



Practitioner's Guide:

Conflict Analysis



Conducting the Editing Process on a Local Conflict Analysis in Tavush Marz, Armenia



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FRCS

Food Security, Regional
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(Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan)



Conflict Analysis

Example:

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I. Introduction

This Application Example provides an overview of an innovative approach to fostering critical stakeholder ownership of a Local Conflict Analysis. The Local Conflict Analysis (LCA) in question was conducted in the Tavush province of Northern Armenia from late 2002 to mid 2003. The approach, dubbed the "Editing Process" by participants, was highly participatory and comprehensive. It incorporated into the final LCA report all comments, concerns and suggestions voiced during a series of lengthy discussions by parties involved in the conflicts. At the start of the Editing Process, local stakeholders were unable to even agree upon a common definition of the term "conflict." By the end, stakeholders not only shared a common understanding of term "conflict," they viewed the LCA report as their own and accepted the significance of its analysis and findings.

In addition to fostering stakeholder ownership of the LCA, the Editing Process had further benefits. It enabled a full discussion of sensitive or "forbidden" topics within the stakeholder community. Topics such as corruption, violence in the army, taxation of border zone lands that cannot be farmed, and the practice of stealing and selling back livestock from the enemy were brought to light and discussed in the safe forum provided by the Editing Process. Finally, the Editing Process, through its intensive and inclusive discussions, exposed critical steps that must be taken to develop a roadmap for future interventions.

Because the Editing Process is essentially a refinement of an already existing document, it is clearly not a process that can occur on its own. It must be preceded by a local conflict analysis, which serves as the raw material for the Editing Process and the development of a stakeholder-supported report.



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II. Overview of Local and Regional Conflicts Effecting Tavush Marz

The province of Tavush is located in the north-eastern part of Armenia, bordering Georgia and Azerbaijan. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in a frozen conflict over the status of the Nagorno Karabagh region, a predominantly ethnic Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan. Although the countries declared a ceasefire in 1994, there has not been a formal peace agreement and a number of Azerbaijani regions remain occupied by Armenian troops. The fragile truce between the countries is undermined by frequent gunfire exchanges along their common border. Large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons burden both countries, particularly in the border areas. Peace efforts by various mediators have had no significant results and the stalemate continues.

Since 2001, the German Government has supported regional peace building efforts in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia through a Food Security, Regional Cooperation and Stability Programme (FRCS). In addition to addressing issues of rural livelihoods and food security, the programme encourages regional cooperation and trade across borders in order to promote economic and political stability. While the programme actively works to resolve conflicts in and across the region, FRCS project activities in Armenia can have only a limited impact on the larger, overarching conflict between the countries.

Within the context of the large scale, international conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, there exist in Tavush numerous smaller disputes or "local conflicts". These local conflicts, which relate to deteriorated infrastructure, "receiver" mentality, corruption, allocation of resources, land privatization, unemployment, youth issues, and the relationship between local and national governments and the people, are the primary focus FRCS activities. These local conflicts will, in all likelihood, continue to some degree until the larger conflict is resolved. The international conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia concerning the status of Nagorno Karabagh has a significant impact on the Tavush province, which shares a long border with Azerbaijan and struggles with the manifestations of the conflict, including landmines, border closings and gunfire.

While the LCA which preceded the Editing Process was limited to local conflicts, effects of and developments in the larger conflict were also taken into account.



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III. The Creation of the Editing Process

During the presentation of the initial LCA report, prepared by a Yerevan-based NGO, it was clear that the report had failed by a wide margin to meet the requirements set forth in the terms of reference for the analysis. The process followed by the NGO led to a report that lacked accurate descriptions, contained little conflict background, set out recommendations that were far too general, and failed to coordinate between the different parties conducting the analysis. The end product was a disorderly, and not particularly useful, draft. The stakeholders of Tavush province, identified for purposes of the LCA as representatives of national and local governments, business community, civil society, other state organizations, and representatives of development organizations, were disappointed and unwilling accept the report and its conclusions.

During the first discussions of the failed LCA report, some stakeholders and FRCS representatives proposed a comprehensive review and revision of the report. Advocates of a revision believed that through rigorous and comprehensive discussions, additional research, and the inclusion of a number of technical experts and opinion makers, the LCA report could be significantly strengthened in the eyes of the stakeholder community. The stakeholders agreed, and the ensuing revision process was named “the Editing Process.” The stakeholders participating in the Editing Process were called the “Editing Group”.



IV. Editing Process Objectives

A major goal of the Editing Process, initially defined by outsiders, was to create a comprehensive and accurate final report owned by the local stakeholders. A key objective was to include the opinions and perspectives on the local conflicts of all relevant stakeholders. FRCS wanted the stakeholders to feel that the report and its findings, including guidelines for handling or resolving local conflicts, were their own. When the Editing Process began in Tavush, several objectives voiced by local stakeholders were added. The following is a partial list of the FRCS Editing Process objectives:

- ▶ Stakeholder ownership of the report
- ▶ Stakeholder understanding of purpose and design of the LCA
- ▶ Simultaneous capacity-building
- ▶ Transformation of stakeholder world view
- ▶ Refinement of conflict issues
- ▶ Inclusion of all relevant stakeholders
- ▶ Awareness creation



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FRCS developed the following impact chain to illustrate the expected effects of the Editing Process on the stakeholders and beneficiaries in the province:

Table 1 Impact Chain of Local Conflict Analysis Editing Group

Impact Chain	Loxal Conflict Analysis Editing Group
Actiities	invite stakeholders and representatives from all sectors to discuss conflict analysis; determine and agree on scope of work; share findings of initial conflict analysis with group members; select and rank importance of conflict areas; interviews with stakeholders on findings of conflict analysis; collect updated and more background information as well as subjective opinions; discuss, document and edit new information; moderate round table discussions with experts, resource persons and stakeholders; integrate all information into one draft document; distribute draft document to editing group members for review; incorporate additions and comments into document; finalize and approve conflict analysis document; publish final conflict analysis report
Output	generally agreed and accepted conflict analysis
Use of Output	Articulation of various opinions and positions; ownership of process and document lead to adapted solutions; listening to the perspective of others; joint and diverse perspectives are taken into account; -local perspectives and solutions are integrated; more options for possible solutions are used; willingness for further dialogue is expressed; mutual requests and recommendations are known and considered; ways of constructive processes of dealing with conflicts are identified;
Direct Benefit	dialogue takes conflicting positions into account; agreement/acceptance on similar/dissimilar positions as well as disagreement is documented; communication channels are established; positions are clarified and understood; familiarity on possible ways to deal with conflicts; mutual agreements on possible next steps; atmosphere for further dialogue is created; jointly accepted and respected analysis is available; users or local players have a better understanding of conflicts and peaceful existence and use it more constructively for development



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IV. Editing Process Working Activities

To ensure a detailed and thorough analysis, the Editing Group opted to follow a topic-by-topic approach to its analysis of the initial LCA. Information was extracted from the report relating to the various conflict fields, such as land privatization, youth issues, water issues, economic development and border issues. For each conflict field, Editing Group members developed separate issue papers and through further interviews, additional information was added. Draft papers were then distributed to selected stakeholders, requesting comments and additions. Each comment was discussed, and summaries of both the comments and discussions were prepared for all members of the Editing Group. Experts were assigned to each topic to review the report's findings and stakeholder comments, and to prepare additional position papers for discussion.

Additionally, four larger Editing Group meetings were held. These meetings, described below, also included a range of experts on the various conflict fields as well as relevant stakeholders or their representatives. During each meeting, the discussion focused on the draft report, comments on the report and the position papers. Discussion of possible solutions to the actual conflicts addressed in the report was avoided. The primary objective at this stage was to develop a joint understanding of the current situation. Possible conflict solutions were not discussed but were documented.

Finally, following months of meetings and re-writes, the final, revised LCA was complete and ready for distribution. As noted below, the final report was favorably received both by stakeholders and outsiders.



A. Group meetings

After the presentation of the initial report, the Editing Group held a series of meetings, described below.

1. First meeting: defining objectives for the Editing Process

Representatives of the initial survey group -- an NGO from the capital city of Yerevan and a local NGO from the province, as well as FRCS staff members and Tavush regional administrators -- discussed the draft report's failure to comply with its terms of reference. The meeting participants determined the steps to be taken according to the tasks set forth in the initial terms of reference. Opinions on the initial report were exchanged and the approach to the Editing Process was discussed. As a result, the participants agreed to invite experts from various sectors for further detailed discussions. These experts would cover topics such as water, land, economic development, displacement, youth, state administration, local self-governance and resource allocation. Once the process was defined and discussion topics selected, a more thorough review of the draft report followed. Comments were made in writing and prepared for discussion at the next Editing Group meeting.



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2. Working process between meetings

FRCS consultants extracted all relevant information from the initial report on individual topics. An issue paper was developed by the Editing Group for each topic and distributed to the main stakeholders. Within a few days, a consultant visited the stakeholders to conduct individual interviews and collect more detailed comments on the elaborated issue papers. In preparation for the next Editing Group meeting, an overview of the comments and information gleaned from the interviews was prepared. It was distributed with the invitation to the next meeting. This procedure was repeated for each meeting of the Editing Group.

3. Second meeting: working on selected issue papers (land and water)

The second meeting took place almost five month after the first to ensure ample time to integrate all suggested modifications to the text. Fourteen local experts participated in the meeting, along with three GTZ-FRCS consultants. This meeting focused primarily on water and land issues since they are the most prevalent and significant conflict factors in Tavush. Accordingly, specialists from the Water Committee and Water Users Associations, village mayors, representatives of land registration department and other relevant department heads from the regional administration participated in the meeting, with the following objectives:

- ▶ To reach an agreement by the participants concerning the substance and structure of the report;
- ▶ To analyze existing conflicts and map conflicts; and
- ▶ To propose recommendations, suggestions and initial ideas on possible solutions.

With respect to land issues, the draft report had found that “many think that the privatization was carried out hastily and the population wasn’t informed of decisions and legal documents of the privatization process on purpose, and these documents were equivocal which allowed the functionaries to interpret these laws in their own way. According to participants, at best 10% of residents were informed of the way of privatization.” Following the Editing Process, the final report concluded that “there was such a mechanism for land distribution which resulted in allowance of series of omissions that caused a conflict which developed for several years. Many participants in group discussions think that privatization was carried out in haste and the residents were not sufficiently informed of decisions and legal acts of privatization process. And these acts were not very clear which gave possibility to some officials to interpret these laws after their own fashion.”

The Editing Group thus ultimately reached the same conclusion as the researchers and those interviewed. The comprehensive and highly participatory approach followed by the Editing Group, however, made its findings more profound and persuasive than the findings in the initial report. The same was true for the Editing Group’s opinion with regard to drinking and irrigation water issues, which mirrored their view of the land reform processes.



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4. Third meeting: working on selected issue papers (economic development and unemployment, youth, border issues)

The third meeting took place five months after the second in order to provide sufficient time for members of the Editing Group and the experts to prepare short position papers for discussion. There were twenty-seven participants and the four conflict fields under consideration were economic development and unemployment, youth issues, and border issues. Discussions focused on the comments to the draft report and the position papers. As was the case with the land and water issues addressed at the second meeting, the conclusions reached by the Editing Group in this meeting did not differ significantly from those expressed in the initial report. The fact that those conclusions were reached through the Editing Process gave them greater credibility and weight with the stakeholders.

At this meeting, several experts and members of the Editing Group questioned the Editing Process, expressing the opinion that their position papers should feature more prominently in the final report. This view was discussed by the group as a whole, which accepted that the inclusion of the papers would increase local ownership of the final report.

5. Fourth meeting: working on selected issue papers (relations of central government, local self government and civil society)

This meeting addressed issues related to local self-governance, state administration, and international organizations. The participants also discussed the political and socio-economic indicators necessary for conflict monitoring. The participants defined the conflicting parties, which included such "opponents" as community resident vs. local self-governance body, local self-governance vs. regional governance, national governments and others. Institutions and actors related to the conflicts were also identified, including entrepreneurs, community mayors, international NGOs, and the parliament. Following a thorough discussion of the conflict parties and involved institutions, the participants recommended several changes. As a result, valuable additions and comments were made to the conflict monitoring indicators and the overall report.

6. Final meeting: preparation of edited final report

Ten months following the initial Editing Group meeting, a final meeting was held with representatives from the capital-based NGO, the local NGO, and FRCS project staff in preparation for the final comprehensive report. During this meeting, only minor issues such as language and report structure were discussed, agreed upon and changed.

After ten months of intensive discussions, the Editing Group had finally completed the Editing Process. The final report on the Local Conflict Analysis in Tavush, was ready for distribution.



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B. Distribution and presentation of final report

Copies of the final report were distributed and presented to all stakeholders, including ministries, embassies, and international organizations. The presentation included an overview of the Editing Process, the findings of the LCA, and possible approaches to solving these conflicts. In the discussions following the presentation, it was suggested that the Editing Group:

- ▶ Produce a film about the Editing Process and make it available to the public;
- ▶ include all members' name of Editing Group in an annex of the report as co- authors; and
- ▶ describe the Editing Process steps as a guideline for further application in other regions.



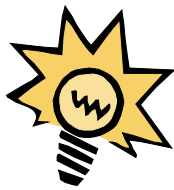
C. Tools used during the Editing Group Meetings

The Editing Group members felt that the meetings described above were successful, as all issues and topics were thoroughly and congenially addressed. This constructive approach was achieved through the use of the following tools:

- ▶ **Facilitation:** The facilitators focused the discussion on the initial analysis, assuring that participants were not distracted by disagreements about specifics. As an alternative to trying to solve disagreements, disagreeing participants were encouraged to share information and opinions. The facilitators would then point out why a certain interpretation made sense from another's point of view.
- ▶ **Recording:** Each participant's comments were recorded. This served to assure members of the working group that their thoughts and remarks were valued and would be incorporated into the final report. Moreover, it strengthened and increased the "ownership mentality" of the participants. Since all comments and concerns were included in the edited and final report, participants were guaranteed that their views were heard. Knowing that their views would be recorded, participants were able to more fully pay attention to the views of others. This led to open, insightful discussions and brought issues to the forefront that had been avoided or ignored during the data acquisition process. The recording of their impressions was a new approach for many participants and led to their engaged and often enthusiastic participation. In addition, recording all comments encouraged the group members to balance their emotions and make attentive and accurate statements in a non-offensive way.

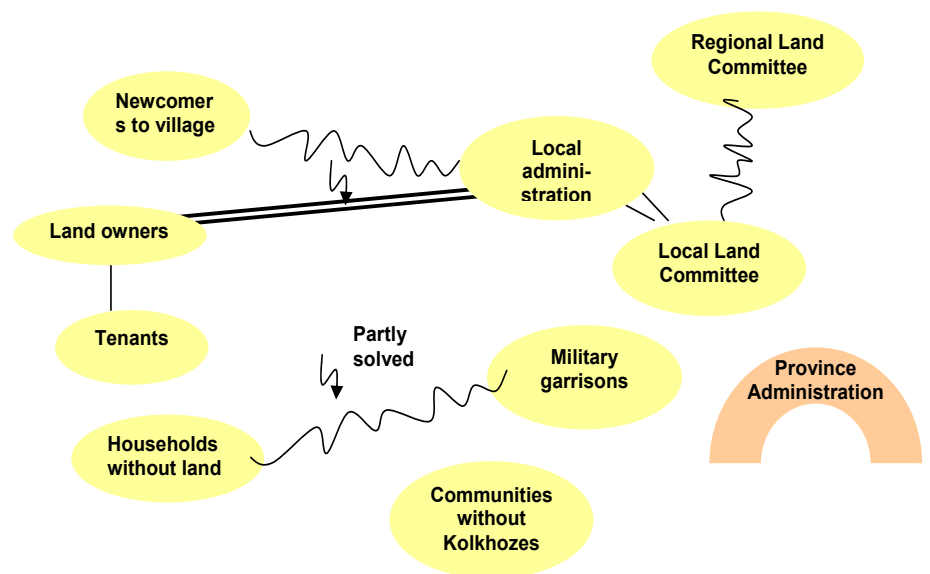


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- **Use of analytical tools:** Several analytical tools (e.g. conflict mapping, trend analysis, conflict profile) were introduced and used during the discussions. For example, conflict mapping was helpful, as it required participants to think in terms of the interrelations of conflict parties and issues. Using a case scenario, conflict mapping was explained to the participants. Although it took the group members some time to understand the concept, they ultimately used it to identify conflict linkages they had previously failed to consider. An example of a Conflict Actors Map, which deals specifically with land privatization conflicts in Tavush, Armenia is shown below:

Figure 1: Land Privatization Conflict Map



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The use of tools such as conflict mapping during the Editing Process facilitated the structured exploration of existing relations. Additionally, it resulted in an increase in the general conflict-related analytical capacities of the local stakeholders.

V. Analytical Approaches Used in the Editing Process

Because the Editing Process took the initial LCA report as its starting point, some data was already available on each topic considered by the Editing Group. As noted previously, however, the stakeholders disagreed with or doubted the quality of much of this data and believed that the ensuing analysis was flawed. The Editing Group employed the following analytical approaches to evaluating the dynamics of the conflicts addressed in the report. The facilitation assured that the collected data was taken into account.



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A. Mapping and weighing sources of conflict and tension

Through quantitative analysis of the surveys and qualitative analysis of the interviews and discussions, sources of conflict and tension were elaborated upon and weighed. Qualitative data and statements made in discussions and interviews were scrutinized, as they emphasized different sources of conflict. The Editing Group considered the privatization and distribution of land one of the most important problems, as land is currently being redistributed in a manner that many stakeholders believe is unjust. Given that agriculture is the mainstay of the regional economy, providing the most employment and income, the urgent nature of this new development played an important role in determining its relative importance.

B. Identification of the causes, features, and effects of conflict

Information from surveys, interviews, discussions, and secondary literature was used to identify the causes and effects of the conflict, as well as its primary features. Through an historical analysis, prepared by a short-term international consultant prior to the data acquisition process, traditional and pervasive causes of conflict, such as ethnicity and culture, were outlined. These causes of conflict were specifically identified by the group during the Editing Process. Because none of the historical factors had actually led to outright conflict additional recent developments, such as land distribution, were identified as destabilizing the status quo. These aspects of the conflict were identified by the local population, local personnel of the NGO, the experts from the national NGO, and through review of the literature. The effects were difficult to determine as they were part of a vicious circle, both causing and being caused by the conflict. The views and statements of the key stakeholders and the local population were weighed according to their credibility and implications, and incorporated into the descriptions of the causes, features and effects of conflict.

C. Listing all players and stakeholders and identifying their interrelations

Because open conflicts did not exist in the region and the positions of various groups were not clear-cut, identifying the main stakeholders required significant analysis. Many of the key stakeholders in the various conflict fields were present during the Editing Process and were required to be aware of their own positions and relations with other stakeholders and the local population. During the meetings, stakeholders heard the views of others and clarified their own opinions. While this led to heated discussions, all stakeholders walked away with a much greater awareness of their own role in the conflict as well as the role of others.



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The key stakeholders were categorized according to two criteria:

1. Explicit leaders with official power and influence, as in appointed or elected political leaders; or
2. Local stakeholders with less explicit influence, as in managers of local NGOs, land-tenants and development agencies.

The first group was easy to identify within existing political structures and their official influence was fairly easy to determine. Their relationship with other key stakeholders and the affected local population could be determined by legal regulations, interviews and discussions. Explicit political leaders were found to be susceptible to discontent. Generally, suspicion and opposition to government persist due to the lack of transparency and accountability that pervades local and regional government.

The second group contained less explicit relationships. The relative importance and influence of the citizens within this category was determined by the frequency with which they were consulted during the initial conflict analysis and subsequent Editing Process, and with reference to their economic and social significance within the community.

D. Analyzing the short- and long-term dynamics of the conflict

A study was conducted using historical analysis of long-term factors, along with recent issues identified in the local and national media, including statements by local populations and key stakeholders. This analysis was performed to determine the dynamics of the conflict over time in addition to the short and long-term prospects for tensions and conflict.

E. Identifying indicators for conflict monitoring

For purposes of conflict monitoring, indicators were identified to reflect trends in conflict fields. Using general conflict field indicators and their sub-indicators, monitoring conflict developments and tendencies is simplified, but remains difficult in terms of volume and scope. Any change or adjustment in the conflict environment does not require a general update of the Local Conflict Analysis but allows for more specific updating to be completed.



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VI. Conclusion

The process described in this Application Example was intense and time consuming, but resulted in a comprehensive and widely accepted LCA report. All stakeholders agreed on the report's content and felt it accurately represented their opinions and perspectives. The facilitation methods ensured that the final report did not gloss over variances and disagreements, but rather included incompatible parts where no agreement could be reached.

It should be kept in mind that the conflicts addressed through the Editing Process in Tavush required attention, but had not resulted in any violent or destructive behavior. The Editing Process should be handled differently in a situation where the level of conflict has escalated beyond that in this example.

Finally, it should be noted that the Editing Process in Tavush was successful because of the impartial, trusting relations that FRCS had built with the different stakeholders in the course of other project interventions. Because of those relationships, the Governor's office of Tavush province was prepared to clearly state its willingness and interest in the Editing Process. In contexts where such favorable relations do not exist, it will clearly be difficult to obtain such a high degree of official cooperation.

Further related generic methods:

- ▶ Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment – PCIA
- ▶ Do No Harm (Local capacities for peace)