Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Context Analysis Tool 2: Identify Fields of Violence and shift to constructive conflict resolution

Date: August 2015
For: SDC CSPM Trainings

Objective *:*
- *to understand the difference between conflict and violence*
- *identify fields of violence that hinder our development and humanitarian mandate and how to address violence accordingly*

Background:
Violence *is prescribed with "actions, words, behavior, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and / or hinder persons / groups to realize their potential for development" (Fisher et al.). As such, violence is always negative, because it always causes destruction to both sides in the conflict; it always leads further and further away from a possible resolution and agreement. This means violence destroys not only the present, but also the future.*
Difference between Violence and Conflict: *The word "conflict" can be understood in two ways: Either negatively when it's coupled with violence (ex. armed conflict) or positively when it enables the two parties to express through dialogue their opposition, their disagreement, without resorting to violence. In this case, the ability for each side to express the disagreement will allow them to understand the other's position, and from there, to try and transform their disagreement into an agreement. Thus, violence is always negative, because destructive, while conflict can be positive if it's constructive and if it can help avoid falling into violence.*

How can one shift from destructive violence to constructive conflict?
Our human relations (i.e. our social life with other humans), lead to opposing opinions, tensions and conflicts. The key questions are thus:
- *How can we canalize the urges for violence that can surge up from a disagreement so that these remain the least destructive possible?*
- *How can we make this disagreement become a constructive conflict so that the disagreement can be transformed into an agreement, without degenerating into violence?*
- *Or, if violence has already broken out, how can we transform the destructive impulses on both sides into a constructive conflict where the diverging positions are instead transmitted with words?*

Possible ways for a conflict to evolve
Conflict, in the sense of opposing positions, can be resolved if the two parties either agree to reciprocal concessions or creatively develop a third possibility.
Conflict will get bogged down and worsen, however, if the two parties camp on their positions, without making the effort to imagine other mutually acceptable exit paths.

What are the benefits of a constructive conflict?
Constructive conflict is the clear expression of a disagreement with the shared objective of reaching an agreement that resolves the conflict.
Expressing disagreement through dialogue is healthy, because it enables each side to recognise the existence and the dimension of the conflict, without which no agreement can be found. Expressing disagreement can thus be a valuable personal goal if our sincere objective is finding a mutually acceptable agreement.

Forms of Violence [2] \ Strategies for prevention of violence [1]		Improve relationships between children and their parents and caretakers	Reduce availability and misuse of alcohol	Reduce access to lethal means, such as guns, knives, and pesticides	Build / Enhance life skills and opportunities for children and youth	Improve gender equality and women empower-ment	Work with elders, rel. & spiritual leaders to change cultural norms	Improve accountability and the criminal justice systems	Reduce social distance between conflicting groups	Reduce economic inequality and concentrated poverty
direct physical violence	Killings									
	Physical violence									
	Sexual assult & violations									
direct psycholo-gical violence	Verbal Abuse & humilation									
	Emotional violence									
cultural violence	Attitudes, beliefes and spiritual forces									
	Patriachal-/Matriachal society									
	Cast System and Racism									
	Forced Marriage									
	Genital mutilation									
structual violence	Gender Based Discrimination									
	Neglect of poor (e.g. mal-nutrition, famine, education)									
	Financial Abuse & Corruption									

[1] See WHO: A Public Health Approach to Developing Armed Violence Indicators (2008)
[2] See: Defining Violence and Abuse