Conflict Prevention

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Conflict exists in all countries and in every level of society. **Conflict** per se is by no means a negative force, rather it is a natural expression of social difference and of humanity's perpetual struggle for justice and self-determination. If managed non-violently, it can be positive, a source of immense creativity and progress.

The challenge, however, is to avoid the violent expression of conflict without suppressing the root causes completely. On a small scale, how do members of a community, faced with competing interests or concerns, address them without resorting to violence or a breakdown of trust? On a larger scale, in the case of nations and states, how can ethnic, economic, territorial or political rivalry between sectors of society or groups be managed so that no side resorts to violence and all agree to channel and resolve their differences more constructively?

No matter how poor or oppressed a society is, or how provocative and manipulative political leaders may be, communal violence does not erupt suddenly. Inevitably, it is the manifestation of accumulated aggression and hostility. In order to *prevent* violence, it is necessary to address the hostile mistrust and belligerence before it reaches a point where each side believes that violence is their only recourse. The goal of **prevention** is to create a situation in which differences and conflicts can be addressed in a non-violent and constructive manner. This chapter provides an overview of developments in conflict prevention with a gender perspective.

1. WHAT IS CONFLICT PREVENTION?

Preventing conflict between states has been a central aim of the **United Nations** (**UN**) since the end of World War II. The UN Charter, however, does not extend deeply into situations of civil war. With the end of the Cold War, and in the light of the war in the **Balkans**, the genocide in **Rwanda** and other intrastate conflicts, the international community has become increasingly involved in addressing internal conflicts.

While no one suggests that preventing war or promoting peace is easy, there is nonetheless a growing consensus that violent conflict is not and should not be considered inevitable. The challenge, however, is not a lack of information or knowledge about a brewing conflict. It is the lack of political will on the part of national leaders and the international community to proactively seek to diffuse and resolve a situation before it escalates into violence. A major study by the **Carnegie Commission on the Prevention of Deadly Conflict** published in 1999 focused heavily on international actions and identified **conflict prevention** as including actions or policies to:

- prevent the emergence of violent conflict and identify non-violent means of resolving the tensions;
- stop ongoing conflicts from spreading; and
- deter the re-emergence of violence.[1]

The report categorises international approaches to prevention as:

- **operational prevention (or direct prevention)**—measures to address immediate crises (e.g. sending high-level diplomatic missions to mediate between parties, using economic tools such as sanctions, inducements, or collecting weapons and

demobilising fighting units), and employing forceful measures such as deploying peacekeepers to a region; and

- **structural prevention (or root causes prevention)**—addressing root causes such as poverty, political repression and uneven distribution of resources, which can, if left unattended, escalate into violence. Long-term prevention includes efforts to reduce poverty and achieve broad-based economic growth. Preventive strategies should also promote human rights, protect minority rights and institute political arrangements in which all groups are represented (e.g. promoting democratic government so that opposing parties can state their views, resolving differences through dialogue and cooperation or ensuring that legislation does not discriminate against one sector of society).

Although the goals are the same, operational versus structural prevention are radically different, with one focusing on short-term and targeted approaches, while the other requires a longer-term and more comprehensive approach. Women and civil society in general have been more active in structural prevention, typically through promoting development, the rule of law, human rights and poverty alleviation. However, at the local level such groups can and are increasingly becoming more involved in taking non-violent action in response to crises, and are themselves engaging in mediation efforts (see below and chapter on peace negotiations).

FROM THEORY TO ACTION: INITIAL STEPS

In practice, the international community has focused its work on conflict prevention at two points in a typical conflict's life cycle:

1. where violence has already erupted, but there is a possibility of preventing its escalation. For example, in 2004 following strong condemnation from the media, NGOs and human rights groups, the US and UN have taken steps warning the **Sudanese** government to stop genocide in the **Darfur** region; and

2. where conflict has recently ended, but peace is still fragile and thus the re-emergence of violence is a distinct possibility. In such cases the international community often sends peacekeepers to bring some security and enable the political structures to gain strength, such as deployments of UN peacekeeping forces to **Haiti** and **Liberia** in 2004.

There have been fewer "observable" instances of conflict prevention before the outbreak of conflict, as it is difficult to trace why war or violence *did not* occur. Moreover, often the measures taken are diplomatic and confidential in nature. A noted example of preventive action was taken in 1992 when the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe** (**OSCE**) sent a "spillover mission" to **Macedonia** with the goal of preventing the spreading of conflict from **Serbia**. In the same year the UN undertook its first preventive deployment mission with a dual military and civilian mandate. UN peacekeepers patrolled the **Macedonia –Serbia** borders and the civilian unit monitoring early signs of conflict, used its "good offices" in the form of preventive diplomacy to address tensions rising among ethnic groups within the country. A number of civil society efforts were also initiated including inter-community dialogues, promoting tolerance through radio and television programmes and democratising the media.[2]

In addition, to improve humanitarian and development efforts so that they are more sensitive to conflict issues, progress is being made through:

- efforts to understand the root causes and ongoing dynamics of conflict; and
- improving international interventions in order to alleviate existing tensions and establish mechanisms for addressing conflict non-violently.[3]

In general, however, preventing armed hostility and promoting the non-violent resolution of internal conflicts remains a key challenge for the international community. In part this is because states affected by conflict are often reluctant to accept international intervention. Despite violence in **Nepal** since the 1990s, the government has been unwilling to invite international peacekeepers. Similarly in the **Middle East**, although Palestinians have asked for international forces and observers, the Israeli government has rejected the notion. Intervention is regarded as a violation of state sovereignty. In addition, many policy-makers and scholars are hesitant to adopt conflict prevention strategies for fear of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Predicting

an escalation to violence is complex and can lead to false alarms. By directing attention to a potential conflict, there is apprehension that deliberate awareness could influence and increase escalation. Moreover, at the international level policy-makers are often focused on dealing with existing crisis situations, and do not have the capacity to focus on longer-term interventions for the sake of prevention.

Despite these issues, internationally there is growing support for better conflict prevention, because it is not only humane but also cost-effective. In 2001 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan presented his report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict to the General Assembly.[4] Among the key points emphasised in the report is the need for national governments to take responsibility for addressing conflicts before they become violent. But he acknowledged that "if the government concerned refuses to admit that it has a problem that could lead to violent conflict and rejects offers for assistance, there is very little outside actors, including the United Nations, can do."[5]

To address this dilemma, the report calls for the full participation of civil society in conflict prevention efforts. It recommends that NGOs organise an international conference including local, national and international organisations to determine their role in conflict prevention and develop regional action plans for interaction with the UN. This acknowledgment of the role of civil society is further endorsed in **Security Council Resolution 1366** (2001), which states: "…the United Nations and the international community can play an important role in support of national efforts for conflict prevention and can assist in building national capacity in this field and recognises the important supporting role of civil society."[6]

In 2004, a global civil society consultative process was well under way, with international organisations and networks such as the **Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)** and the **European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation** taking leading roles. This is an important process as it creates a space for national NGOs to have access to international actors, particularly in countries where governments are often reluctant to have NGOs involved in sensitive issues relating to politics, peace and security.

A Word of Warning…

Without effective and proactive responses, the early warning of violence is useless. But developing responses is challenging.

Early warning and context analyses require objectivity. Yet, there is always a risk that those conducting the analysis may give biased interpretations favouring particular agendas and interests. One way to promote objective evaluation is to bring together people with different political perspectives, economic backgrounds and social classes to do the analysis jointly. This in itself can be a means of addressing conflicts, as opposing parties hear each other's perspectives on the same situation.

Even if the information is objectively analysed and disseminated, without an appropriate strategy or policy for response by influential actors—particularly the international community—the conflict will not be averted.

In situations where violence has not erupted and there has been no recent history of war, it is often difficult for people living in the midst of rising tensions to accept that their community, society or nation could erupt into indiscriminate warfare. Denial is an easy way to avoid the ominous risk of war. It is always easier to retreat and say, "We are different and it cannot happen to us," but the facts often tell a different tale. Violence becomes a first, rather than a last resort in many cases. Denial and disbelief that war could break out was the experience of many in Bosnia prior to the escalation of violence.[7]

2. WHAT DOES CONFLICT PREVENTION CONSIST OF?

Preventive action is not a single event, rather it is an ongoing process that changes according to given circumstances. It should strengthen existing processes for peace, respond to crises, help generate an environment and create mechanisms through which conflicts can be resolved non-violently. Effective conflict prevention measures require coordination and collaboration between various entities, including international, regional, sub-regional, national and local actors. Lessons drawn from conflict prevention efforts indicate that building the capacities of a society to manage and address conflict peacefully requires:

- a high degree of inclusiveness and participation of all sectors of society in dialogue, as well as peacebuilding;
- a high degree of local ownership of conflict prevention strategies and initiatives; and
- the strengthening of democratic institutions and empowerment of local actors through continuous consultation, assistance and training.[8]

To attain these goals, first and foremost it is important to have a thorough understanding of the factors, actors and conditions exacerbating conflict. NGOs, academics, policy-makers and practitioners have developed a series of approaches to improve understanding of conflict, including analyses, development of indicators and possible scenarios to help identify the actions that need to be taken. Gaining familiarity with them can help local actors—including women's groups—to implement their work more effectively. Moreover, by using the tools developed internationally, local actors are often best placed to improve them and develop responses suited to their region and cultural context. At the same time, familiarity with the tools is a means of having a common "language" with international actors and other civil society organisations, with whom local actors might wish to develop alliances. There are numerous frameworks and methods for developing conflict prevention strategies,[9] which generally share four key steps:

1. *Analysing the context and situation that includes identifying*
   - issues (indicators) that underpin and drive a conflict, and
   - issues or conditions that lessen conflict and that can be the basis for peace;
2. *Identifying or "mapping" the key actors and stakeholders,* including those who fuel conflict and those who mitigate it and promote peace;
3. *Developing scenarios* of possible situations from the worst to the best cases; and
4. *Planning effective responses* by identifying actions and steps that can be taken to alleviate tensions and promote the non-violent resolution of conflict.

RECOGNISING EARLY SIGNS OF CONFLICT AND UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION

A key element in understanding the context and situation in an escalating conflict is the ability to read warning signs of trouble and indicators of increasing tension or violence, which is the basis for "conflict early warning" analysis.[10]

Indicators can point to:

- people's security (physical, economic, political);
- political issues;
- economic issues;
- social and cultural issues;
- military issues, particularly mobilisation;
- sub-regional/geopolitical issues; and
- judicial and legal issues.

These indicators can be divided into four inter-related categories.

- Systematic indicators: highlight underlying, structural, deep-rooted conditions in a society. In Latin America throughout the 1970s there was overwhelming disparity between the minority rich, who often owned the vast majority of the land, and the poor. This economic disparity was

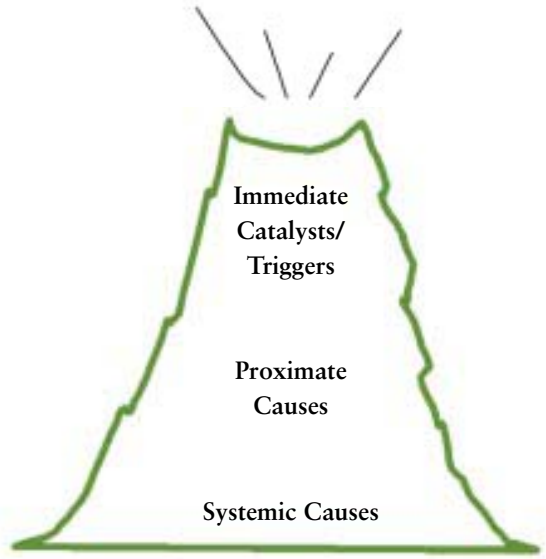
a key source of discontent and conflict. Other examples of systemic indicators are long-term political oppression or military rule or the social and economic oppression of one ethnic group by another.

- Proximate indicators: highlight medium-term events and situations and show a trend. In **Rwanda** for two years prior to the genocide in 1994, extremist Hutu groups were using radio to spread propaganda and hate messages against Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Other examples of proximate indicators are the formation of militias, increasing popular discontent, ongoing high inflation, increasing violence against specific ethnic or religious minorities and extremely high unemployment.

- Immediate catalysts or triggers: events or incidents that are difficult to predict but in combination with systemic and proximate causes, can trigger violence (see diagram). In **Rwanda**, the shooting down of the president's airplane was among the triggers for the genocide in 1994. Other examples include fraud during elections, a sharp rise in the price of basic goods, political arrests, and attacks against peaceful civilian demonstrations.

- Peace indicators: factors that promote peace and non-violence. In **South Africa**, prior to the end of apartheid, every police attack against demonstrations or guerrilla attacks on civilian targets heightened tensions. To ease the situation, leaders of the liberation movement, particularly Archbishop Tutu, immediately called for calm.

Analysing these indicators together can help provide understanding of the state of events and emerging trends in a society. It is also critical in determining whether corrective actions should be immediate and "operational" for **direct prevention** (e.g. deployment of peacekeepers), or if there is also a need for **structural prevention** to address the root causes of conflict in the longer term. Often there is a need for both.



3. WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO INCLUDE GENDER IN EARLY WARNING AND SITUATION ANALYSES?

In the 1990s, between 80 to 90 percent of those killed, wounded, abused or displaced in conflict were civilians.[11] This trend continues in the 21st century. The deliberate victimisation of women (through rape, mutilation or forced pregnancies) has increased international awareness of the differential impact of war on men and women. Some measures are being put in place to address the specific needs of women. At the same time, the contribution of women and women's organisations to conflict resolution, management and peacebuilding is also gaining wider recognition. Yet, often women's organisations lack the confidence to engage in conflict prevention efforts in a strategic manner.

In early warning efforts or situation analyses for conflict prevention, gender issues are still not widely addressed. Yet **gender indicators**—those signs that reflect the changing circumstances of men and women in society—are often the earliest signs of impending conflict. In a study by **International Alert** and the **Swiss Peace Foundation**, three hypotheses were presented in favour of using gender indicators in conflict analysis.[12]

First, gender indicators are often most evident at the grassroots level and can point to systemic problems or highlight early signs of instability. By drawing on them to determine the ongoing

> "The aim [of conflict prevention] must be to create a synergy with those civil society groups that are bridge-builders, truth-finders, watchdogs, human rights defenders, and agents of social protection and economic revitalisation."
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> —UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, quoted in *The Washington Times*, 23 June 2004.

situation, it is possible to recognise societal tensions and aim to alleviate them before they escalate. In the oil-rich Niger Delta region of **Nigeria**, women led a non-violent sit-in against Chevron/Texaco in 2002.[13] Their actions were a sharp contrast to previous armed protests led by men against oil companies. The women were demanding community support, compensation for environmental damage and increased oil revenue for their region. While their actions were an indication of deeper resentment in the community, they also opened dialogue with the oil company, which resulted in Chevron/Texaco agreeing to a series of community-based programmes including creating jobs, starting a micro-credit programme for women and funding local schools, clinics, water and electricity systems. These initiatives alleviated tensions and the potential for violence by transforming the interaction between the company and the community. "We now have a different philosophy," said one company executive to the BBC, "and that is do more with communities."[14]

Second, when gender perspectives are excluded from situation analyses, there is a greater risk of overlooking the often deteriorating situation of specific sectors of society—e.g. women or young unemployed men—and ignoring related factors that fuel conflict. Yet if the gender dimensions of conflict are recognised early, the responses developed are more likely to address them. Where women are particularly discriminated against or targeted, inclusion of gender perspectives can help ensure that discriminatory policies are not perpetuated in post conflict situations and that "newly established freedoms" are not reversed. It is also a means of ensuring that responses at a political and humanitarian level address the vulnerabilities specific to women and men. In **Afghanistan**, under the Taliban (1995–2001) women were severely repressed, unable even to leave their homes without being escorted by a man. Yet women represented an estimated 65 percent of the population in that country, and as a result of war, many were either widows or running households single-handedly as men were away or injured in war. In the aftermath of the US attack on the Taliban and the fall of the regime, the presence of a handful of Afghan-American women as part of the UN and international community efforts ensured that the voices of Afghan women were heard. They also advocated that women be included as beneficiaries of major reconstruction efforts (e.g. being paid for cooking food and sewing clothes for construction workers).[15]

Third, early warning and preventive activities can be made more effective by utilising the untapped potential of women, women's networks and women's organisations as actors for peace.[16] Women's organisations that undertake information gathering and analysis often provide their own insight, knowledge and solutions, which can complement and support the efforts of others—particularly international actors.

Another way to consider this is:

- What is happening to women compared to men? Are they under new pressures to conform to traditions? Are they being attacked? What can be done to stop the attacks?
- What knowledge do women have regarding impending violence compared to men? In the late 1990s in **Sierra Leone,** village women knew about impending attacks by rebels against UN peacekeepers. Despite the risks it involved, they were willing to pass the information on to the UN system, yet did not know whom to contact.[17]
- What actions are men and women taking to prevent or incite violence? In **Rwanda**, in the late 1990s, women convinced their husbands to stop armed actions and return home from hiding.[18]

ACTOR MAPPING

To fully understand the dynamics of a potential conflict, it is also essential to identify the groups or individuals that are exacerbating the situation, and

Gender-Based Indicators[19]

Gender-based indicators remain largely absent in conflict early warning efforts, including responses that are developed. As noted below, gender-sensitive indicators can be found at all levels.

Systemic: Indicators include long-term political exclusion of women, economic discrimination (e.g. laws prohibiting women from inheriting property), discrepancies between men and women's educational levels or place in the work force.

- Example of gender indicator: In 1977, 50 percent of women compared to 80 percent of men were literate in country X.
- Example of gender indicator showing a trend: By 1987, 40 percent of women compared to 80 percent of men were literate in country X.

The second example indicates that the situation of women in country X deteriorated over the decade. This could imply increasing economic hardship or the spread of religious extremism, with a focus on women (e.g. the Taliban's treatment of women in **Afghanistan**).

Proximate: Indicators include gradual trends from an open/tolerant society to a more closed society, particularly imposing or implementing restrictive laws relating to women. Other examples include an increase in propaganda that emphasises hyper-masculinity and violence; increase in the number of public fights between groups of men; more incidences of men ganging up on men of other groups or men not fulfilling the "masculine" ideal of a combatant; verbal harassment, physical beating, persecution of men who refuse to take up arms, rape and honour killings of women; and a lack of institutional prosecution of perpetrators.

- Increase in violence against women in private and public: Rising aggression in society, including domestic violence against women, girls and boys. The increased level of domestic violence (and general tension) was observed in **Ethiopia** prior to the outbreak of war with **Eritrea** in 1962.
- Gender-based changes in economic pattern: Sale of jewellery or other precious materials by women indicating increasing economic hardship; increased financial assistance from family abroad being sent home, hoarding of goods or sex-specific unemployment—particularly where there is a high percentage of unemployed young men.
- Sex-specific refugee migration: Population movements within a state or to surrounding nations. Approximately 6–8 weeks prior to the outbreak of widespread violence in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** in 1992, large numbers of women, particularly of Muslim origin, left Priador. Muslims described this as protecting their families from danger; Serbs described it as clearing the decks to prepare for all-out conflict.

Triggers and Catalysts:

- Killings and disappearances: Men, particularly those who are physically able or represent a political threat, are often targeted prior to outbreak of conflict. In **Cambodia** and **Kosovo**, many males were either killed or "disappeared" prior to the eruption of widespread violence.
- Gender-specific killing ("Gendercide"): Young, educated and often pregnant women are targeted for execution in an attempt to extinguish a culture. Non-pregnant women might be forcibly impregnated, as a way to dilute a culture or introduce the genes of another culture, as in the cases of **Bosnia, Herzegovina** and **Rwanda**.

those that are aiming to mitigate conflict and promote non-violence and peace. The following questions can help identify and map actors in terms of their position, interests, strengths, affiliations and weaknesses:

- Who/what is the actor or stakeholder, including their source of support/legitimacy?
- At what level are they most active and effective (international, national, regional or local)?
- Are they representative of different sectors of the community (including marginalised groups)?
- What are their demands, their needs, their fears?
- What power/resources/capacities do they have?
- Who are they affiliated with or who influences them?
- Do they have a vision of peace? What does their vision include (e.g. autonomy, co-existence, land reform)?

CREATING SCENARIOS

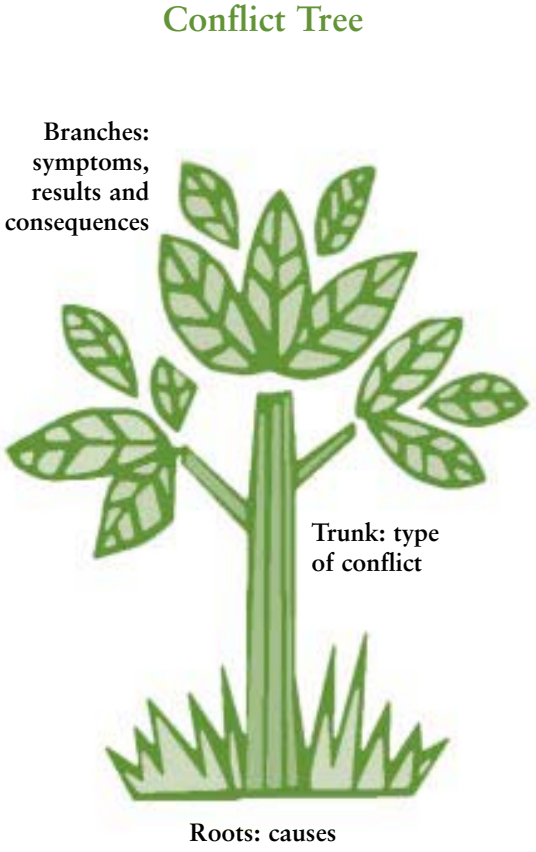
Situation analysis with actor mapping helps identify possible scenarios and answer the question "What will happen next (in a given time frame)?"

Prior to the invasion of **Iraq** by the **US** in 2003, for example, many analysts were developing best-case and worst-case scenarios about the outcome of the war. They ranged from those who believed the US would win easily and be accepted openly and peacefully by Iraqi society, to those that predicted urban guerrilla warfare and resistance to the US.

Scenario development is useful for planning and preparing actions in advance, and helping ground these activities in reality. In **Iraq**, the **US** was criticised for being unprepared in the face of resistance from Iraqis and not planning the reconstruction effort systematically; in the early days this resulted in mass looting of government buildings, banks, and even hospitals, and ultimately contributed to anti-US sentiment.

While these national or international approaches may seem daunting, there are actions that can be taken at the local level to promote better understanding and initiate dialogue between conflicting parties. The **conflict tree** is a tool that was used in northeast **Kenya** by local communities. Each side of the dispute draws a tree, where the roots represent the root causes, the trunk represents the existing problem and type of conflict that has arisen (violent, internal, inter-community, etc), and the branches depict the symptoms or consequences of the conflict. The trees can then be exchanged so that each side can see and get a better understanding of the fears, concerns and general perceptions of their counterpart. A similar exercise undertaken in **Sudan** prompted a dialogue between local disputants and resulted in a written agreement.[20]

The **peace flower** can be used in parallel, to identify potential sources for peaceful interaction. The roots



signify structures or systems in society that uphold peace or can contain conflict, (e.g. rules that govern interactions between groups or laws that enable freedom of expression). The stem symbolises processes that encourage and support peaceful engagement such as inter-village meetings or

gatherings of tribal elders. The petals symbolise mechanisms for dealing with conflict, including truth commissions and civil society activism such as mass vigils or peaceful protests against war.

EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

Within the UN system, the World Bank, European Commission, and many bilateral aid agencies, there is an increase in monitoring situations in unstable countries or those at risk of violence breaking out. The **World Bank** and the **UN Development Programme** (**UNDP**) for example, initiated a joint "watching brief" project to monitor social and economic conditions in specific countries.

The **UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** (**OCHA**) has a dedicated "early warning unit" that combines field missions and analytical work to track trends that might lead to humanitarian crises or failures. It also disseminates regular updates and one-page reports highlighting particular situations to other entities within the UN system. The **Department of Political Affairs** (**DPA**) prepares analytical studies of trends relating to peace and security and offers strategies for response. Its activities include conducting fact-finding missions, reporting to the Security Council, and providing political guidance for diplomatic interventions by senior UN personnel or the Secretary General.

In addition to the system-wide changes and efforts by the UN, other international entities—governments, multilateral organisations and NGOs—are also involved in conflict prevention efforts, as noted below.

- After war broke out in Yugoslavia in 1991, there were fears that the conflict could have a domino effect and spread to the southern **Balkans**, particularly **Macedonia** and **Albania**. In response to these warning signs, the **UN** deployed its first ever prevention peacekeeping operation **United Nations Prevention Deployment Force** (**UNPREDEP**) to **Macedonia** in January 1993. A UN Special Representative held regular meetings with political parties, convened national youth meetings, and undertook projects to encourage bridge-building, the formation of NGOs, and awareness of international human rights instruments. International NGOs initiated educational projects, problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution trainings and media projects to help prevent an escalation of ethnic tensions.[21]

- The **World Bank** and **IMF** do not have mandates to intervene in the political relations of countries. But by basing their financial assistance on certain conditions, such as the rule of law, transparency and good governance, they are implicitly promoting long-term structural conflict prevention.[22] In addition, the Bank's **Post Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit** assesses the causes, consequences and characteristics of conflict and provides financing for physical and social reconstruction initiatives in post war societies to help prevent the resurgence of violence. The Bank has played a significant role in Afghanistan, Africa's Great Lakes region, the Balkans, Iraq, Liberia, Nepal, Sierra Leone, East Timor, the West Bank and Gaza and other war-torn areas (see chapter on post conflict reconstruction).

- Bilaterally, **Sweden**, **Norway** and **Canada** have led many of the international debates and initiatives relating to the promotion of conflict prevention, and the need to promote human security as a key to preventing war. **Norway** in particular has also played a key role in facilitating peace processes (see chapter on negotiations).

Actions by regional multilateral organisations include:

- In 1994, the **Association of Southeastern Asian Nations** (**ASEAN**) established a **Regional Security Forum** to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern, as well as promote confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the **Asia-Pacific region**. Recognising that the territorial and jurisdictional disputes in the South China Sea directly affected peace and stability in the region, ASEAN issued the Manila Declaration of 1992, which promoted a policy of cooperation and collaboration to mitigate the conflict. The regional organisation also played a significant role that led to the settlement of the **Cambodian** conflict through the Paris Agreement, sponsored track two diplomacy efforts on the **Spratly Island** dispute in

1991, participated in mediations in 1999 regarding self-determination for **East Timor** and continues to host dialogues regarding nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia and South Asia.[23]

- Since the 1990s, the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe** (**OSCE**) has expanded its operational capacity for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. In 1992, the post of **High Commissioner on National Minorities** was established to identify and seek early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations among states of the OSCE. The High Commissioner's mandate describes the role as "an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage." The OSCE has been particularly active in the **former Soviet Union**—building confidence and trust between **Russians** and local populations in **Latvia, Estonia**, and other new states.

National leaders include governments or individual leaders. The ability and willingness of national leaders to analyse a situation, weigh options for action and balance personal ambitions and fears with national interest is critical. Examples of such actions include:

- In the 1990s, the growing mobilisation and protests of black **South Africans** caused leaders within the South African government to terminate apartheid policies that promoted preferential treatment of whites. Facing the threat of a descent into mass violence, white South African leaders opted for compromise and power-sharing. This choice was also possible because the majority in the liberation movement was against all-out war, and the leaders in the dominant African National Congress (ANC) valued plurality and equality for all within a system of majority rule democracy.

- During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a peace process in **Northern Ireland** began to take shape. Several developments prompted a dialogue between the Unionists and Nationalists, but the initiative of Social Democratic and Labour Party leader John Hume and Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams eventually led to closer cooperation between a coalition of pro-nationalist partners to pursue a united **Ireland** agenda. While the Hume-Adams talks were unpopular with the public, they moved the conflict towards negotiation of ceasefires in 1994–1995 and eventually the **Good Friday Accords** in April 1998.[24]

Civil society organisations, including NGOs, religious entities, scientific community, educational institutions, media, grassroots movements and the business sector can play an important role, as noted below.

- Several international NGOs and networks are dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for early response through monitoring conflict situations and publishing reports. One of the most prominent is the **International Crisis Group** (**ICG**), an independent NGO with offices worldwide that monitors and analyses conflicts and unstable situations globally. ICG publishes analytical reports with recommendations for action tailored to specific international and national actors. The organisation uses the reports to inform and press for actions that in its view would prevent the escalation of conflict.

- The **Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict** (**GPPAC**) was formed in response the UN Secretary General's report (see above). The network brings together a variety of actors involved in conflict prevention efforts from the international to the community level. With fifteen regional centres, GPPAC aims to influence regional, national and international policy and thinking on conflict prevention; clarify relations between civil society and the UN and its agencies; build better relations with governments; consolidate the network; and set regional agendas for the network for the coming decade.

- A number of international NGOs work to develop in-country programmes dedicated to conflict prevention. **Search for Common Ground** (**Search**), an independent NGO, has developed numerous **media-based** programmes in conflict-affected states, promoting tolerance and peace. In **Burundi**, it started "Heroes"—a radio show that profiles ordinary people who have helped others across ethnic divisions. In **Macedonia**, Search had a television show in which children of all

ethnicities faced prejudice and worked together to overcome it. Search also used public opinion polling to inform Israelis and Palestinians about each other's views and support for non-violence and negotiations.

- NGOs also develop media monitoring projects to identify increasing tensions and respond in a timely and appropriate manner. They can hold media organisations accountable in their reporting—to ensure that the media does not incite violence, does not exaggerate conflict and covers peace initiatives as well. Technological developments and a reduction in the cost of media productions have also created opportunities for women and community-based organisations to create their own news and information channels. In the **Pacific region**, **FemTalk1325** is a radio, press and Internet-based NGO that covers issues relating to women, peace and security, and promotes women's participation in these issues throughout the Pacific. The **Feminist International Radio Endeavour** (**FIRE**) is a Central American-based project that disseminates news about women's issues in the region and provides training to grassroots organisations on Web site design, and newspaper and radio production. These informal news channels strengthen civil society networks and are an effective means of disseminating conflict early warning signs. The **Institute for War and Peace Reporting** runs training programmes for local journalists in conflict areas with the aim of promoting balanced and accurate reporting and understanding of human rights principles. The programmes also facilitate dialogue and exchange among journalists.

- Grassroots and community-based efforts to limit the spread of violence also exist. For example, in 1995, inter-ethnic violence in **Burundi** increased significantly and youth became polarised. To alleviate and prevent division, several small women's groups visited schools, informing students about the political manipulation behind violence and encouraging the youth not to get involved with the heightened violent activities. Women's groups worked to establish joint Hutu-Tutsi neighbourhood security programmes to warn citizens against extremist actions.[25]

- There are also national efforts to encourage a return to democracy and prevent violent conflict. 1993, civil society groups in **Fiji** created the **Citizens' Constitutional Forum** (**CCF**) as a peaceful way to address the acute ethnic conflict following the military coup in 1987. Through consultations, the Forum gathered input from citizens, rather than from political parties and elites, to frame a new constitution. The prolonged dialogue ended with a new constitution in 1996 that created a power-sharing dynamic in the national government.[26] In 2000 another coup took place in **Fiji.** Despite death threats, women's groups led daily candlelight vigils protesting the coup. As the interim government was sworn in, women's groups launched a "good governance working group" publicly counting down the days as a reminder that the country needed to return to democracy. Since then women's groups have monitored socioeconomic and political developments, highlighting the severe impact of economic downturn on women in the country. National women's groups in partnership with the **Ministry of Women's Affairs** formed the **Women, Peace, and Security Committee of Fiji** in 2003 and have initiated a number of activities and programmes to promote peace and dialogue. The programmes range from community radio shows and public vigils to lobbying successfully for more transparency in national security and defence policy-making, and training local communities in detecting early signs of violence and conflict.[27]

- Finally, while the prevention of violent conflict continues to pose a challenge, "**winning the peace**," and ensuring that violence does not surge again in the immediate aftermath of war, has drawn the attention of many practitioners and policy-makers internationally. A major international project housed at the **Center for Strategic and International Studies** (**CSIS**) in Washington, DC, developed a framework for post conflict programming based on immediate, medium and long-term actions needed in four key areas: security, governance and political participation, justice and reconciliation, and social and economic well-being (see related chapters in this Toolkit).

Chilean Women: Non-violent Action and Return to Democracy[28]

In 1988 for the first time in fifteen years, the military government of General Augusto Pinochet lifted the state-of-emergency ban on political activity in **Chile**, and allowed for a previously promised plebiscite to determine the future of his administration. A loss for Pinochet meant holding presidential and congressional elections within a year and returning the country to democracy. Despite the obvious gamble, Pinochet was pushed by mass protests and increased political activism by all sectors of society as well as growing international pressure. Yet, as many Chileans note, he would not have held the referendum if he had not felt sure of success. He lost, however, and Chile returned to a path of political freedom and democracy.

To outsiders the change in Chile may have appeared to come overnight, but for Chileans it was a result of fifteen years of organisation, protest and political action, that was deliberately kept non-violent, even when the government used force. Women, along with church groups and others, were at the frontlines of the anti-government protests. The **Organisation of Democratic Women**, one of the first such groups, was formed outside of the national stadium, in which men were being tortured. Women relatives of the victims gathered to share information and provide support. The organisation remained active for fourteen years, advocating on behalf of political prisoners. As the years went by and women formed support groups, their political activism also increased. Some focused on knitting "arpilleras" or tapestries and art depicting their struggle, for sale abroad, as a means of raising international awareness. Others held protests: housewives in grocery stores banging their pots, hospital nurses marching in silence, and people going on hunger strikes. In soup kitchens across shantytowns outside Santiago, they mobilised and, when the time came, voted against Pinochet in the plebiscite.

4. TAKING STRATEGIC ACTION: WHAT CAN WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS DO?

1. Use existing networks of women's groups to raise awareness about conflict prevention issues; consult with them regularly to learn about conflict trends at the community level, their impact on women and potential roles in mitigating violence.

2. Identify and invite NGOs to a workshop on conflict analysis and mapping of actors.
   - Identify a range of indicators including gender-based indicators that highlight trends in society.
   - Develop a common strategy to address root causes of conflict.

3. Seek to work with other groups with a potential for involvement in conflict prevention, including religious institutions and the business community and mobilise their resources and expertise to promote non-violence.
   - Organise dialogues within communities, or among different sectors of the population (e.g. youth) on issues of concern and possible solutions.
   - Identify traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and explore ways of using them to de-escalate tensions.
   - Commission surveys in conflict-affected communities to identify demands for non-violence.

4. Identify and consult with key international actors, to gain awareness of their concerns and strategies for conflict prevention.
   - Advocate for wider interaction and support of women's groups and use of gender-based indicators.
   - Using international networks and interaction with the UN and national diplomats, call for a UN fact-finding mission—and lobby for the presence of gender experts.

- Publicise Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1366, which advocate for the inclusion of civil society in conflict prevention efforts.

5. Reach out to educators to promote conflict resolution training and peace education in schools and colleges.

6. Develop ties with local media and international services (e.g. the BBC's World Service) to publicise stories of non-violent conflict resolution in society.

7. Work with local journalists to promote objectivity and moderation in reporting.

8. Reach out to key stakeholders most susceptible to resorting to violence and encourage civic engagement and non-violence.

9. Identify key actors that can be a moderating force, including trade union leaders, media personalities and journalists, and religious leaders and mobilise their support against violence.

10. Reach out to the government and military to withhold the use of force and encourage non-violence.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND MORE INFORMATION?

European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation, <http://www.euconflict.org>.

European Union. *Conflict Prevention and Civilian Crisis Management,* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/cp.htm>.

Final Report of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/subsites/ccpdc/index.htm>.

The Global Partnership on Preventing Armed Conflict, <http://www.gppac.org/>

The Institute of War and Peace Reporting, <http://www.iwpr.net/home_index_new.html>.

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Search for Common Ground, <http://www.sfcg.org/>.

Swiss Peace Foundation, <http://www.swisspeace.org/>.

United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA), <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/prev_dip/fst_prev_dip.htm>.

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ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeastern Asian Nations
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCF	Citizens' Constitutional Forum
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DPA	United Nations Department of Political Affairs
FIRE	Feminist International Radio Endeavour
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
ICG	International Crisis Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPREDEP	United Nations Prevention Deployment Force
US	United States

ENDNOTES

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3. For more information see on conflict assessment methods see *Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack*. London: Africa Peace Forum, CECORE, CHE, FEWER, International Alert, and Saferworld, 2004 5 September 2004 <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/resource_pack.html>.
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