



MAKING SENSE OF TURBULENT CONTEXTS



*Local Perspectives on
Large-Scale Conflict*



Michelle Garred
with Siobhan O'Reilly-Calthrop,
Tim Midgley and Matthew J.O. Scott
Foreword by Betty Bigombe



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Foreword

Betty Bigombe

Senior Director for Fragility, Conflict and Violence, World Bank

We can never understand enough about the root causes of violent conflict. Over 2 billion people¹ live in fragile or violent contexts, and the World Bank has been seeking ways to better calibrate development investment to the specific contours of state fragility. The 2011 World Development Report (WDR) laid out the vision for how to put the emerging consensus on peacebuilding and statebuilding into practice. A key section of the WDR emphasises the importance of multi-stakeholder dialogue frameworks as a way to ensure local perspectives in the design of programmes. That section asks:

Which stakeholder groups are crucial to building confidence and transforming institutions, and what signals, commitment mechanisms, and results are most important to these groups? This may include different groupings amongst political actors, security force leadership, excluded citizens, business, labour, faith-based institutions, or other influential civil society groups, and external actors such as neighbouring governments, donors, and investors. (World Bank 2011 p.112)

Several years after the 2011 WDR, local consultation appears to be enjoying a favourable streak within development circles. In Brussels the European Union (EU)–funded Civil Society Development Network has financed a systematic, multi-year engagement of EU policymakers with local peacebuilders. In New York, the International Peace Institute has a multi-year programme emphasising the importance of local perspectives in peacebuilding. In London, the UK government has supported a Sustainable Livelihoods Research Consortium that has also highlighted local expertise. The World Bank’s interest in incorporating local perspectives is well known, particularly from the Poverty Reduction Strategy processes of the

¹ The World Bank, ‘Fragility, Conflict and Violence Overview’, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview#1>.

late 1990s and early 2000s. Yet the current trendiness of local perspectives – particularly in conflict analysis – should not obscure the fact that organisations like World Vision have been carrying out such participatory conflict assessments for over a decade.

Whilst we welcome the current attention on local consultation, we must also be realistic about the state of conflict analysis today. We can draw at least four major themes out of this book. In the first instance, **conflict analysis does not happen nearly as often as it should**. The international community relies heavily on international experts rather than on local perspectives. Conflict analysis needs to become second nature, a first instinctive step. There is still too much ‘boilerplate’ programming. Second, **when conflict analysis does happen, it does not consistently model social inclusion**. Despite the abundance and clarity of evidence that social inclusion is the key to the success of peace agreements, donors, multilateral organisations and NGOs differ vastly in their practice of social inclusion. More important, despite the 2011 WDR, there have been no sustained efforts to convene actors from multiple sectors for the purpose of conflict analysis. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States² lays out five FOCUS principles, the first of which stands for ‘fragility assessments’. The New Deal spells out clearly what these assessments should look like: ‘We will conduct a periodic country-led assessment on the causes and features of fragility and sources of resilience as a basis for one vision, one plan.’ In the absence of such inclusive fragility assessments, multiple actors conduct their own assessments in isolation. Third, and perhaps worst of all, **there is frequent failure to implement conflict analysis**. Even when conflict analysis is conducted in a rigorous and inclusive manner, it too often remains nothing more than an interesting intellectual exercise, the proverbial ‘gathers-dust-on-the-shelf’ document that is not put into practice. Lastly, such multi-stakeholder dialogues – particularly on conflict analysis – must be **iterative rather than episodic**. Ongoing multi-stakeholder dialogue about conflict analysis ensures that maintenance, review and validation happen collaboratively and regularly.

This book goes a considerable distance not only to articulate this timely challenge, but also to present WV’s own experience and tools for the

² For more information, visit <http://www.newdeal4peace.org/about-the-new-deal/>.

reader to evaluate. The authors lay out the risks and opportunities of participatory conflict analysis with numerous country-specific cases. You, the readers of this book, should consider these examples as an invitation to use participatory tools to address the critical need for macro-level analysis. The invitation even extends to multilateral organisations, including the one I represent.

World Vision has done both the hard work of documenting its successes and the courageous work of noting its failures with the Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC) tool. My hope is that this important and timely contribution to the field of conflict analysis will spark new discussions in the international community about participatory conflict analysis. People on the receiving end of the international community's assistance deserve nothing less than a consistent, rigorous, listening posture and a willingness to apply these perspectives into our programming. I strongly encourage you to engage this important body of work in order to make better sense of the turbulent contexts where you work.

Contents

Acknowledgments	iii
Foreword.....	iv
Introduction.....	6
The Participation Gap: Local Actors in Macro-Conflict Analysis.....	6
Background on the Issue	8
Bridging the Participation Gap through MSTC.....	10
The Birth of ‘Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts’	11
What Is ‘Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts’ Analysis?	13
Future Vision.....	17
Purpose and Structure of Book	19
Conclusion	21
Part I: MSTC Rationale and Concepts	22
Chapter 1: Minding the Gap — Why Participatory Macro-Conflict Analysis?	23
1.1 The Growth of Conflict Analysis.....	23
1.2 Macro- and Micro-Conflict Analysis.....	24
1.3 The Participation Gap	27
1.4 What Is a Participatory Approach to Analysis?	31
1.5 General Benefits of Participatory Macro-Conflict Analysis	32
1.6 Minimising Risk.....	37
1.7 Conclusion.....	40
Chapter 2: Key Concepts and Theories of Conflict	42
2.1 The Concept of Turbulence	42
2.2 Greed, Grievance and Multi-Causal Conflict.....	47
2.3 MSTC and Do No Harm: Linking Macro to Micro	52
2.4 Conclusion.....	56

Part II: MSTC in Practice – Tools, Workshop and Process.....	58
Chapter 3: MSTC Analysis Cycle and Overview of Tools	59
3.1 The MSTC Analysis Cycle.....	60
3.2 The MSTC River	62
3.3 MSTC Tools in Brief	64
Chapter 4: MSTC Analysis Tools – Past to Present.....	66
4.1 MSTC Tool #1: Rapid Historical Phase Analysis.....	66
4.2 MSTC Tool #2: Actor-Groups and Characteristics Analysis.....	68
4.3 MSTC Tool #3: Intergroup Relationships Analysis.....	71
4.4 MSTC Tool #4: Symptoms and Root Causes of Instability Analysis.....	74
4.5 MSTC Tool #5: Political Economy of Instability Analysis.....	77
4.6 MSTC Tool #6: MSTC Mapping	82
4.7 Conclusion	85
Chapter 5: MSTC Tools – Present to Future.....	86
5.1 MSTC Tool #7: Trigger Events and Scenarios Analysis	87
5.2 MSTC Tool #8: Strategic Needs Analysis	92
5.3 MSTC Tool #9: Operational and Advocacy Implications Analysis	93
5.4 MSTC Tool #10: Integration with Strategy and Priorities Analysis.....	96
5.5 Conclusion.....	99
Chapter 6: MSTC Process – Key Ingredients for Success.....	100
6.1 Triangulation (Including Participant Selection).....	100
6.2 Leadership Engagement	104
6.3 Excellence in Facilitation	107
6.4 Trust, Respect and Confidentiality	109
6.5 Post-MSTC Context Monitoring.....	113
6.6 Adaptation to Adverse Circumstances	116
6.7 Conclusion.....	117

Part III: Looking Forward	119
Chapter 7: The Benefits of MSTC.....	120
7.1 Putting Context First.....	121
7.2 Eliciting Local Knowledge through Participatory Process.....	125
7.3 Analysing for Action	130
7.4 Conclusion	132
Chapter 8: The Challenges of MSTC	133
8.1 Time- and Resource-Intensive Approach	133
8.2 Implementation of Findings and Recommendations.....	135
8.3 Upholding True Participation	138
8.4 Underemphasised Themes	144
8.5 Competing Objectives.....	146
8.6 Conflict Analysis, Not Peace Analysis	147
8.7 Conclusion.....	148
Chapter 9: Participatory Macro-Analysis as a Promising Multi-Agency Practice.....	149
9.1 Multi-Agency MSTC: What's the Difference?	150
9.2 Amplifying MSTC's Benefits	153
9.3 Overcoming MSTC's Challenges: Strength in Numbers.....	155
9.4 Pathways to Policy Influence	157
9.5 Conclusion.....	163
Annexes	166
Annex A: How World Vision Developed the MSTC Framework.....	167
Annex B: List of MSTC Analysis Workshops to Date	174
Annex C: For More Information on MSTC.....	177
Annex D: About the Authors.....	178
Key Terms	181
References	184
Index.....	198

Tables

Table 1. Selected Macro-Analysis Frameworks	26
Table 2. Sample Rapid History Timeline	68
Table 3. Sample Actor-Groups	70
Table 4. Sample Actor-Group Characteristics and History	71
Table 5. Sample Actor-Group Relations	73
Table 6. Sample Analysis of Economic Activities	81
Table 7. Sample Resource Interest and Control	83
Table 8. Sample Agendas and Drivers	84
Table 9. Scenarios and Strategic Needs	94
Table 10. Sample MSTC Work Groups for Operational and Advocacy Implications	95
Table 11. Factors That Support Conflict Analysis Implementation.....	138
Table A-1: MSTC Timeline Overview	167

Figures

Figure 1. The MSTC Analysis Cycle	14
Figure 2. The Volcano View	46
Figure 3. The MSTC Analysis Cycle	61
Figure 4. The MSTC River	63
Figure 5. Symptoms and Root Causes on Tree Diagram.....	76
Figure 6. Sample Map of Key Economic Resources.....	79
Figure 7. MSTC Mapping in Progress.....	83
Figure 8. The MSTC Analysis Cycle	86
Figure 9. Sample Strategic Needs: Pakistan	92

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Multi-Agency MSTC Contributes to Readiness for Kenyan Elections.....	15
Case Study 2: Micro-Macro Linkages Shape World Vision Lanka Strategy	54

Case Study 3: Cross-Agency Comparison of MSTC Findings
in Pakistan 89

Case Study 4. Leadership Matters: Macro-Analysis in a Challenging
Context 105

Case Study 5. MSTC Updates Equip World Vision Lebanon to Face
Regional Volatility..... 114

Case Study 6. Oxfam Asia’s Experience of MSTC..... 122

Case Study 7. Ensuring Balanced Participation 141

Introduction

A troubling participation gap exists within conflict analysis as currently practised. Understanding conflict is critical to aid planning, yet large-scale analyses are dominated all too often by external ‘experts’. Local voices and local knowledge, which are essential to understanding the true causes of conflict, are not adequately reflected in the far-reaching policies and strategies that define what aid agencies do and how they do it in conflict-affected settings.

In response, the Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC) framework is designed to bring local actors and participatory methodology into country-level conflict analysis. In this book World Vision offers MSTC to the inter-agency aid community with the aim of advocating participation as a standard pillar of macro-conflict analysis and of encouraging collaboration amongst aid and civil society organisations that seek to understand and influence their turbulent contexts.

The Participation Gap: Local Actors in Macro-Conflict Analysis

Poorly planned aid interventions can exacerbate conflict, whether it be overt violence or covert tensions. In contrast, well-designed interventions can help prevent and resolve conflict by addressing its underlying causes. Demand for conflict analysis has grown exponentially because it is used to identify the underlying drivers of conflict in any given context. This knowledge is essential to ensure that aid interventions do not make conflict worse (conflict sensitivity), and, where appropriate, actively seek to address the divisions amongst conflicting groups (peacebuilding).

Participatory approaches have an important role to play in effective conflict analysis. They enable local actors to come together to unlock their own knowledge, identify key challenges and empower themselves to find and act upon realistic solutions. Participatory approaches ensure that analysis and action are informed by the experiences and perceptions of all relevant groups, including those who hold power and those who do not.

However, participation is uneven in the practice of conflict analysis. Many NGOs and other civil society organisations use micro (community)-level methodologies, often incorporating participatory approaches. However, they generally do not conduct structured, country-level analysis. Donors, on the other hand, tend to focus more on macro (country)-level analysis driven by external experts. They recognise the importance of local voices and often consult briefly, but they are rarely able to make full use of participatory approaches. In effect, conflict-affected people and local civil society are failing to be meaningfully involved in macro-level conflict analysis.

This critical gap can undermine conflict sensitivity and aid effectiveness. A lack of local perspectives in macro-conflict analysis can limit the degree to which the analysis captures the multiple drivers and competing narratives of conflict. It can also be difficult to translate analysis into action if ownership is limited to a small group of external experts who are unlikely to be responsible for implementation of recommendations. Furthermore, traditional analysis focuses primarily on the final product and does not account for the potential impact that the conflict analysis process itself can have upon the context. A lack of local voices or marginalised voices may, for example, reinforce the patterns of exclusion that often drive conflict.

Participatory approaches can help to overcome these limitations in ways that:

- **improve overall quality of conflict analysis** by including a broad range of actors in the analysis and shedding new light on ‘standard’ narratives about a conflict
- **increase sustainability of recommendations** by ensuring that findings are ‘owned’ by local people, making action steps more realistic and likely to be implemented
- **improve inter-agency coordination** and collective impact by bringing agencies together to develop common understanding of conflict and shared action plans
- **model political inclusion** by bringing groups together across conflict fault lines in an atmosphere of equitable collaboration
- **strengthen the capacity of civil society**, empowering them to become more resilient agents of change.

‘Like inside and outside actors, country and thematic expertise work best in combination.’

—Séverine Autesserre, *Peaceland* (2014 p.72)

In short, participation brings nuance and on-the-ground relevance to macro-analysis practice. Both local actors and external experts are needed for the unique forms of knowledge that they bring. Thus participatory approaches should consistently complement – not replace – the traditional methods of macro-conflict analysis that emphasise foreign expertise.

MSTC is offered in this volume as a way forward in bridging the participation gap in most existing macro-level conflict analyses. Whilst a partial solution, it can help the aid industry³ meet a number of the pressing needs just described.

Background on the Issue

Over the past 20 years international aid agencies have dramatically changed the way they work. This change has been prompted in part by the transformation of the contextual landscape in which aid actors operate, as well as a significant shift in how that reality has been understood.

Since the end of the Cold War, changing patterns of armed conflict and international response have placed aid workers in more direct contact with internal civil conflict dynamics across the world. Since 2000, host and donor environments have grown ever more complex amidst the global discourses on terrorism, counter-terrorism and armed international intervention. In short, working in areas of conflict and instability has become the norm for aid agencies, and it is difficult for aid actors to understand fully the events happening around them.

Aid actors have become more aware that violent conflict is a primary obstacle to sustainable development. As of May 2013, only 20 per cent of fragile and conflict-affected countries had met the Millennium Development Goal to halve extreme poverty (World Bank 2013). The

³ It is common, but sometimes uncomfortable, to call aid an industry. It does not refer here to making a profit; instead, it is an industry in that it involves much hard work by many people (Oxford University Press).

impact of violent conflict also falls most heavily on the most vulnerable, including young people. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that more than half of the refugees who have recently fled Syria are children (2013).

Add to this the pivotal thinking beginning in the mid to late 1990s on the link between aid and conflict, which acted as a wake-up call for an industry that viewed conflict as an isolated event.⁴ Warfare and violence began to be understood as part of a longer-term pattern of instability. The naive assumption that good intentions equal good impact was shattered. Even the best-intentioned aid, if it lacks contextual understanding, can unintentionally exacerbate conflict, thus doing harm to the very people it intends to help. On the other hand, well-designed aid can help break cycles of conflict by addressing its underlying causes and strengthening conflict management and prevention systems (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012).

Conflict Sensitivity and Conflict Analysis

The awakening amongst the aid industry to this new reality has ushered in the emergence of conflict-sensitive programming, which refers to the ability of an organisation to:

- understand the context in which it operates
- understand the interaction between its interventions and that context
- act upon that understanding in order to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict. (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012)

Conflict sensitivity and conflict analysis (which provides the contextual understanding required for conflict sensitivity) are essential components of aid programming at both micro and macro levels. As a result, the fields of conflict sensitivity and analysis are rapidly growing and evolving. Numerous government donors and some NGOs have committed significant resources to this end. Increasingly, donors and multilateral agencies expect

⁴ Mary B. Anderson's *Do No Harm* (1999) and Kenneth Bush's 'Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment' (1998) are notable early scholar-practitioner efforts, whilst academics leading the early thinking included Le Billon (2000), Collier (2000) and Duffield (1997).

NGOs to show a sophisticated understanding of conflict and to mainstream conflict sensitivity into their programming.

As already noted, many NGOs and other civil society organisations have focused their conflict analysis at the community level, using micro-level methodologies such as the Do No Harm framework (Anderson 1999). On the other hand, national-level analysis has been the focus of bilateral and multilateral donors. Many donors have designed their own frameworks for macro-level use. Thus, analytical approaches to micro- and macro-conflict analysis have taken two different paths, with little crossover between the two. Many NGOs that are familiar with participatory methodologies emphasise participation when they conduct analysis at the local level. Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, working at the macro level, have favoured traditional methods of analysis that do not easily lend themselves to authentic participation of local actors.

As a result, a divide has emerged between micro- and macro-conflict analysis, and there is a 'participation gap' within macro-level conflict analysis practice. The lack of participatory approaches has meant that local voices and civil society are not meaningfully involved in analysis and recommendations at the national level. Too often, local knowledge is not adequately reflected in the far-reaching strategies that define how aid agencies work in conflict-affected settings.

This gap is problematic and cannot be ignored. Donors themselves recognise the need for authentic consultation of local civil society actors (UNPBSO 2013), yet they are struggling to find ways of making this a practical reality. Without local voices articulating their understanding of conflict or being involved in drawing up recommendations, any analysis risks being compromised. Inadequate analysis can lead to aid that is ineffective and even damaging.

Bridging the Participation Gap through MSTC

Amongst six influential macro-frameworks recently recognised by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC 2012 p.79), MSTC is the only macro-analysis framework that is NGO designed and insists on

participatory methodology.⁵ It has been collaboratively tested and refined for more than a decade, through 58 analyses in 23 countries in every major region of the world. MSTC has also been independently evaluated by International Alert (2009) and considered worthy of academic study (Freeman and Fisher 2012).

What distinguishes MSTC from other macro-frameworks is that it engages local actors – including local aid workers and a diverse range of other civil society actors – as both the source of data and the primary analysts. MSTC offers a set of tools for a group of approximately 25 participants to use in a workshop setting. Workshop participants analyse the actors, symptoms, trends and triggers of instability in the country or subnational region in which they work and live. A team of facilitators carefully guides the process as participants identify the context's strategic needs and likely future scenarios, leading to practical recommendations for an agency's strategy and positioning within a turbulent context.

The Birth of 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts'

For World Vision (WV) as a global multi-mandate NGO delivering child-focused programmes in nearly 100 countries,⁶ the challenges of unstable contexts are both important and urgent. Key senior managers in the late 1990s grasped how a proper understanding of conflict-affected contexts could influence all three pillars of WV's work – disaster management, development and advocacy. World Vision views these three pillars as closely connected and seeks to interweave them with conflict sensitivity and, where appropriate, with more active forms of peacebuilding. Thus joint context analysis is essential for the integration of WV planning and practice.

Already engaging with the Do No Harm Project in the late 1990s, WV staff in country offices saw the immense benefit of this frame of analysis for programme design. Nonetheless, it was focused primarily on the assessment of local projects on local realities. What was missing was a

⁵ As of November 2014.

⁶ World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender. For more information, see <http://www.wvi.org/>.

macro-level framework to collectively analyse the social, political and economic dynamics of conflict at the country level, to inform big-picture strategic planning.

In 2001, World Vision started a project to develop tools that would enable staff from country offices to conduct macro-conflict analysis that would inform their high-level strategy. This became known as the Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC) analysis. ‘Turbulence’ was understood to refer to instability and conflict that was chronic, cyclical and political in nature. After two years in development, the MSTC tools were deployed in 2003.

Over the past decade, dozens of MSTC workshops have been conducted in four different languages in numerous locations around the world, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. MSTC facilitators now span more than four organisations, and a dedicated senior member of WV’s Peacebuilding Team oversees MSTC’s continued use and development. Operational staff have embraced MSTC as a way to develop a shared understanding of complex contexts, where violence may be either overt or covert, and to develop grounded recommendations that resonate with their own field-based reality.⁷

Using a collaborative learning process, MSTC has evolved through regular feedback and refinement into the framework that exists today. There is a steadily increasing emphasis on meaningful participation, local knowledge and inter-agency collaboration. Most WV country offices are nationally rooted NGOs, so the early participation of their staff launched MSTC on the path of listening to local voices and of situating itself within civil society. However, it quickly became clear that a balanced analysis would require going broader and deeper, to engage diverse local actors from other agencies and from outside the aid industry. World Vision began to progressively increase the number and variety of external guests invited to its MSTC workshops.

⁷ Previous WV MSTC publications, on which this book draws, include those by Jackson with O’Reilly-Calthrop (Jackson 2002, Jackson and O’Reilly-Calthrop 2002, Jackson and O’Reilly-Calthrop 2003, World Vision International 2007), Lowrey and Scott (2010), and Midgley and Garred (2013).

In recent years, MSTC has attracted the attention of other international NGOs such as CARE and Oxfam, for whom World Vision has conducted single-agency MSTC workshops. Even more encouragingly, MSTC's utility is becoming evident in enabling collaborative analysis across multiple agencies working in a turbulent context. Such multi-agency workshops are gradually becoming a regular occurrence. Multi-agency MSTCs provide shared analysis and the possibility of collaborative action, and therefore they hold significant potential for the future (as illustrated in Case Study 1 below).

What Is 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts' Analysis?

Many macro-level conflict analysis frameworks rely on traditional methods of investigation such as desk research and interviews by foreign consultants. In contrast, MSTC is done in a participatory workshop format, engaging local actors as participants to develop and analyse the conflict-related data they need for their own context. Other NGO initiatives have used participatory approaches at the macro-level, most laudably the People's Peacemaking Perspectives project (Conciliation Resources and Saferworld 2012), but MSTC is the only approach that offers a structured, replicable framework for such analyses.⁸

MSTC analysis is guided by highly skilled facilitators during an intense four-day workshop. The analysis uses specially designed practical tools to peel away the political, economic and socio-historic layers of complex conflict. Participants gradually build up an analytical picture that reflects this complexity and form a common perspective on ways forward. The analysis does not stop there, but guides the participants on to identify the context's unique needs and future trends, leading to recommendations for agency strategy and positioning within the context.

The MSTC Analysis Cycle

The MSTC analysis cycle contains ten tools, which are the building blocks of a participatory MSTC workshop. The first half of the workshop analyses factors contributing to turbulence from past to present, culminating in a relationship map that gives a snapshot of the current situation. During

⁸ This statement, like all data in the book, is accurate as of November 2014.

the second half of the workshop the process turns toward the future, identifying the strategic needs of the context⁹ and forecasting likely scenarios. The workshop concludes by identifying strategic implications and priorities for the participating agencies' own organisational plans.

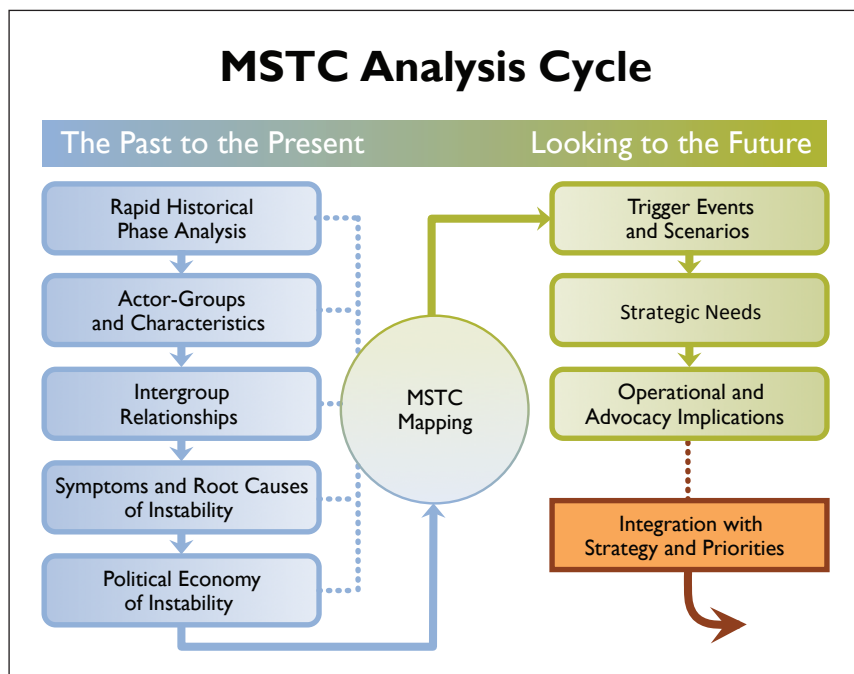


Figure 1. *The MSTC Analysis Cycle*

It is important to note that these MSTC tools have been designed specifically for local aid and civil society actors whose work is affected by turbulence. Whilst MSTC actively seeks the participation and insight of guests from government, academia, business, and so on, the MSTC framework in its current form is not customised to the unique needs of those sectors.

⁹ The strategic needs of the context are defined as the medium- to long-term factors required to move the country or context toward a preferred, more stable future.

Case Study 1: Multi-Agency MSTC Contributes to Readiness for Kenyan Elections

In April 2012, World Vision Kenya and the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium¹⁰ co-convened the first fully inter-agency Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts workshop. It brought together 14 agencies, including international and national NGOs, civil society organisations and government officials to develop a shared analysis of the key needs for peace and stability in Kenya. The workshop findings helped the participating agencies to prepare for the March 2013 general election in hopes of avoiding the violent election-related turmoil that had engulfed Kenya in 2007–8.

As a result of the workshop, World Vision organised a context-monitoring team to track the development of MSTC-identified election scenarios. This enabled World Vision to respond to increases in tensions between groups in areas where World Vision Kenya (WV Kenya) was working. For example, World Vision engaged Christian and Muslim leaders to champion a nonviolent transition of power and peaceful solution to unrest in sensitive areas such as Coast Province. World Vision also followed up with a mini-MSTC workshop for eastern and north-eastern Kenya, enabling pastors and sheikhs, district peace committee representatives and local NGOs to develop concrete plans for helping to prevent and mitigate election-related violence.

Within the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium the MSTC reinforced existing inter-agency collaboration and helped to focus that collaboration on key election-related activities. For example, the analysis had recommended a joint civil society platform to address Kenya's strategic needs, including 'a culture of peace and nationhood'. In response, the Consortium facilitated a one-day coordination workshop organised by the Kenyan government's National Steering

¹⁰ The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium was a Department for International Development-funded project that brought together 35 agencies from four countries, working together to improve conflict sensitivity in development, emergency response and peacebuilding programming. For more information, see <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org>.

Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management. Participants completed an organisational mapping exercise to highlight how each agency was contributing to pre-election peacebuilding efforts, so that they could communicate or even cluster their activities. The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium also undertook capacity building for conflict-sensitive journalism in view of MSTC findings on the role of the media in Kenyan politics.

The Kenyan elections of 2013 were largely free of violence, thanks to the concerted efforts of both government and civil society. The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium and WV Kenya are pleased to have made a contribution towards this broader national achievement. Throughout 2014, Conflict Sensitivity Consortium agencies have continued to work towards MSTC-recommended civic education in order to promote awareness of rights and responsibilities amongst citizens and to empower local communities to engage more effectively with county authorities. Towards the same end, World Vision is using the Citizen Voice and Action approach to local advocacy, which is reflected in 60 per cent of its community development programmes and is continuing to grow.

Benefits and Challenges

The MSTC workshops conducted to date demonstrate multiple benefits. MSTC pushes busy aid practitioners to put context first, developing strategy in response to the context rather than resorting to ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches. MSTC also makes local knowledge the centre of the macro-analysis process. Its participants emphasise themes that are relevant in the wider conflict analysis field – such as good governance, civic participation, equitable distribution of resources, and peacebuilding and reconciliation – from a uniquely internal and citizen-centred perspective. MSTC is designed for action, making it possible for agencies readily to apply the analytical findings to improve their planning.

MSTC experience has also identified several key challenges, which are examined in a more detailed and transparent manner later in this book. In brief, however, MSTC is a time- and resource-intensive process. Its record

of implemented recommendations is mixed, despite the significant boost provided by local ownership of the findings. Most important, discussion of macro conflict can be sensitive and potentially divisive. Special safeguards protect the people and the data in each MSTC process to help prevent harmful tensions from emerging. These safeguards include careful triangulation of sources through recruitment of highly diverse participants (and selective use of external data); exceptionally well-qualified lead facilitators; and firm agreements on mutual respect, confidentiality and the management of sensitive data.

As a reminder, MSTC is not meant to be used in isolation. It is intended to complement the more traditional externally derived forms of macro-analysis and to be used in combination with micro-level frameworks that explore conflict dynamics at the community level.

Future Vision

Participatory approaches to macro-conflict analysis are an exception in aid industry practice, but MSTC experience shows that they could become a standard pillar. Consultation with local actors has tended to be sporadic, but it could become a more robust and transformative style of participation in which local actors work together, using their own knowledge to conduct their own analysis, and ‘owning’ the findings and the outcomes. Better analysis and better outcomes are within reach.

To help make this vision a reality, World Vision offers MSTC to the inter-agency community as the only replicable macro-level conflict analysis framework that consistently requires a participatory approach. MSTC is well proven, yet it continues to evolve through hands-on learning towards greater collaboration and inclusion. Thus MSTC workshop materials and lessons-learned documentation will be made available to other agencies through a specially designed web portal.¹¹ World Vision strongly recommends that agencies interested in making use of these materials engage a certified MSTC lead facilitator in order to maximise quality and minimise risk. MSTC facilitator training opportunities will also be available to other agencies that wish to invest in their own capacity.

¹¹ This portal can be accessed at <http://www.participate-mstc.net>.



The 50th MSTC analysis, celebrated during a September 2013 workshop of CARE International in Pakistan, helped to catalyse plans for broader sharing of MSTC with the inter-agency community. Pictured left to right: Anil Faisal, WV; Michelle Garred, WV; Waleed Rauf, CARE. Photo by CARE.

Single-agency MSTC workshops, which are a long-time mainstay for World Vision and also now used by CARE and Oxfam, will remain an important part of MSTC's future. At the same time, preliminary experience with multi-agency MSTC workshops indicates exciting potential for coordination within civil society. The distinct features of the multi-agency format are the participant mix (no more than 25 per cent from the convening agency) and the emphasis on inter-agency recommendations. Shared analysis and recommendations create the possibility of agencies working together in coordinated action, thus making a collective impact on both aid strategy and public policy.

Multi-agency MSTCs tend to catalyse participant interest in stronger engagement between civil society and policymakers. Policymaker doors are opening, slowly and haltingly, as participation is increasingly recognised as a central element of democracy. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, in which civil society has been granted a formal role in the multi-

stakeholder fragility assessments that inform aid planning, is a key example. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States is at this time imperfect in practice (Wall and Fairhurst 2014), yet the best way to improve it is to get involved. Further, civil society networks could convene their own conflict analyses in contexts where the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States is not a driving force. To reach this goal, civil society will need participatory analytical tools, resources to fund analysis and networking support to help maximise diversity in engaging local actors.

In sum, the hope is that Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts will transcend its WV origin and help to establish the participatory approach as a consistent complement to traditional expert-driven forms of macro-conflict analysis. World Vision welcomes any other new macro-analysis tools that partner agencies may develop to advance the empowerment of local actors. People living in turbulent contexts deserve nothing less than the best, and they have the right to take the lead in shaping how civil society works for peace, justice and human well-being.

Purpose and Structure of Book

This book has a two-fold purpose.

First, it sets out what MSTC is and how it works. More than that, it shares the theoretical and conceptual thinking behind MSTC, how it differs from other macro-analysis frameworks, and why it matters. It encourages not only the use of MSTC, but also a broader increase in the use of participatory approaches at the macro level.

Second, the book seeks to share the real benefits experienced so far, to signpost the significant potential that MSTC holds for inter-agency and civil society collaboration. At the same time, these chapters are realistic about the challenges, both those unique to MSTC and those common to conflict analysis in general.

The primary audience is thought leaders within multi-mandate aid NGOs and peacebuilding NGOs. Secondly, it is for other civil society organisations that have interest in MSTC's potential for catalysing inter-agency collaboration; donors and scholars keen to consider participatory macro-analysis as an emergent promising practice; and MSTC facilitators-in-training, who will learn to incorporate the content into their work.

The relevance of MSTC is broad, but it must be acknowledged that MSTC experience to date comes from the aid industry, particularly from multi-mandate NGOs. *Aid*’ is used as a convenient umbrella term that includes sectors such as emergency response, community development, advocacy and peacebuilding. The aid perspective tends to frame conflict and peace as part of the broader global development agenda. In contrast, the perspective of single-sector organisations may be quite different. Peacebuilding organisations, which are the original source of much conflict analysis expertise, may see the definition of the field in a distinct light. World Vision invites those peacebuilding colleagues to join in the work to help determine how best to integrate MSTC learning and practice.

The book is divided into three main parts. Part I **looks at the conceptual foundations** on which MSTC has been built, what lies behind the development of the tools. Chapter 1 discusses what a participatory approach to macro-conflict analysis is, the benefits it brings and why it is important. MSTC’s understanding of where knowledge is held and how it is obtained shapes the process by which analysis is done. Chapter 2 discusses the meaning of turbulence and the theories of causes of conflict that have informed the rationale and design of MSTC tools. Readers seeking a review of related literature will find it in Part I.

Part II is about the practice of MSTC – what the tools are and how they fit together in a workshop process. The text goes into some detail to explain what each tool does, how it works and what participants are expected to do. Readers who need only a quick overview of the MSTC process will find it in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss MSTC tools in more detail, which analyse the past to the present and the present into the future. Chapter 6 examines the key ingredients for successful MSTC analyses, including triangulation of sources; participant selection; leadership engagement; excellence in facilitation; trust, respect and confidentiality; post-MSTC context monitoring; and adaptation to adverse circumstances.

Part III looks ahead to the future with a view towards sharing MSTC widely within the inter-agency community. Chapter 7 sets out the multiple benefits of MSTC, and Chapter 8 transparently explores the challenges and areas of ongoing growth. Chapter 9 casts a vision for participatory macro-analysis as an emergent promising practice and a vehicle for collaboration

amongst non-governmental aid agencies, and more broadly within civil society. With collaboration comes the powerful potential to influence public policy.

The annexes provide more detailed information on the historical development of MSTC as well as resources and information for those wishing to explore MSTC further.

Conclusion

MSTC offers an approach that bridges the ‘participation gap’ that exists within macro-conflict analysis, builds local civil society, links macro and micro programme work, links cross-sector programming and provides the space to nurture multi-agency efforts.

Looking ahead, inter-agency collaboration is becoming the preferred vehicle for advancing the conflict analysis of the future. As tools towards that purpose, MSTC workshop materials are offered to inter-agency and peacebuilding colleagues through a web portal.¹²

MSTC’s potential for improving macro-analysis practice, for encouraging joint analysis and collaboration amongst NGOs, and even for enabling civil society input into public policy are all factors that make this conflict analysis framework worthy of discussion. The authors hope that this book will prompt such a dialogue.

¹² The portal can be accessed at <http://www.participate-mstc.net>.

Part I: MSTC Rationale and Concepts

Chapter 1: Minding the Gap — Why Participatory	
Macro-Conflict Analysis?	23
1.1 The Growth of Conflict Analysis	23
1.2 Macro- and Micro-Conflict Analysis	24
1.3 The Participation Gap	27
1.4 What Is a Participatory Approach to Analysis?	31
1.5 General Benefits of Participatory Macro-Conflict Analysis	32
1.6 Minimising Risk	37
1.7 Conclusion	40
Chapter 2: Key Concepts and Theories of Conflict	42
2.1 The Concept of Turbulence	42
2.2 Greed, Grievance and Multi-Causal Conflict	47
2.3 MSTC and Do No Harm: Linking Macro to Micro	52
2.4 Conclusion	56

Chapter 1: Minding the Gap — Why Participatory Macro-Conflict Analysis?

Before examining what MSTC analysis looks like in practice, it is important to share the conceptual foundation on which MSTC has been built. This can be divided into two distinct parts:

- the underlying importance of participatory approaches, which reveals MSTC's perception of where knowledge is found and how it is acquired
- theories of conflict that have informed tool design. (See Chapter 2.)

This chapter examines conflict analysis and the need for participatory approaches to it, which shape both the analysis process and its outcomes. Whilst emphasising the value of capturing local perspectives, which often differ from 'expert' wisdom, this chapter also clearly acknowledges the risks implicit to this approach.¹³

1.1 The Growth of Conflict Analysis

No aid intervention in an unstable context has a neutral impact. Recent history demonstrates that failure to understand local conflict dynamics and how interventions interact with them can unintentionally strengthen conflict drivers, undermining or reversing development gains.

For example, aid paradigms shifted as a result of the unintended harm caused by NGO development and emergency response interventions in the 1980s and 1990s in Rwanda. It has been argued that development assistance in Rwanda was structured in ways which reinforced ethnic divisions and structural violence that contributed to the 1994 genocide (Uvin 1998). In response to the genocide itself, NGOs managed refugee camps in neighbouring Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo [DR Congo]) in which innocent survivors were mixed with genocide perpetrators, including some bent on rearming for further violence whilst sustained by NGO assistance (Eriksson 1997). Further, the entire emergency response operation came to be seen by some as a cover for the lack of timely

¹³ This chapter draws on the previous MSTC writings of Midgley and Garred (2013).

political intervention by the international community (Terry 2002) and a contributor to the destabilisation of DR Congo. It is now widely recognised that those unintended negative effects could have been mitigated through timely conflict analysis and willingness to take action.

This paradigm shift led to aid actors adapting to a ‘conflict-sensitive approach’ to assist in policymaking and programming, an approach that seeks to understand the interaction between agencies’ interventions and the contexts in which they take place (International Alert *et al.* 2004). These efforts, it is hoped, will help minimise the negative impacts of aid and maximise the positive ones. A number of aid actors have committed significant resources towards this effort.

Every context is unique. Conflict-sensitive planning requires the flexibility and depth to develop a strong understanding of conflict dynamics in a particular place and time. Conflict analysis has become the predominant way to develop this understanding. Goodhand defines ‘conflict analysis’ as a structured process to examine the actors, structures and dynamics of a conflict, thus informing an effective response to that conflict (Goodhand 2006 p.25). Conflict analysis aims to inform overall strategy, programme design and quality of interventions in unstable contexts.¹⁴

1.2 Macro- and Micro-Conflict Analysis

Conflict analysis can and should be conducted at multiple levels of society, as defined by geographic scope. In fact, effective conflict sensitivity requires focused analysis of the interrelated drivers of conflict at the micro and macro levels as well as coordinated responses working at all levels (Ricigliano 2012 p.8–9).

The focus of micro-level conflict analysis is a local neighbourhood, village or town. Micro-level conflict analysis has become increasingly common in the development sector since the early 2000s, and the Do No Harm

¹⁴ In some situations it may be too contentious to conduct a conflict analysis openly, so the broader term ‘*context analysis*’ is used to help defuse tension. However, it is important to differentiate between analysis that seeks to identify conflict drivers and broader analysis that focuses on a wide range of social, cultural, political and economic factors without a specific focus on conflict.

framework (Anderson 1999) has been particularly influential.¹⁵ Some agencies, including World Vision, also recognise a ‘meso’ (middle) analysis level, the size of an administrative district or small province. For this level World Vision uses a toolkit called Integrating Peacebuilding and Conflict Sensitivity (I-PACS), which includes a strong Do No Harm component.¹⁶

The focus of macro-level analysis is typically national, although it is sometimes applied to a subnational level¹⁷ or a cross-border region¹⁸ where turbulence crosses national lines.¹⁹ Analysis at this level looks not only at how an agency’s programmes might influence the context, but also at how the context may influence the programmes.²⁰ This macro view should inform even grassroots efforts, because it allows aid actors to identify conflict drivers and dynamics that originate outside their immediate geographic area and yet influence it profoundly.

Government donors and multilateral organisations have traditionally favoured macro-level conflict analysis, many creating their own conflict analysis frameworks. The OECD-DAC highlights several of these donor frameworks for guidance on evaluating peacebuilding programmes, along with World Vision’s MSTC framework. (See Table 1.)

¹⁵ Do No Harm was not created as an exclusively micro-level framework. However, some agencies, including World Vision, have concluded that it works best at the local level due to the simplicity of its components.

¹⁶ For more information, see <http://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding>.

¹⁷ Examples of subnational MSTCs include North and South Kivu, DR Congo (2013) and Northeast India (2009).

¹⁸ Nearly all MSTCs demonstrate the influence of neighbouring countries. Examples of MSTCs featuring particularly significant cross-border dynamics include Somalia (2011), South Sudan (2012) and Honduras (2014).

¹⁹ Macro-level conflict analysis is rarely pitched at the global level, except in reference to specific issues, for example, a global analysis of governance and development assistance systems (Duffield 2001).

²⁰ For more on the linkages between micro- and macro-conflict analysis, see Chapter 2 herein.

Table 1. Selected Macro-Analysis Frameworks (OECD-DAC 2012)²¹	
Source	Name of Framework
Clingendael Institute (van de Goor and Versteegen 2000)	Conflict Prognosis
Paffenholz and Reychler (2007)	Aid for Peace
Swiss International Development Agency (SIDA, 2006)	Manual for Conflict Analysis
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2003)	Conflict-Related Development Analysis (under revision)
US Agency for International Development (USAID, 2012)	Conflict Assessment Framework 2.0
World Vision (2015)	Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts

Agencies have used these frameworks widely in recent years, resulting in ongoing learning and innovation. However, the content of conflict analysis frameworks appears to have become more similar over time. In 2008, the 13 different conflict analysis frameworks listed by OECD-DAC (2008 p.71–4) had less content in common than the above six frameworks now have (2012 p.79).

World Vision convened an exploratory mini-workshop in New York in June 2012 to investigate the current inter-agency approaches to conflict analysis and found a consensus regarding the content of macro-analysis frameworks. In the main, the participating specialists from NGOs, donor agencies and the UN agreed that the major macro-analysis frameworks available today are similar enough in content to ensure conceptual soundness for their use. Almost all of the frameworks on the 2012 list include history, actor groups, political economy, root-cause analyses and future scenarios to inform planning. Agencies do disagree on certain relevant details, but in a broad-brush comparison their frameworks produce notably similar thematic content.

²¹ See OECD-DAC 2012 p.79. Other influential macro-analysis frameworks not included on this OECD-DAC list include the World Bank's 'Conflict Assessment Framework' (2005) and the United Kingdom's *Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability* – JACS (2012).

1.3 The Participation Gap

As noted in the Introduction, approaches to micro- and macro-conflict analysis have taken two distinctly different paths. On the one hand, NGOs and other civil society organisations have tended not to make use of macro-level conflict analysis frameworks to conduct their own conflict analyses, preferring to focus on the local level (Schirch 2013 p.23). Many of these micro-analyses incorporate participatory approaches that seek to engage diverse voices, including the least powerful.²²

On the other hand, as donor agencies and governmental bodies usually focus on macro-level frameworks, their process typically involves appointing foreign experts to conduct structured technical studies using interviews, statistical analyses and secondary resources such as those provided by area specialists. These are often remote desk studies, but many also involve on-site data collection. Despite the strengths of these macro-frameworks, they rarely maximise engagement of local actors. Several macro-frameworks mention the possibility of local participants contributing to the fieldwork phase of an analysis conducted by external specialists, but only at management's discretion.

Partial exceptions include UNDP's Conflict-Related Development Analysis (2003) and the United Kingdom's Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability – JACS (2012), which both strongly articulate the need for participation. So too do the latest Guidance Notes on Conflict Analysis released by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, which state that 'analysis needs to be as broadly participatory as the circumstances permit,' taking in the views of 'civil society and a representative sample of those involved in, or affected, by the conflict, including minority groups' (2013 p.3).

Welcome as this advice is, these documents offer no specific guidance about how to garner these voices or ensure true participation of local actors. Participation is not as robust and systematic as it could be. Further, the term 'participation' is used broadly to refer to many different types of

²² Certain civil society organisations that work directly on peacebuilding – not on other forms of aid – are an exception to this general statement. Some of them do both micro- and macro-level analysis, because they appreciate how closely those levels are interconnected.

interaction, obscuring the major difference between a brief consultation of many voices on a work led by external experts, and an analysis that is truly locally owned and driven by local people.

As a result, a participation gap has emerged in conflict analysis practice. The lack of robust, fully participatory approaches means that conflict-affected people and local civil society are excluded from meaningful involvement in conflict analysis at the macro level.

The reasons for this gap are understandable. Participatory approaches to analysis and research have traditionally been the domain of development NGOs that work in the long term at the community level. Donors, on the other hand, by the very nature of their broad geographic scope and governmental mandate, have limited relationships with communities and systems that do not lend themselves easily to participatory techniques. In addition, constraints on time and the practicalities of obtaining local perspectives can act as deterrents to pursuing a participatory process (UNPBSO 2013 p.2). NGOs naturally tend to have more time and access for deep community engagement.

Yet the gap that has emerged because of this reality is problematic. Without the inclusion of appropriate local insight, resulting conflict analyses risk being compromised. At best, resulting analyses may be narrow or incomplete, ignoring key issues that local participation would ensure are included. At worst, they risk being biased towards the worldview of international actors and donors, reinforcing patterns of exclusion and failing to capture the support and ‘buy in’ of those affected by conflict. In so doing, the analyses undermine their own legitimacy and usefulness (Schirch 2013, Autesserre 2014).

Whilst the conceptual differences between the major macro-level conflict analysis frameworks have narrowed, there are methodological distinctions that remain prominent. Participation of local actors is the most important methodological difference. MSTC is the only macro-analysis framework that is designed specifically for use in a fully participatory format. It is no coincidence that MSTC is also the only framework on the OECD list that is designed by an operational NGO. NGOs have demonstrated strength in participatory conflict analysis, though almost exclusively at the micro level, thus contributing to the gap described below.

On the other hand, analysis that gathers local knowledge using participatory processes has the potential to improve quality by challenging assumptions and bringing balance to the analysis. Furthermore, participatory approaches can bring wider benefits that are important to the development of peaceful societies. This is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Bridging the Gap

MSTC uses participation as its core methodology and local knowledge as its primary source. It offers NGOs and local civil society organisations a set of macro-conflict analysis tools that garner local knowledge about instability and seek to form a common perspective amongst participants on ways forward. In so doing MSTC makes a significant, and so far unique, contribution to bridging the gap.

An example of another initiative which used participatory methods as part of macro-conflict analysis was the excellent People's Peacemaking Perspectives (PPP) project devised by the UK-based peacebuilding organisations Conciliation Resources and Saferworld (2012) and funded under the European Union's Instrument for Stability.



*MSTC participants enjoying the analysis, Haiti, 2013.
Photo by Jean-Wickens Merone.*

The People's Peacemaking Perspectives Project

A related approach to participatory conflict analysis is captured in Conciliation Resources and Saferworld's collaboration on the PPP project. These two organisations came together to conduct 18 participatory conflict analyses across 26 countries between 2010 and 2012.²³ Like MSTC, the PPP engaged a wide range of local actors, including civil society, government and the private sector, in order to build a holistic picture of the drivers of conflict at the macro level (national or cross border).

Though closely related, MSTC and PPP are still distinct. PPP offers a highly flexible design, with different participatory methodologies being employed in different contexts. MSTC, on the other hand, uses a consistent workshop format, making it easily replicable but also potentially less adaptable. The two approaches were also designed for slightly different purposes. Whereas MSTC originated from the multi-mandate aid sector, including emergency response and development, PPP was designed to focus explicitly on peacebuilding. Further, there is variation in the scope and nature of participation between the two types of analysis. In many cases, due to the tight timeframe for the project, PPP generates large samples of micro-level input, which are then analysed, documented for policy audiences and applied at the macro level by project staff or in collaboration with local partners. This allows PPP analysis to take in a wide range of perspectives but limits the degree to which the participants themselves conduct the final analysis. MSTC, in contrast, relies on a comparatively modest number of workshop participants coming together to analyse conflict, interpret it and even take significant strides towards identification of action steps.

MSTC and PPP are therefore complementary approaches, and both have much to contribute to the broader international community.

²³ PPP is now complemented by a follow-up project called Capacities for Peace, also funded by the European Union. This project seeks to develop further the skills of local civil society stakeholders to conduct participatory conflict analysis across 32 countries over three years, through 2016.

Both PPP and MSTC bring to macro-level analysis the advantages of a participatory approach, which is described in the following sections of this chapter.

1.4 What Is a Participatory Approach to Analysis?

Participatory research approaches help local people come together to identify key challenges, unlock local knowledge and empower themselves to find realistic solutions (Folkema *et al.* 2013). They also present an opportunity to gather a wide range of perceptions from different stakeholders. When used effectively, participation can ensure that analysis is informed by the experiences of all relevant groups, including both those with power and those without it.

The application of participation to development planning was pioneered in the early 1990s by Robert Chambers (1997), who devised Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA is both a philosophy and a set of tools for local-level organisations better to identify the development needs of their community and to empower them to take ownership of their own development.²⁴ Such tools also lend themselves to analysing conflict as a factor influencing the community's capacities and vulnerabilities (Ibrahim and Midgley 2013).

Participatory tools need to be facilitated carefully to ensure they capture the true views of participants. The facilitator who leads the process must leave behind the role of chief analyst and instead facilitate a process that elicits²⁵ the rich contextual knowledge of insiders. The role of participants may vary along a continuum, ranging from modest to maximum participation (Kanji and Greenwood 2001). In the participatory approach significance lies not only in the end result but also in the process.

Participatory approaches have five defining characteristics. They:

- **focus on eliciting local perspectives** (including, but not exclusive to, those people without power)

²⁴ Looking beyond the development sector, comparable pioneers of participatory research include Freire ([1970] 1990) and Fals Borda (2001).

²⁵ For more on the important difference between elicitive (asking) and prescriptive (telling) approaches, see Lederach (1995).

- **are guided by a trained facilitator** who seeks to maintain neutrality and avoid imposing his or her own views
- **are interactive**, using a range of visual tools and methods for group work
- **provide collective analyses** that are catalysts for the community to act on what is discovered
- **empower participants** to own the outcomes; participants are involved in developing recommendations and in deciding how analysis findings will be used.

Participation matters because development and conflict involve power. Since the end of the Cold War the size and influence of civil society have expanded massively, and international NGOs have greatly extended their reach. The aid system now reaches more people than ever before, yet it is increasingly perceived as externally driven and top down (Anderson *et al.* 2012). Such trends have prompted aid actors to reflect on who holds power in this system and towards which ends (Chambers 1997).

The questions of ‘Who is the analyst?’ and consequently ‘Who holds power to shape the findings?’ lie at the heart of participatory methodology. They are particularly important when addressing conflict because conflict analysis explores highly sensitive themes, including intergroup relations, sociopolitical issues and security.

1.5 General Benefits of Participatory Macro-Conflict Analysis

Based on a decade of MSTC experience, along with insights gained from the PPP project, this section presents the five most compelling potential benefits of using a participatory approach to macro-level conflict analysis. (Chapter 7 looks at the very specific benefits of MSTC as a replicable framework.)

‘Pulling all this analysis from the people of South Sudan shows there is no shortage in the potential of South Sudan.’

— MSTC Participant, South Sudan, 2012

Diversifies and Strengthens Quality of Analysis

In any form of analysis that informs planning, the inclusion of local actors and civil society groups is essential to disrupt the patterns of exclusion that

lie at the heart of so many violent conflicts (Call 2012). A participatory approach can gather multiple perspectives, especially those without significant power or influence. In so doing, a more complete picture can be formed of complex issues. Of course, diverse viewpoints are often contradictory viewpoints, so participation requires careful planning and facilitation, as described in ‘Minimising Risk’ in Section 1.6 below.

Most local actors do not consider themselves experts, yet they know the context deeply through their own life and work experience. In fact, local rootedness is an irreplaceable form of expertise that is too often devalued. Séverine Autesserre (2014) makes a useful distinction between thematic knowledge, most often associated with expatriates, and context knowledge, most often associated with locals. Both forms of knowledge are essential, and the effectiveness of external aid providers often hinges on the extent to which they balance and complement their own knowledge with that of their local colleagues.²⁶

Aid workers’ interpretations of conflict often reveal a notable difference in internal and external perspectives (Schirch 2013 p.21–2). For example, an MSTC workshop in Haiti in 2013 revealed a growing divergence of perspectives on the influence of UN peacekeeping deployments. Expatriate staff viewed the potential decrease in United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) troops as a primary emergent security risk. Haitian participants, on the other hand, saw far greater risk in the potential social unrest caused by cholera, whose contagion was attributed to MINUSTAH forces. Each perspective was vitally important yet incomplete without the other.

Local perspectives are particularly important when working with bilateral or multilateral government donors whose role in the context is controversial. The issues become especially complex when donors’ aid strategies aim primarily for coherence with their own political and economic objectives (Collinson and Elhawary 2012) or domestic security agendas (Duffield 2001). For example, the anxiety within international NGOs reached a fever pitch when then-US Secretary of State Colin Powell referred to aid

²⁶ For more on the irreplaceable value of local knowledge, see Easterly (2014) and Verkoren (2008).

agencies as a ‘force multiplier’ (2001) undergirding US post-9/11 military interventions around the world. These are pressing policy dilemmas, and responding to them is largely beyond the scope of this book. However, NGOs are better positioned to face such dilemmas when they are informed not only by the Western-leaning perspectives of the international community, but also by the views and the voices of local actors. Good policy begins with good listening.

Encourages Ownership of Analysis and Sustainable Implementation

‘Every effort should be made to integrate local perspectives – both elites and those without power – into the analysis, even when time and resources are short. Such perspectives are crucial to ensure policy is geared towards meeting citizens’ needs and expectations.’

Barakat and Waldman 2013 p.274

Many agencies conducting conflict analysis have found it challenging to implement analysis recommendations (Barakat and Waldman 2013). For example, a World Bank review of 20 conflict analyses by various agencies found that ‘use of analysis findings, and subsequent potential impacts, have been weak partly due to limited country operational team buy-in and disconnect between the conflict analysis team and operational users’ (2006 p.13). When conflict analysis was conducted in partnership with local agencies, however, the World Bank found that local ownership increased significantly and recommendations were more likely to be translated into changes on the ground (World Bank 2006).

The conclusion? When those responsible for operationalising recommendations are involved in devising them in the first place, there is a greater likelihood of recommendations being implemented. In MSTC for example, the analysis is carried out entirely by participants, a significant proportion of whom will also be responsible for implementing the findings. They leave the process with a strong sense of ownership and a commitment to translating the findings into action. This does not guarantee the application of recommendations, but application is more likely when there is strong participation by those who will implement the programme. A comparative review of conflict analysis methodologies found that

‘MSTC workshop(s) illustrates how (much) more effective it is to develop strategies when the assessment activity is sponsored by an organisation with the mandate and resources to implement them’ (Freeman and Fisher 2012 p.77).

Improves Inter-agency Coordination and Collective Impact

Despite recognition that large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector collaboration (Kania and Kramer 2011), efforts to improve collaboration amongst agencies working in unstable contexts have often met with limited success. This is due to a number of reasons, including heavy staff workload and inter-agency competition (Barbolet *et al.* 2005). As Thania Paffenholz asserts, ‘Everybody wants to coordinate, but nobody wants to be coordinated!’ (2004 p.2).

Conflict analysis can provide a platform for improved coordination by developing a common understanding of conflict drivers, a shared language for interpreting the context and a coordinated action plan (Barbolet *et al.* 2005 p.209–12, Levinger 2013). Using participatory methodologies can be particularly effective, since they ensure that outputs are equally owned by participating agencies.

The process of working together to create the analysis can also build strong bonds between agencies, making future strategic alignment more likely. For example, a multi-agency MSTC in Kenya (2012) led to a network mapping and coordination exercise. The Kenyan government’s National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management convened the exercise to facilitate communication and joint action amongst civil society peacebuilders. (See Case Study 1.) Multi-agency MSTCs have been used to develop joint conflict analyses in Kenya, Uganda and Honduras, and more are being planned for the future.

Models Political Inclusion

Political inclusion is an essential ingredient for sustainable peace (World Bank 2011, Call 2012). In a post-war setting, according to Call, ‘the shifted norms regarding popular voice and participation in processes determining post-war politics²⁷ require broader participation’ (2012 p.274). Institutional

²⁷ ‘Politics’ here refers to political entities (such as states) and their forms of government.

legitimacy requires inclusion of not only the decision-making elites from opposing groups, but also the social groups associated with those elites, and the broader citizenry including women and youth (Barakat and Waldman 2013).

In other words, who is included in key processes and how those processes are managed can be as important as the outcomes. When a conflict analysis successfully engages diverse representation across the critical divisions and levels of society, exclusion is contested and inclusion is advanced. The very process of analysing conflict together requires participants to listen to one another's diverging perspectives. Indeed, traditional macro-analysis frameworks tend to focus primarily on the report as a final product and do not account for the potential impact that the process itself can have upon the people involved. Conflict analysis approached with an open mind has the potential to transform the participants' own paradigms and perceptions (Barbolet *et al.* 2005 p.5, Garred 2011).

Under certain circumstances participatory conflict analysis workshops can also create opportunities for improved relational interaction patterns amongst individuals representing conflicting groups (Freeman and Fisher 2012). The People's Peacemaking Project project affirms this possibility, particularly when participation provides a rare opportunity to hear the perspectives of people typically considered to be enemies and to do so in a respectful and non-combative manner (Conciliation Resources and Saferworld 2012). MSTC also welcomes this potential, but MSTC's contribution is intentionally limited to the establishment of an open, inclusive and trusting atmosphere within the participant group. Neither approach claims to mediate or reconcile, but both see increased understanding and trust as a desirable side effect of conducting analysis together.

Increases the Capacity and Resilience of Civil Society

There is a growing consensus on the key role of civil society in promoting peace (Kaldor 1999, Varshney 2002, Paffenholz and Spurr 2006), yet conflict often reduces civil society's opportunity to effect change (Poskitt and Dufranc 2011). Engaging local civil society organisations in participatory conflict analysis provides them with an opportunity to strengthen themselves and their resilience by identifying and preparing

for potential shocks and stresses (Ibrahim and Midgley 2013). Shared analysis and action planning can help fortify civil society's collective impact and voice.

The benefits of participatory macro-analysis apply to civil society, which can be broadly defined as citizen groups, organisations or networks that are not part of the state or the business market (Edwards 2009). The concept of civil society differs across cultures, causing differences of opinion about who is included. However, for purposes of conflict analysis, a broad, inclusive definition is preferred (Kasfir 1998). Civil society encompasses both formal organisations and informal networks, so it can include traditional leaders, religious associations and youth networks. Civil society exists at multiple levels; MSTC is an example of a global civil society organisation (World Vision) sharing an opportunity with its local civil society counterparts.

The importance of civil society has recently been highlighted in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding's New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. This multilateral aid-effectiveness movement has called for recipient governments to 'convene multi-stakeholder joint fragility analysis to drive development planning' (International Dialog for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding 2013). This is meant to strengthen local ownership over aid decisions. In other words, fragility analysis (or conflict analysis) should be insider-led and include civil society, along with other key sectors such as business, academia and the media.

1.6 Minimising Risk

The strength of the participatory approach is its emphasis on local knowledge, with its deep, experience-based understanding of context. When conflict analysts seek local participation, they are approaching communities in the throes of turbulence and engaging people both directly and indirectly affected by conflict. As a result, participatory macro-analysis is a challenging process, and it is essential to be vigilant regarding risks.

'The very act of conducting research can exacerbate conflict.'

—Marie Smyth, *Researching Violently Divided Societies*
(Smyth and Robinson 2001 p.10)

Local people in any context are obviously not a uniform group; they have diverse life experiences and perspectives, as do people everywhere. Further, local knowledge is neither objective nor flawless. Local people have biases and blind spots just as international observers do. Neutral and balanced information is in short supply in situations of extreme and ongoing turbulence. Poorly managed disagreements during a workshop can severely damage intergroup relations amongst the participants, or even allow spoilers to co-opt a participatory analysis process for their own destructive purposes.

Further, the very question of who is local can provoke tension. In MSTC practice, 'local' means people who live within the context being analysed, so the workshops are populated mainly by civil society actors who have roots in that place. However, 'local' is best understood in relative terms, for example, neighbourhood actors compared to those from across town, provincial actors compared to those from the capital, nationals compared to internationals. Where conflict is linked to geography, such as territorial disputes or grievances related to migration, the question of locality can create undercurrents of tension during the analysis.

Participatory macro-analysis must be conducted in a conflict-sensitive manner that avoids harm to the participants and to intergroup relations. Without crucial safeguards in place, the strength found in local knowledge has the potential to become an explosive weakness. That is why World Vision has tested and refined MSTC for over a decade before publishing this book. The learnings communicated throughout the book are intended to underscore quality and safety. The key safeguards are summarised herein and addressed in greater depth in the chapters that follow. Safeguards emphasise identifying when participation is appropriate, diversifying information sources as broadly as possible, pursuing a high level of excellence in facilitation and reviewing MSTC's analytical tools for periodic adaptation.

Identifying When Participation Is Appropriate

Wise participant selection prevents many difficulties. MSTC participants should be not only diverse but also basically oriented toward goodwill and open to collaboration with others. In most contexts, MSTC recruitment does not seek armed actors, but it does seek individuals who are sympathetic to the diverse perspectives that those armed actors represent.

MSTC organisers must also be sensitive to the small number of situations in which wise participant selection is not enough to ensure security. If it is inappropriate to bring diverse local participants together in a particular place and time, several alternative means of analysis are available (explored in ‘Adaptation to Adverse Circumstances’ in Section 6.6 herein).

Diversification of Information

MSTC pursues the diversification (or ‘triangulation’) of its qualitative data primarily through great intentionality in selecting widely varied participants. This requires an extremely careful effort to balance ethnic, cultural, sectarian, gender, geographic, socioeconomic and political perspectives, as well as ensuring that participants with different vocational backgrounds are represented. MSTC also encourages diversification of perspective through the selective use of external sources. For example, facilitators may use external analysts’ reports to prepare for workshops and to crosscheck the MSTC findings afterwards. This external information is not used to influence participants but to contextualise and compare the analysis that the participants themselves develop. (See ‘Triangulation’ in Section 6.1.)

Excellence in Facilitation

Successful participation relies on highly skilled facilitators who can manage group dynamics in tense situations. Participatory macro-analysis is complex and often controversial, so MSTC insists on high standards for facilitator qualification amongst both NGO staff facilitators and external consultants. In addition, the global core group of MSTC facilitators regularly reviews procedures and makes every effort to be transparent if participation is compromised. Such standards require significant investment in time and resources. (For more on facilitation, see Sections 6.3 and 8.3.)

Continuous Learning and Adaptation

Lastly, in order to continuously improve the fit of MSTC tools to their delicate task, the process of developing the MSTC tools has used participatory principles. Over the life of MSTC the development of its tools has been collective, consultative and iterative, with each workshop providing opportunities for learning and growth. Small adjustments are made continuously. The MSTC framework has also undergone two major

revisions, driven by consultation amongst the global core group of MSTC facilitators and furthered by the WV Global Peacebuilding Team, in 2006 and again in 2013. In the most recent review, facilitators considered the meta-trends evident in MSTC findings and responded to underemphasised themes. (For more information, see Section 8.4. The details of MSTC's collaborative refinement are further discussed in Annex A.)

1.7 Conclusion

The practice of conflict analysis in the aid industry has grown significantly in recent years in response to the essential need for conflict-sensitive approaches, including the design of many macro-conflict analysis frameworks by government donors.

Donors clearly recognise the need for authentic consultation of local actors in macro-conflict analysis and yet have struggled to offer practical ways of achieving this. Their frameworks do not suggest methods that enable meaningful participation of local civil society in their analysis and recommended actions.

Participation of local civil society in conflict analysis is essential because at the heart of development and conflict lies the question of power and who can shape policies and action at the national and international levels. A participatory process that gathers local knowledge has the potential not only to improve the quality of analysis by challenging assumptions and bringing balance but also to enable ownership of analysis by those affected by the turbulence and to strengthen the resilience and collaboration of local civil society.

With its emphasis on local participation and knowledge, MSTC makes a significant, and so far unique, contribution to bridging the participation gap. Other participatory approaches are beginning to be developed, such as those used by the People's Participation Project, but so far they are few and far between.

Making participation a reality is challenging, and it carries risks that must be managed through careful triangulation of information, skilled facilitation and openness to regular adaptation. Moreover, a participatory approach is not the only way to conduct a macro-conflict analysis. MSTC should not replace but rather complement other existing methodologies.

However, the authors' experience is that a participatory approach has the potential to transform conflict analysis into a grounded, robust and empowering process.



Human knot energiser in Georgia, 2010. Photo by Matthew Scott.

Chapter 2: Key Concepts and Theories of Conflict

Theories of conflict abound, as do approaches to conducting analysis. Therefore it is essential to share the key concepts that have shaped the creation of MSTC and the design of its tools. This chapter first establishes the concept and meaning of ‘turbulent contexts’. It then outlines the prevalent theories that have shaped MSTC’s understanding of the causes of civil conflict, especially the influence of the political economy of conflict and the relationship between ‘greed and grievance.’²⁸ The chapter concludes with a look at the relationship of MSTC, as a macro-analysis framework, to micro-analysis frameworks such as Do No Harm.

2.1 The Concept of Turbulence

Understanding the concept of turbulence is central to understanding MSTC. What does ‘*turbulence*’ mean, and what classifies a context as turbulent? The term refers to unstable countries or regions that are either suffering from overt violent conflict, or appear to be at peace but are undermined by covert forms²⁹ of structural violence (Galtung 1969). Such instability is often most visible in the political arena, but economic and social dynamics are equally affected.

Additionally, natural disasters, when they occur, can trigger and intensify tensions. Two cases demonstrate this quite well: the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India, and, from 2004 onward, the post-tsunami era Sri Lanka (Goodhand and Klem 2005). In these cases, the aftermath of the disasters and the recovery processes exacerbated deep fault lines within the social strata (Harris *et al.* 2013).

²⁸ This famous phrase was popularized by Berdal and Malone (2000).

²⁹ The terms ‘*manifest conflict*’ and ‘*latent conflict*’ can also be useful for distinguishing conflict that is overt from its covert, less visible forms. Signs of structural violence may include human rights abuses, extreme inequality and marginalisation.

The characteristics of a turbulent context may include:

- cyclical conflict
- violence against civilians
- political unrest
- active rebel/guerrilla forces
- political manipulation of group identities
- crippled economy
- extreme polarisation of wealth
- high levels of organised crime
- complex cross-border dynamics with neighbouring states
- natural disasters over several years
- significant institutionalised corruption
- population displacement
- need for emergency assistance.

Conflict lies at the heart of the turbulence paradigm. Critically, the turbulence approach views conflict, in the sense of disagreements and differing interests, as something that is normal in any society and recognises that conflict can be a stimulus for constructive and positive change. The aim of MSTC analysis is to identify the key factors and trends that cause conflict to evolve in a destructive direction, toward physical and structural violence.

Examples of turbulence include obvious zones of conflict, such as Somalia and Syria in the 2010s, but also more functional contexts like the Philippines, affected for decades by periodic instability, multiple insurgencies, and the exacerbating effects of typhoons and earthquakes. There is value in applying the turbulence paradigm to contexts at risk, which have underlying fractures that, if not addressed, could lead to a cycle of conflict and instability. Mali in the early 2000s was such a case, prior to its 2012 insurgency and coup d'état.

'Turbulent contexts' is intentionally simple language that reflects day-to-day reality, as expressed by Roche in 'Operationality in Turbulence' (1994). *'Turbulence'* is broad enough to satisfy a wide range of perspectives and to help avoid biased assumptions (Schirch 2013 p.8). In contrast, terms like *'conflict'* do not always resonate with people's understanding of their own

context. For instance, Haitian MSTC participants (2010, 2013) rejected the term '*conflict*', but affirmed that they saw turbulence in the interaction between natural disasters and political unrest. The term '*turbulence*' is widely acceptable around the world, providing a useful conceptual starting point that is applicable in a wide variety of settings.³⁰

Nonetheless, from a technical standpoint it must be acknowledged that MSTC is primarily conflict analysis. A true context analysis would include a wide range of themes that go beyond conflict, such as economic growth, human development and cultural influences, amongst others, to generate a more holistic picture of society.

Chronic and Cyclical Instability

It is important to emphasise two critically important points about the meaning of turbulent contexts. First, once turbulence takes hold, it can become chronic and ongoing, leading to recurrent periods of apparent peacefulness followed by conflict. Collier claims that post-conflict countries face a 50 per cent likelihood of relapsing into violence within the first decade after a peace settlement (2003 p.7). Likewise, the World Development Report 2011 (p.2, 5) emphasises the cyclical nature of such violence.

Second, turbulence is deeply political in nature. Early MSTC efforts marked an intentional conceptual break with the idea that most emergencies were apolitical. The 1990s trend towards civil conflict made it clear to emergency responders that even the most straightforward natural disasters could unfold in ways influenced by political decision makers. Responders described this paradigm shift by using terms like '*man-made disasters*' and '*complex emergencies*'. Aid agencies have continued to grow in their awareness of the need to look beyond immediate humanitarian symptoms to probe underlying economic and political causes of crises (Keen 2008). In a similar way, MSTC has broadened its focus to reflect on the long-term, cyclical and political nature of turbulent settings.

³⁰ Acceptance of the term '*turbulence*' is broad, but not universal. There have been at least two contexts in which the term was objectionable from a government perspective. In those cases the MSTC workshop was called by a different name. (See Case Study 4 for an example, and Annex A for more on how MSTC was named.) When working across languages, the term is sometimes difficult to meaningfully translate.

It is important to recognise that even when turbulent contexts appear to be free from overt conflict, they may not be at peace. A situation may seem calm on the surface, yet political, economic and social turbulence continues under the surface. Post-war Sri Lanka is often referred to as a situation of 'no war, no peace' (e.g. Minority Rights Group International 2011). Similarly, Angola between 1994 and 1998 had a negotiated peace agreement in place, but the levels of violence and suffering remained extremely high. Once structures and capacities of violence are established, they are not easy to demobilise. Conflict actors may use periods of apparent peacefulness to strengthen their political, economic and even military positions against their opponents (Keen 2012b p.138–70). Thus, periods of overt conflict can be understood as part of a longer-lasting system of violence.

This complex reality affects aid agencies' understanding of how to respond programmatically to communities' needs. It challenges the problematic concept of the relief-to-development continuum, which implies that conflicts or other shocks are temporary and that after brief periods of relief and rehabilitation normal development work can resume. On the contrary, aspects of peacefulness and conflict coexist in many countries, and so relief and development activities also need to coexist. Even though many aid workers criticise the relief-to-development continuum (e.g. Christoplos 2006), funding structures continue to reinforce the separation of relief from development. This division limits aid agency effectiveness on the ground. The turbulence paradigm, however, shifts attention away from the debate over which set of helpers should do what, toward a unified focus on the context and its needs (Roche 1994). This, in turn, should facilitate more effective planning of emergency response and development interventions.

When considering turbulence, MSTC strives for causal explanations rather than staying at the level of observable symptoms. A volcano is a useful metaphor, calling attention both to the surface-level smoke and to the underlying seismic activity driving the volcano. In analysing conflict it is important to take note of the obvious events represented by smoke and ash whilst also striving to understand the underlying structures and pressures that are the true source of the eruption. The volcano metaphor recognises the importance of prediction and mitigation whilst also steering the analyst toward the prevention of destruction and pursuit of long-term change.

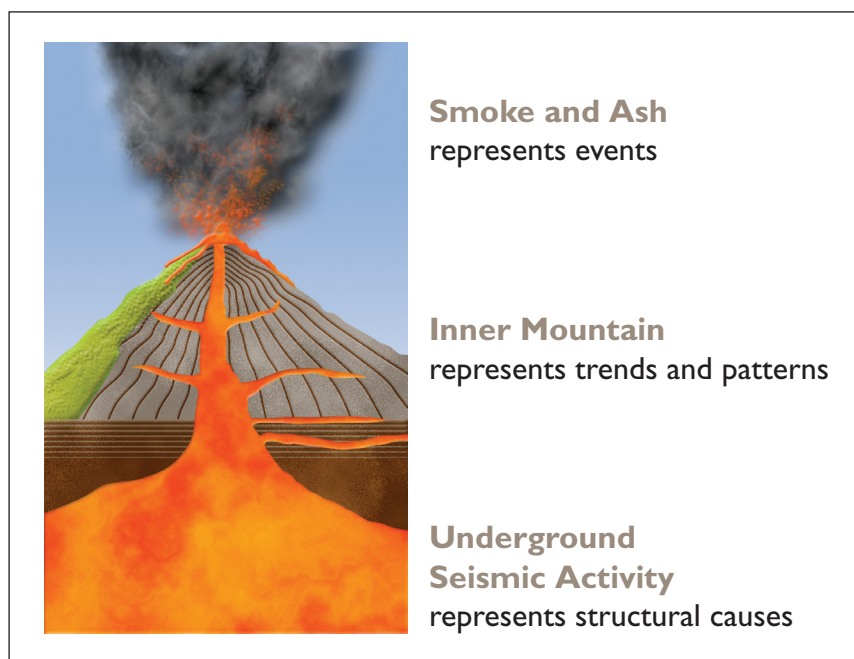


Figure 2. The Volcano View

This integration of peacebuilding into emergency response and the effort to address conflict's underlying causes place MSTC solidly within the stream of practice referred to as '*new humanitarianism*'. This integration of programming streams is based on the conviction that humanitarian response and peacebuilding are no longer entirely separable. However, the new humanitarianism has been criticised for embracing politics in ways that damage humanitarian neutrality (Macrae 1998). Some have also linked new humanitarianism to the recent wave of '*humanitarian interventions*', meaning external military action undertaken with the desirable goal of protecting civilians (Weiss 2007) but often with troubling consequences. Because usage of the term '*humanitarian*' has become controversial, this book uses instead the simpler language of '*emergency response*'.

If emergency response cannot be separated from politics, then responders are ethically responsible to ensure that their efforts are not co-opted by the powerful in ways that harm the powerless. Listening to the voices of affected people through MSTC or other forms of participatory

macro-analysis is a first step towards making good decisions in complex political environments.

2.2 Greed, Grievance and Multi-Causal Conflict

The MSTC framework is informed by the research literature on conflict analysis, particularly theories on the genesis and development of protracted civil conflicts. These theories are not discussed explicitly during MSTC workshops – to avoid influencing the ideas of participants – but the underlying concepts are reflected in the design of MSTC’s analytical tools.

The concepts shaping MSTC arose from the changing conflict trends of the post–Cold War³¹ years from 1990 onward. During this period, intra-state or civil wars became more prominent than wars between states.³² Identity-based (ethnic or religious) conflict became central; violent control of civilians by non-state actors and paramilitaries became common; and cross-border influences from neighbouring countries shaped conflict actors and finances (Kaldor 1999). This led to much study of the interaction between sociopolitical and economic causes of conflict, or ‘greed and grievance’ factors, as described below.

Grievance

Identity-based (ethnic and religious) conflict was highly visible during the early to mid 1990s, with tragedies in the Balkans and Rwanda strongly influencing the international community. Thus, it is understandable that conflict theory during that time emphasised the role of group grievance, meaning resentment in response to perceived mistreatment or injustice.

As an example of a prominent grievance theorist, Edward Azar argues that conflict arises when identity-based social divisions combine with grievance over unmet basic human needs and that the potential for resolution or escalation of that conflict depends on the nature and quality of governance (1990). In a similar vein Ted Robert Gurr finds that ethnopolitical

³¹ At the time of writing, increasing violence in Ukraine makes it clear that tensions between Russia and the West are still relevant. Even so, the end of the Cold War marked a turning point in global conflict trends.

³² The total number of violent conflicts appears to have declined from 1989 to 2005 (Mack 2007). However, since 2008, country-specific peace indices have deteriorated significantly (Institute for Economics & Peace 2014).

minorities are most likely to rebel when they feel deprived in comparison to other groups and when the political environment is conducive to success in making a change (1995).

Greed

However, grievance was not the only factor influencing conflict trends in the 1990s. The end of the Cold War also affected the economics of warfare, albeit in ways that were less immediately obvious. Amongst other changes, decreases in US and Soviet support required conflicting parties to find alternative funding for their war efforts (Hubert 2001). By the early 2000s, several prominent thinkers began to argue that the emphasis on grievance had gone too far and that the economic causes and dynamics of war were being neglected.

One of those economic thinkers, Philippe Le Billon, caught the emergency response sector's attention with his paper 'The Political Economy of War: What Relief Agencies Need to Know' (2000). He challenged the aid sector to consider 'political economy' as the analysis of 'the production and distribution of power, wealth and destitution during armed conflicts, in order to expose the motives and responsibility of those involved, within a historical context' (2000 p.1).

Le Billon details how instability can produce economic gain and profit for certain 'winning' sections of society, whilst increasing the vulnerability and powerlessness of 'losers.' Therefore, the winning actors often maintain or exacerbate violence and instability in order to bolster their political power and their economic profit. Instability becomes self-perpetuating, and war becomes a cover for massive profiteering and economic abuse. These dynamics can be analysed by identifying key resources and then tracking their influence in the economic system (2000).³³

³³ In the political economy of intra-state conflict, the term '*resources*' usually refers to extractables or nonrenewables (such as fuel, mineral, or timber resources). An abundance of extractables is associated with violence (Koubi *et al.* 2014), especially if the economy is dependent on their export (Collier 2001 p.147). Extractables influence conflict in different ways depending on their location and characteristics (Le Billon 2012 p.5). MSTC's political economy analysis is based on identifying and tracking the influence of key resources. (See Section 4.5 herein.)

It was Le Billon's thinking, along with others from the Overseas Development Institute (e.g. Jeffreys 2002), that informed WV's development of MSTC as a way to examine the political economy of conflict alongside and together with grievance. MSTC's inclusion of political economy was unique amongst conflict analysis frameworks in the early years of its existence. More than one decade on, donors increasingly emphasise political economy analysis (e.g. Fritz *et al.* 2014), but political economy is still relatively rare in NGO conflict analysis frameworks.

‘When an elephant is killed, the community goes to skin it. Those with big knives will take big parts whilst those with small knives will go with nothing. We are destroying the country with our greed.’

—MSTC Participant, Uganda, 2012

In the early days of political economy analysis, opinions in the conflict studies field became polarised. Economic explanations for conflict became known as ‘greed’ theories, and the debate was framed around ‘greed versus grievance’. In 2000, Paul Collier provoked controversy by arguing, based on statistical analysis, that greed was the primary cause of civil war and that grievance explanations were ‘seriously wrong’ (2000 p.96). Specifically, he claimed that contexts face a greater likelihood of conflict when income and economic opportunity are low and opportunities to loot valuable resources are high. According to this view, the looting of resources is a powerful motivation for violent rebellion.

Collier's early research on conflict financing was very influential, but it is now seen as oversimplified. Recent theories are more nuanced. Collier himself no longer argues that resources directly motivate rebellion, but rather that resources provide an opportunity for rebellion by making it financially affordable (Collier, *et al* 2008). Keen argues that analysts should not focus on the economic greed of rebels to the extent of overlooking the greed of the state or of international actors (2012b). Le Billon details how conflict financing is just one amongst several mechanisms through which resources influence conflict. Other mechanisms include an ‘institutional weakening effect’ through which a resource-dependent economy can undermine governance, and a ‘motivational effect’ which includes

grievances around economic inequality and negative environmental and cultural side effects resulting from resource extraction (2012 p.17).

Both Greed and Grievance

It is highly significant that Le Billon's recent work includes grievance in his analysis of the political economy of war. He argues that resources are not just natural products; resources also 'contribute to shaping social relations and are in turn expressive of social relations' (2012 p.4). Like Le Billon, numerous theorists have moved on from the greed-versus-grievance debate and now increasingly emphasise the interaction between the two factors.

For example, Frances Stewart's work on 'horizontal inequalities' unpacks the nature of some grievances as economic. Her research indicates that internal violent conflict is caused by inequalities amongst identity groups (identified by ethnicity, religion and sometimes class). Such inequalities may be economic, political, social or cultural (2010). Income inequalities receive especially strong emphasis, since a financial motivation that appears similar to greed actually functions as a grievance.

In another type of greed-grievance interaction, grievance may be the motive for a conflict, but economic gain becomes an important means of funding and sustaining it. The brutal conflict that erupted in Sierra Leone in 1991 is recognised as a war funded through the sale of 'conflict diamonds' by both sides. However, deeper analysis indicates that the Revolutionary United Front was recruited primarily amongst marginalised youth embittered by class tensions, including lack of access to land, legal rights and quality education (Keen 2005 p.56–81). It was the combination of grievance plus revenue that made the Revolutionary United Front a formidable force.

Beyond Greed and Grievance: Multi-Causal Systems

The interaction of greed and grievance can also be seen as a metaphor for understanding conflict as multi-causal and highly complex. Some thinkers now interpret greed and grievance more broadly than a decade ago. For example, 'both "greed" and "grievance" may stem from other, perhaps more fundamental motivations, such as the desire for security, respect or even some measure of care' (Keen 2012a p.771).

Theorists are also acknowledging how closely greed and grievance relate to other conflict theories. For example, the growing emphasis on governance is often explained in relation to greed and grievance. Both conflict analysts (e.g. World Bank 2011) and broader development policy analysts (e.g. Collier 2007) now emphasise weak governance (or state fragility) as a cause of problems, and good governance (or state capacity) as a source of solutions. The relationship to greed is that the appropriate policies and effective institutions are considered the key to using resource wealth in ways that bring stability rather than conflict. In terms of grievance, state capacity to protect citizens' security and deliver basic services is seen as essential for establishing legitimacy and addressing citizen grievances before they escalate. Further, this vision of state-citizen relations sees civil society participation as central in ways that have moved participation beyond the micro level to become a force that can influence national policy (Gaventa 2004). Thus the greed, grievance and governance themes are deeply interconnected.

Interestingly, the emergent application of complex systems theory to conflict studies (Hendrick 2009) promises to help conflict analysts further understand how greed, grievance, governance and other causes relate to one another in a particular context. In a complex system, no single cause of conflict can be understood apart from others. The interactions between causes are non-linear and difficult to predict. Further, systems can adapt, so even if one driver of conflict is removed, others may change their function to keep the system strongly in place (Loode 2011). This implies that the search for a primary overarching cause of conflict is likely useless and that the most useful insight lies in understanding the multiplicity of conflict drivers and the interactions amongst them.

Similarly, MSTC has from the outset advanced an understanding of conflict as multi-causal. Analysing the economic manipulations of the powerful is enormously important in understanding instability. However, this insight does not tell the whole story, because people's multiple intentions are woven together, and their reality cannot be separated into parts. Thus, the MSTC framework is designed to approach basic underlying issues from multiple conceptual directions and diverse personal perspectives. Future development of MSTC methodology may draw more deeply on complex

systems theory in order to identify with greater precision the linkages and feedback loops that define the interaction amongst conflict drivers.

Although MSTC's multi-causal focus can encompass and point toward a broad range of complex and even systemic causes, it must be noted that there are some prominent conflict theories that MSTC does not directly address. MSTC, given its macro-level focus, does not analyse the psychological motivations of individual conflict participants. The psychological realm includes key factors such as worldview, perceptions and communication patterns (Levinger 2013 p.43–8), and it interacts in important ways with the internal dynamics within combatant groups (Guichaoua 2011). MSTC tools are not designed to elicit these insights.³⁴

2.3 MSTC and Do No Harm: Linking Macro to Micro

No discussion of MSTC and its conceptual development is complete without reference to the micro-conflict analysis framework, Do No Harm (Anderson 1999), and the importance of linking micro and macro levels in conflict analysis.

World Vision has been involved since 2000 in the Do No Harm Project, a collaborative inter-agency project run by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. Do No Harm features the simple but powerful context analysis components of 'dividers' and 'connectors' between conflicting groups. It emphasises the ethical responsibility of intervening agencies to identify and rectify any unintended harm to those relationships from aid agency assistance.³⁵ The solution is not to suspend services but to creatively identify options for improving a project's social impact.

Do No Harm has profoundly shaped World Vision's collective understanding of the challenges and opportunities of operating in conflict-affected settings. The lessons and insight learned from this have been paradigm shifting for many of the agency's development staff working in conflict-affected settings (Garred 2006, Kamatsiko 2014). Do No Harm

³⁴ However, because MSTC participants' knowledge of the context is local and personal, they often bring a powerful implicit understanding of psychological factors into the analysis process.

³⁵ For more on Do No Harm, see CDA Collaborative Learning Projects at <http://www.cdacollaborative.org>.

has also modelled a type of highly collaborative field-based learning process that MSTC has sought to emulate.

However, even the best frameworks have limitations. As World Vision's conflict-sensitivity consciousness grew, the awareness of Do No Harm's limitations influenced the organisation's decision to create a macro-level analysis framework. Do No Harm clearly works best at the micro level due to the focused nature of its components, designed to analyse only two actor-groups and one operational project at a time. Some critics have also argued that despite Anderson's emphasis on 'economies of war', the framework was rarely used in practice to address macro-structural factors or 'to develop a broader political perspective' (Leonhardt 2002 p.41).

In response, World Vision designed MSTC specifically to complement Do No Harm³⁶ with macro-level analysis oriented toward political systems. Where both frameworks are in use, the findings of macro-analysis can inform micro-analysis, and vice versa. For example, a Sri Lanka MSTC in 2007 shaped the location and thematic focus of a series of micro-assessments in the central tea plantations. Those micro-assessments led, amongst other things, to a major increase in governance work at both local and national levels. (For details, see Case Study 2 below.)

World Vision initiated work on MSTC in 2001 with micro-macro linkages firmly in mind, but the original framework designers could not have predicted how central this linkage would become in the broader aid industry's understanding of how to make sustainable change. For example, Anderson and Olson have challenged many peacebuilders' emphasis on localised activity, pointing out that change amongst individuals or small groups may not add up to 'peace writ large' unless it reaches the sociopolitical level by involving either more people or key people capable of effecting political change (2003). Ricigliano has argued that in order to overcome this micro-macro gap, peacebuilders must broaden their interdependent collaboration across a wide range of sectors and disciplines (2012 p.17).

³⁶ For more on the historical relationship between MSTC and Do No Harm, see Annex A.

Thus, MSTC provides the macro-level understanding necessary to develop micro-macro linkages in conflict analysis. Since MSTC's creation the number of available micro-analysis frameworks has increased significantly. Do No Harm is not the only micro-analysis framework available, though it is arguably the most influential (Duffield 2001 p.128). In principle, MSTC can be paired with any micro-analysis framework that an agency may be using to help inform well-designed programming at all levels of society.

Case Study 2: Micro-Macro Linkages Shape World Vision Lanka Strategy

By Dilshan Annaraj Associate Director of Peacebuilding for Programming, World Vision International

Sri Lanka is a context in which national potential has been hampered by over 30 years of violent conflict. In preparation for a review of its national strategy for 2007–9, World Vision Lanka conducted an MSTC macro-analysis to explore key contextual changes. As a result, World Vision revised both national office and supporting sector strategies and also created a context-monitoring team to help keep the analysis updated.

When it was time for the next strategy cycle, 2010–12, the context-monitoring team convened a leadership reflection on the previous MSTC findings plus current contextual changes and emergent scenarios. Highlights included the drawdown of militarised conflict in the north and east, and the potential for previous tensions in the south to reignite. One key aspect of this reflection was the strong MSTC recommendation for emphasis on governance work; this was coupled with the observation that land use and economic inequalities in the central and southern tea plantation zones could leave marginalised youth in that sector vulnerable to absorption into conflict. Considering these factors, World Vision decided to increase community development, emergency response and advocacy programming in the Central Province's tea plantation sector from 2010 onward.

To support this growing programme World Vision probed the local context of tea plantation areas more deeply using the Do No Harm and I-PACS frameworks. Six analyses examined in micro-level detail those issues originally identified through MSTC macro-analysis. Those local analyses found that in addition to identity-based tensions amongst Sri Lankan Tamils, Indian Tamils and Sinhalese, people of all ethnic backgrounds had concerns about the control of land and livelihoods exerted by the tea plantations, which were held first by the British, then by the national government and currently by private companies. Water limitations contributed to conflict, and the service-delivery role of local government was obscured within the now-corporate plantations.

Within five years the number of World Vision development programmes in the plantation sector grew from one to eight, supported by both private and public donors. In 2011, World Vision Lanka won a Rural Integrated Water and Sanitation grant from AusAID designed to support conflict management and strengthen governance in the tea plantation sector. The project equipped community-based organisations to advocate with local government for their water rights and to work with the government and plantations to manage water-access improvements. Based on this experience World Vision also began to link water and governance in other plantation development programmes. These efforts established an ongoing platform through which community-based organisations, the government and plantation managers can work together on water management and other conflict-related issues (Annaraj 2012).

Over time, those three-way partnerships in tea plantation areas have been formalised in memoranda of understanding, which help keep the lines of communication consistently open. Positive local results have encouraged World Vision to strengthen national-level government relations, making it central to the mandate of the organisation's management team. World Vision established memoranda of understanding with the national Ministry of Local Government, thus potentially scaling up local government partnerships to reach across

the entire country, as well as with the Ministries of Education, and Health and Nutrition.

The series of micro-level analyses in the Central Province has also influenced how World Vision thinks about turbulence at the meso (middle) and macro levels. Agency staff have observed that the accumulated interplay of micro-level issues makes the meso level very dynamic, so they have begun to consider establishing provincial-level context-monitoring teams that would feed into national-level monitoring to inform leadership action. Staff have also observed multiple local contextual changes, such as growing religious tensions and increasingly contentious provincial politics, which could be indicators of national-level developments. This has prompted World Vision Lanka to consider the best time to complete the circle by convening another MSTC macro-analysis at the national level.

2.4 Conclusion

MSTC's conceptual foundations reflect its very pragmatic purpose of informing the strategy of aid agencies working in turbulent contexts. The notion of turbulence evokes the long-term, cyclical and deeply political nature of the civil conflicts that aid workers encounter. Turbulence permeates both war and periods of apparent peacefulness, and it encompasses both overt and covert violence. Thus the effort to understand a context should unite development and emergency response actors in order to avoid adding to instability and to contribute to addressing its underlying causes.

MSTC's understanding of conflict has from the outset been multi-causal, as is the reality of conflict on the ground. MSTC introduced political economy to the NGO conflict analysis toolkit at a time when this was very rare indeed. This approach is at its best when used to probe the dynamic interaction amongst greed, grievance, governance and other key causes of conflict through the holistic lens of local actors' knowledge and experience. The resulting macro-level understanding of turbulence further shapes and is shaped by local analyses to help identify the optimal points of entry in a complex, multi-level system.

MSTC uses highly refined practical tools to reveal multiple layers of complex conflicts, including analysis of political, economic and socio-historical sectors. Part II of this book presents those MSTC tools and their usage in a workshop setting. It begins with an overview of the MSTC analysis cycle in Chapter 3, followed by a detailed breakdown of the tools in Chapters 4 and 5, and finally an identification of the key ingredients of a successful MSTC workshop in Chapter 6. Part III concludes with a summary of MSTC's benefits and challenges, along with a visionary look at how MSTC and other participatory macro-analysis can improve the future effectiveness of aid.



*Participants map actor-group relationships in Ethiopia, 2008.
Photo by Matthew Scott.*

Part II: MSTC in Practice – Tools, Workshop and Process

Chapter 3: MSTC Analysis Cycle and Overview of Tools	59
3.1 The MSTC Analysis Cycle.....	60
3.2 The MSTC River	62
3.3 MSTC Tools in Brief	64
Chapter 4: MSTC Analysis Tools – Past to Present.....	66
4.1 MSTC Tool #1: Rapid Historical Phase Analysis.....	66
4.2 MSTC Tool #2: Actor-Groups and Characteristics Analysis.....	68
4.3 MSTC Tool #3: Intergroup Relationships Analysis.....	71
4.4 MSTC Tool #4: Symptoms and Root Causes of Instability Analysis.....	74
4.5 MSTC Tool #5: Political Economy of Instability Analysis.....	77
4.6 MSTC Tool #6: MSTC Mapping	82
4.7 Conclusion	85
Chapter 5: MSTC Tools – Present to Future.....	86
5.1 MSTC Tool #7: Trigger Events and Scenarios Analysis	87
5.2 MSTC Tool #8: Strategic Needs Analysis	92
5.3 MSTC Tool #9: Operational and Advocacy Implications Analysis	93
5.4 MSTC Tool #10: Integration with Strategy and Priorities Analysis.....	96
5.5 Conclusion.....	99
Chapter 6: MSTC Process – Key Ingredients for Success	100
6.1 Triangulation (Including Participant Selection).....	100
6.2 Leadership Engagement	104
6.3 Excellence in Facilitation	107
6.4 Trust, Respect and Confidentiality	109
6.5 Post-MSTC Context Monitoring.....	113
6.6 Adaptation to Adverse Circumstances	116
6.7 Conclusion.....	117

Chapter 3: MSTC Analysis Cycle and Overview of Tools

To simplify what is essentially a complex activity, MSTC analysis provides a structured set of tools, designed to be used in a workshop setting. These MSTC tools are the core building blocks of a participatory MSTC workshop. There are 10 tools in all; together they form the MSTC analysis cycle.

The tools can be divided into two distinct types: the first six analyse factors contributing to turbulence from past to present, consolidated in an exercise that ‘maps’ the workshop findings. The last four tools look to the future by predicting possible scenarios and identifying strategic needs, leading to identification of operational and advocacy implications, and their integration with strategy and action priorities.

Throughout the analysis cycle, each tool consists of three components:

- a set of steps and questions for small group and plenary discussion
- an analytical template completed by participants as the discussion progresses
- a set of reflection questions used to help participants interpret the data they have generated, eliciting key observations and insights that shape the broader analysis.

MSTC participants interact through the facilitated use of these tools, uncovering through lively discussions their first-hand knowledge of the local context. This ‘on the ground’ data fuels recommendations for action through which MSTC analysis influences strategy and programming for aid agencies working in turbulent contexts.

MSTC can be used in either single-agency or multi-agency workshop formats. All MSTCs strongly encourage participation of guests from outside the convening agency in order to diversify perspectives. Thus, a single-agency MSTC includes approximately 75 per cent of its participants from the convening agency. A multi-agency MSTC reverses the ratio, with

at least 75 per cent coming from the inter-agency community, which creates the possibility of joint action based on MSTC findings.

Core MSTC Analysis Questions

1. Through what historical phases has the context moved?
2. What are the symptoms of instability?
3. What kinds of actors are at play in the midst of turbulence?
4. What struggles over resources and power play a role?
5. What resentments and stereotypes influence the turbulent context below the surface?
6. Can participants build a graphic picture of the dynamics of the turbulent context?
7. Looking at the context, what trigger events may reasonably be expected to create new scenarios?
8. What are the strategic, operational and advocacy implications of the trends and dynamics of the turbulent context?

3.1 The MSTC Analysis Cycle

The MSTC analysis cycle (Figure 3 below) is the governing framework of the four-day workshop. The first two days focus on analysing ‘the past to the present’ using five distinct tools to look into historical developments, main actors and groups, relationships or ‘grievances’ amongst those groups, political economy or ‘greed’ issues, and the symptoms and possible root causes of instability.

At the workshop’s midpoint, the MSTC mapping session synthesises all analysis thus far in a graphic map that captures actor-groups’ relative influence, positioning, relationships and economic interests at the time of the workshops.

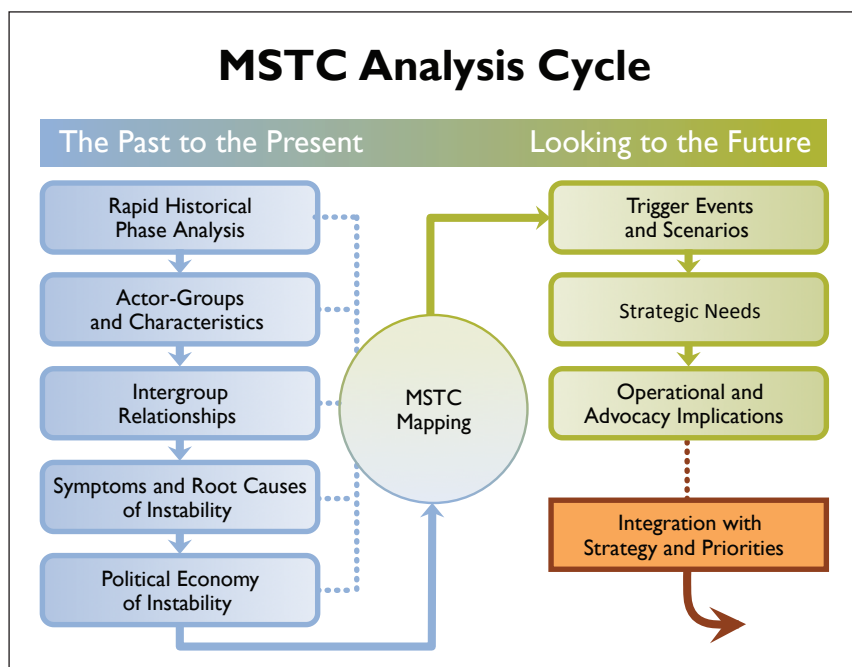


Figure 3. The MSTC Analysis Cycle

The remaining two days of the workshop are focused on ‘looking to the future’.

- The Trigger Events and Scenarios tool anticipates what is likely to happen next.
- The Strategic Needs tool identifies what needs to change in order for the context to move toward its preferred future, e.g. perhaps more equitable distribution of resources or a negotiated peace agreement.
- The Operational and Advocacy Implications tool begins the process of identifying recommendations to guide future action for the participating agencies.
- Recommendations are then integrated with organisational strategies, priorities and plans in the final sessions of the workshop.

Analytical findings are captured in detailed workshop notes as well as an MSTC final report.

Throughout the analysis, MSTC participants post their data and emergent insights on wall-sized analytical templates placed around the perimeter of the room. Common processes include brainstorming ideas followed by clustering and prioritisation (see Section 4.1) and matrices that show the connections between key concepts (see Section 4.3). These processes help to facilitate the identification of relationships, patterns and trends that shape MSTC findings.

MSTC is a cycle in that the tools have been customised to build upon and complement one another. Some of the MSTC tools include components similar to those used in other conflict analysis frameworks (e.g. Fisher 2000). However, because the tools are carefully sequenced and closely interrelated, using them separately is not recommended. For example, no tool used alone would provide the insights required to build an MSTC map. The Triggers and Scenarios tool – one of the final steps – would be less accurate and compelling if the participants did not have the full array of outputs from earlier tools to draw upon.

MSTC is also cyclical; it is meant to be repeated. MSTC participants return to their work with contextual awareness as a mind-set and a fresh understanding of how continuously to interpret what is taking place around them. Further, context monitoring keeps the analysis updated between MSTC workshops. The full workshop should be repeated every 3 to 10 years, depending on the pace of change in the context and the needs of the convening organisation.³⁷

3.2 The MSTC River

The MSTC River (Figure 4) helps to explain the analysis cycle by providing a clear image of the cumulative and carefully sequenced nature of the MSTC process. For example, mapping the relative influence of actor-groups is impossible without first identifying the characteristics of the main actors and analysing their relationships, which is considerably easier once participants agree upon the historical trajectory of conflict, and so forth. The tools pick up speed and volume as they proceed, which underscores

³⁷ See Section 6.5 for more details on the role of context monitoring and the timing of repeat MSTC workshops.

the importance of consistent participant engagement throughout the entire four-day workshop.

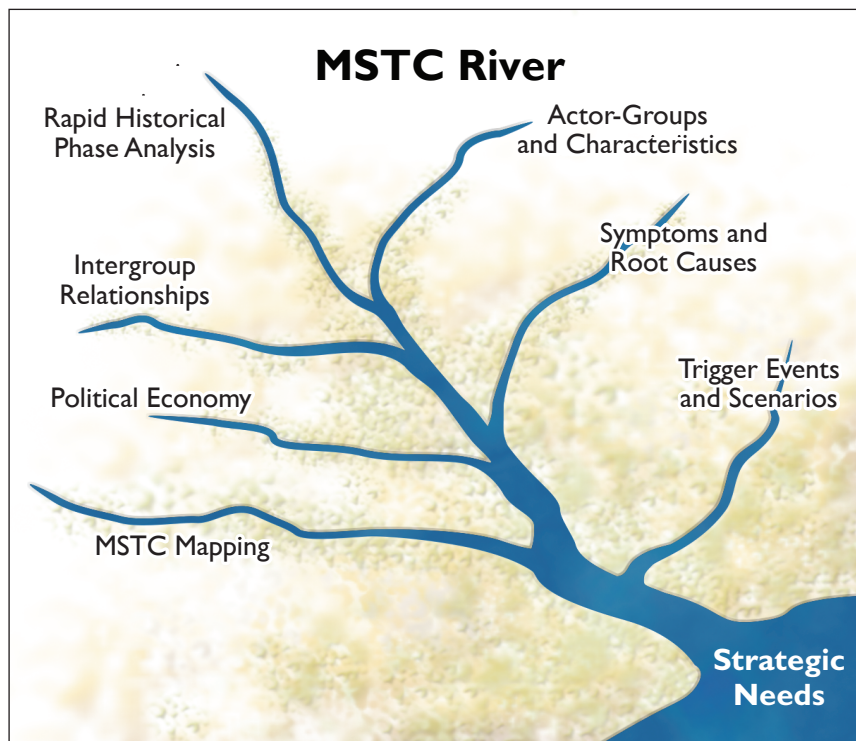


Figure 4. The MSTC River

Another reason for using the metaphor of a river is that it provides a positive and action-oriented image to counterbalance the tendency of any conflict analysis to dwell on the negative, sometimes fatalistic resignation to conflict as inevitable. Water in a river never stands still. It is also symbolically life giving. The MSTC River reframes the analysis of conflict as an active process working toward identification of the context's strategic needs, towards which each participating agency can contribute in order to help build the preferred better future.

3.3 MSTC Tools in Brief

The following is a very brief overview of the purpose of each tool. The tools are designed to work together in a particular order, each feeding into the other as the workshop proceeds. Chapters 4 and 5 look at each tool in greater detail.

MSTC Analysis Tools Overview

- 1. Rapid Historical Phase Analysis** identifies the key historical phases that have marked the context. This provides a common frame of reference and an opportunity for preliminary observations about cycles, trends and catalysts of change.
- 2. Actor-Groups and Characteristics Analysis** identifies the actor-groups that have the strongest influence on turbulence in the context and analyses their background and key characteristics. Increasingly, this tool also includes an identification of actor-groups without influence, so that marginalised voices can be considered throughout the analysis.
- 3. Intergroup Relationships Analysis** probes the interactions amongst and within those actor-groups, with attention to dynamics of grievance or affinity, how the relationships are evolving and what factors are likely to provoke change.
- 4. Symptoms and Root Causes of Instability Analysis** identifies the most prominent signs of turbulence, covering all areas of life. Examples include riots, internal displacement, monetary inflation and massive emigration. Participants then deepen the analysis by discussing the root causes that underlie these symptoms.
- 5. Political Economy of Instability Analysis** is an extended process that examines economic aspects of conflict and politics of control. Participants identify key economic resources and then trace the actor-group interests related to each resource at all levels. This allows participants to identify where actor-groups are motivated to compete or collude, and who are the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, so as to unpack how resources and power fuel turbulence.
- 6. MSTC Mapping** is the midpoint of the process. It consolidates the insights of the previous tools into a visual diagram of the current situation, which often prompts new insights about sociopolitical structures and relationships.

7. **Trigger Events and Scenarios Analysis** build on the current analysis to anticipate what the future will bring. Participants identify trigger events that are highly likely to catalyse significant change within one to three years. Each trigger event is then developed into a scenario that describes likely changes in actor-group interests and relationships, and probable impact on the symptoms of instability and the lives of citizens.
8. **Strategic Needs** are identified to move a given country or context towards its preferred future. Together they provide a visionary strategic platform towards which aid actors and other stakeholders should aim to contribute over the medium to long term.
9. **Operational and Advocacy Implications Analysis** begins the process of applying MSTC findings to aid planning. Participants consider the implications of the strategic needs and scenarios and develop preliminary recommendations. In single-agency workshops most recommendations are addressed to the convening agency, whilst in multi-agency workshops the recommendations are applicable across agencies.
10. **Integration with Strategy and Priorities** takes place after the workshop, yet it is included in the analysis cycle to demonstrate the essential importance of follow-up. On the basis of workshop documentation, the convening leadership team reviews and makes decisions on MSTC recommendations. These leaders set action in motion and identify ways to monitor its progress.



*Political Economy Analysis, Northeast India, 2008.
Photo by Matthew Scott.*

Chapter 4: MSTC Analysis Tools – Past to Present

This chapter describes the first six tools in the MSTC analysis cycle. These tools examine the factors contributing to turbulence from the past to the present. The remaining MSTC tools, which project into the future, are described in Chapter 5.

4.1 MSTC Tool #1: Rapid Historical Phase Analysis

‘Having limited knowledge of our history is a problem. There is a lot of information amidst us but we do not process it.’

—MSTC Participant, Uganda, 2012

When examining turbulent contexts, history should be viewed as the road that led to the present and, because of its continuing influence, as a factor that heavily shapes the future. The goal of Rapid Historical Phase Analysis is to arrive at a shared understanding of the dynamics of historical developments within the turbulent context and to produce a broad historical timeline for use in the rest of the workshop.

As the first tool of the workshop, the Rapid Historical Phase Analysis serves as an introduction to the collaborative style of participation in MSTC workshops. Reaching consensus on the interpretation of each historical event is neither essential nor expected. Discussions on history can easily become mired in disagreements, as one person’s ‘true historical fact’ may be another person’s biased and deliberate ‘misreading of history’. Instead, working together to identify the broader historical phases and their characteristics demonstrates the importance of respecting diverse perspectives and builds a climate of ongoing respect for the rest of the workshop.

This tool also introduces the time pressures inherent in trying to arrive at a brief, joint, respectable analysis of historical trends. MSTC facilitators are trained to elicit key events rapidly but with sufficient detail to be useful.

Participants are encouraged to negotiate outputs with one another to develop a culture of mutual give and take. The purpose of this tool is not to write an authoritative national history textbook but to agree to a 'good enough' guide to the major historical turning points and trends with a forward-looking focus.

To complete the Rapid Historical Phase Analysis, participants move through a structured group process with three main steps:

1. identify turning points (important events that marked a change) in the history of the context
2. delineate key historical phases based on those turning points
3. describe the characteristics of each historical phase.

The timeline visually displays these outputs in three horizontal layers: One central baseline for national turning points; a second line of events for regional or global turning points that affect the national context; and a third line for civil turning points within the national context.³⁸ This multilayered approach helps to illustrate the connections between events happening at different levels of society.

Whilst this tool identifies turning points in the deep past, it emphasises more recent history, focusing on the events of the past several decades that have led to the current turbulence. For instance, a typical national timeline in an African country with a colonial past may go into some detail on events immediately preceding independence from its colonial power and the developments that unfolded afterwards. Within the civil society timeline a Rapid Historical Phase Analysis might list dates when there was an influx of international NGOs (perhaps due to a disaster) or when they left en masse (due to government restrictions).

The Rapid Historical Phase Analysis tool culminates in the identification of four to six major phases, begun and ended by particularly important turning points. These historical phases are named and described, becoming a kind of improvised shorthand for the rest of the workshop. In the example below, participants would be able to refer briefly to 'Multi-Party Democracy' without having to list a range of specific dates.

³⁸ As they explore the history of their work in relation to the context, MSTC participants can better understand their current roles.

Table 2. Sample Rapid History Timeline (Nepal, 2004)

Nepal Rapid History																
Pre-1960		1960–1990				1990–2002						2002–2004				
Phase I First Democracy Planted		Phase II Panchayat (Partyless) System				Phase III Multi-Party Democracy						Phase IV Collapsing Democracy and Increasing Conflict				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1st Election• PM elected• reduced power of Royal• People Power• Five Year Dev Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One party• King as absolute• Land reforms• Return to village• Bamboo curtain• Suppressed stability• Zone of Peace				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People power and freedom (media)• Widespread corruption• Political Anarchy• Unstable Government• Mishandling Conflict• Development captured by political interest• Gap in development between urban and rural• Decentralized• Ignorance, neglect						<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Killing and violence• Human Rights violations• Loss of Hope and trust in political options/leaders• Returning to the old system of corrupt leaders• Economic degradation				
First Multi-Party Democracy		Referendum for Democracy				Bonded Labour Freed						Release of Prisoners				
		Satyagraha				Cease fire Peace Talks						Cease fire Peace Talks				
		Multi-Party Democracy / Constitutional Monarchy										UN Mediation Offer				
1959	1960	1979	1980	1987	1989	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Panchayat System		Student Movement				Indian Economic Blockade						Price on Head of Maoist				
		Referendum				New Constitution Democracy						Maolist in US Agitation				
						United Left Front Split						Student Agitation				
						GPK Dissolve Parliament						Spread conflicts to all districts				
						Romeo						Series of attacks throughout the country				
						Kilo Serra II OPS by GPK						Parliament Dissolved by PM				
						Maoist Uprising Begins						PM fired by King				
						Maoist Attacked Dang						5 Party Agitation				
						State of Emergency/ Deployment of RNA						Increase Bombing Campaign				
						Arms from US and India						Violations by both sides				
						Chief of Police Assassinated						Arrest of Maoist Leader in India				

The most significant contribution of this tool is to provide participants with new insights into the underlying trends and patterns of turbulence. The post-analysis reflection on the completed timeline is often an ‘Aha!’ moment for participants who notice certain interrelationships for the first time, for example, a linkage between external intervention and internal political events, or a connection between natural disasters and communal violence. For visual learners, seeing a completed timeline with a busy cluster of turning points around an election or a peace agreement can yield important new insights about how to anticipate potential turbulence in the future.

4.2 MSTC Tool #2: Actor-Groups and Characteristics Analysis

In everyday language ‘actor’ refers to someone who participates in a process. To analyse turbulence, it is essential to identify the key actor-groups who are driving instability and why they are doing so. Further, because actor-groups are complex and dynamic – with their names, leadership, membership and goals all subject to frequent change – this tool gives considerable attention to understanding their distinguishing characteristics.

In MSTC terms, an '*actor-group*' is a set of people acting together rather than as individuals (leaders in the political or military arena, for example). Using Egypt as an example, it would be clearer to identify the Muslim Brotherhood as an actor-group rather than its leader, Mohammed Morsi. Actor-group does not imply pretence or deception.³⁹ Actor-groups simply refer to groups that function in certain ways because of a shared mandate, cultural expectations and historical factors. Actor-groups can be found at any level – local, regional, national or international. They may be either formal or informal groups representing a variety of sectors including political, military/security, economic, sociocultural, civil society, aid, and so on.

The primary goal of the 'Actor-Group and Characteristics' analysis tool is to identify the most influential actor-groups in the context and articulate their distinguishing characteristics. The primary actor-groups identified during this session are foundational, forming a backbone for the rest of the analysis. This process also includes a post-analysis reflection on groups without influence in order to establish awareness of the marginalised.

The process has three main steps:

1. identification of up to eight highly influential actor-groups affecting the turbulent context
2. analysis of those actor-groups' key characteristics and historical background
3. reflection on groups without influence or 'voice' in the context.

Actor-group identification is done through broad brainstorming followed by a prioritisation exercise based on the actors' level of influence within the turbulent context. Some actor-groups will already have appeared during the initial Rapid Historical Phase Analysis, and participants now choose up to eight of the most influential ones. This number represents the best compromise between depth and breadth of analysis. Further, each primary actor-group that is identified carries time implications for subsequent sessions, so the workshop's four-day schedule does not accommodate more than eight, difficult as that limitation may sometimes be. However,

³⁹ In cultures in which the term '*actor*' has the negative connotation of someone acting falsely or under pretence, facilitators take care to clarify that this is not the case in conflict analysis.

secondary actor-groups can be added later in the analysis during the MSTC Mapping session.

Table 3. Sample Actor-Groups	
Philippines (national) 2006	Mindanao, Philippines (subnational) 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • political parties • military • multinational finance institutions and business groups • civil society • media • religious groups • US government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national and local government • armed groups • business and corporate groups • civil society • media • religious groups • ethnic groups • royal families

The participants' analysis of an actor-group's key characteristics includes relevant descriptors such as political stance, ideology, goals, ethnicity, gender, caste, motives, level of respect for human rights and so on. Identifying its historical background highlights where an actor-group has come from and what past factors have shaped its development. It is important that participants use objective language and avoid value judgements when describing characteristics. For instance, one might say, 'the actor-group's business is expected to generate profit' rather than 'those people only care about money'. Understanding these implicit and explicit roles is a first step towards determining how groups interact with one another and with the turbulent context.

Table 4. Sample Actor-Group Characteristics and History (MSTC location and details withheld for confidentiality reasons)		
Actor-Group	Characteristics	History
Actor-Group A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting democracy, marketing, human rights • interest in oil/gas • no interest in military action • interest in stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relics of Cold War • problems with Iraq/Iran • more interested after 1989 and a new role player
Actor-Group B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • democratically elected • recognised by a number of countries • clear external policy (firm and stable), weak internal strategies (economic, security, development, legislation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elected in 20xx • new constitution approved in 19xx • throughout history, focused on independence • events from 19xx–20xx dependent on external factors

This process concludes by briefly ‘shifting gears’ to reflect on which groups have little or no influence in the turbulence.⁴⁰ MSTC’s focus on highly influential actor-groups is essential for understanding the drivers of turbulence. However if taken to the extreme, a focus on the influential can lead us to overlook those whose position is peripheral and who are relatively powerless. Participants create an open, informal list of such marginalised groups, including, for example, specific ethnic, religious and/or political minorities; indigenous peoples; women; children; and others. MSTC participants revisit this list of marginalised groups throughout the workshop to help explore the relationship between power differences and turbulence.

4.3 MSTC Tool #3: Intergroup Relationships Analysis

Whilst the emergence of conflict is frequently linked to political and/or economic agendas of particular actors, it is also linked to their human

⁴⁰ This is a recent addition to MSTC practice, based on recommendations from International Alert (2009) and the global core group of MSTC facilitators. For details see Section 8.4.

relationships. The goal of this tool is to analyse those relationships, including not only the intergroup dynamics between actor-groups, but also the internal dynamics within actor-groups. The latter is particularly important where actor-groups have important splits or tensions within themselves.

These relational factors are often not as tangible as the symptoms of instability analysed in the next tool of the MSTC analysis cycle. Nevertheless, they are detectable, and they are extremely important. Therefore, each relationship is analysed step by step in a large matrix.

This analytical process uncovers intergroup grievances, meaning complaints or feelings of having been treated unfairly (Oxford University Press). Grievances may manifest in forms such as resentment, division and exploitation. As described in Chapter 1, some of these grievances may relate closely to political economy and governance factors. For example, political exclusion and inequitable economic relations may generate deep and lasting grievances. Injustice need not be objectively defined or proven; if an actor-group collectively perceives that it has been treated unjustly, this is sufficient for the development of a grievance.

Participants also identify intergroup affinities, meaning positive inclinations that are often based on the perception of similar identity or interests (Oxford University Press). An affinity does not necessarily mean that two actor-groups are behaving in a positive manner; it simply means that their relationship is cohesive. Understanding the interplay of grievance and affinity is key to understanding turbulent contexts.

Table 5. Sample Actor-Group Relations (MSTC location and details withheld for confidentiality reasons)						
Actor-Group 1	Actor-Group 2	Actor-Group 3	Actor-Group 4	Actor-Group 5	Actor-Group 6	
<i>Internal Relationship:</i> supportive, interested in the well-being of the members against the management/ govt works for their benefits	<i>Relationship:</i> unions of social identity don't work together	<i>Relationship:</i> neutral	<i>Relationship:</i> conflict oriented; individualistic	<i>Relationship:</i> negative; publicly opposed	<i>Relationship:</i> outwardly not together; internal alliance	Actor-Group 1
<i>Trend:</i> shows its strengths/ influence	<i>Trend:</i> relates and cooperates on the basis of issues	<i>Trend:</i> separate interests	<i>Trend:</i> maintains its own identities	<i>Trend:</i> deteriorating	<i>Trend:</i> common benefits bring them together	
<i>Trigger:</i> anti-union policies	<i>Trigger:</i> not harmful	<i>Trigger:</i> interests differ	<i>Trigger:</i> popularity in the public; influence in govt	<i>Trigger:</i> since 19xx when movement for separation started	<i>Trigger:</i> influenced by leadership	

The Intergroup Relationships Analysis generates a great deal of data, so the post-analysis reflection is particularly important. After working individually on their own portion of the matrix, participants work together to interpret the broader whole. They identify not only patterns of grievance and affinity, but also trends in the trajectory of relationships and common triggers for relational change. For instance, MSTC participants in Honduras (2014) noted that the internal actor-groups' level of dependence on the United States and other external powers was generally increasing, and that the Honduras political crisis of 2009 had changed actor-group relations in ways that were deeper and more far-reaching than previously imagined. Later in the analysis, this equipped the participants to think in new ways about the potential impact of their upcoming 2017 general election.

4.4 MSTC Tool #4: Symptoms and Root Causes of Instability Analysis

Increasing and ongoing instability is the key characteristic of a turbulent context. Using this tool, participants identify the outward signs, indications, or symptoms of instability. Once symptoms are identified, participants turn to consideration of causes, particularly deeper or root causes. Going through this process helps the participants identify the nature and the drivers of turbulence in a given context.

Symptoms

Identifying symptoms is a well-known practice within the emergency response sector. A rise in infant mortality, increases in population movements and so forth are directly linked to programme planning and thus often under consideration. However, there are overlooked symptoms that receive significantly less humanitarian attention. This tool pushes participants to examine a broad spectrum of symptoms across at least six spheres: political, economic, security/military, sociocultural, infrastructure and humanitarian.

MSTC participants identify symptoms through brainstorming and prioritisation, reducing the most important symptoms to a maximum of nine. Whilst conducting this analysis, participants often add important observations about certain symptoms, such as their geographic location within the context (regional vs. widespread), and their overall trend (increasing vs. decreasing). Where relevant, trends can be quantified through post-workshop investigation of statistics.

Once the top nine symptoms are identified, a key reflection question is ‘Who in the context suffers most from these symptoms?’ Discussion typically circles back to the list of marginalised groups (first generated using tool #2), illustrating specific ways in which the marginalised are vulnerable. For instance, an MSTC group in Pakistan in 2013 noted not only that most symptoms disproportionately affected minorities, women and the landless, but also that certain powerful actor-groups appeared to use the chaos generated by the symptoms to consolidate their own influence and control.

*Root Causes*⁴¹

Building on the identification of symptoms, participants identify underlying causes of those symptoms through brainstorming and prioritisation. The visual image here is a tree, with the symptoms at the level of leaves and fruit and the causes closer to the level of the root system (Figure 5). Participants generate 10–15 causal factors that contribute to the identified cluster of symptoms. Then they decide which of those causal factors are deepest, that is, closest to the root.

The emphasis in this session is on deeper causes, but there is no effort to categorise or exclude causes that are more immediate in nature. Such categories tend to be elusive, given the complex systemic interactions in which the causes of instability may influence one another, and some symptoms may in turn become causes. Instead of excluding proximate causes, MSTC participants simply indicate the approximate depth of these more immediate factors by carefully placing them farther up the tree trunk.



*Participants in Haiti discuss key actor groups, Haiti, 2010.
Photo by Matthew Scott.*

⁴¹ This is a recent addition to MSTC practice, based on evaluation recommendations from International Alert (2009) and the global core group of MSTC facilitators. This tool previously emphasised proximate causes, with the understanding that root causes were uncovered by other MSTC tools. Adding root causes to this session has become pivotal in shaping actionable workshop outcomes. Future steps may include the use of systems mapping to capture the complex interrelationships between symptoms and causal factors.

of multiple symptoms. In MSTC usage, ‘root’ does not necessarily imply a cause that came first in the chronological sense. This is important because protracted conflict transforms itself over time, making the original causes less relevant when designing interventions (Woodward 2007).

The collective identification of deeply causative factors often brings with it a powerful sense of shared discovery and feeds directly into the later identification of the context’s strategic needs.

4.5 MSTC Tool #5: Political Economy of Instability Analysis

Political economy refers to the production and distribution of wealth, and the power that it brings (Le Billon 2000 p.1). In conflict analysis, examining the political economy involves assessing how instability might have produced or enhanced economic profit for particular ‘winning’ sections of society whilst increasing the vulnerability and powerlessness of the ‘losers’. Instability can become self-perpetuating when the economic winners have incentive to continue conflict and the economic losers have no means to stop it. Thus, this tool looks at how greed interacts with grievance to shape instability.⁴²

The goal of the Political Economy of Instability Analysis is to understand the influence of economics on instability and turbulence by identifying key resources and determining how usage of resources affects intergroup relationships. As discussed in Chapter 2, resources are central both because they are the foundation for most economic activities in developing economies and because their exploitation is widely associated with conflict and war. However, resources alone do not create violence. Rather, the violence stems from the human social structures and processes involved in production and distribution.

⁴² See Chapter 2 for more on grievance, greed and political economy.

Resources

1. Natural substances that are produced for satisfying human needs and desires
2. Natural resources, raw materials and/or primary commodities.

Le Billon 2012 p.9

This MSTC session is a lengthy one with multiple components. Participants look at their own turbulent contexts to determine which resource-based economic activities are bringing financial gain to actor-groups and how this reality shapes the politics of control and the resulting trajectory of conflict. The key analytical steps are as follows:



Identifying Resources

The process begins with the identification of up to eight economic resources that are valuable, available and have some involvement with turbulence. Resource identification is a key decision, because these resources will be used in subsequent sessions to shape the remainder of the analysis. The identified resources often reflect categories such as fuel resources, precious minerals, water, food crops, non-food agricultural crops (for example, timber or narcotic plants), and fisheries.⁴³

The eight major economic resources are then placed on a map of the context in order to indicate the nature of their geographic distribution (Figure 6).

⁴³ Some MSTC groups also include ‘human resources’ in their identification of key economic resources. Whilst human resources may not fit the typical definition of resources, their inclusion often helps to reveal important issues such as human trafficking, exploitive labour practices and extraction of taxes and rents through extortion.



*Figure 6. Sample Map of Key Economic Resources (Honduras, 2014 – in Spanish)
Photo by Matthew Scott.*

Based on the map, participants reflect on key questions such as:

- Where are resources plentiful? Where are they scarce? What location patterns are evident? What are the implications of these patterns?
- Are the resources near to or far from the centres of government power? Resources that are near or easily accessible through man-made infrastructure are more likely to be controlled by government or vulnerable to capture in a coup d'état. Resources far from the centres of power are more likely to be accessed by secessionist movements or other non-state actors that oppose the government (Le Billon 2012 p.28).
- Are the resources clustered or widespread? Widespread resources are more easily accessed by insurgent movements or warlords. Clustered resources are likely to be controlled by governments or corporations, because they require specific exploitation technologies and are easier to defend (Le Billon 2012 p.28).
- Are the resources affected by or vulnerable to natural factors including disasters, climate change or environmental degradation? Such vulnerabilities are a key indication that future environmental changes

may bring important shifts to the political economy and therefore influence the course of turbulence.

Identifying Economic Activities and Their Impact on Turbulence

In this part of the analysis each of the eight major resources is linked to the key economic activities that it generates. For example, land as a resource can be used for multiple activities including crop production, livestock farming and real estate development. Similarly, trees as a resource can be exploited through multiple activities such as logging, milling and construction.

The nature of each economic activity is considered, along with its level of legality:

- *legal* (pertaining to normal economic life within the letter of the law)
- *grey* (so-called informal activity, outside of taxation or legal permission but widely tolerated)
- *illegal or criminal* (strictly against the law; has a damaging and corrosive effect on society).

The question of legality matters because grey and illegal activities tend to contribute to instability in particular ways. The efforts of controlling actor-groups to protect their lucrative activities, combined with the efforts of authorities to regulate or stop them, can contribute to physical and structural violence. The bloodshed surrounding organised crime networks in the Americas is a deeply worrying example. However, this does not imply that only illegal activities are problematic. Some legal activities have the potential to be structurally violent and deeply destabilising, such as international sanctions, structural adjustment policies and government-sanctioned natural-resource exploitation.

After determining the level of legality, MSTC participants then identify which actors have a focused interest in each economic activity and which are ‘winning’ or ‘losing’ (Le Billon 2000) in economic terms. This may include the eight primary actor-groups plus other relevant actors. Winners often include militaries, politicians, local businesses and transnational corporations, traditional leaders and warlords at any level from local to international. In many cases the losers are those in the general population displaced or disadvantaged by the winners’ push to control resources. In other cases the losers are more specifically identifiable, such as particular

ethnic groups, regional populations or political parties. Some losers may overlap with the previously identified list of marginalised groups in the context.

Finally, MSTC participants determine the extent to which a particular economic activity affects conflict and turbulence: low, medium or high. High impact often implies destabilisation. However, some high-impact economic activities can have a stabilising influence, implying a potentially positive contribution that should not be overlooked. The designation of high impact is important because it provides MSTC participants and their agencies with an indication of which economic activities are likely to merit priority awareness and/or action.

Table 6. Sample Analysis of Economic Activities (MSTC location and details withheld for confidentiality reasons)					
Resources	Economic Activity	Legal, Grey or Illegal?	Actor-Groups with Control or Focused Interest	Winners (W) and Losers (L)	Impact on Turbulence
Diaspora	capital investment	legal	elders, state government	W=elders; L= state government	medium
	local and international trade	grey	elders, religious groups	W= religious groups, business, community; L= state government	high
	remittances	legal	elders, religious groups and the business sector	W= elders, religious groups, state government; L= state government	high

In post-analysis reflection MSTC participants identify the overall patterns found in their data, including their interpretation of who is consistently winning, who is frequently losing, and what this implies for the understanding of the context. Consistent winners are likely to contribute to the overall instability of a turbulent context in order to sustain their

advantage. Consistent losers are likely to suffer multiple forms of physical and structural violence and to have their grievances reinforced, which further contributes to the complex turbulence of intergroup relations.

4.6 MSTC Tool #6: MSTC Mapping

The goal of the MSTC Mapping tool is to consolidate the findings of the first five tools, thus synthesising the participants' analysis of the past up to the present. Mapping provides a coherent picture of the current turbulent context. This session represents the midpoint of the MSTC process, with the subsequent tools looking into the future.

The process has three key components:

- relationship map
- resource interest and control
- agendas and drivers.

The most identifiable component of the MSTC Mapping tool is a visual relationship map, which aims to make invisible conflict dynamics visible. However, the session includes two other key supporting analyses: resource interest and control, and actor-group agendas and drivers. As participants synthesise this information, the data from each of the previous analytical tools is a constant reference point. Their resulting templates and charts are available to the participants as resources.

The central relationship map is a large, wall-sized visual image that depicts the actor-groups, with size representing their relative influence, and different types of lines indicating the primary nature of their relationships. This is a flexible format that can be adapted to a variety of needs. Typically, this MSTC map includes not only the eight primary actor-groups but also their disaggregated subgroups, selected secondary actors and in some cases even the participants' own organisations. The result represents a 'snapshot' of turbulence at the current moment in time.



Figure 7. MSTC Mapping in Progress (Kenya, 2012). Photo by Michelle Garred.

The analysis of resource interest and control strongly supports the relationship mapping, and it is also a powerful tool in its own right. This matrix synthesises how the primary actor-groups in the context relate to the major economic resources, specifically in terms of their level of interest and their level of control. This matrix not only demonstrates who controls what, but it also provides insights into behaviour.

Table 7. Sample Resource Interest and Control (Findings adapted from multiple MSTCs for confidentiality reasons)				
	Oil Businesses	Traditional Local Leaders	UN and Humanitarian INGOs	Winners (W) and Losers (L)
Land	HI / LC		HI / LC	HI / LC
Timber and Gum	HI / LC			
Oil and Minerals	HI / LC	HI / HC	HI / LC	HI / LC
Tourism and Wildlife	HI / HC			
<i>Legend:</i> HI = high interest LC = low control HC = high control				

Where the matrix shows that an actor-group has a high level of interest in a particular resource, it is clear that the effort to secure or maintain control of that resource will influence that actor-group’s conduct and relationships (Table 7). Further, where a particular resource generates high interest amongst multiple actors, this is evidence of either competition or collusion, both of which can significantly shape turbulence. Special symbols indicating economic interests may be added to the relationship map, at the discretion of participants.

Similarly, the agenda and drivers matrix consolidates what is known about a particular actor-group (Table 8). An actor’s ‘agenda’ is its purpose or set of core values, as it would publicly present it. The agenda typically emphasises positive or neutral attributes, including any major grievances. An actor’s ‘drivers’ run deeper, referring to inner and sometimes unspoken motivations. Drivers may include some attributes that are considered questionable or negative, such as the intent to retain political power at any cost, or the greed-related quest to control a particular resource. Articulating the mixed motives of actor-groups in this way can be an ‘eye opener’ for MSTC participants. Small cards summarising these insights can be added to the relationship map and linked to the appropriate actor-groups.

Table 8. Sample Agendas and Drivers (MSTC location and details withheld for confidentiality reasons)		
Actor-Group	Characteristics	History
Actor-Group A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal control of political power • protect interests of its country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empowerment of its own religious sect • local economic development in its own areas
Actor-Group B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • neoliberal economy • political power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pro-Western attitude (international community perception)
Actor-Group C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well-being of its own citizens • strengthening of its own state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • security • self-preservation • stability • maintaining sectarian balance

Post-analysis reflection during MSTC Mapping often becomes one of the most revealing plenaries of the workshop. Participants note the relative levels of influence and connection or isolation across actor-groups. They also assess which types of relationships predominate, giving special attention to the presence and meaning of informal (or ‘under the table’) relationships. Participants even consider the positioning and relationships of their own organisations or networks, speculating on what this means for their effectiveness in the operating context.

MSTC Participants’ Reflections on Mapping

‘Now I understand why the situation is so delicate, and the state is so weak. There are so many other actors with hidden interests and “under the table” linkages, which are not being seen in the light.’

—Haiti, 2013

‘We are sitting on many volcanoes. We do not know which ones will erupt at any time.’

—Burundi, 2008

‘We need to see behind the curtain. We need to see what’s going on “in the kitchen.”’

—Haiti, 2013

‘Many actors have to work together for successfully addressing turbulence; no one actor can singularly solve this complex situation.’

—Ethiopia, 2008

4.7 Conclusion

The first half of an MSTC workshop contains six tools that analyse macro-level turbulence from the past up to the present day and then consolidate that understanding in a visual relationship map. Completion of the MSTC Mapping session typically leaves participants feeling quite accomplished, as they see their first two days of intensive analysis consolidated into fresh insight. The mapping observations also fuel new understanding of the current state of turbulence and begin to draw participants into considering future developments and trends. The second half of the MSTC analysis cycle, which includes tools that probe the future, is described in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: MSTC Tools

– Present to Future

Halfway through an MSTC workshop, usually on Day 3, the focus of the analytical tools shifts from looking back to considering the future. Based on the earlier analysis of past to present, which is consolidated in the MSTC Map, participants begin to ask themselves what is likely to happen next, and what the implications of the analysis are for their own planning and operations. This chapter covers tools seven through ten of the MSTC analysis cycle.

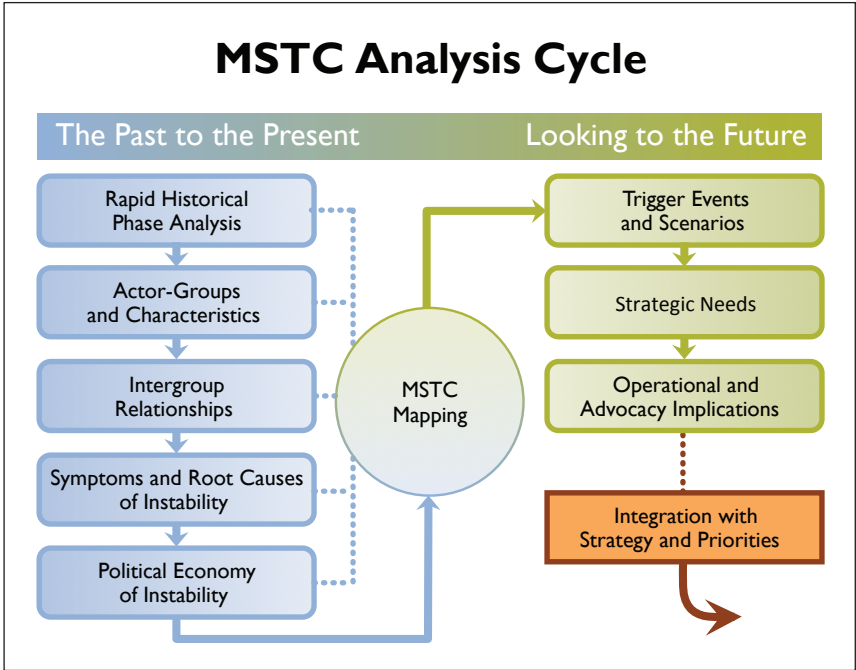


Figure 8. The MSTC Analysis Cycle

5.1 MSTC Tool #7: Trigger Events and Scenarios Analysis

The goal of the Trigger Events and Scenarios analysis is to help participants determine what the next phase in the turbulent context may bring, looking several steps into the future. The group works together to build short-range future scenarios. Clearly, turbulent contexts by their very nature are difficult to predict. However, the detailed analysis accomplished in the preceding sessions creates a solid foundation for this task. MSTC scenarios are often quite accurate.

This process has two primary steps:

- identification of trigger events
- development of the scenario likely to follow each trigger event.

A *'trigger event'* is a catalyst for a particular process or situation to take place (Oxford University Press). MSTC participants identify the trigger events that are likely to change the context based on the criteria of likelihood and impact.⁴⁴ *'Likelihood'* refers to the probability that an event will take place, whilst *'impact'* refers to the magnitude of its effect on turbulence. The period under analysis is typically between one and three years; it is determined by the facilitation team based on the pace of change in the context being analysed. The participants' process involves two rounds of brainstorming and prioritisation, first in small groups and then in plenary.

Participants often find it relatively easy to identify trigger events that appear negative, such as a military coup, a harvest failure, disputed elections, a currency crisis or a monsoon. However, with a little guidance participants are equally able to identify triggers that appear positive, for example, a mild economic recovery, a functioning peace process or successful repatriation of refugees. In any case, most trigger events eventually produce mixed scenarios that contain both positive and negative elements.

⁴⁴ Another popular method is to project the best, worst and most likely scenarios (e.g. Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012). However, experience arguably indicates that the best and worst scenarios rarely happen, so MSTC focuses instead on the criteria of likelihood coupled with impact.

Sample Trigger Events

- Foreign military intervention (Mali, 2012)
- Return of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi (DR Congo, 2011)
- A Category-III hurricane (Haiti, 2010)
- Resumption of peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Mindanao, Philippines, 2009)
- Court confirmation or rejection of proposed electoral boundaries (Kenya, 2012)

Once the MSTC group agrees in plenary on which trigger events to prioritise, the participants begin to develop the scenarios in small groups. Projecting several steps forward from the trigger event, participants consider what other events are likely to follow and ask themselves what changes are likely to take place. (See ‘How Trigger Events Lead to Scenarios’.)

How Trigger Events Lead to Scenarios

- *Changes in the relative power and relationships of actor-groups.* For example, new actors may emerge, and old actors may split or diminish in relevance.
- *Changes in the actor-groups’ interest and control over resources.* For instance, a certain actor-group may sense a key resource slipping out of its grasp and use violence to retain control.
- *Changes in the symptoms of instability.* Some of the previously identified symptoms may increase or diminish, and new symptoms may appear.
- *Impact on the common citizen.* Changing scenarios will inevitably affect citizens, and it is important to understand what these effects might be. Often those most affected include the marginalised groups identified using tool #2.

This analysis forms the backbone of the scenario. MSTC facilitators often use additional techniques to help participants explore a scenario in its

fullness. Process mapping, for example, identifies the chain of events likely to unfold after a particular trigger, including those events whose outcome may bring causal ‘forks in the road’. ‘Sculptures’ invite participants to dramatise the scenarios, bringing kinetic experience into an otherwise heavily analytical process. For examples of scenarios in a real-life context, see Case Study 3.

In post-analysis reflection participants consider more deeply how the scenarios relate to one another and what common themes or challenges they might present. By the end of the session participants are quite naturally thinking about the implications of the scenarios for their own work, which the subsequent tools aim to capture.

Case Study 3: Cross-Agency Comparison of MSTC Findings in Pakistan

By Khuzama Rizwan, Project Manager, Technical Education and Vocational Training, CARE International in Pakistan, and Certified MSTC Lead Facilitator

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan came into being after 90 years of struggle for independence, separating Pakistan from India. The journey of independence witnessed conflict and violence, leaving painful marks on the hearts and minds of the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and other survivors, who still breathe the air of tension. Pakistan has been struggling to find the right leadership ever since independence; ten general elections have been held, with only one government completing its full term of five years. The respective governments struggled to address the political, economic and social instability stemming from the massive earthquake in 2005, an insurgency from Taliban fighters, which was resisted by Pakistan’s military, in 2009, and the colossal floods in 2010 and 2011.

In February 2014, Oxfam, CARE and World Vision held an inter-agency MSTC roundtable in the country to compare their key MSTC findings. The three organisations had each already conducted MSTC workshops involving their own staff and their local and national

implementing partner organisations. All three MSTCs took place within 19 months, which is quite unusual, but in this case it was done because each agency had internal capacity-building goals. It provided a unique opportunity to 'triangulate' MSTC analyses, and when the organisations compared findings at the roundtable they discovered many striking similarities and a few key differences.

Amongst the similarities, participants in all three MSTCs agreed that the both man-made and natural disasters contribute to Pakistan's complexity. It was generally agreed that some among the major actors in power, such as the feudals,⁴⁵ bureaucrats and military, are more driven by personal agendas than national interest. This contributes to a number of issues impacting the country, ranging from elite power and control over resources; constant tension within the country and cross-borders, resulting in very low economic activity; and a feeling of powerlessness within the large population, which gives birth to social evils like violence, unemployment and injustice. The informal relations amongst bureaucrats' families and community networks are often more influential than the citizen-state relationship, and they can function as a means of brokerage, patronage and leverage. Academia and civil society, which largely includes non-governmental organisations and youth, try to be proactive and raise their voices, but they still need to work in greater coordination with each other to generate impact and catalyse change. Media needs to be more independent instead of being divisive by propagating particular political agendas.⁴⁶

Despite the strong similarities in analysis of the current context, the participants of all three MSTCs perceived the future scenarios in Pakistan somewhat differently, due mainly to changes in the turbulent context over 19 months. Nonetheless, all three MSTC groups saw

⁴⁵ Feudals are landlords with large joint families possessing hundreds or even thousands of acres of land, on which agricultural work is done by peasants or tenants who live at subsistence level.

⁴⁶ In these workshops, as in all MSTCs, the context analysis findings represent the collective views of the participants, not of the convening agencies.

elections, natural disasters and militant/counter-insurgency activity as key trigger events affecting Pakistan, though the details and relative prioritisation of those trigger events varied over time. The June 2012 workshop convened by World Vision was unique in identifying the potential for civil unrest due to high inflation, energy crisis and potential failure of Pakistan/United States talks on the status of NATO supply lines. One year later the workshops of September 2013 (CARE) and January 2014 (Oxfam) produced closely related scenarios, with the main differences being the assessment of whether peace talks with Taliban militants were likely to succeed or fail, the increasing level of urgency around NATO withdrawal from neighbouring Afghanistan, and the relative impact of large monsoon floods as compared to ground-breaking local elections.

All the participating agencies recognised MSTC as a comprehensive analysis framework in terms of analysing country programmes under the overarching themes of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding. The framework, coupled with more localised exercises using the Do No Harm framework, proved to work best for conflict-affected countries where organisations were doing project-based work with local and national implementing partners.

Multi-agency MSTC processes are beneficial to plan and implement well-coordinated, resource-efficient country programmes. They also provide a foundation to discuss and identify the role of civil society in the process of peacebuilding and to leverage and influence one another's work for stability and long-term development.

CARE, Oxfam and World Vision agreed to hold a follow-up joint meeting to obtain orientation on MSTC tools and methodology. They also agreed to hold an inter-agency Do No Harm workshop to narrow the analysis to the micro level, reflecting on the details of the analysis as one group rather than as three independent organisations.

5.2 MSTC Tool #8: Strategic Needs Analysis

The goal of the Strategic Needs Analysis is to identify what the turbulent context needs if it is to move towards its preferred future.⁴⁷ In other words, what must happen or change in order to bring about stability and peace? These are macro-level needs over the medium to long term, far beyond the scope of what any single NGO or civil society organisation can achieve. However, each agency or network has a contribution to make. For this reason the strategic needs of the context should guide organisational strategy development and advocacy.



Figure 9. Sample Strategic Needs: Pakistan (CARE International, 2013)

Strategic needs are identified through brainstorming and prioritisation. Beginning in small groups, participants review the raw data and conclusions drawn from all previous MSTC tools. The findings on root causes are often particularly influential in determining strategic needs, but participants

⁴⁷ For a trend analysis of the types of strategic needs that appear frequently in MSTC analysis, see Section 7.2.

consider all tools during this process. Participants are also reminded that every tool flows together towards the identification of future strategic needs (Figure 4.)

When small groups bring their proposed strategic needs to the plenary, they take part in a very important discussion. As they discuss how the needs should be formulated and named, MSTC participants are envisioning the future. The naming of each strategic need merits thoughtful consensus to ensure that it holds meaning for stakeholders outside the workshop also. Facilitators elicit the nuanced detail behind the names so that a generalised need such as good governance can be specifically defined (Figure 9). Participants also articulate key interrelationships amongst the strategic needs (for example, in some contexts an ‘influential civil society’ might require ‘access to education’).

In post-analysis reflection participants often are inspired and gratified to see the context’s strategic needs, as agreed upon by participant consensus and articulated as a platform for building the future. Their thoughts naturally turn to questions of their own contribution: Which of the most strategic needs facing their country should be the primary focus of civil society or NGOs? Of their own organisation? With whom can they collaborate to ensure that their contribution is aligned with the whole? Such questions guide planning during the Operational and Advocacy Implications session that follows.

5.3 MSTC Tool #9: Operational and Advocacy Implications Analysis

The goal of this session is to take the future scenarios and strategic needs generated using the previous MSTC tools and develop specific recommendations related to the work of participating agencies. These recommendations become the basis for converting analysis into action.⁴⁸

To help participants identify the operational and advocacy implications of the scenarios and strategic needs, facilitators provide a template that includes questions like those that follow.

⁴⁸ These questions do not focus on the important minimalist conflict-sensitivity theme of avoiding harm. This could be explored by asking what not to do in order to avoid unintentionally worsening conflict.

Table 9. Scenarios and Strategic Needs	
Scenarios: Operational and Advocacy Implications	Strategic Needs: Operational and Advocacy Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are a few key early indicators that this scenario is happening? (that is, how will organisations know when it starts?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are organisations already doing to help contribute to achieving this strategic need?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well are organisations prepared now to adapt to this scenario? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well are organisations positioned now to address this need?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are organisational strengths and weaknesses in relation to this scenario? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are organisational strengths and weaknesses in relation to addressing this need?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might organisations do differently to prepare for, respond to, or create positive aspects of this scenario? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might organisations do differently (more of, less of) to improve the alignment of their strategies to this need?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are two or three key action steps for making this change happen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are two or three key action steps for making this change happen?

Recommendations need to be targeted and detailed in order to maximise their usefulness. For this reason MSTC participants form three to five work groups to identify operational and advocacy implications for *each* of the main programme pillars of the convening agency or consortium. This means that the work groups may vary from one MSTC to the next. (For examples, see Table 10.)

Table 10. Sample MSTC Work Groups for Operational and Advocacy Implications (formed according to primary programme pillars)	
World Vision Development Foundation Philippines (2006)	CARE International in Pakistan (2013)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transformational (community) development • humanitarian and emergency affairs • advocacy • peacebuilding⁴⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health • education • economic empowerment • emergency response
<i>Through the lens of child well-being</i>	<i>Through the lens of the self-empowerment of marginalised women</i>

Most operational and advocacy implications are structured around the programme pillars of the MSTC convener. However, it is also very important to create opportunities for application at other levels. Participants are invited to briefly consider personal application to their individual roles, and to work extensively on recommendations for inter-agency collaboration. In single-agency MSTCs this takes the form of an additional work group focused on maximising the presence of partner-agency guests by identifying recommendations for joint efforts. In multi-agency MSTCs participants are typically invited to focus their time during the workshop on either the implications for their own agency or on multi-agency application; most choose the latter. Therefore multi-agency MSTC workshop recommendations typically pertain to the inter-agency community, whilst encouraging each participating agency to later identify customised recommendations for its own work.

Inter-agency recommendations can be particularly far-reaching, such as uniting civil society around a defined, shared platform to advocate for the national welfare. The participants in the Honduras 2014 MSTC established

⁴⁹ Peacebuilding is not one of the World Vision's main programme pillars; it is usually integrated into emergency response, development and advocacy. However, some country offices which also feature peacebuilding as a sector may elevate it in their operational and advocacy implications to maximise usefulness of the findings.

an ambitious plan to use the MSTC-identified needs of the context⁵⁰ as a ‘common platform to advocate for the national welfare,’ and then they pinpointed action steps to begin the process through the unification of their existing networks.

Before the workshop closes, each work group shares selected highlights of its recommendations in plenary (whilst documenting the rest for inclusion in the workshop report). This final discussion allows for pollination of ideas across programme pillars and identification of the overarching challenges and opportunities facing the participating agencies. The active participation of the convening agency’s leadership team is essential at this stage in order to affirm participant recommendations and to support the implementation steps that are soon to follow.

5.4 MSTC Tool #10: Integration with Strategy and Priorities Analysis

‘Few workshops provide so much learning in so few days, because although there were four hard days of learning, the quantity of work generated has enormous value.’

—MSTC Participant, Honduras, 2014

Successful completion of an MSTC workshop is a major milestone. However, completing the workshop is only the beginning of the process of putting MSTC recommendations into action. Thus, tool #10 in the MSTC analysis cycle is not actually used during the workshop. It is a follow-up process, but it is integrated into the visual analysis cycle to demonstrate the essential importance of using good documentation for leadership teams to integrate MSTC findings into their organisational strategies and priorities.

Documentation of MSTC Findings

High-quality documentation of MSTC findings is essential for informing strategy and priorities. After the MSTC analysis workshop is over, the

⁵⁰ The participants identified the strategic needs of Honduras as inclusive social protection, transparent and fair rule of law, high-quality holistic education, strengthened families through a focus on rights, and development of a culture of peace.

facilitation team compiles all the data from the workshop and creates four documents at three intervals:

1.MSTC Preliminary Findings (within two or three days of the end of the workshop)

- a. in presentation format
- b. in document format.

These materials offer a summary of the methodology used, the main findings of the workshop and the preliminary recommendations for current and future programming. They are prepared rapidly in order to brief the convening agency's leadership team whilst the facilitation team is still on site. The leadership team provides input on how to frame the final recommendations in ways that are highly relevant to their organisation.

2.MSTC Workshop Notes (within one week of the end of the workshop)

These notes, usually more than 60 pages in length, contain in detail all of the raw⁵¹ outputs of the MSTC workshop. Their purpose is to facilitate rapid sharing of findings with participants and to capture all the information needed for subsequent writing of the final report. All participants approve these raw notes during the workshop, and the facilitation team further proofreads and formats the notes prior to distribution. These notes become the authoritative source in case of future queries about what took place during a workshop.

3.MSTC Final Report (within one month of the end of the workshop)

The final report is a detailed summary, approximately 12 pages, designed for distribution to a broader audience, including partner agencies and donors. It includes a brief overview of MSTC methodology, a synthesis of the participants' analysis from each session during the workshop, and the overarching conclusions and finalised recommendations.

It is important to note that the final report typically contains two distinct types of recommendations. The first is a summary of the operational and advocacy implications developed during the workshop. Those

⁵¹ 'Raw' here means that the workshop notes contain only the written, posted and participant-verified outputs of the participatory group process, without additions or interpretive comments.

recommendations, coming directly from MSTC participants, emphasise the importance of aligning their organisational strategy around the identified strategic needs of the context, and the preparatory actions required to adapt, respond to or influence the emergent scenarios.

The second type of recommendations arises from the observations of the facilitation team, based on the participants' context analysis. These recommendations may address such themes as developing organisational cultures that model peace (for example, inclusion, transparency), improving positioning in relation to other actors in the context and customising steps to mainstream conflict sensitivity. Facilitation team insights can be quite important, yet the team must be sure to crosscheck these insights with participants and local colleagues. The role of local facilitators within the facilitation team is very important in maintaining this balance.⁵²

Leadership Team Action: Integration with Strategy and Priorities

As soon as MSTC recommendations become available, the responsibility for guiding the process shifts from the facilitation team to the convening agency's leadership team. This team needs to take a series of intentional actions to ensure implementation of recommendations.

Steps toward integration with strategy and priorities usually include the following:

- 1. Review:** The leadership team reviews and considers the MSTC recommendations, consulting staff as appropriate. This can be a far-reaching reflection when it involves (re)alignment of strategy to the MSTC-identified strategic needs. This may be necessary to maximise the contributions of an agency to the broader needs of the context.
- 2. Decide:** The leadership team decides which MSTC recommendations will be followed and which will not. No leadership team is expected to blindly approve all MSTC recommendations – though each recommendation merits consideration.
- 3. Implement:** Action often prompts challenges of allocating time and overcoming obstacles. In many cases a decision to implement an MSTC recommendation will require further planning. For example, an approved

⁵² For more on managing sensitive MSTC documentation, see Section 6.4.

recommendation to pursue advocacy on a specific theme will require further development of the advocacy message and strategy.

4. Monitor: Implementation is challenging work; there is a need to monitor whether or not the planned changes actually take place. A progress check six to eight weeks after the workshop can be a useful way to keep the implementation process moving. It is essential to identify an authoritative focal person and a mechanism for bringing updates to the leadership team.

Another essential part of the implementation process is *consistent communication* with MSTC participants and staff. Strategic and operational change requires that as many people as possible be briefed on the analytical findings, and MSTC participants will rightfully be keen to know how their contribution of time and insight is being translated into tangible results. (For more on the pivotal role of leadership see Section 6.2).

5.5 Conclusion

The second half of an MSTC workshop builds on the participants' analysis of past and present turbulence to project into the future. Participants identify the trigger events likely to bring new scenarios, the strategic needs that will enable the context to achieve its preferred future, and the operational and advocacy implications of this analysis for their own work. The leadership team of the convening agency or consortium reviews the recommendations of MSTC participants to make action-oriented changes that improve programming.

The investment of many parties – participants, conveners, facilitators and donors – is significant in making MSTC successful. High-quality analytical tools are essential, as described above. But many other success factors are dependent on the human processes that take place before, during and after the workshop. These key processes are described in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: MSTC Process – Key Ingredients for Success

World Vision has tested the MSTC analytical tools described in the preceding chapters of this book for more than a decade and adapted them over that time. Aid agencies, including and in addition to World Vision, have found them very useful. However, good tools do not necessarily guarantee good outcomes, especially in turbulent and sensitive contexts. The process of using analytical tools is as important as the tools themselves.

The MSTC process is a detailed one, but there are some key ingredients that consistently produce successful outcomes: triangulation (with particular focus on participant selection); leadership engagement; excellence in facilitation; trust, respect and confidentiality; post-MSTC context monitoring; and adaptation to adverse circumstances.

6.1 Triangulation (Including Participant Selection)

MSTC practitioners note that triangulation of qualitative data and analytical perspectives is perhaps the most important ingredient influencing the quality of MSTC results. Local knowledge is the strength of MSTC, but local people have biases just as international observers do. Added to this, neutral and objective information is in especially short supply in situations of extreme turbulence. Triangulation safeguards the quality of the analysis.

Triangulation is used by social-science researchers to ensure that data is gathered from a variety of sources and methodologies. The term '*triangulation*' refers to the navigational practice of identifying one's geographic position in relation to the known coordinates of several other distinct locations. In conflict analysis, MSTC workshops 'triangulate' information by diversifying input from people and sources that are as different as possible. This helps to enable cross-comparison, balance and objectivity (Schirch 2013 p.41–2) – triangulation – of data. When one is considering apparently contradictory points of view, triangulating data sources creates a more accurate picture of reality 'on the ground'.

In MSTC, participant selection is the primary source of triangulation. This is supported through the selective use of secondary data.

Participant Selection

Participants are both the primary source of data and the primary analysts of that data in MSTC analysis. Thus, beginning several months before the actual workshop, MSTC conveners carefully select approximately 25 workshop participants, considering both their individual characteristics and the composition of the collective participant group.

In terms of individual characteristics, each participant should have a deeply rooted knowledge of the context being analysed. Most will originate from that context. External viewpoints are also valuable, particularly for identifying alternative perspectives and for deepening analysis of the motivations and internal dynamics of external actor-groups. Even so, expatriate participants should be limited in number, and they should have a long-term, experience-based knowledge of the context. Each MSTC participant commits to active participation throughout the entire MSTC workshop, because each tool builds conceptually upon the previous one. As a practical matter, all MSTC participants must be able to understand, read and to some extent speak the language in which the workshop is being conducted.⁵³

In terms of group composition, MSTC conveners aim to maximise diversity of perspective and experience. All key viewpoints are necessary for an objective and balanced analysis. There are numerous factors to consider, with the unique characteristics of the turbulent context determining the priorities. For example, if ethnic division is prominent, then it is vital that people from all major ethnic groups be involved in the analysis.

Conveners also consider how group composition will affect the security and comfort level of all participants. Whilst the participants should represent

⁵³ MSTCs are conducted in English, Spanish, French and Bahasa Indonesia. Arabic is under development. Local languages may be used in small-group work, and occasional hard-to-express plenary comments can also be translated. However, the bulk of plenary work needs to be conducted in the primary workshop language. These limitations are significant, because they may hamper the expression of certain key viewpoints. However, because MSTC communication processes are very complex, efforts to pilot fully multi-lingual MSTC formats have not been successful.

all key perspectives, they should also be people who are willing to converse respectfully with others. It is often advisable to avoid inviting armed combatants, and instead to invite private individuals who are sympathetic to the views that those combatants represent (Conciliation Resources and Saferworld 2012). Government representation is highly desirable, but it needs to be weighed carefully in certain settings where the government is a belligerent or is perceived as a threat to civil society.

All of these decisions about selecting participants must be based on an existing understanding of the key fault lines and conflict dynamics, which implies that either the convening agency or its local partners must have an established presence in the context. The lead facilitator also needs to guide and support this process, developing a strong rapport with the convener. For an exploration of what to do when it is difficult to meet these guidelines, see Section 6.6.

Areas in Which Participant Diversity Should Be Maximised

- **Crossing fault-lines** (Whatever the key lines of sociopolitical conflict in a particular context, perspectives from all sides must be included.)
- **Identity** (may be based on ethnicity, religion, class, and so forth, depending on the context)
- **Gender** (participants should be approximately 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men, or as close to that as possible in the context)
- **Geography** (including people from outside the capital city and from all key geographic regions within the context)
- **Type of organisation** (moving beyond aid agencies to encompass other types of civil society organisations, including youth networks; complementing MSTC's civil society emphasis by inviting guests from other sectors such as government, business, academia and think tanks)⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Youth networks and the business sector are recent but important additions to the list of potential MSTC participants. The Honduras MSTC of 2014 included the first known participants under age 18. World Vision, as a child-focused organisation, sees much potential in youth perspectives on MSTC, assuming appropriate protections are in place.

- **Organisational level** (including both senior decision makers who can implement MSTC recommendations and grassroots workers profoundly rooted in local contexts)
 - **Role and expertise** (For example, within a multi-mandate NGO, this may include development, emergency response, advocacy, peacebuilding, security and communications.)
-

Participant-group composition should vary depending on the type of workshop being held. The majority of participants in single-agency workshops are likely to be staff from the convening agency, as its purpose will be to inform the convening agency's own strategic and operational planning. However, it is strongly recommended that 25 per cent of an agency's MSTC participants come from external partners to help ensure diversity of perspective. When conducting multi-agency workshops, the composition is reversed: most of the participants are drawn from a mix of collaborating agencies, with no more than 25 per cent representing the convener.

Use of External Data

MSTC also encourages 'secondary' triangulation of data through the selective use of external information. A desk research report, based on the work of prominent external analysts, is a useful 'read-ahead briefing' for the facilitation team.⁵⁵ This equips the facilitators to ask insightful questions during the workshop and to identify key moments when it might be important to encourage the group towards deeper thinking.

After the workshop, MSTC findings can also be crosschecked against external sources. In addition to the read-ahead briefing, this may include written analyses by external conflict specialists, reports of conflict analyses conducted by other agencies using alternate frameworks, or a validation interview with an area-studies specialist. Such information can be included

⁵⁵ Preparation of read-ahead briefings is a research analyst's role. Graduate students have authored many read-aheads as part of their practical training. Examples of key external sources include the International Crisis Group, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Maplecroft Global Risk Analytics, and regional and national think tanks. Read-aheads include context background plus insights specific to each MSTC tool.

in the MSTC final report,⁵⁶ distinct from and alongside the voice of the participants, as a useful source of comparison.

6.2 Leadership Engagement

If triangulation is the most important ingredient of a successful MSTC, leadership is a close second place. Without a strong contribution from the convening agency's senior leadership, workshop planning would be difficult, and integration of MSTC findings into strategy and priorities would be nearly impossible. Leadership is key to establishing MSTC as a priority, including appropriate timing, hands-on engagement and active support for implementation.⁵⁷ For an example of successful leadership engagement, see Case Study 4 below.

MSTC facilitators advise on workshop timing, but the convening agency's senior leadership must make the final decision. To maximise the uptake of MSTC findings, the workshop should coincide with organisational planning periods. Strategic planning periods are the ideal time to conduct a workshop, because the MSTC-identified strategic needs can shape organisational strategy at the highest level. If the next strategic planning period is too far away, then operational planning periods are a good alternative for quickly putting MSTC recommendations into action.

Senior leadership's hands-on engagement is essential in encouraging participants to commit fully to the MSTC process and its outcomes. Participants need to hear from leadership how the organisation will use the MSTC outputs, and who is accountable for ensuring that this takes place. They also need to see one or more senior leadership representatives present at the workshop, either throughout the entire analysis, or at least during the workshop opening and closing. Otherwise, despite the participants' typically high levels of interest in MSTC, the demands of workload and life may distract their focus.

⁵⁶ In principle, it is possible at this stage to carry out additional validation exercises with other local actors. If the MSTC participant group is as diverse as it should be, this greatly decreases the need for secondary validation. However, in situations where extra rigour is required, secondary validation could be a useful step.

⁵⁷ World Vision assesses these factors through a pre-MSTC strategic readiness assessment. For more on organisational readiness, see Schirch (2013 p.59–66) and Lange (2004).

Finally, senior leadership is absolutely central to the tenth step of the MSTC analysis cycle: Integration with Strategy and Priorities. Leadership must set in motion the process of reviewing, deciding upon and implementing the MSTC recommendations. In multi-agency MSTCs the convening leaders also need to consider how best to support the collaborative multi-agency action steps that may be recommended as a result of the MSTC.

Leadership must also establish a monitoring mechanism to ensure accountability with respect to implementation of changes following an MSTC analysis. Long-term changes in strategy and/or organisational culture may require careful ‘hand over’ from one generation of leadership to the next. For more on the importance of this challenge, see Section 8.2 on implementation of findings and recommendations.

Case Study 4. Leadership Matters: Macro-Analysis in a Challenging Context

*By a World Vision Country Director based in Africa
With Valarie Vat Kamatsiko, Regional Peacebuilding Advisor and
frequent MSTC Co-Facilitator*

This case study is based on World Vision’s experience in one African country in which the country office conducted a macro-analysis using MSTC methodology. The sensitivity of the context required major adaptations, including avoidance of ‘turbulent contexts’ terminology, off-site location and an extra level of commitment by organisational leaders to make these adaptations possible. Contextual sensitivities require that the country name and identifying details be omitted from this case study.

The analysis led participants to identify five key strategic needs that should be addressed in order for the country to move towards a just and durable peace. These included nation-building,⁵⁸ national peacebuilding and reconciliation, inclusive economic development, land reform, and institutional capacity building for government and

⁵⁸ Participants further described nation-building as including democratisation and cultivation of a shared national identity based on the idea of harmony in diversity.

civil society. In short- to medium-term application, it was agreed that World Vision was best placed to contribute to local peacebuilding, institutional capacity building and inclusive economic development. Leadership agreed on recommendations and action steps to put these directions into practice and also to review organisational positioning and preparedness in light of scenario planning.

Adapting to Difficult Circumstances

Undertaking a macro-analysis for a country known to be highly sensitive to criticism required senior leadership to balance the need for the analysis to inform organisational effectiveness with the risk that the contents of the analysis might be seen and misinterpreted by external parties. In the end, leadership determined that it was most important to understand the context more deeply in order to better address the needs of its conflict-affected population. The country director requested that the analysis be carried out and made a commitment to participate personally in the workshop.

Due to the risks involved, leadership had to make some difficult and costly choices. For example, a smaller-than-usual participant group was convened in an off-site location. World Vision made the difficult decision that this collaborative analysis could involve only managers with long-term experience in the country. The workshop became the only one in MSTC history that did not include wider participation by local actors. Leadership understood that this would compromise the quality of the analysis, and it interpreted the outputs accordingly. As part of the post-analysis follow-up, leadership is working to develop a candid conversation with local actors on the role the organisation can play in mitigating some causes of the ongoing conflict.

In the opinion of country office leadership, the following factors enabled the macro-analysis to go well:

- The senior leadership team clearly understood the risks of the analysis but also saw the benefits and was willing to take the risks to improve programming.

- The office was willing to allocate significant financial and time resources to the analysis.
- Facilitators and participants worked flexibly in less-than-ideal circumstances.

Impact on Strategic and Operational Direction

Before the macro-analysis, leadership was essentially ‘flying blind’, bombarded with all manner of information but unable to make sense of it. Strategy and resource allocations were therefore haphazard and opportunistic.

The macro-analysis brought clear benefits:

- Organisational leaders now have a better understanding of the context and how it should inform strategy. The country office has refined its annual business plans to address macro-analysis recommendations and will also consider these recommendations during its upcoming strategy review.
- The organisation’s leadership is now able to speak from an informed position to authoritatively discuss key issues and context-appropriate strategies with decision makers and donors.
- Certain scenarios envisaged in the analysis came to pass, and the organisation was better placed to respond to the crisis caused by these scenarios.

In sum, the leadership’s determination to convene and apply a collaborative macro-conflict analysis under challenging circumstances has better positioned this country office to meet the needs of conflict-affected people, whilst planning and implementing programmes that address some of the conflict’s root causes.

6.3 Excellence in Facilitation

MSTC requires highly skilled facilitation. The macro-analysis and group dynamics are highly complex, and the contexts are sensitive. Local tensions can be aggravated through poorly managed disagreements during or after a

participatory workshop. For this reason teams are carefully composed, and the certification process for lead facilitators is selective and demanding.

What Could Go Wrong?

Here are some real-life examples:

- A subgroup of MSTC participants could try to manipulate the analytical process or findings to advance its controversial political agenda.
- Media could arrive unexpectedly, hoping to cover the workshop, not realising that unwanted publicity could create a security risk for MSTC participants.
- A participant could take up arms after the workshop, prompting facilitators to wonder if MSTC had unintentionally strengthened the person's capacity as a combatant.

Fortunately, such situations are very few and infrequent. However, they have the potential to do harm in a sensitive context. Thus, MSTC facilitation standards are particularly high.

The facilitation team includes one certified lead facilitator and two to four co-facilitators. The ideal team includes both outsiders and insiders to the context, because each brings distinct and important perspectives on the context. (For more on this point, see Schirch 2013 p.15–22). In the first decade of MSTC experience, the lead facilitator was almost always an outsider, but this is changing as the number of certified leaders around the world increases, particularly in developing countries.

Facilitators' identities influence participant contributions, so it is important that the facilitation team include a context-sensitive balance in areas such as nationality, ethnicity, religion and gender. Each team member should be aware of how these aspects of their own identity may affect their facilitation role in a given context (Finlay 2001). The team should also feature a mix of skill strengths and experience levels (allowing new facilitators to gain experience). Facilitators must work together as a cohesive unit, achieving a high level of teamwork.

The lead facilitator is the backbone of the team, so the lead facilitator certification process is a challenging one. An initial recruitment criterion is background in facilitation and conflict analysis. Prospective facilitators participate in an MSTC facilitator-training event and in on-the-job mentoring during actual workshops. Certification as a lead facilitator requires completion of a series of workshops at a certain level of success. Experienced MSTC co-facilitators are also in high demand; they are trained through the same process, even if they do not pursue lead certification.

MSTC facilitator training emphasises the importance of a participatory facilitation approach. In this approach the facilitator is not a content-focused, subject-matter expert. Rather, he or she creates dynamic processes that draw forth the energy and knowledge of the participants in an atmosphere of inclusion and empowerment. The facilitator aims to master the art of managing disagreements and different conceptions of ‘truth’, capturing all competing viewpoints whilst also keeping the workshop on track. For a deeper look at the challenges of participatory facilitation, see Case Study 7.

MSTC facilitators are, of course, imperfect human beings – yet they are required to do challenging work with a high level of effectiveness. The global core group of MSTC facilitators functions as a source of mutual learning and support. Even so, the demands of the training process can at times mean slow growth within the pool of certified lead facilitators.⁵⁹ The delicate nature of turbulent contexts requires the highest possible level of preparation and sensitivity, as described in Section 6.4.

6.4 Trust, Respect and Confidentiality

An MSTC workshop is, in effect, an invitation for people of vastly differing opinions to spend four days discussing sensitive sociopolitical issues in a highly contested context. No wonder trust is required!

It is imperative that MSTC participants have confidence that they will be treated with respect and that their reputations and physical safety

⁵⁹ At the time of writing, there are eight certified MSTC lead facilitators around the world, including both NGO staff and independent consultants. A 50 per cent increase is anticipated by 2016. Scaled-up facilitator training is a key step towards meeting the growing MSTC demand in the inter-agency community.

will be safeguarded. Similarly, the convening and participating agencies – particularly operational agencies with exposed presence in risky places – must be confident that risks will be minimised. The stronger the trust amongst participants, and the more sensitive the management of workshop documentation, the better the results.

Workshop Atmosphere

All participants, particularly those who represent marginalised groups or hold minority opinions, need to be encouraged to share freely their knowledge and experiences. This requires agreed ground rules on mutual respect. Everyone's voice matters; all will listen respectfully, whether or not they agree. Diverse views are welcome, and consensus will not be forced. MSTC facilitators work hard to create this 'safe space'; if it is violated, it needs to be immediately re-established. For examples, see Case Study 7.

To further develop the atmosphere of open communication, facilitators can incorporate personal reflection sessions in which participants consider how the turbulence of the context has affected them as individuals. Sharing personal stories is a powerful way to inform analysis and help the group bond, particularly when participants agree to hold stories confidential. Such storytelling is optional, in recognition of the fact that many participants may have experienced varying degrees of trauma.

To ensure credible documentation of outputs, a designated full-time documenter captures all workshop data in real time. Participants are requested not to document anything using their own electronic devices; instead, the documenter creates a single set of notes to be transparently shared by all. It is important that the documenter be a person participants consider trustworthy and that he or she circulate the raw notes daily for participant verification (and, if necessary, participant correction).

MSTC participants are asked to commit to active participation throughout the entire workshop. This builds camaraderie amongst participants and prevents the disruption of complex communication within the group. Similarly, World Vision does not permit observers in MSTC settings, because participants may question the motives of those observers and/or find their collective energy dissipated by being watched.

Managing Sensitive Workshop Documentation

‘Please, none of the workshop reports can say “xxxx”. That statement could risk the lives of our staff on the ground.’

—MSTC participant, Somalia, 2011

The existence and distribution of data that might be perceived by some actor-groups as sensitive, such as an MSTC report, may raise questions of personal and organisational security. Therefore, the following guidelines are in place:

1. MSTC outputs are a collective product of the participant group.

Conclusions must be reported accurately, without any named attributions that might put individuals at risk. The participant group must give informed consent for all proposed uses of the data. In delicate contexts this includes the participants deciding together whether or not their names will appear in the reports. The final report may include secondary data,⁶⁰ where appropriate for triangulation purposes, with sources clearly cited and without overriding the voices of the participants.

2. The local convening agency is the decision-making authority on report approval and distribution. MSTC participants should be involved in report validation to the highest degree possible. However, the MSTC group disperses after the workshop, so it is important that the local convening agency provide institutional stewardship of decision rights over the long term. This prevents the MSTC data from being used in damaging ways by well-meaning but uninformed outsiders.

This implies that:

- The convening agency distributes the MSTC outputs to participants. The commitment to share outputs with participants is non-negotiable, but it can be done in a variety of security-sensitive ways when the situation requires.
- The convening agency’s leadership confirms approval of the MSTC final report.

⁶⁰ For more specifics on external data, see Section 6.1.

- The convening agency's leadership distributes the MSTC final report to appropriate stakeholders and audiences,⁶¹ and it serves as the clearinghouse for future access requests. Thoughtful protocols are required, and all recipients should be clear on the policy for authorising use of such information.

In distributing MSTC final reports, there is obviously a tension between the desirability of sharing information and the need for discretion in handling sensitive data. It is best to go as far as possible towards maximising information sharing without creating unacceptable security risks.

Thus, there are two advisable approaches to distribution:

- to encourage action based on MSTC recommendations amongst participating agencies, the final report should be specific, precise and distributed mainly to the MSTC participants
- to encourage coordination, transparency and accountability, the final report can be 'scrubbed' of statements perceived as overly provocative and of identifying information that could endanger the security of participants, and compiled for wide distribution through broader platforms.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive; with careful coordination it is possible to create both an internal version and an external version of the final report within a single MSTC process.

Beyond these guidelines, the facilitation team must remain vigilant to the unique security requirements of the context in which it is working. In some settings an oversight such as a data chart abandoned in a conference room, or a document sent through unsecured email, could create unnecessary risk. Local conveners and participants are the best people to advise on safe protocols, and they need to be able trust that visiting facilitation team members will follow protocol agreements.

⁶¹ The MSTC final report is the only document that should be broadly distributed. The workshop notes are distributed only to people involved with the workshop, because they are raw outputs without any explanatory comments.

6.5 Post-MSTC Context Monitoring

Turbulent contexts change quickly. Whilst the MSTC-identified strategic needs are valid over the medium to long term, the trigger events and scenarios are short term in nature. Trigger events are typically pitched at a maximum of three years. Even within those three years their relative likelihood and impact compared to other triggers can change, and so can their implications in terms of the resulting scenarios. (See Case Study 3 regarding Pakistan.) Thus, aid actors who want to influence or respond rapidly to emergent events must monitor trigger events on an ongoing basis.

As a key part of MSTC follow-up, World Vision recommends the formation of a context-monitoring team within the convening agency. Structures vary, but the consistent need is for one or more MSTC-trained people to collect and analyse data. By so doing, a context-monitoring team ensures recognition of the imminent occurrence of one or more of the MSTC-identified trigger events or other important contextual shifts. As a result, the monitoring team can bring issues to the leadership team, either simply for its awareness or when action is necessary. It is advisable to update the underlying Trigger Events and Scenarios analysis at regular intervals in order to consider new trigger events and to review the prioritisation of which triggers to closely monitor. (For an example of the work of a context-monitoring team, see Case Study 2 regarding Sri Lanka; for updating scenarios see Case Study 5 on Lebanon.)

This type of anticipatory context monitoring greatly extends the useful life of an MSTC analysis. In extremely turbulent settings some World Vision country offices have expressed a need to redo their entire MSTC analysis after one year. Whilst that makes for excellent analytical quality, it puts a strain on resources and staff time. With strong MSTC-based context monitoring in place, the interval for a full MSTC analysis can be extended to at least three years in extremely turbulent contexts and up to ten years in medium-turbulence settings.⁶² These intervals are estimates, and they can be shortened by pivotal contextual events (such as devastating natural disasters) or large-scale changes in organisational leadership.

⁶² World Vision estimates relative levels of turbulence using an in-house fragility index, which is a weighted mix of the Failed States Index, the Global Peace Index, Maplecroft indices and World Vision's own conflict analysis data.

In many cases the context-monitoring team also contributes to monitoring the implementation of MSTC recommendations and deploys local conflict-sensitivity analyses to complement the MSTC. When a distinct regional hotspot within the MSTC scope requires additional analysis, experienced MSTC facilitators can convene a mini-MSTC workshop.⁶³ The mini-MSTC is a shortened workshop (two days) because it builds on the previous national MSTC analysis. For example, a 2012 Kenya MSTC was followed by a mini-MSTC in the Isiolo County area that helped local actors foresee the dynamics of potential election violence and make plans to mitigate it. (See Case Study 1, Kenya.)

Case Study 5. MSTC Updates Equip World Vision Lebanon to Face Regional Volatility

By Olivia Pennikian, World Vision Lebanon Advocacy Manager and frequent MSTC Co-Facilitator

In January 2012, World Vision Lebanon conducted a national-level conflict analysis using MSTC. This was a timely and useful exercise, taking place as regional tensions were rising. In addition to informing the internal development of World Vision's sector strategies and civil-military policies, the MSTC findings helped World Vision adapt to the escalating emergency in neighbouring Syria. The analysis was conducted at a time when the impacts of the Syrian crisis on tensions within Lebanon were relatively minor (compared to how they would later unfold during 2012 and 2013). However, the scenarios identified during the workshop proved to be very useful in focusing attention on how a Syrian civil war could undermine the hard-won peace of Lebanon.

As the conflict in Syria worsened, World Vision hosted a half day of reflection on the MSTC scenarios for senior representatives of eight partner international NGOs and donors in October 2012. The use of participatory approaches allowed leaders to discuss contextual challenges together. The multi-agency group identified two scenarios

⁶³ On the micro to macro scale (see Section 1.2), a mini-MSTC could be considered a small-scale macro-analysis or a large-scale meso-analysis.

that projected how the increasing Sunni-Shia conflict in Syria was likely to be reflected in sectarian tensions within Lebanon. World Vision then checked its operational plans to ensure that its interventions were actively enhancing intentional and balanced relationships with Sunni and Shia groups inside Lebanon.

In May 2013, as the Syrian crisis deepened, World Vision produced another MSTC update, using a one-day internal workshop to identify key changes in the context and to update scenarios. These findings detailed the growing dominance of Syrian actors (including refugees) in the Lebanese context, the drivers of increased violence in northern Lebanon and the possibilities of further cross-border escalations of violence. The analysis highlighted the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon and the emerging tensions between refugees and their host communities.

The findings of the May 2013 update were used for both operational and strategic planning in World Vision. Operationally, the scenarios informed contingency planning for relief operations, including community needs resulting from further escalation of conflict. World Vision also redesigned its national strategy in July 2013, drawing upon the MSTC findings. Strategic objectives were updated to include an intentional focus on programmes for host communities aimed at mitigating the increasing tensions between refugees and host communities and contributing to social cohesion. Refugee and host concerns were also taken up in a major advocacy report (Midgley and Eldebo 2013).

To keep up with rapid change through 2014, World Vision again used MSTC scenario updates to revise its approach to its refugee response. The previous national strategy had been based on the assumption that refugees would begin gradually returning to Syria between 2014 and 2016. Instead, with refugee numbers likely to continue increasing beyond 2014, World Vision took further steps to mitigate tensions by establishing integration between the development programmes that serve host communities and the emergency response programmes that serve refugees. Thus, active context monitoring has helped World

Vision to shift from one scenario to another as changes in the Syrian crisis unfold.

Finally, with sectarian tension increasing in the Middle East, the organisation has expanded peacebuilding and interfaith-relations work as recommended in the 2012 MSTC. In 2014, World Vision partnered with the Bible Society to develop and launch an Arabic-language *Peace and Justice Bible*. This Bible includes commentary from Christian leaders of various denominations, as well as prominent Muslim leaders, to highlight the messages of peace and justice throughout the Bible. As a Christian organisation, World Vision's intention is to provide Christians in the Middle East with a tool to spread messages of peace and reconciliation based on their religious convictions.

World Vision Lebanon plans to conduct its next full MSTC workshop in 2015 and to actively share the analysis and learning with other agencies.

6.6 Adaptation to Adverse Circumstances

If each of the above principles is necessary for a successful MSTC, what does one do when they cannot be attained? In real-world turbulent settings, flexibility is essential. A less-than-perfect conflict analysis is often better than one that never happens at all. However, compromising on certain principles – particularly those relating to security and ethics – can have serious consequences for the convening agency, for the integrity of the results or even for relations amongst participants. Discerning which adaptations are appropriate and which are not is the key. In order to make these decisions, lead facilitators need to have a deep grasp of the reasons behind the principles as well as a network of practitioners within which to consult.

For example, several times in World Vision's experience there have been situations in which the convening office urgently needed an MSTC analysis to help understand a current crisis, but it was considered unacceptably risky for local actors to gather openly for a participatory conflict analysis.

In Afghanistan (2007), one-on-one conversations were acceptable, so a consultant was deployed to conduct a diverse range of key informant interviews and analyse the resulting data using MSTC's analytical framework. Triangulation of perspectives was maintained, but the level of participation was significantly reduced, making this MSTC more like a traditional, externally derived macro-analysis.

In other contexts even one-on-one conversations may be unacceptably risky. At least two such MSTCs have been held in neighbouring countries, including a Zimbabwe MSTC held in South Africa in 2008. Case Study 4 documents an even more delicate off-site MSTC and the pivotal role of organisational leadership in making it effective. Finally, even those adaptive possibilities have not yet yielded a safe way for World Vision to conduct an MSTC for Syria, so interim plans have included piloting World Vision's new 'Good Enough' Conflict Analysis for Rapid Response (GECCAR).



*Multi-agency MSTC participants review their analysis, Kenya, 2012.
Photo by Michelle Garred.*

6.7 Conclusion

Each MSTC workshop is unique. However, there are certain key ingredients that consistently influence the level of success. The central importance of triangulation and participant selection, leadership engagement and excellence in facilitation is an unwavering truth.

Trust, respect and confidentiality are always essential for ensuring security and ethics. Likewise, post-MSTC context monitoring is a consistent key to keeping the analysis updated and greatly extending its useful life. Even when adapting to the adverse circumstances that are so common in turbulent settings, MSTC conveners and facilitators do everything possible to preserve these key ingredients of success.

Part III: Looking Forward

Chapter 7: The Benefits of MSTC.....	120
7.1 Putting Context First.....	121
7.2 Eliciting Local Knowledge through Participatory Process.....	125
7.3 Analysing for Action	130
7.4 Conclusion	132
Chapter 8: The Challenges of MSTC	133
8.1 Time- and Resource-Intensive Approach	133
8.2 Implementation of Findings and Recommendations.....	135
8.3 Upholding True Participation	138
8.4 Underemphasised Themes	144
8.5 Competing Objectives.....	146
8.6 Conflict Analysis, Not Peace Analysis	147
8.7 Conclusion.....	148
Chapter 9: Participatory Macro-Analysis as a Promising Multi-Agency Practice.....	149
9.1 Multi-Agency MSTC: What's the Difference?	150
9.2 Amplifying MSTC's Benefits	153
9.3 Overcoming MSTC's Challenges: Strength in Numbers.....	155
9.4 Pathways to Policy Influence	157
9.5 Conclusion.....	163

Chapter 7: The Benefits of MSTC

Part I of this book described the conceptual foundations of the framework for making sense of turbulent contexts. Part II explained how MSTC tools are used in practice by aid NGOs and other civil society organisations that work on emergency response, development, advocacy and/or peacebuilding.

The learning and success of the MSTC workshops conducted across more than a decade have paved the way for a future that World Vision hopes will be defined by sharing MSTC broadly within the inter-agency community. Towards that end, Part III of this book considers MSTC's present situation and ways MSTC that might be used in the future. It synthesises the benefits of MSTC (Chapter 7), its challenges (Chapter 8) and then proposes a vision for MSTC's future (Chapter 9).

Readers will notice in this chapter, as it summarises MSTC's benefits,⁶⁴ that the benefits echo the general advantages of participatory macro-analysis described in Chapter 1. However, this chapter focuses specifically on the benefits of MSTC as the only available replicable framework designed specifically for a participatory approach to macro-analysis. This chapter also reveals new information on the meta-level relevance of MSTC findings combined and tracked across time.

The benefits of MSTC are far-reaching, with the potential to change how participating agencies position themselves within turbulent contexts and how their strategy unfolds in response to those contexts. These benefits are best articulated by grouping them under three broad headings: putting context first, eliciting local knowledge through a participatory process and analysing for action.

⁶⁴ Chapters 7 and 8 draw on the previous MSTC writings of Midgley and Garred (2013).

7.1 Putting Context First

MSTC challenges and equips its users to put context first. In other words, it pushes users to develop strategy in response to context, rather than trying to make the context fit their agency's strategies. Despite aid agencies' increasing acknowledgement of the importance of context, the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to planning is still common (Anderson *et al.* 2012, Autesserre 2014). There is a tendency to attempt to *work around* turbulence, as though it is merely a logistical problem, rather than consciously consider how to engage the context on its own terms. In contrast, MSTC acknowledges that busy aid workers often prioritise action over reflection, and it invites them to pause to begin to understand the context and then to respond accordingly. Crises born out of turbulence rarely come as a surprise, so it is usually feasible to develop a sound understanding of context as a form of preparedness.

In putting context first, MSTC encourages its users to step back from their day-to-day focus on particular elements of the context and instead to view the broader context as an integrated whole. Conceptualising conflict as multi-causal is one important aspect of this holistic view, because it reflects the complexity of turbulence as it actually exists 'on the ground'. MSTC rejects the search for a single cause and aligns with the theorists' growing emphasis on the dynamics of conflict as a multi-causal mix of greed, grievance, governance and other factors as they interact in a particular unique context (Stewart 2008, Le Billon 2012). MSTC's step-by-step process discloses multiple causes of turbulence and elicits the participants' experience-based observations on how the drivers of conflict shape and reinforce one another.

MSTC's approach to context as an integrated whole also encourages the micro-macro linkages that are essential for effective peacebuilding and development. NGOs and other civil society organisations still tend to focus their analytical efforts at the micro level, so MSTC's macro-level lens provides a 'big picture' view that is often lacking. This enables agencies to consider how their local-level work is influenced by – and can even contribute towards influencing – events at the national level. When MSTC is paired with a micro-analysis framework such as Do No Harm, users develop an analytical understanding of how micro- and macro-level

conflict drivers influence each other, and they can shape their programme plans accordingly.⁶⁵ Further, in an ideal MSTC group containing both field workers and senior decision makers, the relational connections made during the workshop can support important vertical linkages of ‘social capital’ by linking grassroots actors and national-level actors who might not otherwise encounter each other.⁶⁶

Finally, viewing context as an integrated whole leads naturally to integrative outcomes. MSTC is designed to encourage sectoral integration in planning. MSTC findings apply equally to emergency response and community development, thus pushing these oft-separated disciplines to work together as they identify operational and advocacy implications and action plans. Isolated projects in sectors such as health or education can be linked by their efforts to contribute to the needs of the broader context. MSTC makes it easier to identify priorities for advocacy, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, facilitating their integration into all streams of programming.

For an example of how MSTC helped one agency to put context first, see Case Study 6 regarding Oxfam’s work in Asia.

Case Study 6. Oxfam Asia’s Experience of MSTC

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Background

Oxfam has recognised that conflict-affected contexts pose additional challenges for development and relief efforts. This recognition came as Oxfam was restructuring so as to have more impact in the changing world.

⁶⁵ For examples of how MSTC analysis can dovetail with Do No Harm or mini-MSTC analyses to strengthen planning, see Case Studies 1 and 2 regarding Kenya and Sri Lanka respectively.

⁶⁶ For more discussion on how micro-macro linkages contribute to peacebuilding, see Schirch (2013 p.180–9).

In Asia, Oxfam Great Britain approached these challenges by focusing on strengthening programme quality, accountability and learning. In Pakistan, this translated into three main pillars of work:

1. Ensuring that Oxfam's overall country strategy (Joint Country Analysis and Strategy [JCAS]) was informed by an understanding of not just the symptoms of conflict, such as population displacement, but its structural causes.
2. Developing more systematic, conflict-sensitive programming. Most Oxfam staff in Pakistan had limited training in, or understanding of, the Do No Harm assessment framework, so a programme of training was established to help staff incorporate Do No Harm methodology into their on-going work.
3. Investing in monitoring and evaluation to ensure country programmes recognise their impacts on drivers of conflict and better understand how the external context is changing around them.

Oxfam chose to test the use of MSTC within this framework for several reasons. First, it wanted to use an existing methodology rather than expend resources developing an 'Oxfam framework'. Second, it hoped MSTC's participatory focus would help produce a 'mind-set shift' amongst its staff, as well as a technical analysis. Third, many analytical frameworks fail to link analysis to strategy, but Oxfam noted that MSTC contains specific tools for translating its analyses into strategic directions. Finally, Oxfam's work on conflict in Asia emphasised investing in the capacities of national staff rather than using consultants or internationally based staff. MSTC's training component provided the possibility of building capacities of Oxfam's national staff through development of a cadre of skilled facilitators to support similar analyses across the region.

Oxfam's Experience Using MSTC

Oxfam held its first MSTC workshop in Islamabad in early 2014. The workshop planning was quite time intensive, though Oxfam saw the benefits of its substantial investment in time during the workshop itself. Staff and partners from the two main Oxfam affiliates in Pakistan (Oxfam Great Britain and Oxfam Novib) were invited in

order to develop a shared vision to support ongoing organisational reform at the country level.

After the workshop Oxfam reflected that it would have been better to integrate the MSTC analysis into its existing JCAS process. A JCAS had only recently been signed off when the MSTC workshop was held, although MSTC did provide analysis not captured by the existing JCAS. This limitation was recognised prior to the workshop, but Oxfam decided that even having missed this window of opportunity, MSTC was still a useful way of galvanising the country team around work in turbulent areas. In the future Oxfam will consider using MSTC as a component of the JCAS review process.

Oxfam felt that MSTC's future scenario planning and analysis to strategy components, whilst useful, would benefit from further investment in design. World Vision responded positively to this, and new ideas for these sessions will be tested at an MSTC workshop to be held in Kabul in November 2014.

Only after the first MSTC workshop did Oxfam come to realise how extremely careful MSTC conveners must be in participant selection – to include the proper balance of ethnic, sectarian, gender, thematic, geographic, political and staff perspectives. All these were discussed in depth prior to the workshop, but only with experience did the group fully appreciate its importance.

How Has MSTC Helped Oxfam's Work in Pakistan?

The MSTC analysis helped frame new directions for some of Oxfam's work as well as for several project proposals. For instance, MSTC mapping suggested that civil society needed to expand the range of actors it influences; this insight directly informed Oxfam's district-level governance work.

The process of doing the analysis also had useful impacts. MSTC energised participants and required them to engage actively throughout the workshop. This seemed to help participants begin to think through the connection between their work on issues such as

livelihoods or education and their analysis of the structural causes of conflict.

MSTC helped the teams, affiliates and partners create a common expression of the drivers of conflict in Pakistan. It also assisted in the creation of a shared vision as to why understanding conflict is important and what it would mean to incorporate a ‘conflict lens’ to Oxfam’s wider work in Pakistan. Senior-level buy-in was important for this. The process benefitted from having one of Oxfam’s associate country directors as part of the facilitation team – a connection that also helped ensure that MSTC analysis and recommendations were given weight within the senior country leadership team.

A final, and unanticipated, benefit of using an existing methodology that has been used by others is that it has given several agencies in Pakistan a common language for discussing conflict and the challenges each faces in addressing its work in turbulent areas. A loose grouping of these agencies has been established in order to collaborate on initiatives such as building capacity for conflict-sensitive practice and sharing context analyses.

What Next?

Although Oxfam’s experience is so far limited to one workshop, it has found MSTC a valuable methodology for beginning to incorporate a conflict lens into its work in Pakistan. It plans to conduct a second MSTC analysis in Afghanistan in November 2014. Later, Oxfam will review its experience with MSTC as part of consolidating all learning around conflict from 2013 to 2015. Based on this exercise, Oxfam will decide whether to adopt the MSTC methodology more widely in Asia and invest in building a cadre of skilled facilitators or to incorporate elements of MSTC into existing Oxfam analytical frameworks.

7.2 Eliciting Local Knowledge through Participatory Process

Until MSTC was developed, local insight was the missing element in most conflict analysis at the national or regional level (as discussed in

Chapter 1). MSTC demonstrated over more than a decade of use that it is a valuable and replicable methodology for making locally driven macro-analysis a reality. The framework's participatory process has three key beneficial outcomes: it empowers civil society, improves analysis quality by diversifying input and yields findings that both align with and challenge the broader thinking in the conflict analysis field.

Empowering Civil Society

MSTC's use of local knowledge goes beyond a brief consultation to offer a highly developed participatory process through which participants develop their own analysis and propose their own action plans. This approach can equip participants and participating organisations to understand, interpret and act within their own context in beneficial ways. In this way, civil society can strengthen its own resilience and expand its potential role as an agent of peace in the midst of turbulence. Further, where multi-agency MSTCs bring organisations together, there is potential for joint action and collective impact.⁶⁷ Using the strategic needs of the context as a guide, each agency can determine how its contribution will complement that of others, and multiple agencies can plan together.

As an example of joint planning, the Honduras MSTC of 2014 included 20 agencies and networks, which together identified lack of shared vision as a primary obstacle to civil society effectiveness. Participants established an ambitious plan to use the jointly identified strategic needs⁶⁸ as a 'common platform to advocate for the national welfare', and then they pinpointed action steps to begin the process through the unification of their existing networks. This experience is typical of multi-agency MSTC workshops whilst, without MSTC, local civil society actors routinely comment that the efficacy of their activities would increase if they were better connected with other groups. These possibilities are explored in further detail in Chapter 9.

⁶⁷ For more on the emergent potential of multi-agency MSTCs, see Chapter 9.

⁶⁸ The strategic needs of Honduras as identified by participants were inclusive social protection, transparent and fair rule of law, high-quality holistic education, strengthened families through a focus on rights, and development of a culture of peace.

Strengthening Analytical Quality by Diversifying Input

MSTC's locally driven participatory approach diversifies data sources to strengthen analysis. Less participatory analytical approaches often lack the space for multiple points of view. In contrast, MSTC is designed to capture the wide range of local perspectives and experiences that are typical of conflict-affected contexts, which can subsequently be triangulated against the views of external specialists. The intentional recruitment of a highly diverse group of participants to work together can be positively countercultural in settings where conflict is driven by exclusion and marginalisation.⁶⁹ This diversification of input contributes to compelling findings, as elaborated in the next section.

‘Never in my life had I imagined the perspectives of some of my own countrymen.’

—MSTC Participant, Honduras, 2014

Comparable Findings, Distinctive Perspectives

Between 2003 and 2012, World Vision conducted meta-analyses of written reports from 42 MSTC workshops in 22 countries.⁷⁰ These meta-analyses identified common trends and patterns in MSTC strategic needs (key factors that must be addressed for a country or context to reach its preferred future).⁷¹

⁶⁹ Participant diversity is a great strength, but it also makes facilitation more challenging, as discussed in Section 8.3 of this document.

⁷⁰ World Vision conducted a meta-analysis in 2009 (Freeman) and updated this analysis in 2012 (Bell). At the time of the 2012 analysis, 46 MSTC workshops had been completed, but only 42 reports were available for review. The findings are not statistically precise, but they are broadly indicative of significant trends.

⁷¹ MSTC participants are quick to see how these strategic needs can be addressed through advocacy. It sometimes takes more thought to see how these needs can also be addressed through operational programmes. For example, a well-designed economic development programme can contribute to equity, and a programme carefully structured around the inclusive empowerment of community-based organisations can contribute towards civic participation, peacebuilding and/or good governance.

Common themes included:

- **Good governance** (appearing in over three-quarters of the workshop reports reviewed).⁷² Reports commonly mentioned components of good governance that included addressing corruption; ensuring functional rule-of-law institutions; respect for human rights; provision of transparency and accountability, capacity building and coordination of government units; and reduction of the politics of nepotism and patronage.
- **Increased and more effective civic participation** (in approximately two-thirds of reports). Participants identified the need for civil society to increase its voice and effectiveness in order to better coordinate with the government and hold the government to account. Civic participation is clearly interrelated with good governance yet consistently identified as a strategic need in its own right.
- **Equitable distribution of resources** (in approximately two-thirds of reports). Many pointed to the perception that resources have generated profits for one segment of the population, often powerful elites, whilst others have been excluded from the benefits. Other destabilising factors included overdependence on particular resources, such as oil revenues in South Sudan (2012).
- **Peacebuilding and reconciliation** (in approximately two-thirds of reports). Participants highlighted reconciliation amongst communities as key to sustainable peace. They frequently noted the need for some form of national-level reconciliation dialogue, including transitional justice mechanisms. Participants also emphasised the need for development of a common identity in several settings of civil conflict.

Alignment of findings. Despite being independently derived, MSTC strategic needs align significantly with prominent external conflict frameworks. The World Bank, OECD, Department for International Development (DFID) and USAID all feature good governance, equitable economic management and reconciliation (including access to justice) as central to their own conflict analysis and response frameworks, overlapping directly with the MSTC meta-trends (Goodhand *et al.* 2002 p.27–9, World Bank 2011, OECD-DAC 2012 p.18, USAID 2012 p.4). These frameworks also emphasise the importance of civil society (albeit to a lesser extent

⁷² A full 100 per cent of MSTC reports to date mentioned the importance of good governance, but only 75 per cent elevated good governance to the level of a strategic need.

than MSTC participants) and security (to a greater extent than MSTC participants). None of these frameworks claims to identify all of the drivers of conflict, because each context is unique. However, the commonalities do indicate that the analysis derived through MSTC's participatory process is consistent with wider thinking in the conflict analysis field.

Distinctive perspectives. If MSTC findings align too completely with external frameworks, one might wonder if local participants have been influenced by global concepts in an international case of 'groupthink'. It is very interesting to note, however, that whilst the types of strategic needs identified by MSTC participants align with external frameworks, the perspectives of MSTC participants often differ significantly. For example, participants in a Somalia MSTC (2011) identified 'peace, unity and stability' as a strategic need, which sounds very similar to what an external specialist might conclude. However, the MSTC group then went on to articulate that the way to address this need should be a 'bottom-up approach, building on local and regional consultation, and working upwards'.⁷³ This statement reflects a rich participant discussion on the extent to which foreign interventions had failed, and a consensus that the most successful effort was a Somaliland peace conference held in 1993 with no international assistance.⁷⁴ Clearly both internal and external perspectives are necessary, and they complement each other.

Further, when MSTC participants examine the underlying dynamics of a conflict, they do not locate most or all of the problematic causes as residing within the state or region being analysed, as international analysts are sometimes accused of doing (Duffield 2001). Indeed, MSTC participants talk freely about their views on the culpability of the international community, from the colonial era to the present. For example:

- **Philippines:** 'Consecutive eras of colonialism (Spanish, Japanese, American) eroded the strong family and community bonds that had existed from at least the 1400s' (*Philippines*, 2006).
- **Lebanon:** The nation 'is a client of many outside parties and has limited ability to control its own destiny. The interplay of US-Israel, Syria-Iran,

⁷³ MSTC Somalia 2011 report, 7.

⁷⁴ MSTC Somalia 2011 report, 3. For a similar view, see <http://www.somalilandpress.com/somalilandcomparing-somaliland-peace-building-and-somalia/>.

Sunni Arab states, and the EU and UN are all more powerful influences on Lebanon than the internal players' (*Lebanon*, 2007).

- **Burundi:** The international community's focus 'has grown in response to surges in violence and contracted during times of peace. Given Burundi's strong reliance on international aid, this response mechanism acts as a perverse incentive against stable long-term peace' (*Burundi*, 2008).
- **DR Congo:** External players are 'perceived as paternalistic at best and not in the interest of local communities. At worst, the community of international cooperation is perceived as seeking its own profit through powerful world players' (*DR Congo*, 2008).

This does not imply that MSTC participants cast all blame on outsiders. On the contrary, frank discussion of world powers often leads to nuanced reflection on who is responsible for solutions. For instance, three Pakistan MSTCs held between April 2013 and June 2014⁷⁵ emphasised that Pakistan's long-troubled relationship with the United States had reached an all-time low during the War on Terrorism. Participants discussed in great detail the US actions that they perceived as provocative. Nonetheless, in the final analysis all three MSTC groups held the government of Pakistan primarily responsible to mitigate such problems by establishing the independence of its foreign policy. Such comparisons indicate that MSTC helps to counter the biases often found in external analyses, without necessarily defaulting to one-sided extremes.

7.3 Analysing for Action

MSTC is not designed to be a training event or an analysis for analysis's sake. Its findings are designed to feed directly into strategic planning, generating practical recommendations for aid in situations of turbulence. Participant selection, workshop process and design, and post-workshop follow-up all work together towards this end.

Participants as Implementers

MSTC participants are primarily decision makers and practitioners; most will bear some degree of responsibility for 'operationalising' the workshop

⁷⁵ For more on this unusual concentration of MSTCs and cross-comparison of the findings, see Case Study 3 in this document.

findings. Some participants' action orientation is so strong that facilitators often have to remind the group to focus on the context analysis first, before identifying implications for their own work later in the workshop. Given this high level of local 'ownership', many participants leave the workshop with a strong sense of personal commitment to ensure implementation of MSTC recommendations when they return to their regular jobs. Whilst the authors acknowledge that local ownership alone does not guarantee application, it is a decidedly helpful factor (World Bank 2006, Freeman and Fisher 2012).

Workshop Design

The MSTC analysis cycle is designed to work step by step towards the identification of two key forward-looking outputs:

1. **strategic needs**, which indicate the changes required in order for the context to arrive at a preferred future
2. **scenarios** describing highly likely and influential future changes, catalysed by specific trigger events.

It is on this basis that MSTC participants consider the implications of the analysis for their own work. Strategic and operational recommendations are structured primarily around the main programming pillars of the convening agency or multi-agency consortium. Participants identify priority action steps, assigned to someone who is present in the workshop, to help ensure implementation.

Follow-up

The immediate post-workshop follow-up – integration with strategy and priorities – is such an integral part of the process that it has come to be considered the MSTC's tenth tool. The post-MSTC leadership briefing allows participating agencies to discuss recommendations and to begin decision-making and action. The recommended context-monitoring team serves to track emergent trigger events and their implications.⁷⁶ The optional mini-MSTC provides the opportunity for local actors in a subnational hotspot to customise action steps within their immediate

⁷⁶ For more detail on operational and advocacy implications, and integration with strategy and priorities, see Sections 5.3–5.4.

reach. The convening agency is responsible for all these post-workshop steps, which it customises where appropriate. Applications vary on implementation challenges (as described in Section 8.2). When follow-up steps are put into practice, the strategic effects can be far-reaching, as illustrated in Case Study 3 on MSTC in Sri Lanka.

7.4 Conclusion

MSTC possesses many strengths. It pushes busy aid practitioners to put context first, developing strategy in response to the uniqueness of each context, rather than resorting to ‘one size fits all’ approaches. MSTC makes local knowledge the centre of the macro-analysis process in ways that are still rare in a field of practice typically dominated by external experts. MSTC findings consistently raise themes that align with the broader thinking in the conflict analysis community, yet those themes are analysed from the distinct perspectives of local people affected by conflict. As such, MSTC provides an essential complement – not a replacement – for more traditional expert-driven forms of macro-analysis. Finally, MSTC tools and processes are designed for action, making it possible for participating agencies readily to apply the analytical findings and improve their programming.

Nonetheless, every framework has limitations, and every process has weaknesses. MSTC is no exception. Every workshop provides an opportunity for learning, so MSTC continues to evolve, guided by the feedback of participants and conveners, and the collective experience of a global core team of MSTC facilitators. It is essential to explore openly MSTC’s challenges in order to continue to improve the MSTC approach and to inform the growth of participatory macro-analysis in general. The next chapter discusses these issues.

Chapter 8: The Challenges of MSTC

This chapter explores MSTC's challenges. Specifically, it examines several key challenges that tend to remain even when the ingredients identified as being necessary for the success of MSTC analyses have been satisfied. These challenges require ongoing attention by facilitators in both single-agency and multi-agency MSTC workshop formats. Some of these challenges are sensitive, yet it is essential that they be disclosed if genuine learning and advances in conflict analysis are to take place. The challenges MSTC has confronted are important because they not only reflect areas of ongoing development in MSTC's practice, but they also reveal some tensions likely to affect any other future frameworks that are developed to advance participatory approaches to macro-conflict analysis.

Based on the experience of 58 workshops across more than a decade, the principal challenges faced by MSTC facilitators and conveners include the following: the time and resources required for this intensive process; the implementation of findings and recommendations; the skill and effort required to consistently uphold participatory ethics; the need to expand on underemphasised themes; competing workshop objectives; and MSTC's primary focus on conflict rather than peace.

8.1 Time- and Resource-Intensive Approach

Conducting participatory conflict analysis can be time and resource intensive.⁷⁷ Selecting participants, arranging logistics, facilitating workshops and consolidating data can be significantly more complicated than the traditional conflict analysis methodologies described in Section 1.3 (Freeman and Fisher 2012). In some cases participation is also more expensive, which is an important consideration for NGOs with typically stretched budgets. These logistical and financial constraints

⁷⁷ World Vision's four-day MSTC workshop currently costs US\$20,000–40,000, depending on local prices and the accommodation needs of participants. Some donor conflict analysis processes take several months and cost considerably more. However, it should be noted that costs for conflict analysis represent a tiny fraction of the value of aid in most turbulent contexts, and they guard against ineffective aid.

can make it more difficult for agencies to commit themselves to participatory approaches.

‘There is no such thing as a “quick and dirty” participatory conflict analysis.’

—Teresa Dumasy, Project Manager, People’s Peacemaking Perspectives

Emergency Response

The time requirements of participatory macro-conflict analysis make this approach difficult in the first phase of a rapid emergency response. MSTC is better suited for use in the disaster preparedness phase (Garred 2007, Zicherman *et al.* 2011). In conflict-related emergencies the turbulence paradigm encourages analyses during the pre-conflict or lull phases, when physical violence is minimal but vulnerable to escalation. If conflict analysis is done during the preparedness phase, contextual and strategic guidance can be available immediately when staff members are deployed to an emergency response.

However, once a rapid response is under way, participatory approaches to analysis may be too time-consuming for both participants and conveners. MSTC is, therefore, not recommended during the first phase of a rapid response. The specific timeframes may vary depending on the context, but if potential conveners and participants are still operating in moment-by-moment ‘survival mode’, then it is probably too soon to conduct a participatory macro-analysis. Instead, the preferred early phase alternative is a ‘good enough’ conflict analysis (Zicherman *et al.* 2011), a minimalist effort to avoid doing harm and to inform agency positioning in its emergency efforts.⁷⁸ Following that, a more in-depth conflict analysis is recommended when the emergency response begins to enter its second phase (Garred 2007, Zicherman *et al.* 2011).

⁷⁸ World Vision is experimenting with a new framework called ‘Good Enough Conflict Analysis for Rapid Response’ or GECCAR. Whilst it can include interview and focus groups, the level of participation is extremely limited in comparison to MSTC.

Facilitator Training

Because of the high standard placed on facilitation skills (see Section 6.3), the facilitator training process can be lengthy. MSTC lead-facilitator certification currently requires successful completion of several workshops, often with some lag time in between. This means that agencies keen to develop their own in-house facilitation capacity need to devote a significant amount of time to this goal and may require support from external consultants in the meantime.

8.2 Implementation of Findings and Recommendations

Nobody wants a conflict analysis to become just another report on the shelf, but, unfortunately, this can and does happen. International Alert's 2009 evaluation (2009) critiqued World Vision for shortcomings in the uptake of MSTC recommendations, as well as inconsistency of post-MSTC context monitoring. World Vision's MSTC follow-up has improved since that time, but it remains challenging to ensure consistent implementation of conflict-sensitivity findings and to collect the data necessary to track the organisation's progress.

With that said, it is widely recognised that implementation is the 'Achilles' heel' of the entire conflict analysis field. Schirch's comments on peacebuilding ring true for the all sectors of aid work:

Too often, conflict assessment does not adequately inform peacebuilding planning.... Many existing conflict assessment methods and frameworks do not include explicit advice or processes for how to link assessment with planning. Research on whether conflict assessment led to better peacebuilding found no link, suggesting that even when groups conducted conflict assessment, they did not link it to their planning process. (2013 p.12–4)

Gaps in implementation obviously compromise the quality of planning and programming, and they can also undermine the empowerment of the workshop participants who worked hard to conduct the conflict analysis. Whilst each MSTC participant can and should identify some applications within the scope of his or her own role, it is nonetheless frustrating to feel that primary organisational or multi-agency recommendations are not being taken seriously

Why Implementation Sometimes Falters

Failure to implement conflict analysis can leave organisations at the mercy of violent events. World Vision and other agencies can cite numerous cases of aid actors being taken by surprise, even when their own conflict analysis predicted violence and recommended mitigation steps. Some implementation failures stem from compromised political will in navigating relationships with power players. Keen argues that during the War on Terrorism, the Do No Harm ethos ‘seems to have been overthrown with abandon’ (2012b p.70). More often, day-to-day implementation failures result from organisational limitations, including failure to develop leadership buy-in and prioritisation, lack of technical capacity to support the process, and/or time pressures due to work overload (World Bank 2006).

World Vision experiences these organisational limitations in very specific ways. Prioritisation is weak where senior leadership roles are in transition and where there is no strategy advisor present to help align MSTC with the organisational planning cycle. MSTC follow-up is also hindered where World Vision lacks a staff focal person responsible for conflict sensitivity and where staff in general feel overwhelmed by the number of ‘cross-cutting themes’ (such as conflict sensitivity, gender and disaster mitigation) that must be considered in programming. Unfortunately, such challenges are particularly common in the extremely turbulent contexts that need MSTC the most. Contexts that are extremely turbulent tend to have higher staff turnover and to be more dependent on short-term grant funding, both of which undermine the development of staff and organisational capacity and follow-through on MSTC recommendations.

Improving Implementation

To address these challenges, World Vision now assesses the strategic readiness of each office that proposes to convene an MSTC,⁷⁹ and in case of leadership transition the organisation recommends delaying the analysis until new leadership is in place. World Vision is working towards systematising the link between MSTC and strategy by incorporating MSTC usage guidelines into the country office strategic planning toolkit

⁷⁹ The World Vision Global Peacebuilding Team guides this assessment in collaboration with the country office.

and related performance-monitoring indicators.⁸⁰ The organisation is also combining multiple risk-related themes, including conflict, civil-military-police relations, disaster mitigation and others, into a light integrated tool for context monitoring in between deeper analyses. Finally, an organisation-wide initiative to ensure consistent resourcing for the most fragile contexts is helping to smooth the funding gaps.⁸¹ Strong anecdotal evidence indicates that these steps are helping to improve MSTC implementation.

However, that evidence does remain largely anecdotal, due to challenges World Vision faces in gathering data about what happens after each completed MSTC workshop. These challenges stem from decentralisation and resource limitations. In a decentralised organisational structure such as World Vision's, the World Vision Global Peacebuilding team, which deploys MSTC analyses, is a technical service provider, with little or no mandate for enforcement. Country offices are not obligated to report their follow-up to MSTC facilitators; rather, their lines of accountability appropriately run to line management, beneficiaries and donors. Many country offices do share their MSTC implementation results, but other stories go untold. Further, the Peacebuilding team⁸² does not have the staff required to carry out systematic post-MSTC tracking. Despite World Vision's large size, resources are limited, so some important functions, including MSTC tracking, are not currently staffed.

Still, there are enough success stories available in World Vision⁸³ and other organisations to identify factors that support MSTC implementation. Some of these factors are summarised in Table 11. These insights highlight the importance of viewing conflict sensitivity through an organisational development lens, which implies that leadership commitment and

⁸⁰ Both of these mechanisms will be based on the World Vision Fragility Index, which indicates relative conflict risk across countries and tracks each country's trajectory over time.

⁸¹ The global effort is called the World Vision Fragile Contexts Business Model. Several funding offices have developed their own supporting initiatives, such as the Raw Hope campaign at World Vision United Kingdom.

⁸² The team has three positions, one of which is focused on MSTC.

⁸³ See, for example, Case Studies 1, 2 and 5, on MSTC efforts in Kenya, Sri Lanka and Lebanon respectively.

institutional capacity (Lange 2004) are sometimes more important than technical expertise.

Table 11. Factors That Support Conflict Analysis Implementation	
Identified by multiple agencies*	Identified mainly through World Vision experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership engagement in preparation, analysis and follow-up • assessment of organisational readiness before conflict analysis is deployed. • linkage and embedding of conflict analysis in organisational planning cycles • participation of local actors, decision makers and implementers in analysis • inclusion of small, concrete, low-cost commitments to maintain momentum • broad, systematic dissemination of findings, in as transparent a manner as possible • accountability to beneficiaries, partners and donors • integration of conflict-sensitivity indicators into monitoring and evaluation plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conflict analysis framework designed for action, including key planning take-aways and development of recommendations by participants during workshop • ‘50-day check’ amongst decision makers to review progress (six to eight weeks after analysis) • ongoing context-monitoring team or other recurring forum to assess emergent trigger events and to prompt action when needed • integration of conflict-related context monitoring with other priority trends (such as disaster mitigation and gender-based violence) • subnational mini-MSTC after national MSTC to contextualise analysis and recommendations for subnational hotspots
*e.g. Lange 2004, World Bank 2006, International Alert 2009, Schirch 2013	

8.3 Upholding True Participation

MSTC’s participatory approach adds much value to conflict analysis. However, genuine participation demands an empowering process undergirded by high ethical standards. Development literature is filled with examples of participation that started off well yet over time became tokenistic and extractive (Cooke and Kothari 2001, Anderson *et al.* 2012 p.125–33). To avoid those pitfalls and uphold the true ethos of

participation, much is required of conveners and facilitators alike. Some of the consistent challenges are highlighted below.

Usage of Outcome Documents

Balancing dissemination of outputs with security and ethical sensitivities is a continual challenge. In a truly participatory process, participants have the right to ‘own’ their outputs and make decisions about what is done with them. Given the sensitive nature of conflict data, this can mean that circulation of outputs may be limited to a small number of agencies, which may diminish the impact of the analysis. In the early years of MSTC experience, report distribution was so limited that even internal World Vision staff who needed the information found some MSTC reports difficult to obtain. In 2009, World Vision adopted more flexible permissions for internal dissemination. More recently, the emergent emphasis on multi-agency MSTCs has created opportunities to plan jointly with MSTC participants for broader external distribution.

Intentional Inclusion

There are cultural and practical factors that can influence inclusive participant selection. True participation implies inclusion, which lends an ethical aspect to the importance of diverse participant selection (as emphasised in Section 6.1 on triangulation of data). Agencies convening MSTCs need to recruit beyond their organisational ‘comfort zone’. Otherwise, there is a tendency to recruit participants that overlap with one’s own organisational footprint in terms of social identity, geographic zone, political persuasion and/or sectoral expertise. It is natural to rely on one’s existing relational networks, often without consciously considering who is excluded from those networks. New or tentative relationships require more cultivation and follow-up during the invitation process.

For instance, in contexts where faith is an isolating factor, World Vision country offices convening MSTCs are sometimes faced with the countercultural challenge of recruiting from non-Christian groups, since World Vision is known as a Christian organisation.⁸⁴ For example, the

⁸⁴ The ease or difficulty of doing this varies across the World Vision Global Partnership, depending on the degree of polarisation in the context and the organisational culture of the agencies involved. Most World Vision offices have strong inter-agency collaboration

recent Kenya and Lebanon MSTCs (2012) both involved intentional commitment to inviting and welcoming Muslim participants. In a similar vein, all three agencies that convened Pakistan MSTCs⁸⁵ found it difficult to recruit participants from Balochistan, because that province is isolated and not the site of any operational work or partnerships. However marginalisation and neglect are amongst the very drivers of insurgency in Balochistan (International Crisis Group 2006). Thus, leaving out Baloch participants not only skews the quality of data, but it also risks reinforcing patterns of exclusion and violence. The specifics vary by context, but there is a consistent need for the convener to cross sociopolitical barriers when recruiting participants. The coaching role of the lead facilitator can be key in making this a reality. Such diversification may also require intentional organisational development and/or multi-agency collaboration in recruitment, as emphasised in Chapter 9.

Avoiding Manipulation

The time-intensive nature of MSTC workshops often leaves facilitators pressed for time and therefore tempted to take shortcuts that compromise participation. When under pressure, facilitators need to be aware of the risk of inadvertently manipulating the group towards their own views rather than eliciting the true opinions of participants. When tendencies toward ‘groupthink’ (Levinger 2013 p.168–74, Schirch 2013 p.46) become apparent, facilitators must gently open up space for divergent thinking, rather than taking the easier path of settling for a false consensus. When painful disagreements arise, facilitators need to ensure, with sensitivity, that all perspectives are heard and respected, which inevitably requires schedule adjustments.

across faith lines, and many in Christian-minority contexts have diverse faiths on staff. Multi-faith collaboration is a fast-growing emphasis.

⁸⁵ World Vision and CARE in 2013, and Oxfam in 2014. The MSTCs were held separately in this unusual case, because several of the convening agencies had internal capacity-building goals. All three agencies met afterwards for a roundtable to compare findings and consider plans for collaboration.

Facilitator Reflexivity

To navigate these challenges successfully, each MSTC facilitator needs to reflect on the ways in which he or she as an individual with a particular social identity and skill set influences the analysis process (Robson 2002 p.172). This means consistently asking self-probing questions such as (Cooke and Kothari 2001):

- How is my identity perceived in this context?
- Who is doing the analysis right now – the participants or me?
- Do the workshop dynamics unintentionally override independent thinking and decision-making processes within the group?
- Do my workshop dynamics unintentionally reinforce the interests of the powerful?

This reflective formation of facilitators is an extended process that transcends time-bound project plans. For more on the nuances of participatory facilitation, see Case Study 7.

Case Study 7. Ensuring Balanced Participation

By Esther Silalahi, International Consultant based in Indonesia and Certified MSTC Lead Facilitator

A Personal Account

A key goal for me as an MSTC lead facilitator is to ensure equal opportunity for each participant to contribute fully whilst creating an atmosphere of respect and cohesion within a highly diverse group. Below I describe some of the important challenges, illustrated with examples from various MSTC workshops that I facilitated.

Ensuring All Voices Are Heard

Careful participant selection ensures that diverse voices are present in the workshop, but it also requires careful facilitation to ensure that everyone is truly heard. At the beginning of the workshop I work with participants on ground rules to establish mutual respect for all points of view. Each participant agrees to listen well to others and also to share his or her own knowledge openly and honestly.

Even so, some participants remain quiet because they lack confidence or are unsure how safe it is to express their opinions. One strategy for drawing out quiet participants is small-group work. The core small groups in which participants work throughout the workshop are carefully composed in advance to ensure that diverse backgrounds and opinions are represented. However, in cases where participants are given freedom to choose their own temporary groups, or where differing personalities affect group dynamics, the facilitation team needs to observe carefully participant dynamics and put everyone at ease to encourage participation.

If necessary, participants can be invited to trade groups, as was the case in Papua (Indonesia) in 2010 during the Rapid Historical Phase Analysis session. This was the first session of the workshop, so some participants felt shy, and the group as a whole had not yet experienced how people with differing perspectives could conduct analysis together. The group included both people who supported integration and people who supported independence. These long-standing political tensions were core to the conflict, so it was essential for all voices to be heard. When participants chose their own small groups, and those groups were not politically diverse, I invited them to remix so that all viewpoints were represented in each group. Transparency is always important, so I also informed the entire group that some participants had been asked to switch small groups.

Using Objective Language

The workshop ground rules should include the principle of using objective language to describe conflict actors and actions. It is often necessary to remind participants not to use language that could be perceived as offensive. The Odisha (India) MSTC in 2012 is a case in point. During the Actor-Group History and Characteristics Analysis, several participants wrote ‘terrorist’ or ‘extremist’ to describe the characteristics of certain actor-groups in the area. It is often possible to shift this dynamic during small-group work by asking the participants how they would feel if they were a member of the group being described. Would they call themselves terrorists? If not, what is a more

neutral word that could be used to describe that group? In Odisha, participants agreed that instead of saying ‘terrorist’ their preferred neutral wording would be ‘perceived to practise violent and aggressive actions’.

When stereotyping terminologies appear in plenary discussion, I intervene strongly as the facilitator to remind everybody to be sensitive and use only terminology that can be accepted by everyone. I have found that allowing participants to continue using offensive words will stop other participants from sharing their opinions and experiences, so it is vital for the group to learn together how to use objective language.

Managing Conflicting Opinions

It is common in most MSTCs for one or more participants to disagree with other people’s conclusions. In a Pakistan workshop in 2012, some participants expressed differences in what they perceived as ‘true facts’. Further, the political opinions in the room were very diverse as described above. Due to this, the participants were very critical of one another’s outputs. As facilitator, I had to explain that people will have different understandings of the facts and that this is good because it reflects the reality of a situation in which perceptions differ widely. It is essential that all the participants know they are being heard.

When small groups posted coloured data cards on the wall during brainstorming, clustering and prioritisation exercises, other participants often challenged them. I encouraged respectful discussion around the issue up to a certain extent, as far as it was crucial for the context and time permitted. If all participants agreed on something different from what a data card said, I asked the group that originally wrote the data card to change it itself. This ensured that all outputs – especially on sensitive topics – came from the participants, not the facilitator.

If participants did not reach consensus on the data cards or other collective analytical charts, I created a ‘middle way’ by encouraging everyone to respect the work posted on the wall whilst also acknowledging all differing perceptions written on a

flipchart. I ensured that all participants could see the flipchart, and I invited participants to amend their own points if the opinion was captured incorrectly. I did this publicly during the session to ensure transparency, whilst assuring the participants that all of these written outputs would be included in the official workshop notes, which would be distributed for review and verification the next morning.

Then, after all perceptions were written on the flipchart, I asked participants if it would be all right to move forward to analyse other topics or begin another session. This was effective because participants generally understood that compromise is sometimes necessary to move forwards. I did not experience objections from participants, and, despite their differences, they continued to work together in a cohesive way throughout the workshop.

8.4 Underemphasised Themes

The MSTC approach is an elicitive one (Lederach 1995) in which facilitators should restrict themselves to guiding the process and avoid unduly influencing the analytical decisions of participants. The four-day workshop is generally very full with the primary themes that are the focus of each tool (such as actor-group relations or economic resources). As the analysis unfolds, context-specific subthemes naturally emerge, however. It is sometimes challenging for facilitators to decide how deeply to probe a specific subtheme, particularly when there is a risk of exerting too much influence on the participants or losing control of time. In 2013, the global core group of MSTC facilitators⁸⁶ addressed three subthemes that appeared to deserve more emphasis in MSTC methodology.

Human Rights, Gender and Environment

The 2012 meta-analysis of MSTC findings (Bell 2012) identified human rights, gender and environmental issues as recurrent subthemes in MSTC

⁸⁶ This core group includes certified lead and frequent MSTC facilitators around the world. As of the time of writing, the core group includes 15 members and meets three to four times a year using online conferencing. The format may change over time, but the core group of facilitators will remain a key body for decision-making on the evolution of MSTC.

reports.⁸⁷ The fact that these important themes are so clearly present in the data indicates the strength of the elicitive approach.

Meanwhile, the core group of facilitators observed that these important themes were being probed at a relatively shallow level because the MSTC methodology afforded limited 'space' for this purpose. This diagnosis of underemphasis was reinforced by International Alert's recommendation (2009) that MSTC could cultivate greater sensitivity to marginalised voices, particularly those of women. At the same time, the recognition of both gender and environment was steadily growing in the conflict analysis field as a whole (Goetz and Trieber 2012, Robinson 2012, Harris *et al.* 2013, Myrttinen *et al.* 2014), catalysed in part by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Modifying MSTC

In order to address these issues, in 2012 the core group of facilitators endorsed a decision to revise the MSTC workshop materials as follows:

- add a series of reflection questions on marginalised groups⁸⁸
- strengthen articulation and enforcement of the need for gender-balanced MSTC facilitation teams and also appropriate and feasible gender balance amongst participants
- strengthen definition and emphasis on environmental questions in post-analysis reflections.⁸⁹

The impact of these adjustments is already being felt as, by 2014, the consideration of these important themes has deepened in MSTC

⁸⁷ These subthemes were generally not elevated to the level of strategic needs but were mentioned elsewhere in the MSTC report as part of the context analysis. Specifically, human rights violations are mentioned in over half of the reports, environmental issues in approximately half and gender in approximately one-third (particularly in South Asia). It is important to note that over three-quarters of the reports also mentioned the impact of conflict on children; this statistic requires validation as it may be influenced by the high number of participating staff from World Vision, a child-focused agency.

⁸⁸ Reflection questions on marginalised groups begin in the Actor-Group History and Characteristics session (see Section 4.2) and appear again in multiple sessions throughout the workshop.

⁸⁹ Reflection questions on the natural environment appear in the Rapid Historical Phase Analysis, Political Economy of Instability Analysis, and Trigger Events and Scenarios Analysis tools.

workshops. Reflection questions on marginalisation consistently bring up groups such as ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, women and children, and issues including rights.⁹⁰ However, some limitations remain. For instance, MSTC does not typically disaggregate discussion of women to probe the many different experiences of women in conflict settings. Whilst MSTC remains a conflict analysis framework that is increasingly sensitive to gender, it is not a gender analysis framework. Adding a session on gender would expand the workshop beyond the length currently considered feasible by most convening agencies.

8.5 Competing Objectives

The primary objective of MSTC is to produce high-quality context analysis to inform strategy and programming. However, as the process is participatory, it will inevitably have a secondary objective of capacity building. The MSTC process can contribute to building the capacity of participants to analyse critically their context, helping them develop new ways of thinking about conflict dynamics and their role in addressing them (International Alert 2009). However, there can be tension between these objectives; high-quality analysis is more likely to come out of participants with existing capacity for critical and analytical thinking. Participants unfamiliar with analysis techniques may learn a great deal from the participatory process, but their inexperience sometimes decreases the quality of the analytical outputs (World Bank 2006). Therefore, the two competing objectives need to be balanced carefully.

There is also a trade-off between the potential interpersonal peacebuilding value of a participatory macro-analysis (Freeman and Fisher 2012) and the quality of its outputs. An interpersonal peacebuilding emphasis focuses on improving the relational patterns between conflicting groups through the interactions that take place during the workshop. For this aspect of peacebuilding to be advanced, the participants need to be key actors who hold significant influence within the groups they represent. The process needs to be highly flexible, prioritising relationship building over analytical tasks. MSTC, on the other hand, is a structured methodology with a number of rigorous steps that must be completed in order to reach practical

⁹⁰ As evidenced by MSTC findings, including those from Pakistan (CARE 2013 and Oxfam 2014), Andhra Pradesh state in India (2013) and Honduras (2014).

application of the findings. Thus, MSTC welcomes the potential of improved relationships, but its contribution is limited to the establishment of an open, inclusive and trusting atmosphere within the participant group.

8.6 Conflict Analysis, Not Peace Analysis

Building on the above, it is important to revisit where MSTC sits within the broad and diverse conflict analysis field. MSTC is first and foremost a conflict-sensitivity framework, which enables aid actors to understand the interaction between their intervention and the particular context in which they work in order to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012). However, because MSTC takes the potential for ‘maximising positive impacts’ very seriously, it is highly relevant to certain aspects of peacebuilding.

Addressing the long-term, underlying drivers of conflict is a core aspect of peacebuilding. MSTC supports this type of peacebuilding through its identification of root causes of conflict and its corresponding identification of strategic needs (factors that must be changed to arrive at a preferred future). Participating agencies can make widely different contributions to these strategic needs, depending on their own mandate. If an intervention accurately and effectively targets one or more of the underlying drivers of conflict, then it is contributing to peacebuilding.

However, MSTC’s focus on conflict causes is largely a problem-driven approach. MSTC does not directly analyse peace factors, meaning the ‘systems, values and institutions that support peaceful conflict transformation in a given context’ (International Alert 2009 p.34). In fact, out of the five MSTC weaknesses⁹¹ identified in the International Alert evaluation (2009 p.34), this is the only one that has not yet been addressed, largely because of the difficulty of adding more elements to an already intense four-day workshop. Positive peace analysis is a common limitation of the conflict analysis field, typically receiving minimal emphasis. On the other hand, the resonance of Anderson’s Do No Harm framework is due

⁹¹ The five main weaknesses highlighted in International Alert’s 2009 evaluation of MSTC were lack of emphasis on analysis of root causes, lack of emphasis on marginalised groups and gender, inconsistent follow-up of MSTC recommendations, inconsistent post-MSTC context monitoring, and lack of identification of factors that promote peace.

in large part to its inspiring identification of the ‘connectors’ that exist in every society to promote peace (1999). Thus, the analysis of peace factors remains an important consideration for MSTC’s future.

8.7 Conclusion

Convening and facilitating an MSTC process is obviously a significant undertaking – a commitment that should not be taken lightly. Transparent consideration of the challenges is essential for continued improvement of MSTC practice, and also for informing the decisions of agencies that are considering MSTC or other forms of participatory macro-analysis. The understanding of these challenges can also help to inform organisational development efforts that undergird conflict sensitivity mainstreaming.

Based on more than a decade of MSTC experience, World Vision strongly believes that the challenges are manageable and that they are far outweighed by the benefits. Effectiveness and ethics demand that aid actors understand their context deeply and respond to it in appropriate ways that support peace. People living in turbulent contexts deserve nothing less than the best, and they have the right to take the lead in shaping how civil society works towards the future.

Further, the emergent innovations of the past few years indicate that multi-agency approaches have the potential to maximise MSTC’s benefits and to ease most of the challenges. The final chapter explores in greater depth the potential for participatory macro-analysis as a multi-agency practice to equip and position civil society for influence in turbulent contexts.



Actor-group mapping in Georgia, 2010. Photo by Matthew Scott.

Chapter 9: Participatory Macro-Analysis as a Promising Multi-Agency Practice

Over the past two decades, conflict analyses have successfully raised awareness regarding the complexities of providing aid in turbulent settings. Aid practitioners now recognise that well-done conflict analyses can equip organisations to manoeuvre effectively in turbulent settings, to avoid unintentionally worsening tensions and even to help address the underlying causes of conflict (Levinger 2013, Schirch 2013). However, the voices of local actors and civil society are still rarely heard in the country-level⁹² macro-analyses that shape far-reaching policy and strategy for the emergency response, development, advocacy and peacebuilding sectors. Given the current trend of decreasing citizen trust in international aid actors (Anderson *et al.* 2012), now is the time to take a fresh look at the practice of macro-conflict analysis.

All macro-conflict analysis practitioners are indebted to the People's Peacemaking Project (Conciliation Resources and Saferworld 2012), which advances a participatory approach. Its ground-breaking learnings continue to shape the future. However as of 2015, MSTC is the only available replicable framework that is specifically designed for maximising a participatory approach to conflict analysis at the macro level. In fact, MSTC practice is even more deeply committed to participation now than it was in the beginning, over a decade ago. The understanding of what it means to engage local voices, and the transformative potential of doing so, continues to evolve and grow.

This transformative potential motivates World Vision to offer MSTC to the inter-agency community and to invite peer and partner agencies to work together in establishing participation as a standard pillar of macro-level conflict analysis. MSTC, and possibly other participatory macro-analysis frameworks yet to be developed, should consistently complement – not replace – traditional expert-driven approaches.

⁹² MSTC analysis is typically national, but it is sometimes applied to a subnational region or a cross-border region where turbulence crosses national borders.

The hope is that MSTC will transcend its World Vision origin and help position participatory macro-analysis at the centre of a multi-agency future. In order to flesh out such possibilities, this chapter explores the potential of multi-agency formats. Preliminary experience with multi-agency MSTCs indicates a range of exciting potential benefits. Multi-agency MSTCs bring together participants from a far greater and more diverse number of non-governmental aid agencies and other civil society organisations.⁹³ This demographic shift in selection of MSTC participants can dramatically change the analytical process, outcomes and follow-up. Shared analysis and joint recommendations create the possibility of organisations working together in coordinated action. In this way, multi-agency MSTC has the potential to deliver much greater collective impact (Kania and Kramer 2011, Levinger 2013 p.210) on both programme strategy and public policy, as elaborated below.

Section 9.1 outlines some key differences between single-agency and multi-agency formats. The sections that follow unpack how multi-agency MSTCs could enhance MSTC's benefits by positioning civil society organisations for coordination and collaboration, help overcome some of MSTC's challenges by sharing convening responsibilities and follow-up, and open pathways for greater influence on public policy, taking as an example the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

9.1 Multi-Agency MSTC: What's the Difference?

The single-agency MSTC format has been the most common format in World Vision and also has been used in CARE and Oxfam. It will continue to be a mainstay, particularly where the convening agency wants to focus internally on its own development and strategic planning. In contrast, whilst multi-agency MSTCs can and do inform the planning of individual agencies, they are best suited for collaborative planning amongst multiple organisations. Experience to date is preliminary, but multi-agency MSTC participants have responded favourably, and it is evident that the key distinctions of the multi-agency format lie in the mix of participants and in the nature of the resulting recommendations.

⁹³ *Civil society* here means a broad and inclusive of formal organisations and informal networks, traditional leaders, religious associations, youth networks and so on.

Participants' Observations on Multi-Agency MSTCs

'This is useful. I work in an umbrella organisation in the peace and security realm.... This vindicates what we're doing – having one voice for civil society organisations to drive policy and interventions.'

—Kenya, 2012

'This is very useful to take up in our organisations, and very valuable if we can capitalise on it. I see risk if we do not capitalise on it.'

—Honduras, 2014

'There are three giants in this country—the executive, the private sector and the international actors. Yet we have a weak civil society. Instead of working in our small corners, it is time for civil society to start joining hands if we are to influence this context.'

—Uganda, 2012

Multi-Agency Experience to Date

By 2014, three fully multi-agency MSTCs had been convened. These were in Kenya in 2012⁹⁴ (co-convened by World Vision and the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium), Uganda in 2012 (convened by World Vision in collaboration with the Civil Society Organisation for Peace in Northern Uganda), and Honduras in 2014 (convened by World Vision). A fourth MSTC, South Sudan in 2012, was intended to be multi-agency, but recruitment difficulties limited external participation to no more than half. In Pakistan, a series of three single-agency workshops followed by a multi-agency MSTC roundtable has provided a different type of multi-agency experience.⁹⁵ There have also been multiple mini-MSTCs and MSTC facilitator trainings that were multi-agency in nature. Whilst the multi-agency MSTC learning process is in early stages, and it is too early to identify evidence of long-term impact, there is enough experience to make preliminary observations about future potential, which could be both compelling and beneficial to the wider aid industry.

⁹⁴ See Case Study 1.

⁹⁵ See Case Study 3.

Participant Mix

Diverse local actors are the driving force of any MSTC participant group, including both local aid workers and other local civil society actors. (See Section 1.2 for more information.) Further, all MSTCs strongly encourage participation of guests from outside the civil society sector – such as government, academia and business sectors – to help diversify perspectives.

As noted in Chapter 3, one key difference between single-agency and multi-agency formats lies in the proportion of participants coming from within the convening agency. A single-agency MSTC includes approximately 75 per cent of its participants from the convening agency (or in some cases the convening agency plus the established local partners that implement its programmes). A multi-agency MSTC reverses the ratio, with no more than 25 per cent coming from the convening agency, and at least 75 per cent of participants coming from the broader inter-agency community. The percentages need not be precise; the point is that multi-agency MSTCs draw their participants from a much wider range of cooperating organisations.

Multi-Agency Recommendations

In a single-agency MSTC, participants typically structure their consideration of operational and advocacy implications around the main programme pillars of the convening agency. This helps to ensure direct application of the findings to the convener's own plans. Facilitators also ensure that some attention is devoted to identifying recommendations for inter-agency collaboration. However, in single-agency MSTCs that aspect is relatively small.

In contrast, in a multi-agency MSTC the bulk of participant recommendations are directed towards the inter-agency community. Participants may recommend actions that apply to many individual agencies working in their context, as well as collective actions to be addressed by actively working together. Multi-agency MSTCs also encourage the participating agencies to apply the shared analysis to the plans of their own agency. World Vision Kenya's internal application of multi-agency MSTC findings provides an example (see Case Study 1). However, this may require an extra post-workshop step, because the recommendations developed

during a multi-agency workshop emphasise collective applications, with advantages outlined in Section 9.2.⁹⁶

What's Different in a Multi-Agency MSTC?

- Participant mix includes no more than 25 per cent from the convening agency.
- Emphasises multi-agency recommendations, creating the possibility of collaboration and joint action across agencies.
- Recruitment of diverse participants becomes easier. However, the convener's control becomes less direct, which may require extra attention to inclusion of marginalised groups.
- Requires more effort and potentially more cost to convene – yet also allows the convener role to be shared by two or more partners.
- More time is devoted to relational dynamics, because participants may not know each other. A multi-agency event may also require attention to security if it attracts public attention.
- The multi-agency MSTC format works well with leadership from an existing inter-agency network and a multi-agency facilitation team.

9.2 Amplifying MSTC's Benefits

The multi-agency approach has the potential to maximise the diversity and collective empowerment advantages of MSTC that are described in Chapter 7. This, in turn, could help eliminate duplication of effort caused by different agencies conducting their own conflict analyses, whilst simultaneously creating a shared understanding of the context's needs as a platform for collective action and impact (Kania and Kramer 2011, Levinger 2013 p.210).

Participant Diversity Improves Analysis

Participation of diverse local actors can shift a macro-conflict analysis from adequate to excellent and at the same time contribute to the conditions that support peace. The diversity of individual participants' perspectives, which

⁹⁶ For more detail on how operational and advocacy implications are identified in both single-agency and multi-agency MSTCs, see Section 5.3.

is essential for triangulation of sources and analytical quality, naturally tends to increase as the number of participating agencies grows.

Further, most agencies are likely to have incomplete but overlapping perspectives of the context.

Their staff or implementing partners may share certain implicit assumptions based on similar identities, professional training, or political views. When multiple agencies are involved, those assumptions can be questioned and balanced, allowing a more comprehensive, nuanced picture to emerge. This, of course, requires conveners deliberately to seek out organisations different from themselves.

At the same time, MSTC conveners may also find that the multi-agency format decreases their direct control over participant selection, because the invited agencies may exercise discretion in determining whom to send. Preliminary experience indicates that some agencies may feel obligated to send a senior or highly influential person to the workshop. This misperception can unintentionally undermine the participation of people from grassroots backgrounds and marginalised groups. Fortunately, the convener can prevent this through clear selection criteria and one-on-one consultation.

Coordination Empowers Civil Society

Collaboration amongst organisations can help strengthen civil society's position in turbulent settings. The 'big picture' scope of MSTC typically confronts every aid agency with the reality that the solutions to turbulence are beyond its grasp and that its own position is small and perhaps vulnerable compared to the major influential actors in the context. Thus, each agency's contribution must be strategically combined with that of others in order to make a difference. When multiple agencies do the analysis together, those strategic combinations of effort become more obvious, and future possibilities begin to look more achievable.

For those reasons, multi-agency participant groups typically bring forth a significant discussion of the position of civil society in the turbulent context. The participants recognise together that civil society has a necessary and irreplaceable role to play, which encourages civil society groups to pursue consistent engagement with the government. The powerful

experience of conducting a macro-analysis based on local participants' knowledge – rather than passively receiving it from experts – makes it clear that local actors have something valuable to say. This gives local civil society organisations courage to speak up in new ways, especially when they experience the increased power and safety of speaking together.

Whilst the previous paragraph may sound like a cliché, MSTC participants have been quick to identify the obstacles to civil society effectiveness and are not afraid to critique themselves. For example, the multi-agency Kenya MSTC of 2012 found that

the relative influence of civil society in Kenya has decreased since [the] 1990s, with a brief resurgence in influence following the election violence of 2007–8. Participants noted that the relative influence of civil society tended to increase during times of crisis, and decrease during relatively more peaceful periods. This was because CSOs lack a cohesive approach, with increased focus on competition for resources, rather than focusing on core issues and internal governance. A clear finding therefore was the need for civil society to work together in advance of crisis moments, so as to play a preventative role.⁹⁷

To that end, the Kenyan participants went on to identify specific types of programme and advocacy interventions that multi-agency groups should implement together and several core values and principles that should underlie their collaboration.⁹⁸ In so doing, the Kenyan MSTC group was using a shared context analysis as a platform to pursue synergy, in hopes of making the combined activity of its civil society network more powerful than the accumulated efforts of its individual members.

9.3 Overcoming MSTC's Challenges: Strength in Numbers

Effective use of MSTC involves a number of challenges (as described in Chapter 8). It is a time- and resource-intensive process, and follow-up has at times been inconsistent. A multi-agency approach has the potential to help mitigate some of these challenges.

⁹⁷ MSTC Report Kenya 2012, p.10.

⁹⁸ For more on the short-term outcomes of this Kenya MSTC, see Case Study 1.

Lightening the Convener's Load through Co-hosting

The reality is that aid organisations sometimes skip conflict analysis, particularly when faced with significant operational challenges, because it is perceived as difficult. Participation can actually increase the degree of difficulty, even as it enhances the relevance, quality and usefulness of the outcomes. A multi-agency approach does not remove the demands of convening an analysis and the dilemmas of implementation, but it does provide new ways to address and overcome them.

The requirements of convening a participatory macro-analysis may be heavy for a single organisation. The diversity of participants required can be daunting, and the logistics of gathering them can be complicated in a country experiencing insecurity. Many of these complexities cost time and money to resolve, particularly where in-country travel is needed to ensure participant diversity and external facilitation support is required. However, co-convening with a partner can bring a solution within reach. If two or more distinct agencies come together, their network reach for recruitment of diversity is expanded. Co-hosting a workshop also allows for sharing costs amongst several partners, making such a proposition more realistic for cash-strapped aid organisations.

Collaboration: Key to Effective Follow-up

The dilemmas of implementation, which form the central weakness of the conflict sensitivity field, should not be taken lightly. (See Section 8.2.) The additional point to be emphasised here is that multi-agency collaboration can play a role in creating implementation breakthroughs. Unlike single-agency analyses, multi-agency conflict exercises tend to emphasise recommendations that are collective in nature. Multi-agency groups can address context-wide needs that are beyond the reach of any single organisation by coordinating their efforts to ensure complementarity and in some cases by taking joint action. Advocacy on sensitive issues can become more feasible and effective when working together.

At the practical level, where individual agencies lack the information, training or relational networks to implement a particular recommendation, these could potentially be acquired through inter-agency resource sharing. Multi-agency action plans also tend to create healthy mutual accountability

– in other words, positive peer pressure – to follow through on shared commitments. Joint post-MSTC taskforces would make implementation commitments public and therefore perhaps harder to overlook than commitments made in private. For example, the inter-agency MSTC roundtable in Pakistan (2014) led Oxfam, CARE and World Vision to recommend interdependent plans for mainstreaming Do No Harm at the local level. These agencies will inquire about one another's progress, because their own progress may depend on it. The point is not to shame any agency if its plans change, but to welcome external accountability as help in moving beyond the status quo.

Post-MSTC context monitoring is needed to track emergent trigger events and scenarios. Such follow-up can feel burdensome to an agency working alone. Multi-agency collaboration could help make analytical updating more feasible. This was recommended specifically and strongly in the recent multi-agency Honduras MSTC of 2014 (though it is too soon to observe the results). It is already clear that operational agencies like World Vision consistently lack the staff capacity required to collect appropriate context-monitoring data and to conduct the preliminary analysis necessary for presentation to a broader group. Establishing one shared analyst role within a multi-agency network could help by ensuring that all participating agencies have, at minimum, ready access to quality, updated context-monitoring data. Optionally, reconvening conflict analysis participants at regular intervals, whether face to face or virtually, could help spur creativity and commitment in applying that context-monitoring data to operations and also maintain the relationships necessary for ongoing collaboration.

In sum, multi-agency unity of vision is critical for unified action and is likely to lead to more sustainable and effective programming in turbulent contexts. There are no shortcuts to participatory macro-level conflict analysis, but multi-agency collaboration can lighten the load borne by any single agency and multiply the impact of the analysis. This potential applies to both emergency response and community development strategy, and perhaps even more so to peace-related advocacy, as elaborated below.

9.4 Pathways to Policy Influence

When presenting MSTC conflict analyses by local practitioners to policymakers, World Vision has sometimes been met with this reaction:

‘That didn’t tell us anything that we didn’t already know.’ Yet some of those same policymakers have also said, ‘We didn’t see this coming!’ when surprised by an outbreak of violence that civil society activists had predicted through an MSTC. For instance, it has been widely acknowledged that many analysts did not adequately foresee South Sudan’s rapid descent into ethno-political violence in December 2013 (Hirsch 2014, Wall and Fairhurst 2014 p.37–8). One full year earlier MSTC participants had identified a likely scenario involving a leadership split in the ruling party degenerating along tribal lines into widespread violence, displacement and possible famine.⁹⁹ The participating civil society actors were later dismayed by the speed with which the violence spread but not surprised by its origin or trajectory.¹⁰⁰

Civil society representatives still lament that they are frequently unable to penetrate the ‘barbed wire perimeter’ of a donor’s embassy or a UN compound. However, there is also a hopeful trend toward new opportunities for local civil society engagement in public policy. These opportunities are imperfect, yet if seized they have the potential to produce progress. The remainder of this chapter explores the opportunities and constraints, using the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States as an example, and considers how participatory macro-analysis can help position civil society to influence policy.

Opportunities and Constraints

Doors are gradually opening because participation is increasingly recognised as central to democratic governance (Gaventa 2004). Further, civil society is acknowledged as key to bridging the deteriorating relationships between states and their citizens (Mahmoud 2014). The World Development Report 2011 (World Bank), *Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals: New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* (2011) and UNDP’s *Governance for Peace: Securing the Social Contract* (2012) demonstrate an emerging consensus on the unique needs of conflict-affected countries. All of these documents broadly agree on the need for ‘strengthening governance

⁹⁹ MSTC South Sudan Report 2012, p.8.

¹⁰⁰ In retrospect, the South Sudan MSTC could have helped to inform early warning in the policy community. It is unlikely that early warning could have stopped the tragic events that unfolded, but it could perhaps have helped to mitigate the negative impacts.

to provide citizen security, justice, and jobs' (World Bank 2011). Good governance is specifically envisioned to require 'new ways of working' (G7+ 2011), including strengthened partnerships with civil society and other stakeholders such as business, to 'deliver in more coordinated, coherent, and complementary ways' (UNDP 2012 p.12).

Thus civil society has increasing access to multi-stakeholder dialogues and forums, including conflict analysis processes that influence policy on the architecture of aid and the prevention and management of violent conflict. The type of participation envisioned here is not a stand-alone consultation but rather a systematic and sustained process of engagement, consultation and feedback. In practice, however, civil society access is still infrequent, and, when it does occur, the representation may be criticised as shallow or tokenistic. There is a clear need for civil society to advocate that policymakers' doors remain open in consistent and meaningful ways.

At the same time, civil society itself could also command more respect by increasing its own capacity to offer high-quality input with a cohesive voice. Participatory macro-analysis can provide a valuable platform for local knowledge to coalesce into policy positions. Further, when it is done in ways that model inclusion and respect, it can also contribute to the unity that gives civil society credibility (Uvin 1998) The resulting network collaboration amongst civil society organisations can provide a vehicle for sustained policy input and dialogue. These crosscurrents of opportunity and constraint are particularly visible in the New Deal process described below.

The New Deal

The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States¹⁰¹ is a result of convergence between the aid effectiveness movement and the growing recognition of how greatly fragility and violent conflict can impede development. The New Deal seeks improved mutuality in donor-recipient relations. One key component of the New Deal is a requirement for recipient governments to convene multi-stakeholder 'joint fragility assessments' that will drive development planning and inform the indicators used to track progress. This is a welcome shift away from externally driven analyses, which can be both disempowering and fragmented due to the large number of external stakeholders.

¹⁰¹ See <http://www.newdeal4peace.org/>

Pilot fragility assessments carried out in 2012 and 2013¹⁰² demonstrated the potential to bring together diverse actors and to yield a shared understanding of context that is now informing the renegotiation of development agreements. However, the pilots varied in their level of political openness. In fact, the state-centric nature of the New Deal process – and indeed of the ‘fragile states’ concept itself (Fischer and Schmelzle 2009, Dann and Hammel 2013) – makes the platform for civil society participation uncertain. Despite the uniquely privileged status of civil society in the New Deal concept, the protocol for civil society engagement is not predetermined, but rather negotiated in each New Deal country. In some contexts civil society’s contribution is limited by the government’s interest in preserving authority or by civil society’s fragmentation along lines of conflict (Wall and Fairhurst 2014 p.25). In other settings civil society itself may fear that engaging too deeply in government processes would mean compromising its independence (Hughes *et al.* 2014).

To maximise the inclusion of all stakeholders in joint fragility assessments, World Vision has proposed a four-part consultative process involving civil society, the private sector, bilateral donors and multilateral organisations, all convened by government but enabling each sector to meet separately before coming together (Scott and Midgley 2012). This process might look something like the illustrative – and entirely imaginary – vision laid out below for DR Congo.

***Imagining Future Possibilities:
Civil Society in Multi-Stakeholder Fragility Assessment***

It is the near future in Kinshasa, DR Congo, and a ground-breaking joint fragility assessment summit has just concluded, convened by the Congolese government and supported by the World Bank, UNDP and OECD. Three mining company executives in suits greet half a dozen colourfully dressed civil society activists. UNICEF’s country director converses with the minister for new citizenship about youth

¹⁰² New Deal pilots include Sierra Leone, Liberia, DR Congo, South Sudan, Timor Leste, Afghanistan, Somalia and the Central African Republic. Sample assessment reports are available at <http://www.newdeal4peace.org/new-deal-pilots/>

employment, whilst a member of the Youth Parliament adds clarifying comments. A Catholic nun, a British aid official and an NGO leader make plans to meet again soon in Goma.

This diverse group has spent the last three days sharing the conflict analysis developed within its sector. More than a hundred participants from civil society, the private sector, bilateral donors, multilateral organisations and the government had prepared for months for this meeting. A month earlier civil society participants had gathered for a MSTC exercise in Lubumbashi to map the driving forces of the nation's multilayered conflict, to identify future strategic needs and scenarios, and to propose strategies to address these needs.

At the same time, the private-business sector and the bilateral/multilateral donor sector had conducted their own conflict analyses using frameworks customised for their sectors. All sectors submitted their conflict analyses to a mixed resource team of Congolese and international specialists. The specialist team produced a synthesis document summarising the insights and action ideas arising from each sector. During the government-convened joint assessment summit, skilled facilitators helped the participants to agree on shared recommendations and develop implementation plans focused on revising the government's citizen-empowerment plan.

Participants leave the summit with specific action plans for education and employment to encourage former youth combatants to leave combat permanently. Several business leaders have begun investments in vocational training to facilitate employment for thousands of young people. The summit also commissioned a separate task force – including civil society representatives – to create a public trust fund for mineral royalties and mining concession fees. The trust fund's revenue and investments in development will be published monthly online and updated by text message and radio.

The president makes a televised speech to assert that this investment in peace will yield benefits for economic and human development in DR Congo. Several NGO leaders thank the government publicly for

ensuring that civil society has a permanent place in this discussion. The nation now has a sustainable and transparent platform for dialogue about the causes of conflict and the multi-sector solutions for peace. The work of implementation begins.

Of course, joint conflict analysis alone will not ensure a just and peaceful future. The scenario above is imaginary, and the Congolese context is exceedingly complex. Further, in most New Deal pilot countries, it is not clear how civil society engagement will fare after the assessment phase ends and implementation of new aid agreements begins (Wall and Fairhurst 2014). Even so, conflict analysis is a foundational first step, and all sectors, including civil society, have a key contribution to make. Further, the sanctioned role of civil society at the New Deal table gives it an unprecedented – though imperfect – opportunity to shape the direction of development in participating countries.

Next Steps

To maximise such opportunities, civil society needs analytical tools that are deeply participatory and capable of informing national and international policy. Without a doubt, ‘fragility assessments must be locally owned rather than solely produced by external technical experts’ (Hughes *et al.* 2014 p.9). The People’s Peacemaking Perspectives project,¹⁰³ the only participatory macro-analysis approach currently comparable to MSTC, emphasised policy input to EU audiences. That project not only produced policy briefs, but in many cases it also provided local participants with advocacy training and put many of them directly into contact with policymakers, including policymakers in Brussels (Conciliation Resources and Saferworld 2012 p.iv). MSTC holds a similar potential, but its advocacy outputs are less systematic because they depend on the recommendations of participants and the decisions of their organisations. In all cases, civil society needs financial resources to deploy analysis as well as networking support to help ensure that the actors involved are as diverse as possible.

¹⁰³ For more on the People’s Peacemaking Perspectives project, see Section 2.4.

The New Deal is helping to establish an important paradigm shift towards civil society engagement in conflict analysis and public planning, but civil society does not need to wait for an invitation. Nor does civil society need to limit itself to being consulted in processes led by others. Civil society can create and lead its own conflict analysis processes. In fact, in contexts where the New Deal is not active or where the national government is not a credible convener, a civil society-led process may become essential. In such cases, international civil society organisations could be useful catalysts, and their role should focus on bringing their national and local counterparts to the forefront. International NGOs could mobilise funding, provide facilitation support and broker communication opportunities with policymakers, all with the goal of elevating local voices.

Further, the opportunities for influence expand when one looks beyond aid architecture and towards broader applications of conflict prevention, management and transformation.

Amongst other possibilities, civil society-led conflict analysis can inform strategy and planning on early warning, influence public opinion on policy debates, directly lobbying policymakers, encourage nonviolent action, engage children and youth in peacebuilding, mediate between conflicting parties and monitor compliance with peace agreements. UN peacekeeping missions are a key example of a pivotally important intervention that rarely benefits from the policy input of local actors and civil society. Participatory macro-level conflict analysis could inform those missions, possibly in ways that help increase their success. Conflict analysis is only the beginning of the peacebuilding process, but when local knowledge complements externally driven approaches, planners can more accurately target interventions and support the self-empowerment of the people who will carry them out.

9.5 Conclusion

With this vision in mind, World Vision invites aid actors to join in making the participatory approach a standard pillar of macro-level conflict analysis. Local actors and civil society organisations are too often excluded from country-level macro-analysis for reasons that are altogether avoidable. Without their contribution, the local knowledge and ownership needed to complement external expertise are painfully absent. This dearth of

local voices compromises analytical quality, hinders sound planning and reinforces the patterns of exclusion that often drive destructive conflict.

However, a hopeful alternative is within the grasp of the organisations providing aid in turbulent contexts. With the right methodology, a participatory macro-analysis process can intentionally yield the following: a more diverse, higher-quality analysis; a high level of local ownership and commitment to implementation; an opportunity to model political inclusion; and a stronger, more resilient and respected civil society. Multi-agency analyses, in particular, offer the potential of shared planning and collaborative action, bringing greater cohesion to the inter-agency community and increasing the likelihood of effectively influencing public policy.

MSTC is a quality framework with 58 analyses and numerous consultative revisions to its credit. World Vision offers MSTC not necessarily as the ‘best’ framework, but as the only available replicable framework specifically designed for a participatory approach to macro-analysis.¹⁰⁴ The organisation’s vision is to see many more civil society organisations using this framework. MSTC workshop materials and lessons-learned documentation will be made available through a specially designed web portal.¹⁰⁵ World Vision strongly recommends that agencies interested in making use of these materials engage a certified MSTC lead facilitator to maximise quality and minimise risk. MSTC facilitator training opportunities will also be available to other agencies that wish to invest in their own capacity.

The authors, and World Vision as a whole, also hope that MSTC ‘ownership’ could become shared, with multiple organisations contributing to joint planning about the future evolution of the MSTC framework and the development of the MSTC facilitator-training system. Shared decision-making would be the optimal way to ensure that MSTC continues to evolve in ways that maximise its usefulness amongst civil society aid organisations. If and when differentiation is needed, peer agencies’ development of new frameworks for participatory macro-analysis will be welcomed.

¹⁰⁴ As of 2015.

¹⁰⁵ This portal can be accessed at <http://www.participate-mstc.net>.

With a commitment to fully participatory forms of macro-level conflict analysis, bilateral donors and multilateral institutions can progress towards the robust civil society engagement that they have identified as desirable (e.g. UNPBSO 2013). Local actors and civil society organisations can embrace macro-analysis as a feasible possibility in which their own knowledge is valued and deployed for positive change. Few things can transform turbulence more effectively than an informed and emboldened citizenry determined to strengthen governance, justice and peace.

Annexes

Annex A: How World Vision Developed the MSTC Framework.....167

Annex B: List of MSTC Analysis Workshops to Date174

Annex C: For More Information on MSTC..... 177

Annex D: About the Authors..... 178

Key Terms181

References 184

Index..... 198

Annex A: How World Vision Developed the MSTC Framework

This annex summarises the history of Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts. It is divided into four key phases, outlined in Table A-1. More detail on each phase follows in the rest of this annex.

MSTC has grown from a small project to a global programme, with 58 workshops to date. MSTC analyses are currently conducted in four languages, not only within World Vision but also in collaboration with other international NGOs, civil society organisations and key local stakeholders. The facilitator corps spans four organisations and is gearing up for further expansion.

The MSTC story is ongoing; the collaborative and iterative nature of the project means that the framework and the workshop process are continually evolving.

Table A-1: MSTC Timeline Overview	
Phase	Main Developments
Birth 2001–2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• identification of need for conflict analysis tools for improved advocacy capacity and emergency response planning• initial development of framework and facilitator’s manual• first pilot tests• named ‘Situations of Chronic Political Instability’• key leaders: Siobhan O’Reilly-Calthrop and Stephen Jackson

Table A-1: MSTC Timeline Overview	
Testing and Development 2003–2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first workshop held in Uganda in 2003 • programmes for facilitator training and testing materials • name changes from Situations of Chronic Political Instability (SCPI) to Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC) • first major revision based on lessons learned • key leaders: Dr Bill Lowrey with Reola Phelps
Consolidation and Standardisation 2007–2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of MSTCs increases dramatically • meta-analysis conducted of findings of first 27 MSTCs • external evaluation by International Alert • MSTC presented to International Studies Association • key leader: Matthew Scott
Expansion 2012–Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • second meta-trends analysis and revision based on lessons learned • OECD recognises MSTC; two key papers published • MSTC usage begins to transcend World Vision, and vision for increased civil society collaboration takes shape • positioning for expansion as World Vision offers MSTC to the inter-agency community • key leader: Dr Michelle Garred

Phase 1: Birth (2001–2002)

The Need for Context Analysis Tools

The initiative for MSTC emerged in 2001 when senior leadership in World Vision International responded to the challenge of Philippe Le Billon’s influential article ‘The Political Economy of War: What Relief Agencies Need to Know’ (2000). Le Billon contended that relief and development agencies operating in turbulent contexts were frequently ‘working in the dark’ without an in-depth knowledge of the economic and political aspects of conflict.

World Vision’s global vice president, Bryant Myers, discussed the article with numerous other organisational senior leaders. They recognised that, in spite of World Vision’s substantial expertise in emergency relief and

community development, there was a strong need to develop a more sophisticated analysis of 21st-century turbulence. This aligned with the intention to scale up advocacy capacity and the growing interest of country offices to engage issues of conflict and instability. Overarching all was a desire to transcend the long-held distinctions between emergency relief, advocacy and community development work.

With these mutually reinforcing purposes, the MSTC project was born, funded by World Vision Emergency Relief and Disaster Mitigation¹⁰⁶ and managed by World Vision Advocacy. The goal was to devise a set of tools for country office staff, particularly those engaged in emergency relief, in order to analyse the political, economic and social factors that shaped the turbulent contexts in which they worked. This focus has steadily widened over the years to encompass a much greater linkage to development work and an emphasis on moving beyond NGO staff to promote the participation of other local actors.

Project MSTC Begins

World Vision Policy and Advocacy Capacity Building Coordinator Siobhan O'Reilly-Calthrop was appointed to direct the project. She hired Stephen Jackson, then director of the Institute for Famine Studies in Cork, Ireland, to collaboratively devise the framework and write accompanying materials for facilitators. He drew on current thinking regarding political economy of war, particularly the 'greed vs grievance' debates, and also took into account the increasing popularity of the Do No Harm framework being used by World Vision country offices.¹⁰⁷

After the first draft of the tools, World Vision conducted two pilot workshops.¹⁰⁸ As a result, two things became clearer: MSTC has benefits across emergency response, advocacy and community development programmes; and there is a dynamic nexus between MSTC and Do No Harm. Do No Harm, whilst immensely helpful in sharpening the analytical

¹⁰⁶ Now called Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter 3 for a deeper exploration of the concepts underlying MSTC.

¹⁰⁸ One pilot was a regional MSTC for the Caucasus (including staff from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia), and the other was a simulated, multi-context workshop run with World Vision staff at a conference in Capetown.

approach of staff to local humanitarian interventions, did not offer the same depth of analysis of the broader macro-level context. MSTC therefore offered the potential of scaled-up analysis and joint programme planning.

Based on those learnings, a facilitator's manual was produced, containing the full framework with detailed steps for working through each tool in a two-day workshop format. At this stage the name given to the analysis framework was Situations of Chronic Political Instability.

Phase 2: Testing and Development (2003–2006)

The first official MSTC analysis workshop was held in 2003 in Uganda. Over the next few years MSTC took on its full form as a framework being actively used, proven and refined.

In 2003, World Vision Advocacy no longer had the capacity to take this project forward. Fortunately, the organisation had recently appointed Dr Bill Lowrey as its first Peacebuilding director, working within the World Vision Community Development Department. He saw the immense potential of MSTC to further conflict sensitivity in World Vision's work, and his leadership grew MSTC to the next level.¹⁰⁹

Lowrey focused MSTC development on four key areas:

1. to **identify and train excellent facilitators**
2. to **build confidence** amongst national directors working in sensitive areas about the security concerns surrounding use of findings
3. to **run MSTC workshops** across the world as learning exercises, improving and refining the framework and facilitator's guide each time
4. to **seek funding** for each workshop.

World Vision's approach was to make MSTC a collaborative learning process, viewing it as a continually evolving methodology, which continues to this day.

¹⁰⁹ Conflict sensitivity is a core element of the Peacebuilding team's work.

Name Change and Methodology Update

In 2003 the name was changed from SCPI to MSTC after feedback suggesting the difficulty that some countries had with the use of the phrase '*political instability*'.¹¹⁰

Tremendous learning took place in all of these workshops, amongst both participants and facilitators. In March 2006, the facilitation teams from the first three years of MSTC workshops gathered for a 'lessons learned' retreat, sharing their own observations and feedback from participants. With expertise from consultant Reola Phelps, the manual was significantly updated to reflect issues such as the need for cultural adaptation, handling difficult dynamics that might compromise the participatory process, and report writing. In addition, planning tools were added, namely the current Strategic Needs and the Operational and Advocacy Implications sessions, as well as an Advocacy Matrix that has since been retired. The length of the workshop increased to a minimum of three days.

Phase 3: Consolidation and Standardisation (2007–2012)

During this phase the number of MSTCs increased dramatically, and the documentation practices became much more standardised. Some countries repeated analyses to reflect changed circumstances. MSTC began to include external consultants in the pool of MSTC lead facilitators, realising the crucial importance of specialised facilitation skills.

During this time period, World Vision Associate Peacebuilding Director Matthew Scott took over the leadership of MSTC. Amongst numerous other developments, he saw the vision for the role that MSTC could play in catalysing collaboration amongst humanitarian and civil society actors and began to promote the idea of multi-agency workshops. Another significant development was the growing participation of academics, UN staff, representatives of donors and local government in workshops, which has deepened the breadth and quality of analysis.

In 2009, intern Lisa Freeman conducted the first meta-analysis of 27 MSTCs, leading to an internal learning paper (Freeman 2009) and a

¹¹⁰ For more on the thinking and meaning behind the term '*turbulent contexts*', see Chapter 3.

presentation of the MSTC approach at the International Studies Association (Lowrey and Scott 2010). MSTC was externally evaluated by International Alert (International Alert 2009).

Phase 4: Expansion (2012–Present)

From around 2012, the usage and vision for MSTC started to expand significantly both within and beyond World Vision. Inter-agency collaboration has become a preferred approach to MSTC analysis, and the emphasis on participation of local actors and civil society has grown into an intentional defining feature. This expansion has been led by World Vision Associate Peacebuilding Director Dr Michelle Garred.

In 2013, Garred organised a second ‘lessons learned’ review, leading to the third major revision of MSTC methodology and materials. This review drew on the observations of the newly formed global core group of MSTC facilitators, an updated MSTC meta-trends analysis by intern Kathryn Bell and insights from the International Alert evaluation. Key changes included increased attention to root causes of conflict and marginalised groups, an increase in workshop length to four days and enhanced facilitator training in participatory process and ethics.

Since 2012, two key papers have been published about MSTC. World Vision UK published a Policy and Practice paper titled *Bridging the Participation Gap: Developing Macro-Level Conflict Analysis through Local Perspectives* (Midgley and Garred 2013). *The Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* published an article comparing MSTC to a problem-solving workshop (Freeman and Fisher 2012). In addition, OECD recognises MSTC as one of six influential conflict analysis frameworks (OECD-DAC 2012 p.79).

As inter-agency cooperation has increased, World Vision has deployed and trained MSTC facilitators for CARE (Nepal 2011, Pakistan 2013) and Oxfam (Pakistan 2014, Afghanistan 2014). Multi-agency MSTC workshops¹¹¹ have been convened in Kenya, Uganda and Honduras, with several more scheduled for 2015.

¹¹¹ For every MSTC workshop, World Vision recommends inclusion of participants from partner agencies and other sectors to help diversify perspectives. However, a fully multi-agency MSTC takes this principle to a higher level, with typically fewer than 25 per cent of participants coming from the host agency.

MSTC continues to show immense potential as a cross-agency vehicle for joint analysis and action. For that reason, World Vision is now offering MSTC to the inter-agency aid community, with the aims of advocating participation as a standard pillar of macro-conflict analysis and encouraging collaboration amongst aid and civil society organisations working in turbulent contexts.

Annex B: List of MSTC Analysis Workshops to Date

2003

1. World Vision Sudan
2. World Vision Uganda

2004

3. World Vision Nepal

2005

4. World Vision (Sri) Lanka
5. World Vision Indonesia (Aceh)
6. World Vision Jerusalem – West Bank – Gaza
7. World Vision Sudan (update)

2006

8. World Vision Indonesia (Aceh)
9. World Vision Development Foundation Philippines

2007

10. World Vision Lebanon
11. World Vision Pakistan
12. World Vision (Sri) Lanka
13. World Vision Zimbabwe

2008

14. World Vision Sudan
15. World Vision Sudan (Warrap mini-MSTC)
16. World Vision Sudan (Upper Nile mini-MSTC)
17. World Vision Kenya
18. World Vision Uganda
19. World Vision Democratic Republic of Congo
20. World Vision Burundi

21. World Vision Indonesia (Central Sulawesi)

22. World Vision Ethiopia

2009

23. World Vision Bolivia

24. World Vision India (Northeast)

25. World Vision Development Foundation Philippines (Mindanao)

2010

26. World Vision Haiti

27. World Vision Georgia

28. World Vision Indonesia (Papua)

29. World Vision India (Jharkhand and Bihar)

30. World Vision Sudan

31. World Vision Sudan (Warrap mini-MSTC)

32. World Vision (Sri) Lanka (Northern and Eastern mini-MSTC)

33. World Vision Pakistan (update)

2011

34. World Vision Somalia

35. CARE Nepal

36. World Vision Democratic Republic of Congo

2012

37. World Vision Lebanon

38. World Vision Jerusalem – West Bank – Gaza

39. World Vision Pakistan

40. World Vision Kenya and Conflict Sensitivity Consortium Kenya

41. World Vision Kenya (Northeast mini-MSTC)

42. World Vision Uganda

43. World Vision South Sudan

44. World Vision Mali

45. World Vision India (Odisha/Orissa)

46. World Vision Somalia (update)

2013

- 47. World Vision Haiti
- 48. Undisclosed location (for security reasons)
- 49. World Vision Democratic Republic of Congo (Eastern)
- 50. World Vision Democratic Republic of Congo (North and South Kivu mini-MSTC)
- 51. CARE International in Pakistan
- 52. World Vision India (Andhra Pradesh)

2014

- 53. Oxfam in Pakistan
- 54. World Vision South Sudan (update)
- 55. World Vision Honduras
- 56. World Vision India (Meghalaya mini-MSTC)
- 57. World Vision India (Chhattisgarh)
- 58. Oxfam in Afghanistan

Note: This list does not include Key Informant Interview processes completed using MSTC analytical tools, as in Afghanistan (2004, 2007).

Annex C: For More Information on MSTC

Please see <http://www.participate-mstc.net> for resources, including:

- MSTC analysis workshop materials
- List of certified MSTC lead facilitators
- Emerging lessons learned in MSTC practice
- News on who is using MSTC and how
- Preparation tips for MSTC conveners
- Skill-building resources for trained MSTC facilitators

Whilst workshop materials are freely shared, World Vision strongly recommends that agencies interested in making use of these materials engage a certified MSTC lead facilitator in order to maximise quality and minimise risk. MSTC facilitator training opportunities are also available to partner agencies that wish to invest in their own capacity.

Annex D: About the Authors

Michelle G. Garred

Michelle is World Vision's associate peacebuilding director for strategy and innovation and currently provides global leadership for the deployment and development of MSTC. As a certified MSTC lead facilitator in English and Spanish, her recent workshops include Afghanistan, Honduras, Pakistan, Kenya, Somalia and Lebanon, as well as MSTC facilitator training around the world.

Previous roles include independent peacebuilding consultancy, as well as WV peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity leadership in the Asia Tsunami Response, Asia-Pacific Regional Office, Kosovo and US International Programs. In many of those roles Michelle was deeply engaged with innovative mainstreaming of Do No Harm, including the adaptation of Do No Harm for religious actors and multi-faith networks. Strengthening civil society's effectiveness and positioning it for influence are consistent themes.

Michelle is passionate about participatory action research and collaborative learning, as well as the transformation of identity-based (ethnic and religious) conflict. She holds a PhD in peace studies from Lancaster University, and a master's of public administration/MA in international studies from the University of Washington. Currently based near Seattle, she can be reached at michelle_garred@wvi.org.

Siobhan O'Reilly-Calthrop

Siobhan, a freelance writer based in the UK, has a background in advocacy and conflict analysis. In her role as Policy and Advocacy Capacity Building Coordinator for World Vision International she spearheaded the early MSTC project, appointing consultant Stephen Jackson to work with her in devising the MSTC tools and training materials.

Prior to this, in her role as conflict policy officer at World Vision UK, she conducted pioneering research into the contribution of World Vision's community development programmes for peacebuilding, funded by DFID. Her report in 1998 on the socioeconomic impact of the Oslo Peace Accords

on the Palestinian Territories was pivotal in helping to shape UK policy on Israel/Palestine.

Siobhan is now an editor of and regular contributor to the website www.post40bloggers.com, showcasing the best of blogging by the 'over 40s' and blogs on parenting issues at www.everyoneelseisnormal.com. She holds an MA in development studies from the University of East Anglia and a BA Hons in geography from Nottingham University. She can be reached at siobhanfreelance@gmail.com.

Tim Midgley

Tim is senior conflict and security advisor at Saferworld, a UK-based International NGO working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Tim leads Saferworld's work on promoting conflict sensitivity for development actors, including government agencies, donors, INGOs and the private sector. Previously, Tim was fragile states advisor for World Vision UK, where he led policy engagement on issues relating to fragility, conflict and poverty with the UK government, as well as building capacity for the integration of conflict-sensitive approaches into World Vision's development and emergency programming.

He is a certified MSTC lead facilitator and has led or co-led workshops in, amongst other places, South Sudan, Lebanon, Kenya and Nepal. His recent research has included analysis of developmental approaches to tackling transnational organised crime, promoting conflict sensitivity amongst Chinese corporate actors, the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on stability in Lebanon and participatory approaches to conflict analysis.

Tim has also worked in DFID's South Asia Department, focusing on Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as undertaking consultancy projects for donors, including DFID, GIZ and UNDP. He holds an MSc in development studies from SOAS (University of London), and a BSc in experimental psychology from the University of Bristol. He can be reached at tmidgley@saferworld.org.uk.

Matthew J. O. Scott

Matt is currently World Vision's Peacebuilding director. He previously provided global leadership for MSTC between 2008 and 2012. He was the

first to spark the vision of MSTC's potential as a vehicle for inter-agency collaboration.

Matt brings 18 years of experience working at the international level on peacebuilding, humanitarian concerns and human rights issues. He is passionate about executing knowledge-management innovation, motivating staff for peak performance and facilitating change processes. He has been deployed with NGOs to the Middle East, Caucasus, Horn of Africa, Great Lakes, Latin America, South Asia and South East Asia, and he has partnered with donors and multilateral organisations.

Matt is also a certified and highly experienced certified MSTC lead facilitator, working in English, Spanish and French. He can be reached at matthew_scott@wvi.org.

Author of the Foreword – Betty Bigombe

Betty, a Ugandan national, is the senior director for the Fragility, Conflict and Violence Group at the World Bank. Previously she was the state minister for water resources in the Ugandan cabinet, and also an elected Member of Parliament.

Betty began her career in the African Development Bank. She subsequently was deputy minister in the Office of the Prime Minister before an eight-year tenure as minister of state for Northern Uganda. In that position, she was charged with leading the peace process and humanitarian efforts in Northern Uganda. She later worked with the World Bank as a senior social scientist in the Social Development Department's Post-Conflict-Unit, and also with the Carter Center.

Betty has been a visiting scholar at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and the Woodrow Wilson Center, and a fellow at the United States Institute of Peace. In 2014, she received the Ordre National de la Legion D'honneur from the French government, honouring her longstanding commitment to peace and humanitarian affairs throughout her career.

Key Terms

Aid: an umbrella term that includes sectors such as emergency response, community development, advocacy and peacebuilding.

Actor-groups: a phrase that is used MSTC to refer to groups of people that have the strongest influence on turbulence in the context.

Conflict analysis: a structured process of analysis to better understand conflict by looking at its history, actors, dynamics and causes. Conflict analysis is used to inform both conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding.

Context analysis: a broader analysis that covers social, cultural, political and/or economic factors without a specific focus on conflict. (In some situations it may be too sensitive to discuss ‘conflict analysis’ openly, so the term ‘context analysis’ is used to defuse tension.) (Schirch 2013 p.8)

Conflict assessment: similar to ‘conflict analysis’. *Assessment* is sometimes understood to be more focused on planning. However, definitions are contradictory (Goodhand 2006 p.25, Freeman and Fisher 2012, Levinger 2013 p.88), and in current practice the terms are used almost interchangeably. MSTC uses ‘analysis’ as a term more accessible to the non-specialist.

Conflict sensitivity: the ability of an organisation to understand the context, understand the interaction between its interventions and the context, and act upon this understanding in order to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012). Unlike peacebuilding, it does not necessarily seek to address the underlying causes of conflict.

Convening agency: the agency that convenes or hosts an MSTC workshop. In multi-agency MSTCs, the convener may be a consortium.

Civil society: citizen groups, organisations or networks that are separate from the state or business sector (Edwards 2009). This is the ‘space’ where people work together to address societal issues. Civil society includes, but is not limited to, non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The concept

differs across cultures, but for conflict analysis purposes a broad, inclusive definition is preferred (Kasfir 1998).

Fragility: characteristics include state unwillingness or inability to provide for citizen security, political representation and/or public services; lack of perceived government legitimacy; compromised rule of law and/or territorial control; disposition to conflict and violence; and, in some cases, state collapse. Definitions of fragility are contested, especially amongst local actors.

Local actors: people who live within the context being analysed, such as national actors as opposed to international actors or people from outlying areas as opposed to capital cities. MSTC emphasises the participation of local actors in civil society.

Macro-level analysis: refers to a large-scale analysis normally conducted at the national level. It may also be applied to a subnational or cross-border region.

Multi-mandate organisation: refers to aid NGOs that offer multiple types of programmes, including emergency response, community development, advocacy and/or peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding: activities that intentionally address underlying causes of conflict by weaving a fabric of resilience through a community so that it resolves its own conflicts, builds capacities to heal broken relationships and nourishes more just systems and structures.

Participatory approach: seeks to increase the level of activity and autonomy by local people. Levels of participation may vary along a continuum. However, participation always means going beyond a simple consultation or extraction of data so that participants have some ownership over the process and the outcomes.

Political economy: ‘the production and distribution of power, wealth and destitution during armed conflicts, in order to expose the motives and responsibility of those involved, within a historical context’ (Le Billon 2000 p.1).

Scenarios: potential future developments that are considered highly probable and impactful based on an MSTC analysis. Scenarios are catalysed by trigger events and are short-term.

Strategic needs: the key factors that need to change so that a turbulent context may progress towards its preferred future, based on an MSTC analysis. Medium to long term in nature.

Trigger event: an event that catalyses an unfolding process, especially a process of significant contextual change.

Turbulent contexts: unstable countries or regions that are either suffering from overt violent conflict or appear peaceful but are in fact undermined by more covert forms of violence. The instability in turbulent contexts is often long term and chronic, with alternating cycles of peacefulness and violence over the long term. Turbulence is profoundly political in nature.

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Index

A

accountability and multi-agency
MSTCs, 9.3
actor-groups
 Actor-Groups and Characteristics
 Analysis, 4.2
 interaction among, 4.2, 4.3
 internal dynamics, 4.3
 mapping analysis, 4.6
adaptation and flexibility, 6.6
aid agencies
 historical changes in, Introduction
 improving social impact, 1.6, 2.3,
 9.2, 9.3
 workshops for inter-agency aid
 community, Annex A
analysis cycle, 3.1
 ten steps of, Introduction
analysis tools
 overview, 3.3
 Rapid Historical Phase Analysis,
 4.1
 Actor-Groups and Characteristics
 Analysis, 4.2
 Intergroup Relationships Analysis,
 4.3
 Symptoms and Root Causes of
 Instability Analysis, 4.4
 Political Economy of Instability
 Analysis, 4.5
 MSTC Mapping, 4.6

Trigger Events and Scenarios
Analysis, 5.1
Strategic Needs Analysis, 5.2
Operational and Advocacy
Implications Analysis, 5.3
Integration with Strategy and
Priorities, 5.4

B

Bell, Kathryn, Annex A
Bigombe, Betty, Annex D

C

Capacities for Peace (follow-up to
People's Peacemaking Perspectives),
1.4 *footnote*
case studies
 cross-agency comparison,
 Pakistan, 5.1
 ensuring balanced participation,
 8.3
 Kenyan elections, Introduction
 macro-analysis in challenging
 context, 6.2
 micro-macro linkages, Sri Lanka,
 2.3
 Oxfam Asia, 7.1
 scenario updates, Lebanon, 6.5
challenges, 8.1–8.7
 competing objectives, 8.5
 conflict analysis, not peace
 analysis, 8.6

- implementation of
 - recommendations, 8.2
 - time- and resource-intensive, 8.1, 9.3
 - underemphasised themes, 8.4
 - upholding true participation, 8.3
- civic participation as strategic need, 7.2
- civil society
 - empowerment of, 7.2, 9.2, 9.4
 - engagement in conflict analysis, 1.6
 - participation in, 9.4
 - peacebuilding organisations, 2.3 *footnote*
- collaboration
 - among aid agencies, 2.3, 7.2, 9.2, 9.3
 - among civil society organisations, 9.4
- complex systems theory, 2.2
- conflict
 - economic causes of, 2.2, 4.5
 - identity-based, 2.2
 - manifest or latent, 2 *footnote*
 - multi-causal systems of, 2.2
 - and turbulence, 2.1
- conflict analysis, 1.6, 9.1–9.5
 - and civil society, 1.6
 - complex systems theory, 2.2
 - and conflict sensitivity, Introduction
 - growth of, 1.1
 - macro-level, 1.2, 2.3
 - micro-level, 1.2, 2.3
 - need for, Introduction
 - format, Introduction

- as transformative process, 1.6
- conflict-sensitive approach, 1.1, 8.6
- confidentiality in workshop context, 6.4, 7.1
- context as basis for MSTC, Introduction, 2.1–2.4
- context analysis, 1.1 *footnote*, 2.1, 2.3
 - need for context analysis tools, Introduction, Annex A
- context-monitoring team, 6.5
- coordination, inter-agency, 1.6

D

- data
 - consolidation, 8.1, 8.2
 - external, 6.1
 - from diverse sources, 7.2
- development
 - concurrent with relief, 2.1
 - of MSTC framework, Annex A
 - of MSTC tools, 1.7
- disaster-preparedness phase, 8.1
- diversity
 - of facilitators, 6.3
 - of participants and input, 6.1, 7.2
 - in multi-agency MSTCs, 9.2, 9.3
 - in participatory macro-conflict analysis, 1.6, 1.7, 6.1, 7.2
- documentation
 - standardisation of practices, Annex A
 - of workshop outputs and findings, 5.4, 6.4, 8.3
- Do No Harm, 1.2, 8.6
 - and MSTC, 2.3, Annex A

E

economic activities and turbulence, 4.5
economic inequality, 2.2, 4.5
economic resources, 4.5
emergency response, 2.1, 8.1
empowerment of civil society, 1.6, 7.2, 9.2, 9.4
environment as underemphasised theme, 8.4
ethnic conflict, 2.2
expertise of locals, 1.6

F

facilitators
 importance of, 1.5, 6.3, Annex C
 reflexivity, 8.3
 standards for, 1.7
 training, 8.1
flexibility in conflict analysis, 6.6
follow-up to workshops, 5.4, 6.5, 7.3
 challenges, 8.2
 with multi-agency MSTCs, 9.3
fragility assessments, 9.4
Freeman, Lisa, Annex A

G

Garred, Dr Michelle, Annex A, Annex D
gender as underemphasised theme, 8.4
geography as source of tension, 1.7
governance as strategic need, 7.2
greed as source of conflict, 2.2, 4.5
grievance
 and affinity, 4.3
 and conflict, 2.2, 4.3, 4.5

groups, *See actor-groups*

H

historical phase analysis, 4.1
humanitarian interventions, 2.1
human resources, 4.5 *footnote*
human rights as underemphasised theme, 8.4

I

implementation of
 recommendations, 5.4, 6.2, 7.3, 8.2
 and multi-agency MSTCs, 9.3
 improving, 8.2
 sustainable, 1.6
inclusion
 of diverse participants, 1.6, 6.1, 8.3
 political, 1.6
instability, 2.1
 and economic inequality, 2.2, 4.5
 symptoms and root causes, 4.4
integration
 of programming streams, 2.1
 Integration with Strategy and Priorities, 5.4
Intergroup Relationships Analysis, 4.3

J

Jackson, Stephen, Annex A

L

languages MSTCs conducted in, 6.1 *footnote*
latent conflict, 2 *footnote*
leadership team
 engagement, 6.2

post-workshop responsibilities, 5.4
 Le Billon, Philippe, 2.2, Annex A
 legality and economic activity, 4.5
 local actors
 defining, 1.7
 need for, Introduction, 1.3, 1.6
 local knowledge as a resource, 1.4,
 1.6, 7.2
 Lowrey, Dr Bill, Annex A

M

macro-analysis frameworks, 1.3
 and local context, 7.1
 participatory, 1.2
 similarity of, 1.2
 manifest conflict, 2 *footnote*
 manipulation, avoiding, 8.3
 mapping analysis tool, 4.6
 marginalised groups, 4.2, 8.4
 meta-analysis of MSTCs, 7.2,
 Annex A
 micro-analysis frameworks, *See Do
 No Harm*
 micro-macro linkages, 2.3, 2.3 *case
 study*, 7.1
 Midgley, Tim, Annex D
 MSTC Mapping, 4.6
 MSTC River, 3.2
 multi-agency workshops,
 Introduction, 9.1, 9.3, Annex A
 impact, 7.2, 9.2
 multiple perspectives
 and competing objectives, 8.5
 of participants, 6.3, 6.4, 8.3 *case
 study*
 of participatory approach, 1.6

N

natural disasters and turbulence,
 2.1, 8.4
 new humanitarianism, 2.1

O

objectivity and triangulation, 6.1
 Operational and Advocacy
 Implications Analysis, 5.3
 O'Reilly-Calthrop, Siobhan,
 Annex A, Annex D

P

participation gap, Introduction
 in conflict analysis practice, 1.3
 participants
 active participation, 6.4, 8.3
 in multi-agency MSTCs, 9.1, 9.2
 selection, 1.7, 9.2
 as source of diversity, 6.1
 participatory approaches, 1.4, 1.5
 benefits of, Introduction, 1.6
 in facilitation, 6.3
 and local knowledge, 7.2
 MSTC, 1.2
 People's Peacemaking
 Perspectives, 1.4
 time and resources as factors, 8.1
 peacebuilding as strategic need, 7.2
 peace factors, no direct analysis of,
 8.6
 People's Peacemaking Perspectives,
 1.4
 perspectives
 internal vs. external, 1.6, 7.2
 of participants, 1.7
 Phelps, Reola, Annex A

policy influence, 9.4
 political economy of conflict, 2.2, 4.5
 Political Economy of Instability Analysis, 4.5
 political inclusion, 1.6, 9.2, 9.4
 politics and turbulence, 2.1
 powerful groups, 4.2

Q

quality of analysis, improving, 1.6, 6.1, 7.2

R

Rapid Historical Phase Analysis, 4.1
 read-ahead briefings, 6.1 *footnote*
 recommendations
 based on strategic needs and scenarios, 5.3
 in final reports, 5.4
 implementation of, 1.6, 7.3, 8.2
 relationships
 Intergroup Relationships Analysis, 4.3
 between conflicting groups, 2.3, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6
 inter-agency, 1.6, 9.2, 9.3
 relief concurrent with development, 2.1
 relief-to-development continuum, 2.1
 religious conflict, 2.2
 reports
 distribution of final reports, 6.4
 meta-analyses, 7.2
 on workshop findings, 5.4

resources
 equitable distribution as strategic need, 7.2
 human, 4.5 *footnote*
 influence on conflict, 2.2, 4.5
 interest and control, 4.6
 resource-intensive approach, 8.1
 sharing, 9.3
 respect in workshop context, 6.4
 risk minimisation, 1.7, 6.2 *case study*, 6.4, 6.6
 root causes of instability, 4.4

S

scenarios
 identification, 5.1
 monitoring, 6.5, 9.3
 Scott, Matthew J. O., Annex A, Annex D
 security of data, 6.4
 sensitive data guidelines, 6.4
 strategic needs
 addressing, 7.2 *footnote*
 analysis, 5.2, 7.2
 future, 5.2
 Strategic Needs Analysis, 5.2
 of the context, Introduction
 Symptoms and Root Causes of Instability Analysis, 4.4

T

terminology
 conflict analysis vs. context analysis, 1.1 *footnote*
 conflict vs. turbulence, 2.1
 emergency response vs. humanitarian interventions, 2.1

- themes, underemphasised, 8.4
- time-intensive approach, 8.1
- timeline
 - as history during MSTC
 - workshops, 4.1
 - of MSTC, Annex A
- tools, development of, 1.7, Annex A
- transformative process, conflict analysis as, 1.6
- triangulation of information, 6.1
- trigger events, 5.1, 6.5
 - monitoring, 9.3
- Trigger Events and Scenarios Analysis, 5.1
- trust in workshop context, 6.4
- turbulence, 2.1
 - and economic activity, 4.5
 - causal explanations for, 2.1, 4.1
 - cyclical nature, 2.1

V

violence and economic activity, 4.5

W

weaknesses of MSTC, 8.6 *footnote*

workshops

- atmosphere, 6.4
- cost, 8.1 *footnote*
- design, 7.3
- mini-MSTC workshops, 6.5
- multi-agency, 9.2
- single- and multi-agency, Introduction, 9.1
- to date, Annex B

World Vision mandate, Introduction

‘MY HOPE is that this important and timely contribution to the field of conflict analysis will spark new discussions in the international community about participatory conflict analysis. People on the receiving end of the international community’s assistance deserve nothing less than a consistent, rigorous, listening posture and a willingness to apply these perspectives into our programming.’

— Betty Bigombe

Senior Director for Fragility, Conflict and Violence, World Bank

Local voices matter.

World Vision offers this book, *Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts*, to address a problematic gap within the field of conflict analysis: local knowledge. The ambitious claim is that analysing large-scale conflict in an inclusive, participatory way will increase the effectiveness of aid in turbulent settings.

The hope is that *Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts* will transcend its World Vision origin and help to establish the participatory approach as a consistent complement to traditional expert-driven forms of macro-conflict analysis. Turbulent contexts require the best from aid workers, and local people have the right to take the lead in shaping how civil society works for peace, justice and human well-being.



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