



A1 HIDDEN ISSUES – INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

Tools in this section of *Reveal* provide background information on hidden issues for facilitators. Tools in other sections are designed to be used with communities.

Revealing conflict: information for facilitators

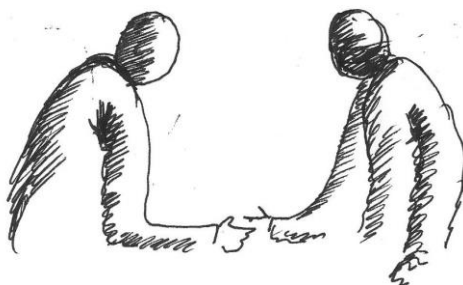
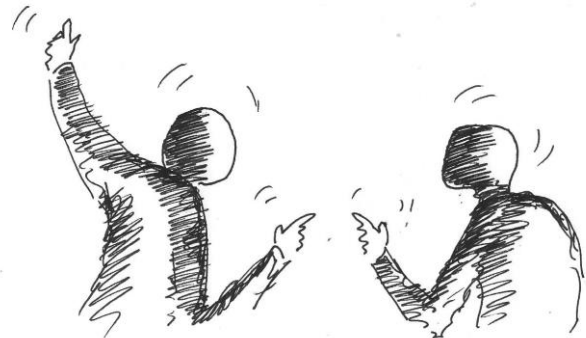
Questions for a facilitator to consider:

What do you think when you hear the word ‘conflict’?

What conflict are you experiencing in your life? Has conflict of any sort (big or small) stopped you from doing things you want and need to do?

Is there conflict within the community you are working with?

Conflict is all around us. When people think of the word ‘conflict’, they often think of wars or violence. Of course, this is a reality for many people. But conflict does not only include violent conflicts where armed groups are fighting each other. It also includes the disagreements we might have with a family member, a colleague or a neighbour.



In most cases, people are able to resolve conflict. Good communication is used to overcome differences and to reach an agreement. In fact, discussions and differences can be healthy and productive if they are dealt with well. However, when conflict is not addressed or it becomes violent, it can be very harmful. All communities experience some form of conflict, but some communities experience levels of conflict that severely affect people’s lives.

Sometimes, conflict is ‘below the surface’. It is not talked about openly. In this sense, conflict can be a hidden issue. It needs to be brought out into the open before it can be addressed effectively. If it is not addressed, it will limit the development and transformation that a community is able to experience.

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- Children & youth
- Climate & environment
- Conflict & peacebuilding
- Corruption & governance
- Disaster risk management
- Discrimination & inclusion
- Food & livelihoods
- Gender & sexual violence
- Health & HIV
- Influencing decision-makers
- Migration & trafficking
- Water, sanitation & hygiene

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What does the Bible say?

In Genesis, when God created the heavens and earth, Adam and Eve lived in God's land under God's blessing (Genesis 1:28). They experienced *shalom* (peace) with God, each other and the environment. However, in Genesis 3 we see that God's good creation was spoilt by sin. The *shalom* was destroyed. People's relationship with God was broken. This resulted in broken relationships between people, and between people and the environment.

The Bible shows that **broken relationships**, rather than any ethnic or cultural differences, are at the root of all conflict. Human rebellion against God has led to self-centredness, which in turn results in exclusion, mistrust, greed and injustice. Because of sin, people spoil and 'break' peace. This can be through large-scale wars, destructive conflict between individuals or, sadly, conflict within or between churches.

From Genesis 3 onwards, the Bible reveals God's plan to restore his creation – to bring it back into a right relationship with him. God's aim is reconciliation and community. There are many places in the New Testament where Christian unity is emphasised, and guidelines are given about how to live at peace with one another. In Christ, ethnic identities and cultures are united without being destroyed, and all people are seen as equal (Romans 10:12–13; 1 Corinthians 12:12–13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). In Matthew 5:9, Jesus tells his disciples: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.' This means that Christians should make peace with each other and work towards peace and reconciliation in our communities.

For Bible studies on this issue, please see **Section B** of *Reveal*.

Understanding conflict

When two or more people or groups disagree about an issue, then conflict can arise. This kind of conflict is normal, and all of us experience it to some extent.

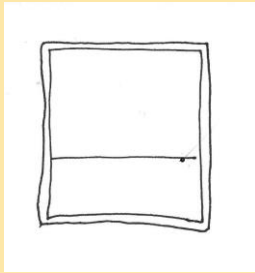
Disagreements can have many causes, such as land, natural resources, language, water, ethnicity or race, migration, political power, values, assumptions or religion. Conflict at community level could be about any of these issues. Conflict happens because people are unable to reconcile their differences, and they let these differences influence their behaviour.

If disagreements lead to one side or both actively making life difficult for the other (either by attacking them or restricting access to essential resources), then this can be called 'violent conflict'.

While a conflict starts because of a disagreement, there are usually background factors that fuel the conflict. The most important of these is power. Others include culture, identity and rights.

Conflict usually falls into one of four categories:

1. No conflict



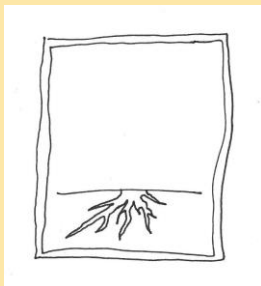
Any peaceful community is likely to face conflict at times, although communities in this category are good at resolving conflict before it develops.

2. Surface conflict



This has shallow or no roots. It may be due to misunderstanding of goals, which can be addressed by improved communication and the conscious effort of opposing groups to understand each other's needs and opinions.

3. Latent conflict



This is conflict 'below the surface'. It might need to be brought out into the open before it can be addressed effectively.

4. Open conflict



This conflict is very visible and has deep roots, sometimes over several generations. Both the causes and the effects need to be addressed.

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How does conflict affect people?

Violent conflict leads to injury and death and can result in the widespread destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods. It results in a breakdown of trust and can cause great suffering through bereavement, trauma, grief and anger.

Increased levels of conflict can also impact other areas of lives. It may stop access to education, livelihoods and even essentials such as food, shelter and water.

It is important to deal with the underlying causes of conflict, as well as the symptoms, and to work towards the restoration of relationships. As relationships are restored, future conflict on other issues may be avoided, as there will be better understanding and stronger ties between opposing groups.

Using Reveal

Please see **Section C2** for a tool to help communities to analyse and begin to understand conflict. For Bible studies about peace and conflict, please see **Section B**.



Finding out more

- Tearfund (2013) Footsteps 92 – *Conflict and peace*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_91-100/footsteps_92/
- Tearfund (2003) Roots 4 – *Peacebuilding within our communities*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/roots/peace-building_within_our_communities/
- World Vision International (2006) A Shared Future: Local Capacities for Peace in Community Development -
<http://reliefweb.int/report/world/shared-future-local-capacities-peace-community-development>
- Other resources from World Vision International, such as 'Making sense of turbulent contexts' and 'Do no harm' can be found at <http://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding>

Related tools:

- B – Christ triumphs over conflict (Bible study) [*B: Conflict & peacebuilding-1*]
- B – Love your enemies (Bible study) [*B: Conflict & peacebuilding-2*]
- B – Unity in Christ (Bible study) [*B: Conflict & peacebuilding-3*]
- C1 – Story telling [*C1: Awareness raising-6*]
- C1 – Writing a community drama [*C1: Awareness raising-7*]
- C2 – Analysing conflict [*C2: Conflict & peacebuilding-1*]