



**Thematic Note**  
**Cross-Cutting Theme: Conflict and Violence**

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## 1. Description of 'CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE' theme

Conflicts *per se* are not necessarily violent, nor inherently bad. They are an inevitable part of living in society, and are a result of the differences and tensions between people and between groups. Conflicts play an important role in driving social change; and social change itself can generate conflict.

International Alert uses the **definition** from the Conflict-Sensitivity Consortium, of which it was a member: "Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests. It becomes violent when parties no longer seek to attain their goals peacefully, but resort instead to violence in one form or another." In other words, conflict is the result of (perceived) incompatible aims, perceptions or behaviours of at least two actors (Scheffran et al., 2012).

This allows Urban ARK to **distinguish between conflict and violence**. Conflict is a dynamic process, can be violent or non-violent and can go through various stages of escalation and de-escalation. In violent conflict however, at least one actor uses force to pursue their aim (Scheffran et al. 2012). Not surprisingly, the threat, fear or actual experience of conflict and violence has an impact across almost any area of privately and publicly experienced life. For example in terms of people's status and levels of confidence, their degree of agency and voice, their access to livelihoods and assets, the availability of and access to resources, services and infrastructure and local capacities to respond to circumstances. These dynamics have a bearing – often a very significant one – on how effective external interventions in vulnerable urban settings will be whether risk management, development, humanitarian or peacebuilding.

This raises particular priorities for **urban risk management**:

- Is the implementation of risk management (by government agencies or community groups) constrained because of local social tensions, mistrust or the threat of violence?
- Does political tension undermine or enhance collective organising for effective community level risk management?

Those people and places experiencing poverty and exclusion may also be exposed to **environmental risk** and violence. It is important to understand how local capacity to manage environmental risks is constrained or shaped by conflict dynamics, including violence. In some cases, successful disaster risk reduction, which enables trust-building, can have positive outcomes for reducing conflict dynamics.

The consequences of past conflict and violence will also **impact on individual behaviour and by extension risk governance**. How is urban risk governance influenced by the arrival of migrants fleeing violence in the countryside? Does this only increase the number of vulnerable people or does past conflict exposure shape individual vulnerability and capacity in some way? Within the city, residents may be able to balance exposure to social violence and political conflict with environmental hazards, perhaps by making decisions to relocate. Amongst the poor however, it is more likely that conflict and risk will both have to be endured. In such cases, what strategies and priorities emerge from local residents, community groups and government to try and build resilience? Of particular interest will be experiences of risk and violence for those people that have been relocated as part of urban development or risk management projects.

Conflict/violence can be brought into the Urban ARK analysis in at least three ways:

- conflict and violence as part of the conceptualisation and mapping of urban governance;
- analysing how conflict/violence manifests itself and how this affects local risk dynamics and urban resilience, and
- assessing how policy responses and projects seeking to reduce risk interact with the conflict context

## 2. Questions to ask yourself in designing research so that 'CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE' can be integrated into your work

- a. What are the emergent political, economic, environmental and social issues in your city? What are the existing and potential conflicts that influence or could influence people's lives in your city case study?<sup>1</sup> (See Table1 Conflict Map for guidance)

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<sup>1</sup> There is no single cause of conflict; conflicts often result from a combination of factors and are context-specific. However, this question is geared towards a mapping of the different conflicts that exist in the communities as a first step to integrating

<b>Table 1: Conflict Map</b>	
<b>Types of conflict</b>	
Identity-based conflicts	generational, ethnic, religious, intra-household, gender-based, identity politics
Issue-based conflicts	availability and access to resources, access to services and infrastructure, trading and market sites, jobs and livelihoods, power dynamics between different groups, elite pacts, power sharing settlements
<b>Contributing factors</b>	
Political and institutional	elections, elite power struggles and political exclusion, breakdown of social contract, corruption, weak state, and poor service delivery
Socioeconomic	poverty, inequality, exclusion and marginalisation, absence or weak social cohesion, disruption of social networks, injustice and uncertainty
Resource and environmental	scarcity of natural resources, environmental degradation and impacts on livelihoods, aggravation of environmental risks of one group for another, environment-induced displacement, inequitable access, exploitation and benefits sharing of natural resources

- b. How do these conflicts manifest themselves and how does/could this affect local risk dynamics and consequent behaviours? How are grievances and tensions exacerbated to trigger violence through certain proximate and situational factors? Who is vulnerable as a result of this expression of conflict?
- c. How does conflict shape the delivery of resources, services and infrastructure, and thereafter people's susceptibility to risks, coping and adaptive capacities?
- d. How do environmental impacts/disasters reinforce local conflict dynamics and act as a threat-multiplier (competition over resources & services, impacts on livelihoods, assets & networks; on effective responses & coping mechanisms fuelling grievances, especially against the government, breakdown of the social contract, stress on weak governance systems displacement)?
- e. How do external interventions generate grievances/tensions and inadvertently undermine local resilience? e.g. infrastructure project, government policy, disaster/humanitarian responses that:
  - benefit one group over another/ exacerbate inequalities among communities
  - affect peoples' livelihoods
  - displace communities
  - create unmet expectations
  - lead to negative knock-on consequences
- f. What is the salience of the conflict issues you have mapped for your research?<sup>2</sup> (See Table 2 on Mapping Conflict Issues with Research Focus)

<b>Table 2: Mapping Conflict Issues with Research Focus</b>			
<b>'Conflict Issue'</b>	E.g. Land rights	Eg...	Eg...
<b>Scope and scale of conflict</b>	Widespread tensions over land ownership, unfair distribution over land titles, particularly among Ethnic Group Y and Ethnic Group Z		
<b>Expression and stage of conflict (pre-conflict/ latent, tensions, crisis/violent conflict, protests, de-escalation, post-conflict)</b>	Intermittent confrontations between landlords and tenants. Latent tensions between (local) government officials and communities over land rights. Protests erupt particularly during elections		
<b>Implications for risk, disaster impacts and risk management</b>	Social tensions and landlordism have undermined local capacity for social organisation and community based risk management. This is associated with actions by political parties to undermine non-political popular movements which are seen as a threat to their own power bases.		

a 'conflict lens' to your research methodology. It might be helpful to use the findings from the Actor Mapping exercise conducted in Cape Town.

<sup>2</sup> Note – Not all the conflicts you have mapped will be relevant to include in your research design. Prioritisation could be undertaken based on the particular importance of that conflict dynamic to understanding risk in your city case study and to what extent it resonates and aligns with your research focus.

### 3. How to monitor successful integration

- a. During the research design and implementation process:  
Check conflict issues been identified in the city case study i.e. there is evidence of a conflict map, this should be augmented by a series of hypotheses on the interaction between the conflict and risk.  
Check questions on relevant conflict issues are integrated into the research design and field data collection methods (e.g. interviews, FGDs, HH surveys etc.).  
Check that data is gathered on specific conflict dynamics
- b. During the stage of reviewing results:  
Check data is coded on specific conflict dynamics and risk interactions.  
Check enough data has been collected to potentially draft a mini case-study on risk interactions that include an analysis of relevant conflict issues.
- c. During dissemination and impact (including measuring impact):  
Check analysis of conflict dynamics are included in written outputs, presentations and of research , framed as a factor whose consideration is integral to the success of development interventions in vulnerable settings.

### 4. Further Readings

**Reading 1:** Vivekananda, J., Schilling, J., & Smith, D. (2014): [Climate resilience in fragile and conflict-affected societies: concepts and approaches](#), *Development in Practice*, 24(4), 487-501,

**Reading 2:** Clionadh Raleigh, ['Urban violence patterns across African states'](#), *International Studies Review*, 2015, 17, 90–106,

**Reading 3:** Fox, S. and Beall, J. (2012) [Managing conflict and violence in African cities](#). *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 30: 968-981

**Reading 4:** Beall, J., Goodfellow, T., and Rogers, D., ['Cities and Conflict'](#), London: Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics

**Reading 5:** Caroline O N Moser and Cathy Mcllwaine, ['New frontiers in 21st century urban conflict and violence'](#), *Environment & Urbanization Brief*, International Institute for Environment and Development, 2014, ISBN 978-1-78431-127-8.

**Case Study 1:** Schilling, J., Locham, R., Weinzierl, T., Vivekananda, J., & Scheffran, J. (2015 (forthcoming)): The Nexus of Oil, Conflict, and Climate Change Vulnerability of Pastoral Communities in Northwest Kenya, *Earth System Dynamics Discussions*.

**Case Study 2:** Schilling, J., Vivekananda, J., Nisha, P., & Khan, M. A. (2013): Vulnerability to Environmental Risks and Effects on Community Resilience in Mid-west Nepal and South-east Pakistan, *Environment and Natural Resources Research*, 3(4), 1-19.

**Case Study 3:** Vivekananda, J., Schilling, J., Mitra, S., & Pandey, N. (2014): On shrimp, salt and security: livelihood risks and responses in South Bangladesh and East India, *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 16(6), 1141-1161

### 5. References

International Alert, (2010), [Programming Framework for International Alert Design, Monitoring and Evaluation](#), London: International Alert

Scheffran, J, Link, Peter Michael, & Schilling, J (2012), Theories and Models of Climate-Security Interaction: Framework and Application to a Climate Hot Spot in North Africa. In: Scheffran, Brzoska, Brauch, Link, & Schilling (Eds.), *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict: Challenges for Societal Stability* (Vol. 8, Hexagon Series on Human and Environment Security and Peace), Berlin, Springer, pp. 91-131.

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