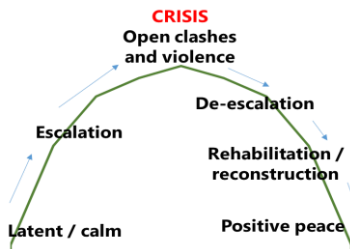


# Conflict and fragility

**The increasing frequency and scale of conflicts has forced millions to flee their homes and had a devastating impact on civilians, communities, infrastructure and development.**

Countries with weak, or no state capacity or legitimacy, often referred to as **'fragile states'** are more vulnerable to conflict. Effective **steps towards peace** rely on inclusion, enhancing state capacity and peace building. However, these efforts can also undermine state legitimacy and contribute to further conflict.

## The conflict cycle



- **Understanding the root causes of conflict is vital** - interventions should address them, not reinforce them.
- At a minimum – **ensure your intervention does no harm.**
- A conflict may skip some stages, and flow into or repeat others.
- A country may experience 2 or 3 different stages at the same time.

## Who is responsible for those affected by conflict?

**International Humanitarian Law (IHL)** applies in armed conflict, whether international or non-international conflict, or occupation. Legal obligations related to **humanitarian access** differ depending on the nature of the conflict but consent of the parties to the conflict is required in all cases. In summary:

1. **States and non-State armed groups** are responsible for meeting the basic needs of civilians under their control (or occupation).
2. **Humanitarian agencies and third countries** have the right to offer assistance and this cannot be seen as a breach of sovereignty
3. In any situation, parties to the conflict need to consent to relief interventions.
4. Parties to the conflict **must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need.**

Denial of assistance and humanitarian access may constitute a war crime under **International Criminal Law** if, for example, it leads to starvation.

### Impact of conflict

- Cumulative degradation of assets, infrastructure and resilience
- Mass displacements
- Increased risk of epidemics
- Mental health concerns due to stress, violence and trauma
- Declining physical health due to poor nutrition, injury and illness
- Localised violence and criminality
- Increased discrimination

### Strategies to mitigate risk of conflict

- Increase understanding and respect for human rights and international law
- Establish and maintain dialogue with parties to conflict at all levels
- Advocate for warnings and precautions before launching attacks
- Focus on early interventions to mitigate tension, suspicion and insecurity and promote peace, inclusion, recovery and reconstruction

## Key questions for conflict analysis

### Context

- What is the political, economic, and socio-cultural context and emergent issues?
- What areas are affected?
- Is there a history of conflict?

### Causes

- What are the causes of the conflict?
- What could trigger further outbreaks?
- What factors can contribute to peace?

### Actors

- Who are the main actors and what are their interests and relationships?
- What are the capacities for peace and who might spoil peace efforts?

### Dynamics

- What are current conflict trends?
- What are the windows of opportunity?
- What scenarios can be developed from the analysis?

Also refer to the *Conflict Sensitive Approaches* page

### Additional resources on the All In Diary website

Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding © Conflict Sensitivity 2018  
Oxford Guidance on the Law Relating to Humanitarian Relief Operations in Situations of Armed Conflict, © OCHA 2017

### Web links for further information

ICRC: <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law>  
Safer World: <https://www.saferworld.org.uk>  
Oxford guidelines: <https://reliefweb.int/oxford-guidance>  
Conflict Dynamics: <http://www.cdint.org/humanitarian-access/>