

# CONFLICT SCANS

MARCH 2015

**GUIDANCE NOTE FOR THE CONFLICT  
SCAN METHODOLOGY:  
A QUICK AND ACTIONABLE APPROACH  
TO CONFLICT ANALYSIS**

## **WHAT IS A CONFLICT SCAN ?**

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In the broader family of conflict analysis, there exist several methodologies and approaches to analyzing conflict. SFCG has a document explaining conflict analysis (also known as conflict assessment), which can be found here in SFCG's resources. Conflict scans are one specific approach to conflict analysis. They are meant to inform programming by allowing us to comprehend the changing dynamics and evolution of a conflict or peace initiatives within short periods of time.

This document is a guide to the conflict scan approach, which was developed by program and DM&E teams at SFCG to encourage learning and reflection with regards to the contexts in which we work.

For more information on the sfcg approach to conflict analysis, please contact our ILT department.

## TEN ELEMENTS OF A CONFLICT SCAN

Listed below are the ten elements that make up a conflict scan. If you think one of these *does not* fit what you want to accomplish, you are likely interested in doing another type of study. In either case, make sure to get in touch with a DME Coordinator and/or DME Specialist to confirm which methodology and approach is appropriate, given your context and for what you would like to learn.

<b>Action-oriented</b>	Conflict Scan results informs what necessary adaptations are necessary to peacebuilding interventions given a dynamic conflict.
<b>Quick</b>	Designed for rapid response, scans take no longer than one month (maximum) to conduct all activities, from initial planning to final report.
<b>Small in scope</b>	Reporting prioritizes the top risks/opportunities for peace, highlights important events and/or tracks specific indicators over time.
<b>Brief</b>	No more than 15 pages, without annexes. Includes: description of purpose, summary of methods, context, findings and recommendations.
<b>Accessible</b>	Short format, understandable language, and clear visuals like graphics and tables. Reports are designed for communication to a wide audience.
<b>Developed with communities</b>	Build the sharing of results into activities to generate discussion amongst and with communities that are affected by the conflict or new peace initiatives.
<b>Targeted at diverse actors</b>	Guide provides strategies for ‘Do No Harm’ for all actors (including those who do not work on peacebuilding issues) working in a community.
<b>Responsive to context</b>	Conflict scans are either 1) repeated over time to track change, or 2) conducted in response to an important event that may have altered the situation.
<b>Qualitative Data</b>	Fill an information gap on perceptions and contexts of conflicts. Scans must utilise qualitative data, though quantitative data can also be added.
<b>Conducted by trained people</b>	All surveyors and researchers should be trained on ‘Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitivity’ principles in research and conflict analysis.

## WHY CONFLICT SCANS?

Conflict scans have **four main objectives** that align with the overall goals of conflict analysis:

- To **understand** the **evolution** and **dynamics** of conflicts
- To **plan or adapt** program/project **activities** (of SFCG and partners) based on the specificities of the context and changing dynamics
- To **ensure** that SFCG and/or other actors **do no harm**
- To **promote dialogue**, reflection and reduction of tensions

Scans prioritize information about what has changed *recently*, rather than broad ongoing trends. They are designed to build upon other deeper analyses that already exist, but may not have been done in a while, or on a specific location. In doing so, the information provided allows program staff and partners to respond to current trends and ensure that they are conflict sensitive by designing programs and activities with recent conflict dynamics in mind.

### TIPS AND TOOLS:

#### HARMONIZING WITH ACTORS IN THE REGION

To ensure that scans add valuable research rather than overlapping with what already exists:

- Read other studies being conducted in the region
- Make sure that the identified target groups are different from those in other studies
- Propose joint missions to make sure approaches and ideas are harmonized
- Look carefully at the methodologies of studies to understand the differences or similarities.

Conflict scans not only allow us to shape our internal decision-making in a quick and actionable manner, but they also provide a document that can be shared with other organizations to enable maximum positive impact.

Last, while an important part of all research is to promote dialogue and discussion, scans build opportunities for collaboration and discussion into their approach either during the research or through validation meetings. This is an essential part of the research process, as it ensures that the information shared in the scans is agreed upon by a wide range of actors and is validated by the communities.



If your primary goal is NOT a conflict analysis, but to study progress on project indicators, consider conducting **monitoring visits** that can help you gain knowledge of the context and get quality feedback from communities.

## WHAT DOES A CONFLICT SCAN DO?

While the methods used in scans vary based on the context and conflict, there are several aspects that all conflict scans should accomplish. A conflict scan must:

- Analyse and identify conflicts dynamics, including peaceful initiatives, between and/or within communities based on a geographical location
- Provide new information not already published in other sources
- Provide a snapshot of the current situation
- Provide analysis of risks associated with conflicts
- Provide recommendations for programming and Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitivity strategies
- Produce a short final report
- Communicate results and recommendations back to communities and other actors

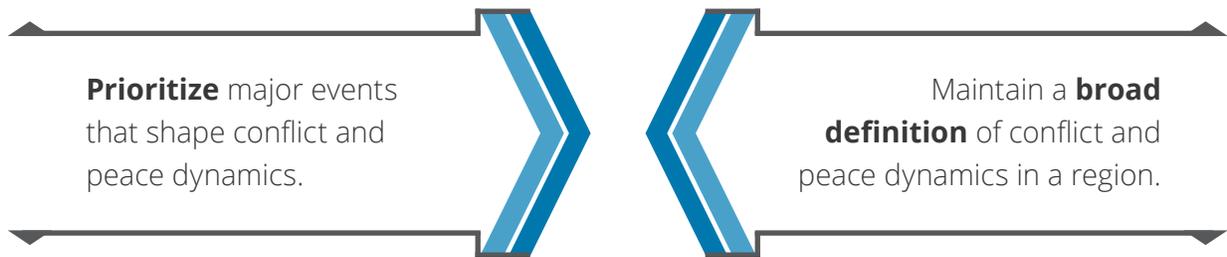
A geographical zone can be small or large (the size of a village or an entire region, for example). Within that area, scans should explore a wide range of conflict and peace dynamics that may be affecting the current context. They should focus on new information and recent trends. Any information that is already well known or well researched should be referenced, in order to avoid detailed explanations of those elements that are already well documented. All scans should also include an analysis of the main risks that could escalate violent conflict and provide recommendations to SFCG and other stakeholders. Last, these results need to be communicated back to communities to encourage dialogue and discussion surrounding conflict.

### **TIPS AND TOOLS:**

#### **NOT ALL CONFLICT IS BAD: USING PEACE INDICATORS IN CONFLICT SCANS**

Conflict can create numerous problems within communities, but it can also push communities forward into creating new solutions. In addition to tracking negative developments, risks, or use of violence, consider other elements such as positive developments. Capture new opportunities for peace by documenting the use of peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms, the venue of new peacebuilding actors, or new initiatives that strengthen social cohesion.

## HOW DOES A SCAN ENCOURAGE LEARNING?



First, scans **maintain a wide understanding of conflict and peace that is inclusive of all types conflict and peace dynamics happening in an area.** There can be focused questions in a study to provide feedback concerning a key population or type of conflict to ensure targeted Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitivity strategizing; however, conflict scan's scope should remain broad so that they do not miss pertinent information about peace and conflict that may be important in community dynamics.

### TIPS AND TOOLS:

#### COLOR-CODED RISK ANALYSES

Because scans are meant to be actionable and clear, using color-coded risk assessments can be a useful tool to present the main ideas. Color coded risk analyses can also provide clear visuals to improve understanding. Consider providing clear recommendations that help actors to avoid elevating tensions.



Second, scans should **prioritize information to give a reader the top conflicts cited, or the most important elements shaping community dynamics** (most encouraging / warning trends, for instance). In a short format, the goal is to provide clear understanding of priorities, and actionable recommendations. This does not mean types of conflict that are not discussed in-depth in the scans are irrelevant, but they may be referenced in annexes or discussed in reference to larger overarching conflicts.



If you want to do a study that is broader in scope, consider choosing one of the many conflict assessment frameworks that have been developed by donors and implementing organizations.



If you want your report to present all of the dynamics shaping peace and conflict in a region, rather than the top priorities, also consider doing **an in-depth conflict assessment.**

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE CONDUCT SCANS?

A scan should be designed according to the **volatility of a conflict**. Scans can be designed, for example, to follow events around an election year, an ongoing conflict, an influx of refugees into an area or recent peace treaty. To do so, they can be done periodically or in response to events. This is for the programme focal point and DM&E staff to decide together.

In highly volatile contexts, like Central African Republic, during the high-peak conflict period, the team opted for one conflict scan every two months, and deployed them as dynamics appeared to change. In less volatile situations, where certain specific events are expected to change dynamics, you may plan for only two or three to follow very specific moments. For example, the opening of a new mining site may change community dynamics, but can be followed up less frequently by programme staff.

Make sure to **build flexibility into proposals** in order to allow for the use of more funds for scans or more funds for programmes based on what is needed.



If this is the first study you have done in this area, and you do not have any background information in the area, consider conducting **a conflict assessment, a baseline study, and a needs assessment**. Use conflict scans to build upon this preliminary research.

## WHAT MAKES THE METHODOLOGY UNIQUE?

This is a *light* approach that should be *repeatable* and used to *respond quickly* to changes in communities. A scan takes a maximum of **one month** to conduct, from planning to reporting stages. Sharing and dialogue should follow this to ensure the scans result in action:



Scans prioritize gathering **qualitative information** about perceptions and relationships, focusing on how these have changed in recent months. Qualitative methods should be participatory, and fully involve community members in the process of analyzing conflicts. However, there are interesting quantitative methodologies that can also be used to provide additional understanding and value to reports. Quantitative methods should always be statistically significant, so be sure to plan for a large enough sample size.

### Examples of Qualitative Methods

- Interactive Focus Group Discussions
  - Mapping Workshops
  - Interviews
- Participant Observation

### Examples of Quantitative Methods

- Short surveys (10 questions or less)
- SMS feedback or tablet data collection

For advice on constructing methodologies for a scan, please see the conflict analysis guide and consult the DM&E Specialists, who can give advice and put country staff in touch to learn from each other.

## TIPS AND TOOLS:

### RISKS FOR STAFF AND COMMUNITIES

Always do an assessment of risks of the research and security issues before conducting a scan. Be sure to ask: Is this necessary? And, will its benefits outweigh the risks? See the conflict analysis guide for more sources on assessing the risks of research.

In addition, *data collection should focus on recent events*. Scans should not focus heavily on understanding events that happened more than 3 months prior to data collection, because they are meant to show how recent events have changed current dynamics. *This does not mean participants cannot discuss issues that they feel are relevant that happened prior to this timeframe. However, unless the information is completely unknown or unpublished, reports should reference other reports that discuss these issues, or put the data in annex.*



If you want to do a primarily quantitative study, consider doing a full conflict assessment that includes frameworks such as a full **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices framework (KAP)**.



If you do not want to focus on recent events, but want to include a more in-depth economic, political, or historical analysis, consider a different type of study such as an actors analysis, barrier analysis, or system approach.

## WHO TAKES PART IN SCANS, AND HOW?

### PRODUCTION

There are several people involved in producing a scan through data collection tool development, data collection, analysis and reporting:

- SFCG Staff
  - Program focal points
  - DM&E and ILT staff
  - Field staff

- Partners
- Other external groups (consultants, interested parties who want to collaborate on research, etc.)
- Communities

### TIPS AND TOOLS:

#### TRAINING IN DATA COLLECTION AND DO NO HARM PRINCIPLES

Scans should be inclusive, and it is important for program staff to be involved in methodology design, and possible data collection or analysis. However, as with all research, everyone engaging in data collection and analysis should receive proper training to ensure they interact with communities in a conflict sensitive manner and respect research principles throughout the entire process.

Program officers and DM&E staff should work together with DM&E Specialists to develop a methodology that responds to the needs and interests in a given region. This process may involve partners or other groups who are interested in collaborating on research and have ideas to contribute. Be sure to collaborate with staff from other countries to learn about the methodologies being conducted across SFCG, best practices, and lessons learned in other contexts. All scans should include community input and a participatory research approach that involves members in data collection and conflict analysis.

### TIPS AND TOOLS:

#### COLLABORATION IN DATA ANALYSIS

It can be difficult to understand how all the data fit together in a study. Quantitative data may seem like they do not match qualitative data, or interviews may contradict what is said in focus groups. Analysis should always be done in collaboration with those who have research experience to ensure that findings are clear and make sense of all of the information. Validation meetings will offer opportunities for communities to offer insight or additional information.

#### VALIDATION AND SHARING

A plan for validation and sharing of data should be included in a conflict scan's methodology. Due to the participatory approach that the scans use, it is important that conflicts and sensitive information are presented in a way that communities fully understand. Thus, it is necessary to **validate results** amongst community members before writing the report.

Conflict scans must be **shared**, both internally and externally, as they are meant to foster dialogue and provide recommendations to those working in the region. Because scans are shared, there may be times where two versions of the report may need to be produced: a confidential SFCG version, and an external edited version.

Scans may be shared with:

- SFCG Staff
- Partners
- Communities
- Government
- Civil Society
- Other external groups

The ways in which information is shared will vary. For some, this involves *validation meetings* with key actors and communities. For others, programs may use *radio programming or community dialogue programming* to share the results of scans and encourage dialogue in response to the more interesting results. Be creative, and decide what works best in your region based on the context, the opportunities, and the sensitivity of the information.

## THE FINAL PRODUCT

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### THE REPORT

A brief final report will be produced of **no more than 15 pages**, excluding annexes. The report design is meant for communication of results to a wide range of people. It should be clear, accessible, and action-oriented with useful recommendations. However, this does not mean the report should lack rigor in methodology or findings. All reports *must* include a 1-2 page summary (purpose, summary, context, findings, recommendations) and a summary of the methodology applied, with Annexes referenced for detailed methodologies and information on the approach. Annexes should include all the important additional information: tools, important data excerpts, etc.

Visuals are the key to creating an interesting, accessible and clear report of this length. Use graphics, charts, text boxes and illustrations to showcase findings and encourage interest.

### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

If you do not plan on using a conflict scan, then it's probably not relevant to conduct it in the first place. Do not forget to include follow up activities in the design of a conflict scan. Consider what you can shape in programming with the data collected, and be sure there is a clear plan for use before doing a scan. Some projects will use the reports to help guide microgrant priorities; others will use the scans to ensure that participatory theatre and community outreach respond to the immediate needs of a community. Other programs will use these reports continuously to evaluate Conflict Sensitivity strategies in volatile areas.

Whatever they may be, ensure that there is a clear vision for the use of these scans, so that it can be considered in the planning and design.

# SUMMARY GUIDE TO CONFLICT SCANS

## PILLARS AND VARIABLE ELEMENTS

### OBJECTIVES

- To understand the evolution and dynamics of conflicts
- To plan or adapt program / project activities (of SFCG and partners) based on the specificities of the context and changing dynamics
- To ensure that SFCG and / or other actors do no harm
- To promote dialogue and reflection and reduce tensions

### ACTIVITIES

- Analyze and identify conflicts between and within communities based on a geographical location
- Provide new information
- Provide a snapshot of the situation
- Provide recommendations
- Provide analysis of risks
- Produce a short final report
- Communicate back to communities and other actors

### CHARACTERISTICS

- Action-oriented
- Quick (1 month maximum)
- Short report (15 pages maximum without annexes including purpose, summary of methodology, context, findings and recommendations)
- Accessible
- Developed together with communities
- Targeted at actors implementing activities in the area
- Repeated in response to changes in local dynamics
- Based on a qualitative approach
- Conducted by trained and skilled people

### VARIABLES

- Staff and team involved in a scan (program officers, DM&E staff, field staff, partners, communities, external consultants)
- Timing and frequency of scans during the project cycle
- Target users (SFCG staff, partners, communities, government, civil society)
- Use of quantitative methods
- Data collection methods
- Follow-up activities to the conflict scans (grants given, programs implemented, ...)
- Additional thematic focus
- Do No Harm Analysis
- Color-coded risk analysis

## QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Please contact SFCG's ILT Team through Vanessa Corlazzoli:  
[vcorlazzoli@sfcg.org](mailto:vcorlazzoli@sfcg.org), or visit our website at <https://www.sfcg.org/ilt/>.

