.

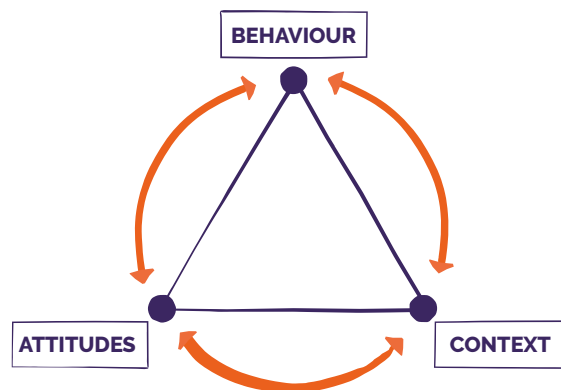
**Primarily provides information on: stages of the conflict.**



**Tip:** If you plan to use this tool in a group where you have participants that represent two sides of a conflict this can be a very sensitive tool as it might create a lot of disagreements between both parties. But if the discussion is well managed this can also be a quite unique opportunity for both sides to understand how each has been living such events. You may even want to have two timelines (or more) and then have a discussion on parallel truths and different narratives (see pages 25-26).



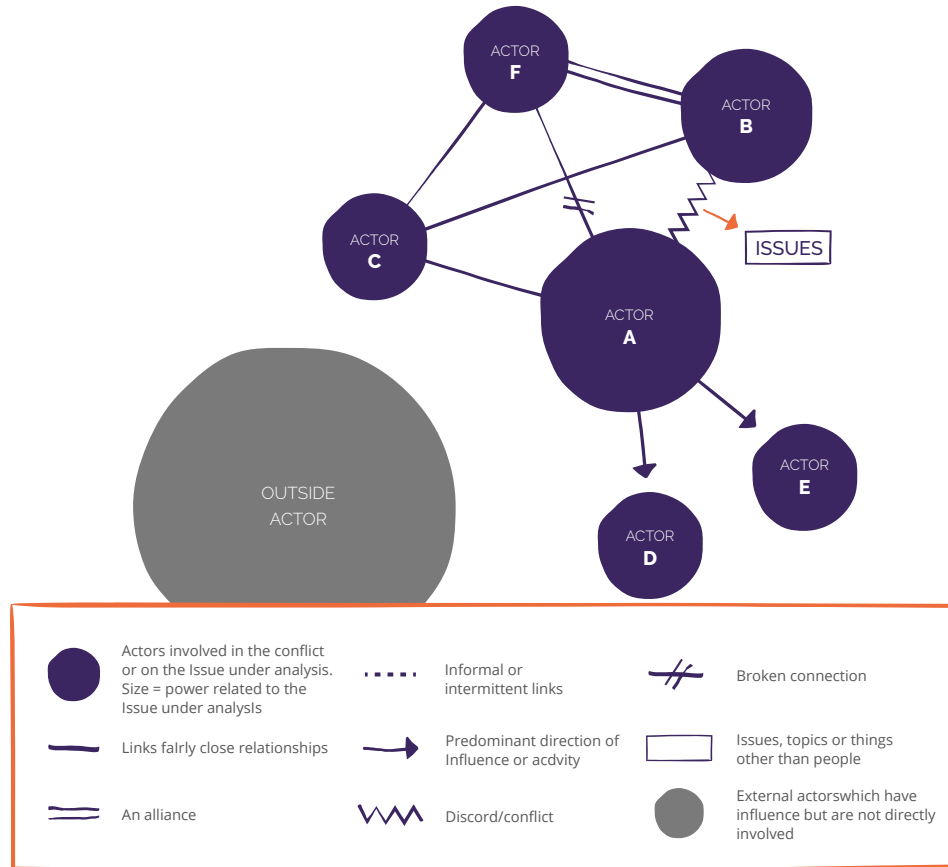
- **ABC Conflict Triangle or Iceberg Model:** in the visualisation of an iceberg, this tool allows participants to analyse the conflict based on what is visible: the behaviours (the actions that the groups/persons in conflict are taking) and the attitudes (what they think, their mental mindset) and the context: what is the context that is sustaining such conflict (perhaps there are forms of structural or cultural violence that allows the conflict to last. This can be an easy tool to start with your group as it allows for the analysis of the conflict from visible to invisible. In addition, if you have previously introduced the triangle of violence (direct-cultural-structural) it might be a good moment to make the connection.



**Primarily provides information on: visible forms (attitude and behaviour) and invisible forms (structure/context) of the conflict.**

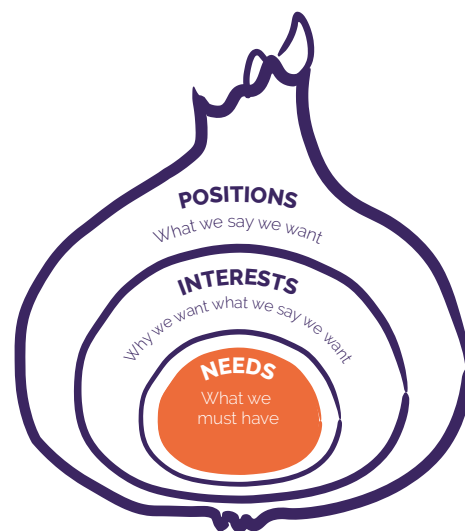
- **Conflict mapping:** You represent the conflict graphically, placing the parties in relation to the problem, and conveying graphically the relations between them.

**Primarily provides information on: actors involved in the conflict.**



- **Onion:** Imagine an onion. An onion is usually composed of different layers. With this symbolism, you can analyse a conflict through different layers; the most obvious or visible; the position (what the person says she/he wants); the interests (what she/he actually wants) and the final layer; the need (what she/he needs, something non-negotiable). Please note that this tool might sometimes be confusing for participants as they might not be very clear on the difference between interest and need for instance. It might be quite important to provide different examples and make them practice. Also, if you have a session on nonviolent communication (NVC) in your training, this tool can be very interesting. In NVC we would try to get into expressing our needs (not our position nor interest) and at the same time understanding the needs of the others, so this tool can be easily linked with NVC.

**Primarily provides information on: the needs behind the conflict.**



*Adopted from Fisher, Simon et al., 2000*



## HOW CAN YOU INTRODUCE THIS TO YOUR GROUP?

60 min, min. 10-15 participants.

# ANALYSING A CONFLICT ACTIVITY



**Preparation/Materials:** Flipcharts, markers. You first need to explain what conflict analysis is, its objective and the different tools (how and when to use it). Again, depending on your group, you will be able to introduce a different number of tools. Beginners-intermediate: try to limit to 1 tool (maximum 2 depending on the time available) and rather choose the conflict tree, onion and conflict mapping as they are usually easier to relate to. For advanced group, you can introduce all the tools.



**Instructions:** Divide the group into smaller groups and ask them to analyse a conflict of their choosing through one of the tool presented. It would always be better if they could choose a conflict they are familiar with (in their community, family, school...).

**Debriefing:** At the end, ask some groups (be mindful of time) to share their analysis through short presentations (it can become quite overwhelming if each groups goes into details)focusing on sharing challenges they might have faced while using these tools, what they realised, how useful it was and any doubt they might have.



**Tips:** It is important that you clearly explain the tools and provide participants with some examples. Unless the group is really advanced, do not bring very complex situations but try to simplify and give examples of conflict that they can relate to (conflict within the family, in the community, at university, etc.). Most important is that you are sensitive to your group, to their expertise, expectations and current context (please see part II for more details).



## KEY LEARNINGS FOR YOUR GROUP:

- Conflict analysis is a crucial tool to transform conflict and depending on the chosen tool it allows for a deeper insight on actors involved, root causes, actual issues, phases of the conflict and triggers.
- Conflict analysis is also key when it comes to conflict sensitivity and being more aware of when and how address or intervene in a conflict.
- Conflict analysis emphasises that conflict is dynamic and that it changes very quickly.



## YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE:

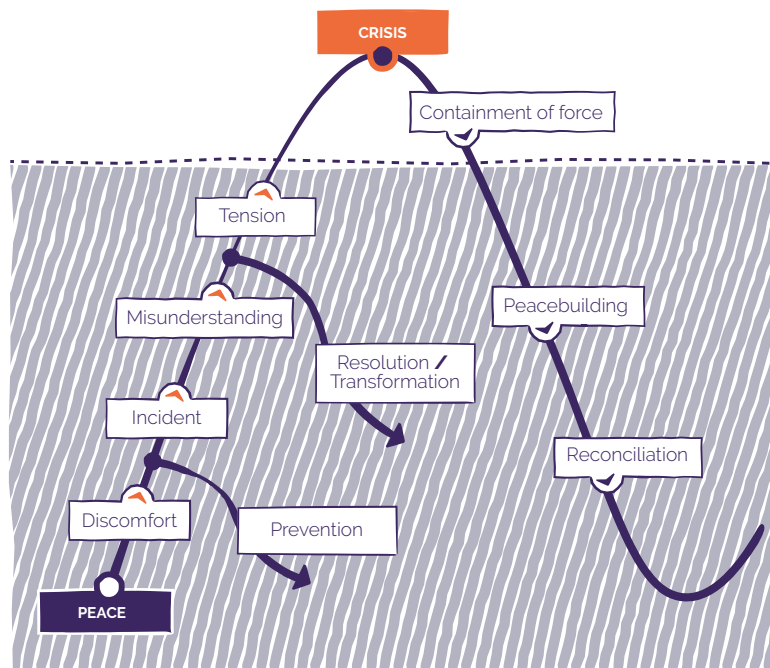
- Conflict analysis (*HD Centre, Conflict Analysis: the foundation for effective action*)
- Conflict analysis framework (*GPPAC*)

## Conflict escalation

Another crucial aspect to grasp is that every **conflict is dynamic**. It is a **process that changes and evolves over time** going through different stages. When supposedly competing goals emerge or two parties do not agree on something (a conflict situation, remember at this point it is neither positive or negative), the conflict can evolve in very different ways that will vary in the degree of cooperation and opposition. If you type conflict escalation or conflict stages on the internet, you will find many different charts, graphics and theories. The one we present in this toolkit is based on Fisher et al. (2000).

As you see on the graph, from a peaceful situation, a conflict can easily escalate into violence and a major crisis by an uncomfortable situation not being addressed. The situation can become so tense that at some point violence might arise. In all these stages, there were measures that could have been taken to avoid the conflict escalating, such as communicating, sharing the needs, etc. When the conflict has reached a stage of intense violence (crisis), it will then take some steps and time to bring back peace and would probably require a process of reconciliation.

**Example:** The situation starts with two friends having a peaceful friendship (you may already refer here to positive or negative peace - the two friends may simply not have an apparent violent conflict). At some point in the relationship, friend A has not been replying to the messages sent by friend B and this is creating a situation of discomfort to friend B. Then an incident may happen: friend A forgets the birthday of friend B and this create a misunderstanding: friend B may start speculating on the reasons why friend A does not reply to friend B ("does not like me", "has a new friend"...). This conflict situation may continue escalating until a real tension exists between both friends, who do not speak to each other and may even use violence (verbal insulting, bullying, etc.); that is the peak of the conflict, the crisis.



Source: Fisher, S. 2000, p. 19.

Please note that recently through our trainers expertise, we have also started presenting conflict stages in the form of a Tornado. This model can help your participants to understand that actually conflict is very dynamic and there is no linear evolution in it.

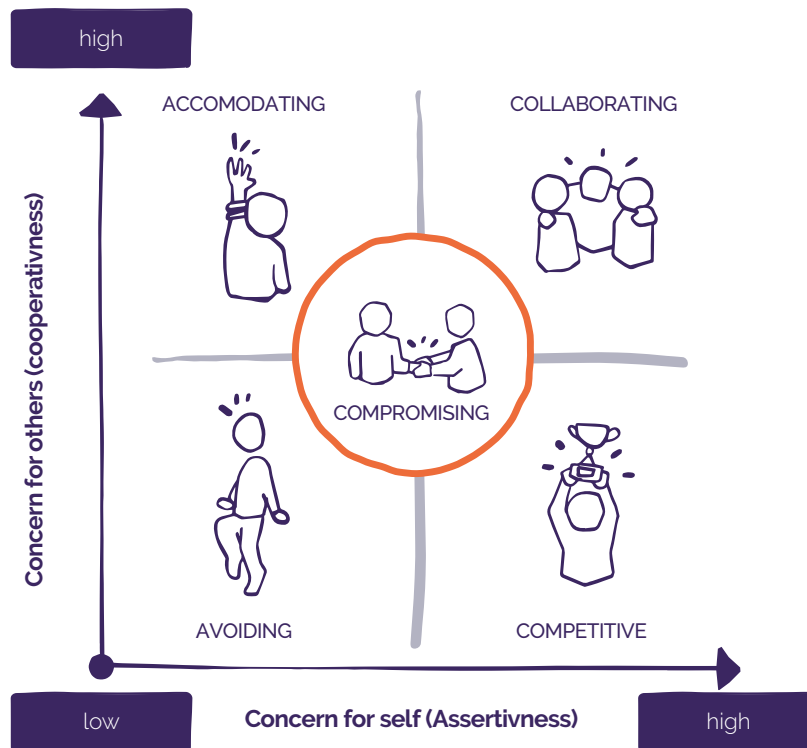


#### YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE:

- Understanding, Negotiating and Mediating Conflict ([Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue](#))
- Conflict Stages model ([Mainstreaming Peace Education](#))
- Conflict Transformation ([Beyond Intractability](#))

## Conflict management strategies

Once participants have an understanding of the notion of conflict, how to analyse it and what conflict phases and process of escalation are, you may want to explore with them the different ways of managing a conflict. We would recommend you to have at least discussed with the participants beforehand the concept of conflict escalation and how usually society has taught us to use violence to manage a conflict. It is very important to highlight during this part that there are different ways of managing a conflict and that it will depend on different factors, such as: time, interdependence on the other party, personality, own interests and needs.



Source: Thomas, K.W., Kilmann, R.H. 2008, p.2.

As you can see from this chart, there are 5 main ways of dealing with conflict, using a scale based on two main axes: 1) Concern for Others or Degree of Cooperativeness and 2) Concern for Self or degree of assertiveness.

From avoiding: you avoid the conflict leading to a lose-lose situation, to accommodating: you basically give up and surrender to the needs of the other (win-lose situation). or you compete (using power, authority, violence) and basically the other loses and you win, or you compromise: you both find a mid-way solution where none are completely satisfied but it is a short-term solution (half win-half lose) and finally you can collaborate where both parties understand their needs being fulfilled in a win-win situation.