

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects' approach to

# Conflict Systems Analysis: Benefits and Practical Application

**When might a systems analysis be particularly helpful for you?**

The 'problems' you face are chronic and have resisted repeated efforts to resolve it.

Many actors are involved in addressing the issue but struggle to coordinate efforts and/or to achieve greater collective impact.

The 'problems' have produced multiple, and often contrasting, analyses regarding its sources - and 'solutions.'

Short term and 'quick fix' solutions, for example in relation to specific sectors, have failed.

**How does a systems analysis help develop strategic programming?**

**Benefits of a systems approach for strategy and program development:**

Conflict-sensitive design & implementation: how to ensure and measure that interventions 'do no harm'?

Relevant program strategies: what are the relationships with conflict dynamics? Development of sound theories of change.

Helps identify leverage points for change and entry points for programming: how can we influence the system?

Scenario development: how will different scenarios impact conflict dynamics? What are implications for your strategy?

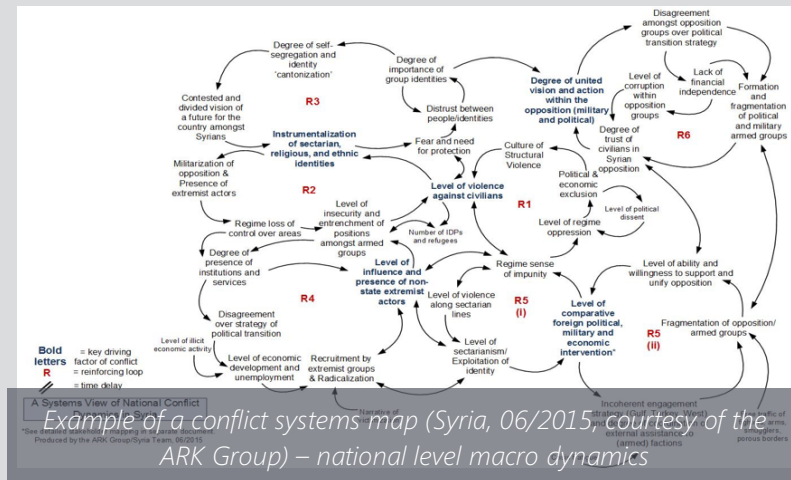
**What are the benefits and purposes of a systems approach?**

Applying a systems approach is particularly helpful for understanding overall conflict dynamics for the purposes of planning strategies and programs at macro-levels with diverse teams of policy makers and practitioners, also striving for greater collective impact beyond project levels.

Conflict analysis from a systems perspective is a complementary approach to other types of conflict analysis. Systems analysis helps to understand the dynamic relationships and causalities between different conflict factors, and the interconnectedness between conflict factors and stakeholders. It operates based on an understanding of 'feedback' (causal connections) between conflict factors and helps to understand *reinforcing and balancing dynamics in conflict systems*. Systems analysis has the potential to help *bridge the gap between analysis and programming* by including analysis of points of leverage and approaches for changing the system.

## What does a systems analysis look like?

This illustrates ONE example of what a systems map can look like. Systems analyses can be done at multiple levels – national level, local level, in specific areas and sectors, depicting regional influences and global dynamics etc. – depending on the need of specific groups. Like for other types of conflict analyses, the inclusion of local partners and stakeholders in the development of systemic analyses is critical.



## The relationship between systems analysis and other forms of analysis

CDA's approach works best to enhance your existing forms of analysis, and is not yet another stand-alone process. CDA's approach to systems analysis avoids some of the 'traps' and shortcomings of traditional conflict analysis models. It will not produce long lists of conflict factors without an understanding of the dynamics and relationships between them. Nor would it result in a very comprehensive document that does not help you prioritize and identify leverage points in a conflict system. It *will* help you produce user-friendly, actionable, insightful information.

**Building on the lessons from its Reflecting on Peace Practice Program, as well as ongoing learning working and accompanying policy makers and practitioners, CDA has become a leader in the field of systems thinking in conflict analysis, and its application to design and/or review of strategies.**

CDA has facilitated conflict systems analyses processes and related strategy design and/or review processes on Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, the Western Balkans, Pakistan, South Sudan, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau, Mindanao, and the Democratic Republic of Congo – and other types of conflict analyses, conflict-sensitivity assessments, and peacebuilding strategy processes in various other countries.

CDA has worked with various organizations, facilitated multi-stakeholder workshops, conducted desk research, and designed tailored processes for the needs of various audiences.