THE ANATOMY OF CONFLICT
A Conflict Analysis Handbook for Journalists: towards conflict sensitive reporting
The Anatomy of Conflict

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About this handbook

Journalists have a wealth of information concerning the occurrences from the areas where they report. The nature of their job makes them among the most informed and appropriate target group for any conflict analysis exercise. Actually, the role of journalists is greater than just reporting the facts, it goes further to interrogate issues for the benefit of the target audience.

The audience too should be able to understand why things happen the way they do, and not just what happened. This is why there is need to provide background information and context on conflicts in an accurate and credible frame. Reporting conflict is a big responsibility that requires journalists to be informed and understand what they are reporting about. They play a positive role when they portray conflicts in a constructive manner, provide the whole picture, address the root causes, use de-sensationalized language, report on all sides, and highlight peace stories.

Constructive conflict coverage that addresses causes of conflict and follows up the post-violence stage has the potential to create opportunities for the public to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict. Conflict sensitive journalism stresses on the importance of news selection, what is being reported on, how, and its consequences on the public. Deep-rooted and intractable conflicts tend to be very complex. Good journalism requires that you do a conflict analysis to understand who all the parties are and what role they are playing in the situation.

Disputants often frame the conflict in relatively simple (and often self-serving) terms. Very often the sides see the underlying causes as very different. Sometimes they don’t even know what they are, as the conflict has gone on so long and become so embedded in the culture, that raw emotions: fear, humiliation, and anger overlie earlier substantive concerns.

Good journalists will explore both the superficial, but also the underlying causes of the conflict from all points of view. With conflict analysis, journalists can understand what diplomats and negotiators are trying to do, and can report it more reliably. With conflict analysis, journalists can identify more sources to go to for information.
Foreword

Conflict analysis is the foundation of any conflict management process, from prevention, mediation to reconciliation. In the world of development organization—both local and international—a nuanced understanding of the context and dynamics of a conflict can determine the effectiveness with which you intervene in a conflict, prevent further harm from, help determine priorities for program development and lead to understanding better the consequences of any actions or policies.

Conflict Analysis must be based on a wide range of views about the sources of conflict. Conflicts are about perceptions and the meanings that people attribute to events, policies and institutions. A conflict analysis helps stakeholders to reconsider their perspectives, which are often heavily influenced by emotions, misunderstandings, assumptions, suspicions and mistrust. In conflict situations, emotion can easily overwhelm logic and reason. It is therefore important to distinguish opinion from fact.

A conflict is often more complex than it seems. How do the participants frame the conflict? To what extent are their views alike, and how do they differ? How do others frame the conflict? What seem to be the immediate or proximate factors behind the conflict? Are there deeper livelihoods, institutional, political or other structural factors behind the conflict?

Trying to manage a conflict as a single, isolated event may be of little use if it is intertwined with wider problems or issues. Journalists should understand that Conflict is not violence, neither is it war. But conflict could lead to war when opposing parties react to conflict violently. Violence does not only mean war, as it is not only direct or physical. Violence could also be structural and cultural.

War is a violent conflict. Thus, reporting on conflict does not necessarily mean reporting on wars. Having knowledge about conflicts expands the comprehensions and perspectives of journalists regarding the conflicts and prevents them from focusing only on violence when conflict occurs. By knowing that conflict is a process that has different stages, journalists can be aware that violence is only one of these stages. This said, it is important to distinguish conflict, war and violence. This necessitates understanding the nature and dynamics of conflict which happens through conflict analysis.
Part One

The Essentials

Why conflict analysis and mapping for journalists?

Journalists need to have extensive and comprehensive understanding of conflict situations before they elaborately report on it. Various audiences and stakeholders in conflict situations depend on the media for information especially during conflict situation where dialogue is non-existent. Journalists ought to exercise professional, objective and conflict sensitive reporting and analysis that will facilitate dialogue, peace building and reconciliation. According to a publication by the United Nations Peace building Support Office, conflict analysis can be defined as an assessment of the context, causes, consequences, actors and dynamics of conflict as well as the sources and actors supporting peace and resilience.

The aim of conflict analysis among journalists is to gain a comprehensive and shared understanding of potential, latent or ongoing violent conflicts. With the growth of journalism over the years, scholars have been exploring new ways of reporting conflict. These principles and approaches have different labels including; conflict sensitive journalism and conflict de-escalating reporting or peace journalism. Conflict analysis aims to assist journalists achieve the aforementioned conflict reporting skills based on professional and ethical principles that form the core tenets of conflict sensitive reporting and peace journalism.

According to Du Toit (2010), conflict is a dynamic situation and changes depending on the level it is at each stage and this is precipitated by factors including entry of new actors. Conflict analysis usually involves an assessment of key conflict factors which include the sources of tension and root causes of conflict, including linkages and synergies. Conflict analysis also considers the actors including; interests, potential spoilers, capacities for violence and peace, incentives required to promote peace. Lastly, it looks at the dynamics; triggers for violence and likely future scenarios in terms of conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence.

Understanding conflict is very important because conflict is always about change. Among other things, it’s about people trying to meet unfulfilled needs, enhance their influence, defend their identities, gain increased access to resources and reduce inequalities and injustice. It can also be about people resisting change and fighting to maintain privilege. Conflict is an important driver of change and change is at the heart of almost all media focused reporting.

The premise of conflict analysis for journalists is that the more we understand about conflict, its causes, dynamics and prospects for resolution the better our reporting will be. Conflict is almost always more complex than it seems and we can make good use of thinking tools from the field of peace and conflict.
studies to enhance our understanding of what is happening and why. These tools can help us get beyond the rhetoric of groups involved in disputes and confrontations and help us explore the underlying causes of a conflict. They can also help us identify solutions that have the potential to satisfy all of the stakeholders involved.

Elections on fledgling democracies like Kenya are often marred with heated competition that is sometimes manifested through conflict. This sometimes turns violent as witnessed in 2007/2008 or non-violent as witnessed in 2013. \textsuperscript{5}The 2013 election was described as one of “tense calm” or “unstable peace.” These contrasting and even contradictory views raise questions about the legitimacy of the success narrative with regards to peaceful elections. Kenya is never safe from conflict until some issues are resolved and even so, conflict can never be fully eradicated. Only violent conflict is preventable. The patterns from previous elections in Kenya provide the basis of a comfortable conclusion that violent conflict could erupt before every election. This can happen as long as the long-standing grievances that fueled violence in such elections remain unresolved.

**What is at Stake?**

Howard Ross’s handbook \textsuperscript{6}argues that having the skills to analyze conflict will enable reporters to be more professional and informed about the conflict. Professional journalists do not seek to alter, lessen or disrupt the course of conflict. They only seek to present accurate and impartial news. It is clear that the public depend on the media on accurate, reliable and objective information which require that reporters have extra lenses to discern factors beyond the conflict. While the constraints of time and space are limiting factors in newsroom production, journalists can learn to package their stories without eliminating the essential elements they learn and understand through conflict analysis.

While journalists try to remain aloof and distant from the conflict, they inevitably and progressively become involuntary actors as part of the conflict. This happens the moment they start reporting it. As purveyors of conflict information, all the parties to it seek media attention through interaction with journalists. Journalists have often been caught up in the mesh of conflict web which sometimes fogs their understanding and clouds their judgment and reporting of conflict situations.

It is not in the interest of journalists to determine small or big conflict situations to report on but they should understand that how they behave, who they choose as news sources, the questions they ask, what they write and broadcast will influence conflict dynamics. The choices journalists make when they are reporting about conflicts affect not only our understanding of the conflict but also what we perceive to be the solution. This, in turn, affects the conflict and its outcome. This is more so because conflicting parties seek to be heard and seen via media platforms during conflict situations.
The connection between media reporting and conflict Management

While the connection between media reporting and conflict eruption is mostly vague, the media's influence on the course of conflict is insignificantly minimal, inconspicuously minute and oddly intangible most of the time. It is a fact however that good reporting by media can shape conflicts in a significant way. This stands as the fulcrum of professional and ethical reporting of conflicts by journalists.

To provide a comprehensive picture of what is taking place in a conflict, journalists need to show how the parties' attitudes, their behaviors and the social context (contradictions) are impacting on each other. While this skill is not imparted in our media training institutions, many journalists have reported without proper understanding of conflict situations within their areas. Too often reporting focuses on behaviors without addressing the other important issues related to the conflict. This can be achieved through conflict analysis. Analyzing conflicts includes not only collecting information and evidence about the conflict, but also interpreting and evaluating the information collected. The end user of the information (audience) is the major beneficiary of a diligent, thorough, well-thought and reported process of conflict analysis.

Why Professional and Ethical media coverage of conflict

Accurate, objective and reliable reporting of conflict by journalists is very important. It can assist in lessening the tension by bringing out facts, correcting misperceptions and presenting realities which would otherwise be ignored by conflicting parties. Quality reporting of conflict helps avoid stereotypes and narrow perspectives on the causes and process of conflict. We need to appreciate that quality reporting cannot happen without clear understanding of conflict through conflict analysis.

The Media can explore and provide information about opportunities for resolution and also assist the parties into dialogue through accurate reporting of issues. This can only happen if journalists have a good understanding of conflict situation.

Journalists have a potential to contribute to conflict escalation, interfere with peace process, derail negotiations, misinform the public through inaccurate, insensitive and sensational reporting. Conflict analysis does not aim to shape or limit how journalist report on conflict situations. Objectively, it helps to create a broader, deeper and objective understanding of the conflict situation in a way that enhances quality reporting. Essentially, conflict analysis makes a journalist's subjective perceptions transparent.

What lenses can we view conflict with as journalists?

Furlong (2012) argues that conflict can be viewed through cultural lens, communications lens, personality lens, structural lens, type of conflict lens, dynamics of conflict lens, and many more. However, for journalists, they should strive to look at conflict using all the above perspectives with the aim of an
objective, accurate and reliable reporting. Considering the arguments of Furlong, conflict analysis aims to equip journalists with a three Dimension perspective and approach to reporting on conflict. With such, they avoid repeating shallow, thoughtless rhetoric about the conflict to achieve sensationalism and targets for their media houses.

Journalists who are conflict sensitive recognize that their role is to serve audiences, not to provide a megaphone for any actor in a propaganda war. A journalist who has a thorough understanding of the conflict will ask questions that encourage parties to explain their needs, values, and interests and to express their emotions and fears. Through their questioning and interrogation mechanism, they will also challenge actors by reporting the facts when situations are exxegarated. Journalist equipped with conflict sensitive reporting skills and deep background of conflict situations understand that parties firing verbal salvos and threats at each other may make for dramatic content, but it does not help our audiences.

“What the power of media in warfare is formidable. It can be a mediator or an interpreter or even a facilitator of conflict. If only by editing away facts that do not fit the demands of air time or print space” Elizabeth Rehan, Ellen Sirleaf, Women, War and Peace

What are the inadequacies and inconsistencies in media reporting of conflicts?

Rumors, misperceptions, fears and suspicions very often provoke or prolong a violent conflict. Journalists working in a highly polarized and partisan contexts are sometimes pressured to take sides in the conflict, further aggravating divisions.

The major problem is that reporting conflict even in the Kenyan context (based on our media monitoring reports, 2015) is often partisan, inaccurate, and sensational and majorly lacks the objectivity that is needed to pass across messages that will promote dialogue, peace and reconciliation.

Majority of journalists do not have adequate knowledge on conflict analysis that helps them isolate the various issues and actors in conflict situations (Based on workshop survey during the conflict analysis with sampled journalists, (MCK, 2015/2016). In essence therefore, understanding of the origins, nature, dynamics and possibilities for resolution of conflict is what journalists’ lack.

Interactions, media monitoring and discussions with journalists in various regions in Kenya made evident the following inadequacies and inconsistencies:

- Stories of conflict are framed within binary categories of good vs. evil, or one ethnic race against another, thus leading to an over-simplification of conflict process.

- Journalists who cover the involvement of their ethnic conflicts are sometimes unable to do
objective and reliable reporting where their ethnic communities are involved

- Journalists sometimes attribute the triggers of conflict as the main causes.

- “Helicopter Journalists” (Journalists who are flown to a specific area to cover conflict situations) often do not understand conflict they cover because they do not have background information on such conflicts.

- Journalists concentrate on bad news of conflict and are silent on peace process. Some positive stories are killed due to mindless gatekeeping processes by editors.

- Journalists are often sensational and emotional in their tone or reporting.

- The media tends to focus on powerful, conspicuous actors like politicians, warlords and other opinion leaders.

- Journalists often reinforce stereotypes which sometimes damage perspectives of conflict.

- When telling every story, Journalists not only choose who and what to include inside the frame but who and what to leave out. Sometimes, important details are left when journalists do their conflict stories

- Journalists use limited viewpoints and often repeat old grievances by the old elites when reporting on conflict.

- Journalists mostly just follow events. They don’t explain what led to those events. They thus reported on conflict superficially and mechanically.

- The media ignores the small conflicts while dramatizing and sensationalizing the larger, historic conflicts.

- Journalists very often personify a conflict, so that an act of evil or good is attributed to one person or group. This overlooks the dynamics and substantive issues in a conflict.

- Journalists tend to focus almost exclusively on the behavior of groups involved in conflict without explaining the reasons behind people’s actions.

- Journalists have been dragged into conflict factions based on their geographic areas of reporting. Journalists from two sides of conflict report differently on same conflict situation but with differing perspectives influenced by which side they reporting from.

- Distance and vastness of some areas, counties were a great hindrance to professional, ethical and objective reporting of conflict situations in Kenya.

- Reporters and correspondents indicated that editors sometimes mutilate their stories which they have carefully and professionally done to fit in space and time constraints.

(The Bias of the mainstream media is towards sensationalism, conflict and laziness, Jon Stewart)
Why conflict Analysis Matrix is important for Journalists

The aim of conflict analysis for journalists is to understand the causes, dynamics and the actors/forces who are promoting continued violent conflict. The more we know about conflict, its causes, dynamics and the ways in which it can be managed the better equipped we can be to report on events with the understanding and sensitivity that enables us to make a constructive contribution through good journalism. Objectivity in reporting conflicts is often killed because journalists cannot discern between truth and false information especially when they are given by news sources.

The aim of Conflict analysis for journalists is to achieve reporting that:

i. Upholds the principles of conflict sensitive reporting

ii. Identify perspectives of all important conflict parties before doing their stories.

iii. Goes beyond obvious conflict symptoms to the issues that warrant public attention.

iv. Explore the sources and effects of the conflict towards wholesome reporting.

v. Explain the historical and social context that help project the context of the conflict.

vi. Examine the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict for public awareness and interventions

vii. Examine stakeholders’ options and their implications with regards to its watchdog role

viii. Analyze attempts to negotiate or bridge gaps and objectively report on such with greater ability to do analysis of such efforts based on clear understanding of conflict.

ix. Determine an effective style and medium for reporting on various forms of conflict

There are various issues that journalist should understand with regards to coverage of conflict. Whether journalists seek to influence a conflict or not our coverage will always have the potential to impact on whether a conflict develops positively or not. The ability of journalists to make constructive contribution depends on the degree to which we are seen as credible by all of the parties involved. Journalists should not promote particular solutions to conflict but we can help people to make decisions by examining the strengths and weaknesses of available options. This is where conflict analysis helps in opening up perspectives, options and areas where parties to a conflict may not be able to see.

Ethically and professionally, journalists cannot censor news to avoid upsetting or angering people but we can offset some of the hazards of exaggerated rumors which promote fear and violence. However, Journalists can become more effective reporters of conflict and violence if we take the time to read and learn about these complex phenomena. What is needed with urgency in the newsroom is journalism which explores each side's particular difficulties, such as politics or
powerful interests can help educate the other side to avoid demands for simplistic and immediate solutions.

**Characteristics of conflict that necessitates conflict analysis**

1. Comprehension of the phenomenon, appreciation of its causes and consideration of its complexity is necessary to analyze, comment or even report on it in a manner that yield positive dividends by raising demands for peace-building. The common characteristics of conflict situations that necessitate conflict analysis for journalists include:

- **Multiple Actors:** Who are the major actors and what is their role in relations to conflict

- **Prolonged Duration:** Long conflicts are often convoluted and needs critical understanding

- **Complex Issues:** Conflicts are sometimes based on multiplicity of issues in maze-like fashion

- **Perceptions:** The perception of parties and audiences to the conflict are often shaped by the media. A thorough understanding of this is absolutely essential.

- **Social-Psychological Factors:** The social and psychological factors are characteristics of the conflict should be understood better.

- **Geopolitics:** Conflict is not often restricted by geographical boundaries and it is important to understand the dynamics of the same.

**A resource for Journalists**

This book will help journalists by introducing various conflict analysis tools which they can use by themselves or participate in using when involved in conflict analysis with other stakeholders and partners.

Ethnic conflicts in Kenya occur frequently, although most are minor skirmishes compared to what's happening in other Africa countries. Kenya has over 42 ethnic groups. It has had protracted political and ethnic clashes. Some of the causes of ethnic conflict in Kenya include:

- Colonial Policies, Political Instigation, Land issues, Access to water and pasture resources, Loss of traditional grazing land, Cattle rustling, terrorism, perceived Harassment and theft and extortion among other causes.

According to a national conflict mapping and analysis report by the various actors and organizations, the Kenyan context is coloured by different types of conflicts ranging from structural violence, political, economic, identity-based, cross-border, gender-based, human-wildlife, urban, to environmental conflicts. There are also challenges of pastoralist conflicts, intrastate and with neighboring countries.

A well-executed conflict analysis among journalists increases the chances of gaining deeper insight into the underlying factors, which created the actual situation in the conflict area. Shallow understanding by journalists leads to shallow reporting on matters of conflict which in turn impacts on the target audience. Many times journalists are posted as reporters and correspondents to news areas for short term or long
terms assignments. Very often they are bombarded by conflict situations which they are required to report with professional and ethical considerations. This book lays down the simple tools and principles of conflict analysis which can help them to flag out key issues regarding the actors, dynamics, causes and consequences of conflict as they report.

The kind of poor journalism may amount to no more than isolated incidences of misjudgment in newsrooms when covering conflict situations. Journalists’ mistakes, however, are made in public and are likely to have an impact on conflict resolutions. Too many errors, even if unrelated, can have a cumulative effect. Journalists can rapidly turn, even if unwittingly, into conflict propaganda. One way of insuring against this is getting facts right and identifying what is wrong and preventing mistakes being made and recognizing professional and ethical journalism relating to conflict sensitive journalism and encouraging its practice.

Seven Tough questions that Journalists Need to ask before covering conflict situations

i. Do I really understand what is happening?

Conflicts are often deep-rooted, intractable and dynamic in nature and quite complex for simple coverage. This is compounded by the fact that coverage of conflict had tremendous implications in terms of conflict transformation. This necessitates journalists to undertake a thorough conflict analysis to understand the actors, structures and dynamics of conflict. Considering the fact that what news sources say during interviews represents their positions and not their interests. Journalists are often posted from one place to another, this necessitates that they understand conflict analysis within their new areas of posting.

ii. What are the underlying causes of the conflict?

Parties to a conflict sometimes frame the conflict in very simple terms that reflect positions and not interests. This may be shaped by the fact that they see the underlying causes in different perspectives. Some conflicts have a long history and may have spiraled into revenge missions and often embedded in the culture of conflict parties. In most cases such types of conflict are characterized by raw emotions, fear, humiliation and anger which very often override the substantive concerns of the parties. Good journalism aims to explore both the superficial and substantive issues in its reporting.

iii. What are the possible impacts of conflicts on different parties to a conflict

Journalists should be able to build and report on various scenarios of the possible effects of the conflict. Sometimes the parties do not understand the full costs of the conflict and the potential benefits of a settlement and resolution of such conflicts. If journalists are able to represent an assessment of potential effects on various parties then reporting can help in conflict transformation.
iv. Where are you getting your facts?

Factual disputes are rampant in complex, intractable conflicts. Sometimes this occurs because facts are hard to obtain or understand; sometimes each side claims different “facts”. Journalists should take care to do balanced and careful fact-finding before believing any facts about what is or has been going on.

v. What are the full effects of the conflict on different constituency groups?

Conflict participants, particularly those most directly involved in the struggle, often don’t really understand the full cost of the conflict and the potential benefits of settlement or resolution. Doing an assessment of the human, as well as monetary costs, of the conflict on the primary parties, the by-standers (people caught in the middle) and on allies and neighbors of the disputants often reveal an overlooked picture of the conflict situation.

vi. Are parties to the conflict presenting their positions or interests?

Journalists should be able to discern the difference between interest and positions. The classic story to illustrate this describes two sisters fighting over the only orange in the family larder. Each sister must have the entire orange for herself; any less is impossible. A wise parent asks each of the girls (in private) why she wants the orange. One explains she wants to drink the juice; the other wants to use the rind to cook a pudding. What each sister wants is her position, why she wants it is her interest. In this case, the simple solution is to give the cook the rind after the juice has been squeezed for the thirsty sister – thus meeting the interests of both.

vii. Will my stories contribute to conflict escalation?

Media coverage often contributes to escalating a conflict. Sometimes this is desirable; constructive escalation is sometimes the best way for lower-power groups to gain power to effectively advocate for their needs. In other cases, escalation gets out of control, and leads to increasing polarization, violence, and costs to all sides.

Core assumptions underpinning this tool box

The first assumption is that, while fairness, accuracy and responsibility are all generally associated with good, professional news coverage, this handbook suggests that these characteristics alone may not be enough. Understanding of the causes of conflict, the dynamics of conflict escalation and how conflicts can be addressed by parties involved is also important towards conflict sensitive reporting. The more journalists understand about conflict, the better equipped they will be to effectively report on conflict events in conflict sensitive manner.

The second assumption is that, inaccurate reports, biased coverage (intentional or not), sensationalism and in some instances outright propaganda is often
as a result of many factors. Such factors include misunderstanding, misinterpreting or misrepresenting conflict situations and can exacerbate conflict and result in loss of life and destruction of property.

The third assumption is that journalists will be very wary of assuming that they understand why parties in conflict want what they want and do what they do without giving the parties themselves a chance to explain. Keeping an open mind is important for journalists. They also must be aware that solutions that seem self-evident to them may in no way address the concerns of other parties.

The fourth assumption is that journalists can explore the use of conflict analysis tool that are often used by peace & conflict experts. This is designed to enhance their understanding of conflict situations in a way that will enrich their reporting. The tools will hopefully make journalists go beyond simple, basic and often sensational confrontations and dramatic rhetoric of groups involved in disputes. Alternatively, journalists will use their lenses to focus on underlying issues of the conflict. The assumption of the tool is that conflict sensitive reporting can effectively be undertaken if journalists are able to undertake conflict analysis and mapping before reporting.

The fifth assumption is that editorial decisions do not affect the manner in which stories on conflict are represented in the media. While issues of space, time and commercial priorities are existent realities in the newsroom, such is assumed not to affect the comprehensive presentation of stories related to conflict. It also assumes that editors will equally need knowledge on conflict analysis. This will assist them in guiding and shaping how reporters and correspondence report on conflict situations.

Understandably, journalists deal with extraordinary levels of pressure in their daily lives, racing from deadline to deadline and ever-mindful of the competition for a “scoop”. As a result, they have little time and opportunity to examine their role as journalists and what it means to themselves and those around them.

**Having the necessary skills to analyse conflict will enable a reporter to be a more effective professional journalist and an individual who has greater awareness. Journalism practiced with an understanding and awareness of conflicts is called conflict sensitive journalism.**

**International Media support**
Part Two

Introduction to Conflict Analysis; Journalists Perspective

What is Conflict Analysis

Conflict analysis should be distinguished from context analysis which seeks to understand the broader situation, including all economic, social, and political factors. According to Conflict Analysis Framework, Field Guidelines and procedures (2012), the conflict exists within the context and is influenced by it, but the conflict has its own important dynamics. A context analysis seeks a broad understanding of the entire political, economic and social (historical, environmental etc.) scene. A conflict analysis is more narrowly focused on the specific elements of that broader picture that may trigger or propel conflict.

Conflict analysis should also be distinguished from conflict assessment which is a process of analyzing the current situation in order to understand the causes and dynamics of the conflict, and to determine possible areas for intervention. The conflict assessment aims to identify programmatic needs, opportunities, as well as determine appropriate strategies. A conflict assessment is an exploration of the realities of the conflict and an analysis of its underlying causes. In essence, conflict assessments aim to identify needs and opportunities for programmes or projects as well as determine appropriate strategies.

Conflicts and disputes should also be differentiated in the context of conflict analysis. According to Burton (1997), conflict is interpreted in the context of a serious nature of challenges to the existing norms, relationships, and rules of decision making. On the other hand, the term ‘dispute’ applies to management issues and the control of discontent relating to the implementation of specific policies.

Conflicts are dynamic and fluid situations. Each conflict as reported by journalists will require in-depth analysis of the issues at the heart of the conflict, although these will vary with each context and over time. Rarely do we find journalists who are narrowly specialized in conflict reporting in the newsroom. The need for knowledge on conflict analysis stems from the understanding that at one point or another, journalists are engaged in reporting of conflict. Such conflicts can range from political exclusion and questions of governance to economic issues such as lack of inclusive development or the equitable sharing of benefits from a country’s natural wealth.

In one context, a specific issue such as access to land might need to be analyzed; in another, political structures, electoral systems and/or recruitment of personnel into public administration might be paramount issues.

What will journalists seek to understand through conflict analysis?

Conflict analysis enables journalists to understand the following about the conflict:

- The type of the conflict;
- The reasons for the conflict;
• The causes and consequences of the conflict;
• The components and the different actors involved and
• The levels at which the conflict takes place.

The analysis provides information to journalists on how the conflict is seen (whether it is manifest or latent), its dynamics, the relationships and hierarchy of positions between the conflicting parties, and their interests, needs and motivations. In effects conflict analysis allows journalists to examine the dynamics, actors, positions, interest, causes, relationships, types, levels and motivation of conflict for better framing and packaging of news stories.

According to Anstey (2008), conflict exists in a relationship when parties believe their aspirations cannot be achieved at the same time. They also perceive a divergence in their values, needs or interests (latent). They therefore purpose to mobilise the power that is available to them in an effort to eliminate, neutralize, or change each other. There sole desire being to protect or further their interests in the interaction (manifest conflict). From this definition, several things are evident in relations to the nature of conflict:

Conflict takes place within relationships. Relationships are quite complex as well and cannot be understood by casting a short glance only. The beliefs and perceptions of people in conflict are important in shaping conflict situations, Conflict is always about parties’ needs, values and interests and that conflict is often manifest when parties begin to mobilise the power that they have to shape the way conflict happens.

Shaping Journalists understanding of conflict situations

Journalists who seek to understand conflicts need to consider various factors in their coverage: They need to go beyond simply describing the conflict event ie how the parties behaved toward each other.

According to Lynch & McGoldrick, (2005), journalists need to question prior relationships between the parties. They also need to look at the broader context in which the conflict happened and how this has shaped their relationships. Conflict sensitive reporting recognizes that events are important, but also that the social processes leading to these events must be explained. This explanation must be made manifest if people are to understand why and how a conflict is unfolding. This can only happen if journalists are able to undertake conflict analysis.

(Journalists cannot effectively exercise conflict sensitive reporting unless they have a thorough understanding of the conflict which can be realized through conflict analysis)

The World Bank and other development partners have used conflict analysis to create or increase knowledge of the conflict factors. Such analysis has also been used to either contribute to country programming or to inform a specific instrument such as a country strategy or a poverty reduction strategy. Additionally, they have used conflict analysis to integrate a conflict perspective into a wider assessment framework. Such has also included country social analysis or a poverty and social assessment. Media practitioners can borrow
heavily from such conflict analysis tools and processes. With such capabilities, the media will better stand at a vantage point with the vast knowledge of the happenings and occurrences within their areas of reporting.

Conflict analysis is not a one-time exercise, with rigid tools, or a one-size-fits-all process. It is an on-going process, and should be permanently adapted to the ever changing circumstances that are being analysed. Conflict analysis applies to all levels of conflict, from interpersonal through to international, and all stages of conflict, escalation and decline.

**Conflict Analysis and its aim towards conflict sensitive reporting**

Conflict analysis aims to equip journalists with capacity to ensure conflict sensitive reporting. The provocative wording; use of adjectives; narrow view of conflict and partial reporting; become commonplace without journalists understanding of conflict. This additionally happens without being conscious that they are contributing to the perpetuation of such conflict. Some of the tips towards conflict sensitive reporting can only be achieved with a thorough understanding of conflict situations.

- Report Conflict as Multi-Dimensional phenomenon
- Recognize Divisive Propaganda.
- Cover Both Sides of Conflict
- Subjective Interpretations Compromise Objectivity
- Conflict Vocabulary Should Not Be Used Imprecisely
- Being Judgmental is being Detrimental
- Opinions Are Not Facts

Journalists need to ask more questions towards understanding the conflict. More answers lead to more information on multi-dimensional aspects of a conflict. Information that is fed to journalists by parties at conflict suits their interests and not the interest of an independent media. Deeper probing with as many people related to conflict directly or indirectly leads to information that is important and essential to untie the knots that keep settlement of conflict a distant possibility. It is also important for the projection and reflection of diverse perspectives through the media.

Therefore, a conflict sensitive journalist applies conflict analysis and searches for new voices and new ideas about the conflict. Journalists’ reports on who is trying to resolve the conflict, looks closely at all sides, and reports on how other conflicts were resolved. A conflict sensitive journalist takes no sides, but is engaged in the search for solutions. Conflict sensitive journalists choose their words carefully and try to be as objective as possible. This happens if they know what words are appropriate to use in specific context and what is not. This can only be done through conflict analysis.
Understanding conflict Dimensions for wholesome reporting

Understanding conflict dimension requires that journalists look critically at various aspects of conflict. Conflict causes can be defined as those factors which contribute to people’s grievances; and can be further described as:

- Structural causes are the pervasive factors that have become built into the policies, structures and fabric of a society and may create the pre-conditions for violent conflict.

- Proximate causes are the factors contributing to a climate conducive to violent conflict or its further escalation, sometimes apparently symptomatic of a deeper problem.

- Triggers are the single key acts, events, or their anticipation that will set off or escalate violent conflict.

Causes of conflict are divided into three different categories: proximate, intermediate and root causes. Structural causes are also known as root causes of conflict and refers to those long standing factors that may have been latent for a long period but are critical to address systemic violence. The pastoral warfare and cattle rustling served mainly as a tool for resource and land expansion by these Turkana and Pokot tribes and consists of the structural causes. Intermediate and proximate causes and are more recent and visible causes. Intermediate causes generally act as accelerators of violent conflict while proximate causes are those issues that can trigger or further escalate violence. A good example of proximate causes can be the recent oil exploits which could prove profitable to the community which takes advantage of land-leasing arrangements. Thus there is a lot at stake for both Turkana and Pokot.

It is important for journalists to acknowledge that conflicts are multi-dimensional and multi-causal phenomena that there is no single cause of conflict. It is also essential to establish linkages and synergies between causes and factors for accurate and in-depth reporting by journalists.

For example, in Kenya people belonging to particular ethnic groups have felt marginalized by a government dominated by people from another group. This sense of deprivation has caused resentment toward those from the ruling tribe and this has contributed toward heightened conflict during periods of instability, such as the aftermath of the 2007 elections in Kenya. To provide a comprehensive picture of what is taking place in a conflict, journalists need to show how all of these issues the parties’ attitudes, their behaviors and the social context (contradictions) are impacting on each other. Too often reporting focuses on behaviors without addressing the other two factors. This can be adequately addressed through a well-structured conflict analysis model by journalist.

Framework for conflict analysis; towards wholesome reporting

There are several aspects that journalists can use as a framework of analyzing conflict when doing their stories. They are: social and ethnic relations; governance...
and political institutions; human rights and security; economic structure and performance; environment and natural resources; and external factors.

According to a report by Nairobi peace Initiative *A validated report of the National Conflict Mapping and Analysis with Recommendations for Actors*, analyzing and mapping of conflict consist of a critical examination of various aspects that shape or lead to conflict. A holistic espousal of conflict by journalists requires that they undertake a critical examination of the following aspects as part of understanding and reporting conflict in a sensitive way. The variables are:

 i. Political dimensions  
 ii. Security dimensions  
 iii. Legal dimensions  
 iv. Economic dimensions  
 v. Socio-cultural dimensions  
 vi. Environmental dimensions

The media can help people to identify and understand the dimensions and root causes of a conflict, journalists can raise awareness about what needs to happen in order for a conflict to be effectively resolved. By anticipating how a conflict might develop, journalists can ask questions that raise awareness about the potentially harmful effects of allowing a conflict to escalate. By identifying the ways in which parties are approaching conflicts journalists can pose questions that highlight the strengths and weaknesses of competitive and collaborative approaches that parties are adopting in pursuing the conflict.

### Type, level and intensity of conflict

Conflicts vary in level, intensity and nature of hostility between parties. Whatever the issues, weapons, parties and geographic scale, the intensity of hostility between the parties is a useful way to assess a conflict. This level of hostility can be measured through the attitudes and behaviors the parties exhibit towards each other. Understanding the definition of conflict which is present when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or take pursue their interests through actions that damage the other parties. These parties may be individuals, small or large groups, and countries. Interests can diverge in many ways:

- **Over resources**: Such resources include but not limited to territory, money, energy sources, food and how they should be distributed.

- **Over power**: meaning how control and participation in political decision-making are allocated.

- **Over identity**, concerning the cultural, social and political communities to which people feel tied.

- **Over status**, whether people believe they are treated with respect and dignity and whether their traditions and social position are respected.

- **Over values**, particularly those embodied in systems of government, religion, or ideology.
The gradations suggest that conflicts and peace rarely, if ever, arise suddenly, shift quickly from one status to another, or end suddenly. Various dynamics demand that journalist continuously monitor and report on conflict situations. Numerous factors can cause a shift from one conflict gradation to another include:

- The intensity and number of grievances.
- Parties’ awareness of their differences; perceptions and attitudes towards each other.
- The intensity of emotion and psychological investment in the parties’ positions and views of the world.
- The amount of direct interaction and communication the parties have with one another.
- The level of political mobilization and organization behind the parties' positions.
- Cohesion between the respective parties’ leaders and constituencies.
- The amount of hostile behavior.
- The extent that parties use or threaten to use arms.
- The number of parties supportive of each side.

The notion that the ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ of a conflict can be identified is inappropriate in contemporary conflicts. Conflict is a dynamic social process in which the original structural tensions are themselves profoundly reshaped by the massive disruptions of conflict. Therefore ‘root causes’ may become decreasingly relevant in protracted conflicts that have led to the transformation of the state and society.

**Power analysis as part of conflict analysis**

Power analysis is a process that identifies structures and power relationships between actors. It describes discrimination and other human rights abuses, is an important part of any strategic conflict analysis. In establishing power relations with reference to the conflict, journalist should:

- Link actors and their interests in order to define ongoing and/or potential conflicts in which actors have incompatible interests.
- Link actors and interests so as clearly to define the common ground where actors may have compatible interests.
- Look at actors’ positions and assess their incompatible interests in terms of greed and grievances.
- Look at actors’ expectations and assess possible expectation gaps.
- Look at fear and insecurity as driving forces of various actors.

**Methods of conflict analysis**

Journalists can carry out conflict analysis through a variety of ways:

- The direct and immediate recording of events or observation. Since their work involve mostly field work, they are better placed to assess the situation through observation and registration of effects.
- Measuring social relationships and the degree of relatedness among people.
• The analysis of all available information provided through various mediums for data storage or the study of documents;

• Interviews and meetings with conflict parties, and other interested parties;

• Carry out random surveys and general and specific inquiries.

Phases of Conflict in the Conflict Circle:

Conflict is conceived of as a circle consisting of different phases that can reoccur unless the circle is broken. Journalists need to understand the phases of conflict. The phases are: submerged tension, rising tension, violent conflict and post-conflict. The goal of activities promoting peace and security is to escape the vicious circle.

Submerged Tension: Submerged tension refers to underlying conflict motives, which can be caused by structural instability in a country or region. These often appear as greed or grievances from various population groups and elites in the society. In the long run, these grievances can increase the risk of political instability and armed conflict. Submerged tension is very common phase during electioneering periods and it is important that journalists understand the causes of the submerged tension.

Rising Tension: Rising tension refers to a situation in which grievances increasingly are accompanied by violent demonstrations and open protests. Often an open political power struggle is underway, and political violence has increased. The situation often includes gross violations of human rights and/or threats of violence. This situation entails the risk of armed conflict.

Violent Conflict: Incompatibilities or differences between groups of people that result in organized violence. This can range from violent confrontations and manifestations in society, such as violent riots and massive crackdowns on protestors, to wars, genocide and massacres.

Post-Conflict: The situation following open confrontation. Post-conflict need not be the end of the conflict, as it can also entail the beginning of a new conflict if developments do not move in a favorable direction.

With a clear understanding of conflict situations, the media can play the following roles in various stages of conflict:

• Submerged & Rising tension: The media can play a critical ruling in this stage, the media publicizes the competing interests of conflicting parties, which may lead to a conflict situation, with a view to striking common grounds for a negotiated settlement of differences and thus raise demands for peace. Conflict analysis in this stage helps journalists understand the critical and competing interests by the conflicting parties.

• Violent Conflict: The media with a knowledge of conflict analysis empowerment can brings to fore its human, economic, social and political impacts and thus be able to reinforce the path towards the de-escalation of conflict.
• **Post-conflict:** The function of the media at this stage of conflict is to keep an eye on the enforcement of peace agreements that have been put in place by competing parties and ensures that they are being implemented judiciously.

**Conflict dynamics**

If journalists are to report more accurately and effectively on issues of conflict, they have to examine all palpable evidences regarding the conflict dynamics. The analysis of conflict dynamics is a critical step in the conflict analysis process that explores the interaction between the conflict situation, the stakeholders, and the identified causes of conflict. Analyzing conflict dynamics involves examining the different elements that relate to the conflict. Some of the factors that are considered include: connectors and dividers, triggers, accelerators, conflict drivers, conflict trends and possible scenarios.

The idea that conflicts have beginnings and endings is highly irrelevant in contemporary conflict situations. Conflict is a dynamic social process where the original structural tensions are shaped by the massive disruption of the conflict. Very often the root causes may become irrelevant in prolonged and protracted conflict of the contemporary society.

**Conflict triggers**

Triggers are isolated events or occurrences that are capable of starting or escalating conflict and violence situations. When there exists prolonged instability and high tensions then the condition favorable for triggers are rife. A good example of a trigger is the Tunisian street vendor who in December 2010 set himself on fire after being harassed by the police, and whose death triggered a wave of mass protests in the entire Arab region. Other known triggers may include: election disputes, arrest or assassination of political leaders, drought, a military coup, flood, a strike that turns violent and other social media broadcasts.

**Conflict drivers**

Conflict drivers are normally issues and processes that fuel violence and lengthen the conflict process. Conflict drivers are normally dynamic and they evolve over time and sustain violence. Controversial debates abound as to the nature of conflict triggers and drivers and as to whether it is greed (the fierce competition over resources) or rather grievance (the uneven enjoyment of universal rights) that really drives conflict. Examples of conflict drivers in Kenya and many parts of the world include: corruption, poor accountability system, ethnic, regional and gender-based discrimination, presence of natural resources and their uneven distribution.

**Conflict trends**

Conflict trends are common patterns that feature conflict and political violence in one country. These patterns can be periodical events or precedents that recur in a cyclical way over a certain span of time. For instance, the regional rather than national dimension of conflicts is a recurring pattern of violence in Sudan. In Kenya, a cattle rustling has been a major trend that has been facilitated by commercial interests. Trends are a critical element to consider when developing potential scenarios.
Analysing the Actors

i. **Interests**: what interests do they have in relation to the conflict and how do these interests influence the conflict?

ii. **Relations**: what are the relationships between the various actors?

iii. **Capacities**: what capacities do they have to influence conflict either positively or negatively?

iv. **Peace Agendas**: do they have an interest in peace? What kind of peace do they want?

v. **Incentives**: what kind of incentives could be offered for them to choose peace? Or disincentives to engage with violence?

**Key issues to consider when undertaking conflict analysis**

**Issue One: Consider the underlying structures and causes that created the grounds for the conflict**

Every conflict has many causes. Some causes seem more obvious, conspicuous and prominent as compared to others. Journalists should start by defining the key sources of tension and root causes of conflict. Some of the crucial structural factors that journalists should be look at include; the economic development and equity of distribution of the area under conflict, the existing political system and structures, democratic structural causes, respect for human rights, natural resources, the environment, and other sources of violent conflict or positive structural influence.

Additionally, journalists should look at the ability in terms of strengths and weaknesses of existing formal and informal institutions to address grievances that can potential lead to conflict. They should also examine avenues of opportunistic behavior by conflict actors and other actions that can further the interests of confrontational actors. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the underlying structures and root causes as thoroughly and historically far back as possible.

**Issue Two: Consider the most recent causes of conflict and why the conflict continues unabated**

When analyzing the causes of conflict, journalists should consider the difference between the deep underlying causes that created the grounds for potential conflict, but also the more recent causes. Among these “proximate causes” it is important to describe the conflict dynamics and, for example the way the war economy functions. If conflicts take long, they are in fact creating their own causes. This level of analysis will not identify why the conflict started but why it is continuing. It also describes some of the causes that directly relate to the underlying causes. This is especially important for conflicts that have persisted for decades without solutions.

**Issue Three: Consider who the actors and stakeholders in the conflict. Describe how and why they are the conflict’s stakeholders**

Journalists need to fully understand which actors there are in the conflict and what their role is. Try to describe all conflict-related actors at all levels (including Governments, armed groups but also civil society
actors, donors, international actors and communities, individuals, men and women. The focus here is those actors causing and fueling the conflict. When analysing the actors, focus on their incompatible interests in terms of greed and grievances and how these factors affect and are affected by ongoing and potential violent conflicts. Fear is a strong driving force of actors’ behaviour in situations of insecurity. Examine various actors’ expectations and possible gaps between these expectations and how they are met. Analyse the power base and resources of key actors and also include the power analysis that identifies structures and power relationships between actors.

Consider the impact and source of the attitude of conflicting parties to the conflict

It is important for journalists to consider the attitudes and perceptions of parties involved in the conflict because it shapes their behavioral reactions. Before doing a conflict story, try and understand the underlying attitudes, motivations and perceptions which are largely shaped by the context in which people are living in. It is also compounded by the experiences that they have had before. While doing analysis of attitudes, journalists should strive to understand the source of perceptions that fuel violent behavior in the conflict. Include perceptions among civilians that are older, rooted in the culture as well as the attitudes and perceptions of violent actors. It is important to also consider the changes in attitudes that are a result of the conflict.

Professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news. But it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced.

-Ross Howard
Part Three

Introduction to Conflict Analysis Tools for Journalists

Conflict analysis strives to examine the long term structural causes of conflict and how such development might result into violence. While some analysis looks at the short term, potential triggers of conflict, other look at the structural, deeper causes of conflict and the dynamics around the early warning system. In understanding conflict, it is imperative to examine the sources of discontent and animosity, to identify the phases of evolving relationships between adversaries, and to illuminate the escalation of their struggles and the eventual recession of violent cycles to the peaceful resolution of differences.

There are key questions within each area of analysis tool that is important:

Profile: What is the political, economic and socio-cultural context? What are the emergent issues? What conflict affected areas can be situated within the context? Is there a history of conflict?

Causes: What are the structural causes of conflict? What can be considered proximate causes of conflict? What triggers could contribute to the outbreak, escalation or prolonging of conflict? What factors can contribute to peace?

Actors: Who are the main actors? What are their interests, goals, positions, capacities and relationships? What capacities for peace can be identified? What actors can be identified as spoilers and why?

Dynamics: What are the current conflict trends? What are the windows of opportunity? What scenarios can be developed from the analysis of the conflict profile, causes and actors?

There is no single conflict analysis tool that is appropriate for all circumstances. Conflict analysis does not have to be structured process and various methods are adopted and used for particular conditions and specific aims of the analysis.

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<th>Conflict analysis method</th>
<th>Brief description of the method</th>
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<td>Conflict mapping</td>
<td>Conflict mapping as a conflict analysis model shows the relationships between conflict parties. It provides the opportunity to identify real and potential allies and opponents in a conflict situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABC Triangle</td>
<td>This tool provides and defines the three basic components in conflicts: attitudes, behavior and contradiction. Understanding the three components provides clarity in terms of conflict understanding.</td>
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### Onion of positions, interests and needs
This is a visual method using the metaphor of the onion for identifying the positions of conflict parties.

### Tree of Conflict
This is a visual method that likens a conflict to a tree. The trunk of a tree represents the main problem, the roots – its main or deeply laid causes, and the leaves – its consequences.

### Pyramid of Conflict
Using the image of a pyramid, this method is used to identify people or groups who have an interest in the conflict and its eventual perpetuation.

The profile of conflict situations emerges from investigating the context and dynamics of adversarial relationships. In addition, a conflict ‘tree’ can be used to shed light on the root causes, manifested tensions, and their effects. Mapping methods provide a system for illustrating the scope of a conflict by assessing the goals of the parties, the type of their relationship, and the issues in contention. Identifying the parties to the conflict is an essential step prior to understanding their positions, interests, and capacities as well as the level of external support. The evolution of relationships between parties and their social context can be examined in terms of short-term and long-term dynamics.

**Conflict Mapping**

Conflict mapping is the systematic process in which a conflict is critically analysed to help both the interveners and actors of the conflict in comprehending its root causes and nurturing its possible reduction, management or solution. Mapping a conflict gives us a kind of ‘bird’s eye view’ of the problem. It is a way of graphically representing the issue, showing everyone’s perspectives on it, and getting sufficient distance to see issues and ideas which may otherwise go unnoticed. The conflict mapping focuses on actors and their interrelationships. It is a good tool to start analyzing a conflict.

As conflict emerges and develops gradually, it produces a complicated mesh of confusion and uncertainty. Very often the growth of conflict changes a number of dynamics because interactions between the conflicting parties changes and this sometimes radically and abruptly. Most often—and this is a factor that is evident in majority of conflicts— the levels of unpredictability, uncertainty and emotion rise. Most often when this happens, unwise and costly decisions are rashly made from a lack of understanding of what is occurring.

Conflict mapping for journalists aims to understand the following elements of a conflict:

- The subjects (who takes part in the conflict?)
- The interests and goals (what do the subjects want and how do they intend to achieve it?)
- Power (what resources do the subjects have for obtaining their interests?)
- Awareness (who is recognised as an interlocutor for the resolution?)
• The frames of reference (what are the presuppositions, paradigms or prejudices the agents harbour unconsciously?)
• The emotions (what role do the emotions play in this conflict?)
• The relation (how is the relation between the subjects structured?)
• The coalitions (what coalitions can be generated in this conflict?)

Very often, relationships between conflict actors can change over time; new parties can join the conflict, or the nature of the conflict can change due to different interactions between stakeholders. It is important that journalists are able to repeat the exercise to discern changes in relationships before they report especially when the conflict spans a long period of time and keeps erupting from time to time.

How can journalists determine and identify if they need to do a conflict mapping, the following indicators/questions are very necessary for the same:

• **History:** Is there a history of conflict in the area you are working in?
• **Neighbours:** Is there a history of conflict in a neighboring village, region, ethnic community or country?
• **Disputes:** Are there disputes between people or groups, perhaps over water, land, grazing access or aid?
• **Hostility:** Have communities or groups been openly or overtly hostile?
• **Change:** Have there been dramatic social changes in the past 5–10 years?

**Conflict Onion**

Conflict Onion is often used to express the interrelated dynamics of positions, interest and needs among conflicting parties. Groups approaching conflict from a competitive standpoint will tend to express demands about what they want and how their opponents should behave. What is generally presented among conflicting parties are only positions (the visible outside layer of the onion) which conceal underlying interests (the deeper layers) which are representative of the group's real needs (the layers at the core of the onion).
The complexity of conflict is that often the parties indicate what they say they want (positions) and not what they really want (interests). Often, the positions mirror the interest of the parties. Consequently, it is common for groups to become completely locked into their positions and to refuse to move beyond these, even when their actual needs and interests could be addressed in other ways. This can eliminate the possibility of groups finding creative solutions to conflicts. If we are to accurately represent what a conflict is really about then we need to get beyond the stated positions and to learn about the different groups’ interests and needs.

Focusing on inflexible, immediate and often deeply held positions reduces creativity and restricts the exploration of possible solutions to conflict. Journalists must be aware that interests are frequently many and varied. Some are contradicting or competing, while others are likely to be overlapping, compatible and shared by all the parties to a conflict. If journalists want to paint an accurate picture of what the conflict is really about then they need to get beyond the rhetoric, beyond the different groups’ demands and closer to their real interests and underlying needs. This will not be easy, because it means doing more than simply accepting people’s demands at face value. It means asking the probing questions that can get beyond the rhetoric. It also means going beyond a single source. By speaking to a range of people at different levels within a group you may get a clearer picture of what the conflict is really about.

The Onion model can also bring insight into prolonged conflicts; even raising new hopes for them, as these kinds of conflicts are often seen to result from hiding or distorting actual needs, making the conflict intractable. These needs can be identified by further peeling off the layers of conflict.

Uncovering real interest of the parties as part of conflict analysis

Most often the parties to a conflict conceal their interest and what they really want addressed. Positions that are stated before the public are far removed from conflicting parties’ actual interest, demands and needs. Journalists can undertake very vital steps in-depth understanding of the conflict analysis with regards to finding the real interest. As such, they should ask the following questions:

- Why have the parties adopted the positions they have?
- What underlying needs and interests have led parties to adopt particular positions?
- How would the parties prioritize these issues and why?
- What are the concerns that the parties hold in common?
- How could their concerns be addressed in a way that would satisfy everyone involved?

Baumann and Siebert suggest that journalists needn’t reiterate parties’ hardened positions but rather can explore interests underlying these positions identifying common ground between parties.
The ABC Triangle

The ABC triangle is a handy tool in understanding the various components and dynamics of conflicts. Using this model allows one to differentiate between different ingredients involved in a conflict, providing us with an understanding of its most significant aspects. Understanding the components of a conflict, or the elements it is made up of, is just as important as understanding who the actors are or what caused it. The model proposes that conflicts consist of three basic components: (1) attitudes, (2) behaviour and (3) contradictions. These can be identified in every single conflict, although to different extents. The components are placed in the three corners of a triangle to illustrate the mutual relationship between them.

i. Attitudes

Attitudes consist of the party’s thoughts, feelings and desires. Often times, our attitudes and our assumptions about the conflict lie beneath the surface and are not always overt. Feelings refer to those emotions the conflict parties have for each other, and also the ways the conflict parties consider and deal with their own feelings. Attitudes also cover our presumptions and subjective ideas about the underlying issues in the conflict, about what has happened, who did what. Journalists have to consider the objective and subjective dimensions of how the causes of conflict are reported. The story and the perceptions of what has occurred change as time passes and as the parties become increasingly distant from each other during a conflict that is escalating. A continuous assessment of long terms conflict should be done by journalists before reporting. Attitude refers to feelings of hatred, distrust, and apathy, the transforming potential of these attitudes is to develop feelings of empathy.
ii. Behaviour

This consists of the visible aspect of a conflict and is what sensational journalist dwells mostly on when reporting on conflict situations. Human reactions to events are rather complex, so what is referred to as behaviour really consists of many elements. Different people react differently to different events. Nevertheless, the actions that combine to make the behavior as it is understood in this model can usually be divided into three categories: what the actors said; what the actors did and the existence of physical violence. Often times, what is not said or not done (non-action) can be considered part of behaviour. Avoiding action can have an equally important effect on the development of a conflict as action would, probably simply with different consequences. Physical violence is treated as distinct from other actions because the use of violence changes the character of the conflict drastically.

iii. Contradictions

The root cause of conflicts is based on the issue of contradictions. The model proposes that conflicts are usually about three basic types of issues: distribution, position and order. The contradiction with regards to distribution arises because there is competition for resources that have to be divided among different actors. Contradiction emerges as a result of competition over a position. A position is understood as a resource that cannot be shared. This is because only one person at a time can hold a given position. Contradiction with regards to order emerges over the rules that should be followed by a given society or within an organisation, with at least one party claiming that the current rules are not adequate or fair and wanting to change the prevailing system. Order conflicts can be more intense than the two other forms of contradiction already mentioned, since the core values of those involved are challenged, and core values are very difficult to negotiate. The premise of ABC triangle is that since a conflict can start in any corner, it can also be stopped in any corner.
The Conflict Triangle

This Conflict Triangle analyses certain basic elements often present in conflict. One way of conceptualizing the relationship between these elements is a triangle with Attitudes, Behaviours and structures at the tops of the triangle. Each element influences and is influenced by the other elements.

Attitudes include the parties’ perceptions and misperceptions of each other and of themselves. These can be positive or negative, but conflicting parties often tend to develop demeaning stereotypes of the other.

Behaviours can include cooperation or coercion, gestures signifying conciliation or hostility. Coercive behaviour might include threats, pressure of different types and violence. Co-operative behaviour could include: recognition of rights, setting up of joint (economic) projects, trust building measures, negotiations in good faith, etc.

Structures refer to the political, economic, societal mechanisms, processes and institutions and history that influence the distribution and satisfaction of basic needs and interests of people. Conflict is a dynamic process in which structure, attitudes and behaviours are constantly changing and influencing one another.

Conflict Tree

The conflict tree deals with the difference between structural and dynamic factors, visualizing how conflict issues link these two aspects.

When using this form of analysis, you may find that a recurring issue can be identified as both a cause and an effect of a particular conflict. An example of this is the scarcity of natural resources, which can be a source of conflict, but also an effect of prolonged violence. The conflict tree can also illustrate the cycle of violence, and the ways that communities can become trapped by the causes and effects in a perpetual cycle of conflict.

Trunk: Core problem
Roots: Causes
Leaves: Effects
Gardeners: Actors
Watering: What is sustaining the situation?
The problem tree methodology enables us to visualise links among different conflict factors (root, intermediate and immediate causes).

The tree visualises the interaction between structural, manifest and dynamic factors. The roots symbolise structural “static” factors. The trunk represents the manifest issues, linking structural factors with the dynamic factors. The leaves moving in the wind represent the dynamic factors.

**Dynamic Factors:** Dynamic factors include the form of communication, escalation level, relationship aspects etc. Working with dynamic factors involves a short time horizon; reactions to interventions are quick and at times unpredictable. Examples are diplomatic interventions, or multi track conflict transformation dealing directly with the form of interaction between the conflict parties. Quick money is often more important than big money when addressing dynamics factors.

**Manifest issues:** Issues are what the conflict parties want to talk about, the “topic” of the conflict.

**Structural Factors:** Root causes are the basic “reason” of the conflict. They are difficult to influence on a short time basis, if they are avoided, however, the conflict may pop up again later. This is the typical area for development cooperation, longer-term involvement and the prevention of structural violence (Human Needs Theory).

One would likely identify both “proximate” and “structural” causes of the conflict, whereby the former are those issues that appear closer to the ground surface and the latter would appear deeper underground. Moreover, you should not assume that the relationship between root causes, the prioritized conflict and the effects will necessarily be linear; root causes may be linked to each other, while effects if unaddressed can feed back into the process and become causes for new conflict. Moreover, the perceived causes and effects of a conflict can differ according to social groups and status (i.e., gender, age, wealth, ethnicity, etc.). These complicated relationships and differing viewpoints should be kept in mind and if possible, marked on the tree.

**The Iceberg Model**

Like in the case of an iceberg, there are those things that are obvious on the surface while there are those that are underneath. Compared to conflict, some things are obvious to the disputants that reflect the dynamic between them, the issues in dispute, and other aspects of the existing dissension. These are above the water level line.

Below the water line is much more. There are hopes, expectations, emotions, needs, values, beliefs, and
other deeply held views and feelings. Our individual 
and collective histories that we bring to the issues in 
dispute are in the mass below the surface, too. While, 
for all intents and purposes, this underlying mass 
appears to be unnoticed or remains unspoken, it has 
an enormous impact on the interaction. Indeed, it is 
an integral part of the conflict and who we are within 
it, within ourselves, and within the relationship.

One of the classical ideas in conflict resolution is 
to distinguish between the positions (i.e. concrete 
-demands) held by the parties to the conflict and their 
underlying interests and needs. Interests are often 
easier to reconcile than concrete positions, since there 
are usually several positions that might satisfy them. 

For example, two neighbours quarrel over a tree. Each 
neighbour takes the position that the tree is on her 
land (positions: “The tree is on my land.” “No, the tree is 
on my land.”) No compromise is possible, since the tree 
cannot be sawn in half. It turns out, however, that the 
interest of one neighbour is in using the fruit of the tree 
(Interest: “I want the fruit of the tree.”), and the interest 
of the other is in having the shade (Interest: “I want to 
sit in the shade.”). The positions may be irreconcilable 
at first, but the interests might be. New positions can 
be found to satisfy the interests of both parties.

*The most important thing in journalism is hearing what isn’t being said. The art of reading between the lines is a lifelong quest of the wise.*

*Shannon L. Alder*
Shells of cars burnt down at the height of a confrontation. Conflict analysis is the foundation of any conflict management process, from prevention, mediation to reconciliation.
Part Four

Reporting on political and electoral conflicts

Election process in Kenya has often been marred by political, ethnic and other forms of conflict before and after elections for the past three decades. Kenya experiences multiple, overlapping conflicts, which sometimes coincide with electoral cycles that act as triggers for politically motivated violence. The media has often reported on such issues because of public interest and also heightened tension during such periods. Political related conflicts are not always a result of political process. Conflict during political and electoral processes are often a result of other underlying causes which journalists sometimes fail to capture and report. As witnessed in Kenya, some of such conflict has risen because of historical and ethnic bitterness that is just triggered by political processes around the elections. Political and electoral violence has been used in the Kenyan context with the motive to force compliance, to subjugate, to persuade, to intimidate or to expunge a particular group, ethnic community or political faction. Electoral violent conflict is a sub-set of violent political conflict.

Political and electoral violence in Kenya has developed as a result of a combination of factors, including politicization of ethnicity, corruption, nonadherence to the rule of law, a centralized and highly personalized form of governance, inequitable development and a “winner-takes-all” form of politics perceived as benefiting one ethnic constituency to the detriment of all others. Only the 2002 and 2013 elections have not been seriously marred by violence.

Conflict dynamics that are often manifest during election periods and having the potential to create violent conflict includes:

- **Corruption and impunity:** corruption has severely compromised the security sector, while impunity and lack of justice legitimize violence and lead to revenge attacks.

- **Land and development projects:** inequity in land ownership and access cause widespread grievances, as do development projects that are not delivered in a conflict-sensitive manner.

- **Social fragmentation, politicized ethnicity and partisan politics:** political entrepreneurs use ethnic affiliation and manipulate ethnic grievances as the basis for political mobilization to gain power and control over resources.

- **Discrimination and marginalisation:** certain groups and areas have faced long-term discrimination and marginalisation, which has been exploited by violent extremists.

Reporting electoral conflicts and violence can be a daunting task for the media. This is because such conflicts are sometimes made manifest through both covert and overt means. In some cases threats to commit violence can be made through personal contact, rendering them invisible to the media.
Routinely, media reporting has always used three events to present the electioneering process: violence or the images of voters going to the polls, ballots being dropped into ballot boxes, and officials and clerks counting and announcing results.

Understanding and reporting election violence

Election violence is defined as acts that are used to harm, intimidate, exploit, disrupt, determine, hasten, delay, or reverse electoral processes or outcomes, and acts that occur between the registration of a voter and the inauguration of a political regime. Media reporting of election violence surely reach more voters than just those who witness the violence in person.

Journalists can overcome many of these challenges when they are able to analyze a conflict during elections and look through what is being presented by the politicians and other ethnic fragments. A conflict analysis is required to try to find objective reasons for a political conflict, which also become common grounds between conflicting parties to move towards facilitating peaceful electoral processes.

When analyzing violent conflicts during elections, journalist should have a look at various factors and actors. They should consider the following:

- The history of violence in specific places in what would be termed as hot-spots
- The nature of seats contested and candidates involved. Some candidates generate heated debates and have a potential to flare up tensions.
- The tactics of violence whether it involves beatings, kidnappings, killings
- The venues of violence for example if in polling places, street rallies, government offices
- The timing of violence whether they happen before, during, or after the voting period
- Actors or perpetrators of violence whether they are party officials, governments
- The participants in violence for instance if they are paid thugs, mobs, police, military, campaign workers, party loyalists.
- The victims of violence whether they are election officials, voters, candidates.

A conflict analysis of political and electoral violence has three main elements:

- **Nature of political and electrical Conflict**

  Political conflicts are rooted in multi-dimensional causes and factors and their complex interaction and overlap of various structural and proximate causes. There can never be one single factor that leads to a violent conflict especially during elections and political processes. Often journalist report triggers as causes especially during political and electoral violence.

- **Actors in the Conflict**

  The ability to identify all explicit and implicit actors to a conflict is also important for a conflict reporter. Actors to a conflict can be individuals,
groups and institutions engaged in, as well as being affected by conflict. The identification of actors of a conflict can help in understand various perspectives and issues related to the conflict. The first is the stated positions and their comparative positions. The second is the interrelationship between various actors. Conflict analysis at this stage helps in understanding the resources the conflict actors have at present in order to realize their agenda.

- **Effects of the conflict in elections process**

  Journalists should present a critical analysis and presentation of the possible implication of the conflict based on their understanding of the conflict. Journalists should not forget that there are many sides to any conflict and matters get more complex as events move on, they should present such issues for public scrutiny and understanding. In the process, try not to settle for the simple “good guys versus bad guys” or “them and us”

**Various causes and reasons for electoral conflicts that journalists should watch out for:**

a) **Elections Rigging**: This is when the electoral process is skewed to the advantage of an opponent.

b) **Election gangs and supporters**: This happens when political gangs and good of opposing political factions face each other. This often turns into violent conflict.

c) **Consensus**: This issue of consensus in allocating political officers to the political class sometimes does not go down well with political opponents. Thus could result to conflict.

d) **Imposition of candidates**: This is the situation whereby parties in deference to due Process pick a non-popular candidate as against the popular one.

e) **Corruption of the electoral process**: This involves all the malpractices that are often witnessed during an electoral process.

f) **Favouritism**: This can be done by the party acting on the influence of the state or the skewing of the electoral process to favour the preferred state candidate.

The media or the Journalist must recognize that the responsibility imposed on them by the society is a sacred one and they must be guided by the dictates of truth, honest, sincerity, integrity, accountability and transparency. It is harmful for the media to assume the role of collaborators and conspirators with politicians, the electoral body, ethnic or religion group to misinform or misguide the general public in election issues. This if done, will surely promote violence rather than help in managing conflict that will arise from election.

**Conditions for election related violence**

- Persistent and sustained sense of election fraud.
- The outcome is not so contested, but there is a
bitter and non-accepting loser. A subset of this is when the government loses (and is surprised and shocked by the result).

- The cause of violence is an external or domestic source not immediately participating in the election process (another state, “terrorists,” economic “profiteers” of violence).
- The violence is connected to contested legitimacy of the state itself or the failure/weakness of the nation-building process.
- Violence that is supported or provoked by the government to implement controversial restrictions, consolidate political power or weaken certain communities.
- Violence that is pursued by non-state actors (including opposition parties) to economically profit from conflict, consolidate political power or weaken certain communities.

Understanding and reporting political/electoral conflicts

To effectively understand conflicts during election periods, journalists must resist the pressures of their own opinions, which they should express in the privacy of the voting station, like any other citizen. The public expects journalists to remain above the political fray. They are expected to treat all politicians impartially, regardless of the sympathies or antipathies they may feel toward them. This objectivity is paramount in analysis conflicts during elections times.

A journalist’s role in strengthening democracy and peace is even more important in sensitive circumstances. A journalist must sharpen his powers of observation and analysis in order to understand the complexity of the socio-political environment and the issues at stake in an election.

Who were the figures in the conflict or crisis, what were their motivations, and what were the underlying issues? What were the causes or factors of resolution, and who were the people behind it? If an accord has been signed, a journalist should know its general structure and major points. When ethnic or communal divisions play a significant role in a crisis or conflict, a journalist should have a deep understanding of each community’s sociological realities.

A journalist should also understand the ways in which each community has been affected by the events. This research is essential because it makes a journalist aware of the actions and discourse that may signal a return of tensions, and thereby enables him to report on looming danger. He can then get leading figures or civil society organizations to remind parties and candidates of their commitments and of the accords they may have signed.

When covering conflict stricken areas, journalists should ensure the following:

- Visit the conflict areas especially the centers where voting will happen days before the actual voting and assess the situation considering the general mood and attitude of the electorate towards the elections process.
• Framing the election disputes as a personality conflict between candidates is often very risky; journalists should focus on the candidates’ positions on issues of importance schools, health care, roads.

• Identify potential issues that may trigger the conflict especially those related to elections malpractices of inadequacies like possible favouritism in ballot box distribution and voter requirements.

• Avoid airing inflammatory, divisive, or violent statements by candidates. However, edit these comments to eliminate these inflammatory statements. Or, broadcast these comments, and then offer analysis and criticism of what is being said.

• During elections and after contested political processes, it is appropriate for journalists to avoid stories that give opinions/sound bites only from leaders. Always center stories on everyday people, their concerns and perceptions about the candidates and process.

• Do not consider the election like a horse race. Polls and surveys are fine, but they are only a part of the story. It is important to concentrate on issues of importance as identified by the public.

A reputation for accurate, balanced reporting is a journalist’s biggest assets. We must not shy away from painful reality, but we should also seek to minimise any harm to the public through our actions. The people who make the news are vulnerable to the impact of our stories. In extreme cases, their lives or their reputations could depend on our reporting.

-Reuters
Scenarios like this are common during a conflict. By knowing that conflict is a process that has different stages, journalists can be aware that violence is only one of these stages.
Part Five

Analysis of journalists’ stories on conflict

Level of understanding of conflict

To understand the understanding of journalists on issues related to conflict analysis, journalists from conflict hot-spots in Kenya were sampled and after training on conflict analysis, they were asked to fill a questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to test their understanding of conflict situations in their areas of reporting and the challenges that they face. A total of 48 journalists filled the questionnaire.

Journalists were asked to indicate their level of understanding of different conflicts situation within their jurisdiction of reporting. Journalists are often posted from and transferred from one area to another and are expected to report objectively and reliably on what they don’t fully understand. Conflict analysis empowers journalists to understand conflict and report on it with a conflict sensitive approach. Journalism sensitive to conflict empowers reporters to report conflicts professionally without feeding the flames. To report reliable and unbiased information to the public in a time of violent conflict requires additional journalism skills and a deeper understanding of what causes conflict, how it develops and ends. Reporters must know where to look for solutions and crucially, they must be aware of media’s role and the responsibility that follows with this in times of conflict.
Journalists reporting on conflict situations face a lot of complex scenarios when dealing with news sources. Such include; unwilling news sources, sources who give their positive side of the story which might be different from the reality, sources that are hostile towards journalists and specific media houses, sources who give surface and insufficient information regarding the conflict and sources. The role of journalists regardless of different conflict situations is to impart the truth and help build new knowledge and experiences through the dissemination of information.

Especially in conflict situation where lines of truth is blurred and a lot of propaganda occurs, journalists are required to add authority and believability to their news, journalists need to rely on news sources to provide them with the facts about events. Thus, to a certain extent, it is the news sources and not journalists who are responsible for the accuracy of the facts.

Media organizations and the journalists are often blamed whenever there is a misreporting of facts regarding to conflict. The accusations thrown at the journalists in several instances are partly valid because of the fact that the ability to identify who to quote, and under what circumstances, has become an essential part of the journalists’ roles and responsibilities. The responsibilities of journalists become more critical when they need to assemble news in a hurry, under rigid deadlines and within dangerous environment, such as in time of conflict and war.
Featuring various actors and balancing perspectives in conflict

Journalists have the primary responsibility of understanding the various actors to a conflict in terms of who are primary and who are secondary. The media are themselves actors or agents in the conflict and their behavior will have an effect on the way the conflict develops. To use more abstract terms the media constitute a space in which the conflicts of a society can be articulated and are inevitably themselves actors in that conflict.

Primary parties are those who oppose one another, are using fighting behavior, and have a direct stake in the outcome of the conflict. Secondary parties have an indirect stake in the outcome. They are often allies or sympathizers with primary parties but are not direct adversaries. Disputants also can be divided up according to their stance towards the other side. We divide interest groups into moderates, hardliners, external supporters, conflict profiteers, and spoilers.

Journalists should also understand that there are third parties. Some of the third parties may be acting in active intermediary roles, such as mediators, arbitrators, or dialogue facilitators, while others may be by-standers. As conflicts become increasingly polarized, however, the by-standers tend to be pulled in, being forced to join one side or the other, and polarizing the conflict even further.
Why do some conflicts get more media attention than others?

Media attention is often limited to the dramatic and catastrophic scale of conflict and often ignores what would be considered small conflict. The degree of impact and the implications of the conflict are very critical when the media determines what to broadcast. Most importantly, the conflict has to be of national and political interest for it to receive adequate media attention. The media needs to pay special attention when covering emotionally charged issues, as failure to do so threatens to heighten tensions.

Frequently, pressure groups receive more coverage than the institutions they attack—usually the business community or a governmental unit especially if the target of that criticism is “fatalistic” in its behavior. The media can reduce suspicion by digging into hot issues and revealing them so there are no secrets to fear.
Challenges of reporting conflicts in Kenya

Understanding the type of conflict is important to journalists’ reporting

Journalists often make foregone conclusions on the type of conflict which they sometimes base on the triggers and not on real causes. Often such conclusions are based on the assumptions that ethnic conflicts (between two ethnic groups) are considered as religious, political or intra-society form of conflicts.

The controversial question that journalists face include whether in their reporting, conflicts should be described as ethnic rather than as religious or political; naming it ethnic could have negative associations. The criteria used for classification vary. Among others, they include:

- The conflict parties;
- The context of the conflict or the areas of social life in which the conflict takes place (for example, political, economic, cultural, etc.);
- The motivations or needs behind the conflict;
- The consequences of the conflict;
- The duration of the conflict;
- The intensity of the conflict;
- The absence or presence of violence in the conflict

Explicit violence can easily be described and reported by journalists but implicit violence that exists in societies, is rarely reported and written on. The coverage of these kinds of violence is also important, because these kinds of violence have the potential to turn into explicit violence unless effort is made to curtail them in earlier stages. Two types of such violence are:
This is what remained of a house after a conflict. Conflicts analysis is important to understand all the parties and the role they played.
Gender and Conflict Analysis: Inclusion and Unbiased Reporting

Gender issues are sometimes ignored by journalists when determining conflict dynamics. Very often, gender relations intersect with many other lines of social cleavage, such as class, race, ethnicity, age and geographical location, to determine the major actors in a conflict and the relative capabilities of different actors to intensify or resolve conflict.

Good conflict analysis is sensitive to relations of power, including gender. The principle of including gender as an element of good conflict analysis therefore should be self-evident and standard operating practice. In reality, however, this does not happen systematically.

Images of men and women in conflict reporting often reinforce a variety of gender stereotypes. Women are often nameless victims who appear passive. In contrast, images of men display active figures, engaged in all sorts of activities from armed combat to political debates. When women and men are portrayed through gender stereotyped lenses, this impacts the behaviours, actions and attitudes of society. When women are portrayed only as victims in conflict reporting, we are led to believe that women are passive by nature, while men depicted as fighters, politicians and experts, are active and authoritative.

Women can wear many hats with regards to conflict situations. Sometimes they play the role of combatants, or they may provide services to combatants. They certainly number significantly among those afflicted by physical harm and loss of property. Gender relations shape the specific form this harm takes: women are far more likely than men, for instance, to be subject to sexual violence. Yet, the tendency to see women primarily as victims of violence particularly sexual violence has obscured the many other roles women play in provoking and pursuing conflict or building peace.

When engaging major actors in a conflict in negotiation and resolution efforts, it is essential to involve women because their different experiences give them different perspectives on the social and economic ills to be addressed in any peace accord and in post-conflict governance arrangements.

Gender Inclusive media reporting of conflict situations

Women often play key roles in relation to peace and conflict but many of their contributions go unnoticed, or are undervalued and unsupported. This is often also reflected in media reporting. This is because they take place outside the official sphere. This fact is often reinforced when journalists choose to focus on male actors at the expense of female actors in conflict reporting. A gender-sensitive conflict analysis can shed light on these efforts and may help identify obstacles to participation in official peace and security decision-making.
Despite the fact that conflicts affect whole populations, women are almost invisible in the media reports. If they are present at all, they are often seen crying in the background and are talked about rather than listened to in news programs and documentaries.

Based on the various content analysis reports by the media council, it is evident that men are often asked to explain and interpret the conflict in many different roles; as combatants, warlords, experts and politicians. Women, on the other hand, are rarely asked about their opinions regarding the conflict in general, and if they are, it is usually from a woman’s or the victim’s perspective.

Media conflict coverage suffers from more than gender imbalance. People representing the civil society and people working for peace on grassroots level are marginalized too. Traditional conflict reporting also has a strong focus on occasional violent events. It rarely explains the ongoing processes, backgrounds or contexts in which the events occur. How does this influence our understanding of the conflict? And what are the consequences of such reporting?

There is a gender dimension to virtually every event, process, institution and/or individual experience covered by the media, including disasters and conflicts. All genders including women, who are either poor or illiterate women, have knowledge and opinions on practically everything. The failure of journalists to include women as sources and resources can only impoverish media coverage and diminish our understanding of conflict situations, as well as many other similar situations.

**Lenses on gender situations during armed conflict**

Conflict tends to result in gender inequality and encourages gender-specific disadvantages, particularly for women that are not always recognized and adequately addressed by mainstream media. The impact of armed conflict on gender relations is significant and should not be ignored by the media. From previous studies by the Media Council on Gender relations in the newsroom, it was evident that women are among the first to bear the brunt of armed conflicts but they also have a vital role to play in reconstruction processes.

By ignoring or marginalizing issues of gender in conflict analysis, the same is missed out during conflict reporting. It is evident that the blackout and insensitivity that the media accord to gender issues when reporting on conflict can reinforce stereotypes of women and men.

Whilst women’s contribution to conflict transformation and reconciliation on the ground is slowly beginning to be recognized, women still remain largely excluded from high level negotiations and the decision making processes leading to peace. The media can contribute to building bridges of understanding and provide for a more informed and critical audience that will not so easily fall prey to prejudice.

i. Journalists should undertake thorough analysis of conflict to enable them focus and aim to capture stories that reveal the strength, courage and resilience of many women during conflict.
situations. They can project the different experiences of women, the ways in which they live through conflict in various roles and capacities.

ii. Journalists should avoid making assumption and should understand that Gender relations, however profoundly unequal and unjust, are rarely the root cause of violent social conflict. Gender-based injustices against women or men, on the other hand, can sometimes be a catalyst for conflict. However, the systematic abuse of women by men of a rival class, race or ethnic group can trigger violent defensive reactions.

iii. When undertaking conflict analysis, journalists should understand that gender-based injustices feature as one of the significant manifestations of conflict. The systematic use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as a means of prosecuting war has been observed in many conflicts.

iv. It is also important to highlight that women are not always “good”. Women participate in the war and make decisions during war. In order to ensure a just and correct representation of conflict, media also needs to depict women who deviate from the norm when it comes to conflict.

v. Prioritize women as news sources as well. Men are often asked to explain and interpret the conflict in many different roles; as combatants, warlords, experts and politicians. Women, on the other hand, are rarely asked about their opinions regarding the conflict in general, and if they are, it is usually from a woman’s or the victim’s perspective.

Few journalists have any training in the theory of conflict. Having the skills to analyze conflict will enable a reporter to be a more effective professional journalist.

-Ross Howard
Policemen patrol a border following inter-ethnic conflict. Good journalists will explore both the superficial and the underlying causes of the conflict from all points of view.
Part Seven

Media, Conflict Analysis and Early Warning

Early warning in the context of media reporting

Early warning is an important concept which the media can effectively borrow from development world in order to exercise and assist in conflict mitigation. Media is the best early warning system which helps in acute crisis. According to United Nations Environmental program, early warning is the provision of timely and effective information, through identified institutions, that allows individuals exposed to hazard to take action to avoid or reduce their risk and prepare for effective response. It is a tool for mobilizing the masses and enables the voices of the needy to be heard. Early warning is a particular aspect of conflict prevention that the media should consider keenly.

Early warning is an essential first step for conflict prevention. In order to respond in time, authorities need detailed information in advance of an emerging threat to the peace.

Journalists should aptly be able to deal effectively with reports on conflict prevention through professional and ethical reporting. As such, the media should consider early warning as an appropriate instrument of conflict preventive that should help determine the whether and when violent conflicts can be expected to occur, with the intention of reporting accurately, objectively and fairly for the benefit of various actors.

The media, by communicating the information to the people and the concerned authorities sufficiently in advance, can enable them to take the necessary steps to prevent and minimize the loss of life and property.

Understanding information flows in fragile or conflict-affected states is vital to conflict prevention and early warning. How people receive and transmit information about their countries, their communities and their place within them is central to their perception of peace and security, as well as their relationship to their state, nation, neighbours and community. It may drive a vicious circle of fear and prejudice and, in its most extreme forms, may propel people to violence. It can also shape public understanding of the dynamics of violence, harness or encourage peaceful ways of addressing them and build communication, accountability and trust between the state and society.

Improvements in anticipation, analysis and planning are all critical for successful engagement in national conflicts. Too often, journalists are surprised or unprepared for the resulting chaos and violence that transpires when other societies disintegrate, and they typically respond with a series of reactive and non-integrated actions. Complex situations can be further exacerbated due to a delayed and ineffectual response that is not alerted through the media.

Early warning has four key elements according to the United Nations’ International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).
Risk Knowledge: Risk assessment provides essential information to set priorities for mitigation and prevention strategies and designing early warning systems.

Monitoring and Predicting: Systems with monitoring and predicting capabilities provide timely estimates of the potential risk faced by communities, economies and the environment.

Disseminating Information: Communication systems are needed for delivering warning messages to the potentially affected locations to alert local and regional governmental agencies. The messages need to be reliable, synthetic and simple to be understood by authorities and the public.

Response: Coordination, good governance and appropriate action plans are key points in effective early warning. Likewise, public awareness and education are critical aspects of disaster mitigation.

The concept of early warning is closely related to one of preventive diplomacy that involves efforts to either prevent or contain violent conflicts. It is premised upon the fact that addressing problems the moment they emerge is generally better than responding after they have grown to a less manageable scale.

The essence of early warning systems is that it helps to reduce the economic losses that a community can incur and also mitigate the number of deaths, injuries of casualties from a conflict, disaster through the systematic provision of information that allows apt, pragmatic response to hazardous situations. If well integrated with risk assessment studies and communication and action plans, early warning systems can lead to substantive benefits.

Journalists’ acquaintance with issues of early warning, conflict analysis, and their purpose and added value to news reporting is because of a lack of institutional knowledge and related guidance. The other key factor is the absence of formal instructions to address these issues more proactively and consistently when reporting on conflict related stories.

Media role relating to early warning

The echo chamber function of media can be an important and efficient source of early warning on sources of conflict within society to which the state and civil society can respond, provided that the biases or incentives of media coverage are well understood. In situations of violent conflict or high tensions it can also provide warning to people likely to be directly affected by these manifestations.

Media practitioners should understand that the purpose of early warning is to assist in addressing the ‘root causes’ of conflict and must allow for the development of proper understanding of situations, their development, conditions for resolution and guidance to better settlement. It entails ways of forestalling or alleviating the worst effects of conflict, including early intervention to transform or resolve conflicts.

The media hear of the event, try to obtain more information, use their own files to add background to
their stories, dispatch reporters and report anything they are told. Often they devote all their air time or much of the space available to that single story.

i. The media should be on high alert especially when violent conflict does break out. The media can play a role in containing it by facilitating rapid response and appeals for calm by citizens more especially during elections and ethnic tensions.

ii. The media should also enhance a people-centered early warning which has the characteristics of being clearly understood by the people, easily and readily accessible to people, timely; and tied to response actions to be taken by the people in advance of, during, and after the conflict.

iii. The media can also provide situational updates with regards to the conflict and media deflate rumors and propaganda that have the potential to escalate the conflict during early stages.

iv. Publishing or broadcasting balanced, well-informed and responsible stories about the nature and sources of conflict, as well as activities supporting peace, can help to counter the incendiary influence of rumor or sensationalism.

v. Mainstream media platforms could help reduce civilian conflict casualties by serving as early warning systems, helping citizens stay connected to humanitarian organizations, and keeping citizens secure in the aftermath of crimes.

‘it can also be difficult to distinguish sectarian from religious or separatist conflict. In cases where the line between nationalism, religion and culture is unclear, we should try to explain the historical and demographic background instead of glossing over the problem with oversimplified tags.

-Reuters
The remains of a hotel set ablaze during a conflict. Journalists should be sensitive when reporting conflict to avoid making a bad situation worse.
Part Eight

Practical solutions to challenges faced by journalists when reporting conflict

Journalists mostly just follow events

Journalists don’t explain what led to those conflict events. This might be based on the fact that they thus report on conflict superficially and mechanically. Given the prevalent paradigms of conflict reporting and the focus on negating the ‘Other’, the media tends to ignore those stories that offer a different reality.

Journalists need to know the importance of how the media as a whole frame and portray an issue and how framing influences both your reporting and how the public understands the conflict. Be aware of your responsibility as a journalist and recognize the power that your reports may have to influence individuals and governments. See yourself as a conduit that provides information to the public and recognize that you have a great deal of responsibility in what information is presented to the public and in how the public receives it.

Framing of conflict stories

Stories of conflict are framed within binary categories of good vs. evil, or one ethnic race against another, thus leading to an over simplification of issues. Such framing is inappropriate and fails to delve deeper into fundamental questions that can help in understanding and resolution of conflict. This style of reporting came into favor during the Cold War era when two giant hegemonic systems capitalism and communism were in ideological confrontation. It has further been fortified by the media through its reporting of terrorist acts. Journalists report in binary categories of good vs. evil because they fail to ask relevant and important questions from their news sources.

Editors should recognize the importance of how the media as a whole frame and portray an issue and how framing influences both your reporting and how the public understands the conflict. A good conflict analysis enhances framing of stories and avoids the good versus evil kind of framing.

In a conflict, describing the problem in a different way can reduce tension and launch negotiations. In good journalism, editors and reporters are always looking for a different angle, an alternative view, a new insight which will still attract an audience to the same story. Good journalism can help reframe conflicts for the two sides.

Challenges of gatekeeping

Field reporters and correspondents complain that the editing process ridded their stories of vital components of conflict sensitive reporting. This was attributed to editor’s failure to understand the background and importance of some of the information provided in their unedited stories. Often facts, backgrounds and different perspectives tend to go missing from the final, published reports by field reporters and correspondents.
Due to lack of time, space and resources, media concentrates on who started the conflict and does not seek out to explain the causes, dynamics and circumstances under which the conflict occurred. The problem is that without the context no reporting of a violent event is correct or complete. To understand violence, we need the whole picture.

**Focus on physical damage**

Another area of the main imbalances in traditional conflict coverage is the focus on visible damage and destruction, while the damage to mental health, structure and culture remains invisible. However, this is news too. Focus on physical damage by the media often creates an imbalanced perspective and skews reality to decision makers. Such a focus is often guided by desire for profit margins resulting from sensationalism.

The lead story for most news programs is typically the most recent and extreme violent conflict with several casualties. Conflict attracts viewers, listeners, and readers to the media; the greater the conflict the greater the audience, and large audiences are imperative to the financial success of media outlets. Therefore, it is often in the media’s interest to not only report conflict, but to play it up, making it seem more intense and grisly than it really is while focusing largely on the physical damage.

Journalists should try to find ways of reporting on the invisible effects, e.g. the long-term consequences of psychological damage and trauma, perhaps increasing the likelihood that those affected will be violent in future, either against other people or, as a group, against other groups or other countries.

**Independence and objectivity of journalists**

Journalists who cover the involvement of their ethnic conflicts are sometimes unable to do objective and reliable reporting where their ethnic communities are involved. A number of journalists assigned to cover areas of origin are common in the media environment in Kenya. Objectivity can only be realized when doing conflict analysis by asking hard questions. Such include:

- Have you obtained your information in a reliable and ethical way?
- Have you done everything you can to be accurate and to corroborate your facts?
- Are your decisions free from unfair influence or bias?
- Have you provided balance and context, in particular the right of reply and fair comment to anyone criticized in your article?
- Is there no other way to get the information, especially in the case of an unnamed source?
- Are your sources reliable and have you spoken to all sides of the story?
- Is the information reasonable and does it make sense?
- Most of all, can you stand by your story?

**Triggers and causes**

Journalists sometimes attribute the triggers of conflict as the main causes. Triggers are the factors that affect the timing of the onset of armed conflict; referring to these can help explain not why a conflict started at all,
but why it started then. Triggers are often reported by journalists because they are the most immediate and dramatic elements of the conflict. While shallow understanding results in failure to portray the causes of the conflict, such results in poor public information dissemination to the public.

**Helicopter Journalists and conflict perspective**

These are journalists who are flown to a specific area to cover conflict situations. Very often they do not understand conflict they cover because they do not have background information on such conflicts.

**Who are the news makers?**

Journalists tend to focus on powerful, conspicuous actors like politicians. Many of the atrocities are planned at the top level of government or the military. It is ironic then that these are the very people both national and international media turn to as a source of information. Journalists often overlook people at the community level. A community worker, a farmer, a school teacher, a mother may bring very different perspectives to a story and when placed alongside elite sources, those perspectives would bring greater balance in stories.

**Stereotyping conflict situations**

Journalists often reinforce stereotypes which sometimes damage perspectives of conflict. Seek out constructive ways to move the story forward by providing accurate information, reducing misperceptions and stereotypes, and countering rumors. To avoid stereotypes, journalists have to ask difficult questions. A journalist is serving the public’s right to know, so has a responsibility to probe. But that does not mean being rude or discourteous. BBC editorial guidelines advises journalists to be searching, sharp, skeptical, informed and to the point but not discourteously or emotionally attached to one side of an argument.

Factual disputes are rampant in complex, intractable conflicts. Sometimes this occurs because facts are hard to obtain or understand; sometimes it occurs because each side claims different “facts” are true and the opposing sides’ facts are false. Journalists should take care to do balanced and careful fact-finding before believing any facts about what is or has been going on.

**Repeating old grievances**

Journalists use limited viewpoints and often repeat old grievances by the old elites when reporting on conflict. All sources journalists use have their own agenda and it’s important for journalists to remember that, and to clarify the difference between facts and claims. Some of the sources when interviewed repeat and fail to reveal only their positions and not their interests and as such, journalists end up reporting on the superficial and surface elements of conflict.

**Personification of conflict**

Journalists very often personify a conflict, so that an act of evil or good is attributed to one person or group. This overlooks the dynamics and substantive issues in a conflict. Journalists tend to focus almost exclusively
on the behavior of groups involved in conflict without explaining the reasons behind people's actions. Dig deep to find out what the values and assumptions are that motivate each side. Use professional conflict analysis tools to get a full understanding of the needs and values of those involved in every story.

**Journalists being partisan**

Journalists have been dragged into conflict factions based on their geographic areas of reporting. Journalists from two sides of conflict report differently on same conflict situation but with differing perspectives influenced by which side they reporting from.

Journalists have been caught up in the dualistic perspective reporting which creates a sense of “us” versus “them”. They have thus taken sides based on their areas of reporting. This tends to lead to the understanding of “us” as the good guys and “them” as the bad ones. By picturing the other side as barbaric beyond the pale of civilized behaviour, traditional conflict reporting usually works to dehumanize and demonize “them”. When focusing exclusively on the suffering, fears and grievances of only one party, media suggests that coercing or punishing the other party might be the best solution.

“It’s important to remember that journalists are human beings, too—and just like everyone else at work, they can often be overwhelmed, underprepared, bought with kindness, and subject to unconscious bias”. Zenobia Ravji, Journalist based in Israel

**Gender perspectives**

Journalists have ignored gender perspectives when reporting on conflict situations. Media should document the experiences of women in armed conflict, as well as support and publicize women’s peace initiatives. The role of women as peace builders, and the unique contributions that women bring to the peace-table, should be highlighted, and not sidelined by the mass media. Another problem with the under-representation of women in the media is that issues important to women are neglected.

**Distance and vastness of some areas,**

Journalists complained that some were vast, remote and inaccessible during outbreak of conflict situations. It is clear that some counties like Turkana, West Pokot among others counties were a great hindrance to professional, ethical and objective reporting of conflict situations in Kenya. Journalists could verify information urgently to ensure accuracy and fairness, they relied on

While technology in and out of the newsroom has reduced the tyranny of distance, the commercial realities of news gathering have also affected the reporting of conflicts. The higher cost of news gathering in remote regions, coupled with the geopolitical and economic priorities of the many governments and interested stakeholders, mean that conflicts occurring at close proximity to the metropolitan centers receive coverage at the expense of those occurring further away in less developed regions of the world.
Part Nine

Components of stories with good background of conflict analysis

Principles of Conflict Analysis for Journalist

i. Journalists should strive to seek information from various actors in the conflict area; conflict analysis by journalists must be based on a wide range of views about the sources of conflict. Conflicts are about perceptions and the meanings that people attribute to events, policies and institutions hence the need for variety of viewpoints.

ii. Journalists should note that analysing a conflict is not an emotion-free exercise. As a matter of fact, peace-building is a value-based engagement and journalists must beware of subjectivity and bias creeping into your analysis. It is better placed to engage all sides and appreciate the situation more clearly, if you engage in your analysis with an open mind.

iii. Journalists should also understand that conflict analysis is not only relevant when there is visible violence. There are stages where the conflict has not fully manifested in the form of violent conflict and this does not mean that the conflict analysis should not be done.

iv. Conflict analysis is done in participatory or non-participatory ways hence journalists in their experience in reporting should contribute to conflict analysis process within their areas of operation.

v. Journalists should be able to understand that a conflict analysis is not a ‘one off exercise. Good practice implies that periodic updates are planned for to capture effectively the dynamics of the conflict. More especially for journalists who are posted to new areas, conflict analysis is very important.

vi. Maintain at all times ethical journalistic principles of professional reporting, foster a dispassionate stance toward any issue in a conflict while avoiding the status quo, ask tough questions of everyone despite discomfort, and push for access.

vii. Gender perspectives and dynamics should be integrated into a conflict analysis process. Conflict perspectives are influenced by gender dynamics. Often times conflict reporting by journalists are male dominated.

viii. Use solid information as the basis of the story rather than an emotional peg. Operate on principle rather than prejudging the outcome, and avoid finding the point of coverage that fits only one side’s narrative.

ix. Conflict analysis is not a one-time process, journalists should engage in constant conflict analysis each time before they report by conflict situations are dynamics.

x. Reporting from the ground on conflict situations is always preferable in order to give accurate
depictions of events, eyewitness accounts, and gather information that will put authorities in a position to speak directly to the issues at hand. Demand access.

xi. A conflict analysis by journalists must be based on a wide range of views about the sources of conflict. Conflicts are about perceptions and the meanings that people attribute to events, policies and institutions.

xii. Offer a variety of coverage that can build the bigger picture. Avoid resorting to mostly human interest stories that rely on emotion to illustrate weighty issues, or using a zero-sum debt approach that ignores complexities of the situation.

xiii. Do not insert or package opinion into conflict analysis because this will be consequently transferred to the formal news coverage. Blurring this line can fuel distrust, misunderstanding, and resentment toward the media and between sides of the conflict.

xiv. Conflict analysis helps journalists to reconsider their perspectives, which are often heavily influenced by emotions, misunderstandings, assumptions, suspicions and mistrust as informed by their sources. In conflict situations, emotion can easily overwhelm logic and reason. It is therefore important to distinguish opinion from fact.

**Elements of journalists’ stories with a conflict analysis background**

Stories done by journalists who have a good conflict analysis background should have the following elements:

- A clear, precise and informed background of the conflict and reasons for its occurrence.
- Specifically identifies the cause of the conflict and clearly separates between causes and triggers and goes beyond obvious conflict symptoms.
- Avoids subjective interpretations that can compromise objectivity of readers in understanding the conflict and stakeholders in dealing with the conflict.
- Avoids the reinforcement of stereotypes which sometimes damage perspectives of conflict.
- Carries a wide range of viewpoints, perspectives from different news sources involved in the conflict.
- Examines the options and strategies of various parties including the possibility for withdrawal, compromise or transcendence?
- Contains a gender specific perspective to the conflict with regards to news sourcing and actors. It also seeks to explain how different genders especially the women and children have been impacted by the conflict.
• Does not focus on dramatizing and sensationalizing the physical aspects of the conflict while ignoring the emotional and latent forms of pain and distractions.

• Names sources accurately and precisely after proper verification. The rule is named sources are always better than unnamed sources.

• Examines the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict for public awareness and interventions.

• Examine stakeholders’ options and their implications in the conflict with regards to media’s watchdog role.

• Avoids the personification of a conflict, so that an act of evil or good is not attributed to one person or group.

• Avoids assessing the merits of a violent action or policy of violence in terms of its visible effects only.

• Reports and focuses on both sides of conflict. By examining and reporting on the two sides’ misperceptions of each other, the media encourages disputing sides to revise their views and move closer to reducing conflict.

• Asks tough questions. Good stories seeks out the real meaning of what leaders say and looks beyond the leaders’ interests and seeks the larger groups’ interest.

• Asks the disputing parties for their solutions instead of just repeating their rhetoric of grievances.

“I think journalism anywhere should be based on social justice and impartiality, making contributions to society as well as taking responsibility in society. Whether you are capitalist or socialist or Marxist, journalists should have the same professional integrity. – Tan Hongkai”
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