

Religion *in* Conflict and Peacebuilding



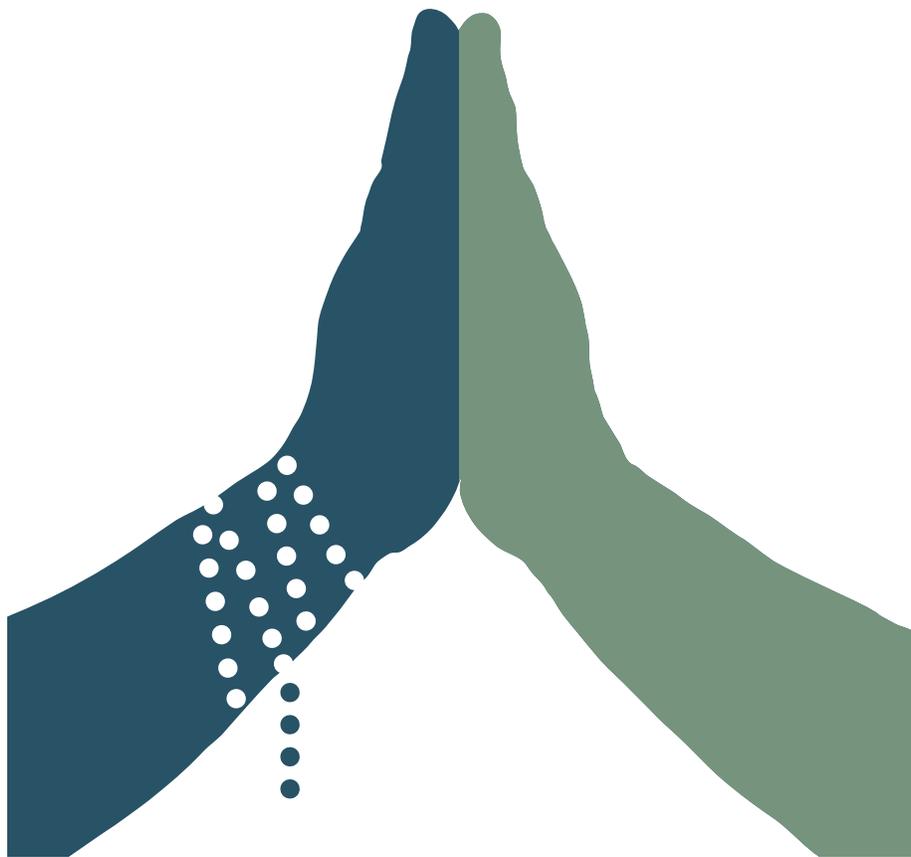
ANALYSIS GUIDE

Religion *in* Conflict and Peacebuilding

ANALYSIS GUIDE

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The views expressed in this book are those of the authors alone.
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Quick Reference Chart

Black = general question; *Red italic = religion-specific question*

QUESTION TO CONSIDER	STEP 1 Self-Reflect	STEP 2 Understand the Context	STEP 3 Analyze the Conflict	STEP 4 Map Peacebuilding	STEP 5 Turn Analysis into Action
WHERE? Geographic and social location Social location is the position people hold in their community as a function of their gender, race, class, age, ability, religion, and other characteristics that relate to power and privilege	Where have you been working and what do you already know about the context? <i>Where does your knowledge of the society, religion, and culture come from and what do you know about the context that will help you with your conflict analysis?</i>	Where is the conflict located within the wider geographic and demographic context? <i>Which geographic areas have particular religious significance? How does religious identity shape the structure of society?</i>	Where is the conflict taking place and who is affected? <i>What areas of religious significance overlap with areas of conflict? What is the religious identity of the social groups affected by the conflict?</i>	Where, and with which sections of society, are peacebuilding actors working? <i>How do areas of religious significance feature in peacebuilding activities? Which different religious identity groups do peacebuilding activities engage with?</i>	Where will you work? <i>What areas of religious significance will feature in your peacebuilding work? What religious identity groups will you work with?</i>
WHAT? Factors and issues that are contributing to conflict and peacebuilding	What are your assumptions about what is driving and mitigating the conflict? <i>What are your assumptions about religion and its role in the conflict?</i>	What are the context's main political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural characteristics? <i>What is the relationship between religion, the state, and society?</i>	What are the driving factors of the conflict? <i>What dimensions of religion, if any, are involved in driving the conflict?</i>	What conflict drivers have past and current peacebuilding initiatives addressed? <i>What religious drivers of conflict are being addressed by existing peacebuilding initiatives?</i>	What conflict drivers will you address? <i>What issues will you address that are related to religion?</i>
WHO? Actors, their characteristics, and their attributes	Who are you and why might you be suited to work in this area? <i>What is your and your organization's self-defined and perceived religious identity or affiliation?</i>	Who are the actors with social and political influence? <i>Who are considered religious actors within the conflict context? Who do religious actors have influence over?</i>	Who are the actors in the conflict and what are the relationships among them? <i>Which actors are associated with a religious or nonreligious identity? How does religion shape relationships among actors? Who are the religious actors involved in the conflict?</i>	Who are the peacebuilding actors and whom are they working with? <i>Who are the actors initiating or involved with peacebuilding activities?</i>	Who will you work with? <i>Which religious actors will you involve in your peacebuilding activities?</i>

QUESTION TO CONSIDER	STEP 1 Self-Reflect	STEP 2 Understand the Context	STEP 3 Analyze the Conflict	STEP 4 Map Peacebuilding	STEP 5 Turn Analysis into Action
<p>WHY?</p> <p>Motivations: why actors behave the way they do</p>	<p>Why are you getting involved in the conflict?</p> <p><i>Why do you think it is important to look at the religious dimensions of the conflict?</i></p>	<p>Why are actors from the wider context interested in the conflict?</p> <p><i>How are the interests of actors from the wider context shaped by religion?</i></p>	<p>Why are the actors engaged in the conflict?</p> <p><i>How are the motivations of actors in the conflict shaped by religion?</i></p>	<p>Why are actors engaged in peacebuilding?</p> <p><i>How are the motivations of peacebuilders shaped by religion?</i></p> <p><i>Why are religious actors engaged in peacebuilding?</i></p>	<p>Why would actors be motivated to engage in your peacebuilding project?</p> <p><i>How do you take into account motivations that are shaped by religion?</i></p>
<p>WHEN?</p> <p>The conflict over time</p>	<p>When, and to what extent, can you engage in work on this conflict?</p> <p><i>How might religious calendars affect the timing of your efforts?</i></p>	<p>When did major historical developments that shaped the context occur?</p> <p><i>When were major historical developments shaped by religion?</i></p>	<p>When did the conflict start and how has it evolved over time?</p> <p><i>What is the role of religion in the conflict over time?</i></p>	<p>When have peacebuilding efforts been most successful?</p> <p><i>When has religion been involved in previous peacebuilding efforts?</i></p> <p><i>How have religious calendars affected past peacebuilding efforts?</i></p>	<p>When will the engagement begin and how long will it last?</p> <p><i>How might religious calendars affect the timing of your peacebuilding efforts?</i></p>
<p>HOW?</p> <p>The use of power and resources to achieve goals</p>	<p>How can you use your skills, resources, and experience to contribute to peacebuilding in this context?</p> <p><i>What additional skills, resources, and relationships might you need to engage with the religious dimensions of the conflict?</i></p>	<p>How is power and influence exercised in this context?</p> <p><i>How does religion contribute to power dynamics?</i></p>	<p>How are conflict actors using sources of power and influence in pursuit of their goals?</p> <p><i>How is religion a source of power and influence in the conflict?</i></p>	<p>How are individuals and organizations attempting to build peace?</p> <p><i>How do, or could, the power and resources of religion contribute to building peace?</i></p>	<p>How do you plan to reach your goal?</p> <p><i>How will religion contribute to your peacebuilding efforts?</i></p>

Source: This framework is inspired by the one developed by Lisa Schirch in *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 2013).

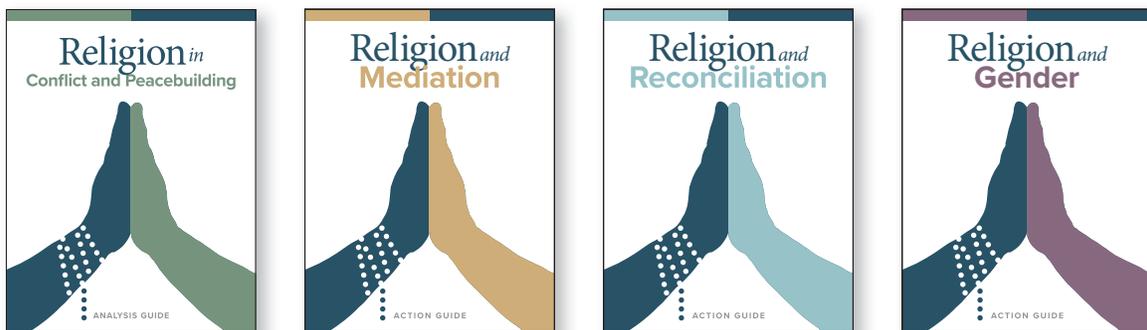
Getting Started

THIS ANALYSIS GUIDE is written for people who are working to address violent conflicts in which religion plays a part a role or can aid in peacebuilding. It provides guidance on how to understand the religious dimensions of conflict and take them into consideration in peacebuilding. The guide examines a wide range of ways religion can contribute to peacebuilding, whether practiced by religious or secular actors, even when the conflict has no religious dimensions.

This Guide takes a holistic and strategic approach to peacebuilding, recognizing that any peacebuilding initiative must be designed to fit a specific context and complement other peacebuilding efforts. The Guide does not assume that religion will always be part of a solution, but it provides guidance on assessing if and how religion can play a role in wider peacebuilding efforts (see “Understanding the Role of Religion in the Peace Process” on page 7).

The target audience includes both faith-based and secular practitioners. Secular is understood here as not affiliated with any specific religion but also not hostile to religion. The Guide will be of interest to religious and civil society leaders, local and international nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers, diplomats, and staff of international organizations. It can be used at all different levels of conflict analysis (international, regional, national, and local).

For the purposes of this Guide, *conflict analysis* is defined as the systematic study of conflict in general and of individual or group conflicts in particular. Conflict analysis provides a structured inquiry into the causes and potential trajectory of a conflict so that processes of resolution can be better understood. In specific conflicts, the term *conflict assessment* refers to the data collection phase of a larger conflict analysis process; *conflict mapping* describes the process of identifying actors and their relationships. Definitions of additional key terms can be found on pages 121-124.



The Guide can be referenced on its own or in conjunction with broader conflict assessment and analysis frameworks. It is one of four Action Guides; the others are *Religion and Mediation*, *Religion and Reconciliation*, and *Religion and Gender*. The guides are intended to have practical value, providing theory only to the extent that it helps with the assessment, design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of concrete interventions.

Understanding the Role of Religion in Peace Processes

Understanding religion's role in conflict is important, both for people who wish to work with religious leaders or communities on addressing conflict and for people who work on a conflict in which religion plays a role. A conflict analysis that neglects or simplifies the role of religion runs the risk of being incomplete and missing vital considerations. Three examples from formal peace processes illustrate this point.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a secular bias in peacemaking efforts led to underestimating the role of religiously inspired actors, such as Hamas on the Palestinian side and the religious right on the Israeli side, and to not meaningfully involving them and their perspectives in the Oslo peace process, to its detriment. Some observers believe this failure led to an escalation of religious opposition on both sides of the peace process.^a

In Sri Lanka, a secular bias meant that Norwegian facilitators of the 2000–2006 peace process took a long time to recognize the influence of nationalist monks in political circles as well as Sinhala society at large. Excluded from peacemaking efforts, the monks spoke out against negotiating with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), the Tamil armed insurgency group, and became a significant obstacle to the peace process.^b

In the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan, the role of religion and religious law in the state became a central point of contention in the 1980s, when various peace attempts failed. Only when religion was successfully addressed in the 2002 Machakos Protocol was a path opened that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.^c

NOTES

- a Marc Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- b J. Goodhand, B. Klem, and G. Sørbø, "Pawns of Peace: Evaluation of Norwegian Peace Efforts in Sri Lanka," Report 5/2011, Norad Evaluation Department (2011), 121–22, <https://www.norad.no/globalassets/import-2162015-80434-am/www.norad.no-ny/filarkiv/vedlegg-til-publikasjoner/pawns-og-peace-evaluation-of-norwegian-peace-efforts-in-sri-lanka-1997-2009.pdf>.
- c Isak Svensson, *Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil War* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 92.

Understanding Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding

Any attempt to analyze religion and the role it plays in conflict must balance two seemingly contradictory perspectives.

First, religion is a valid unit of analysis. One may speak of Islam, for example, and be widely understood to be talking about a core set of followers, teachings, symbols, rituals, and experiences that is distinct from Judaism or Hinduism. Yet religion is also highly contextual and subjective. There is no one universal definition of religion, and a religious tradition in one place may look very different from a similar tradition in another. Indeed, the beliefs and practices within a given religious tradition may vary as much as those between religious traditions. Religion is often intertwined with the cultural, political, social, and economic character and development of a particular context, making it impossible to describe the specifics of one tradition in a way that everyone will agree on.¹

¹ Consider, for example, surveys in the United States that show that significant numbers of Christians believe in the dharmic concept of reincarnation found in Hinduism and Buddhism. See Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths" (2009), www.pewforum.org/2009/12/09/many-americans-mix-multiple-faiths/.

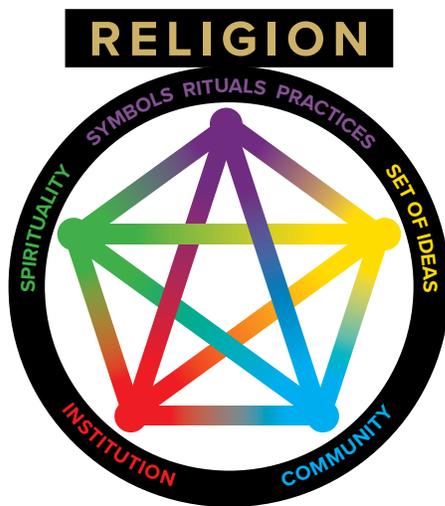
Due to this complexity, it is helpful to have a definition of religion to work with. Being precise about what is being examined is the key to good analysis. This Guide adopts the following definition of religion:

A human response to a perceived nonphysical reality concerning the origin, meaning, and purpose of life. It is typically organized by communities into a shared system of symbols, rituals, institutions, and practices.²

To offer a systematic and comprehensive way to consider the role religion can play in conflict and peacebuilding, this Guide presents religion as encompassing five interrelated dimensions:

- **Religion as a set of ideas:** A shared set of teachings, doctrines, norms, values, stories, and narratives that provides a framework for understanding and acting in the world
- **Religion as a community:** A defined group of followers and believers that provides individuals with a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves
- **Religion as an institution:** The formal structures, leaders, and organizations associated with religious communities
- **Religion as a set of symbols and practices:** The many visible, lived manifestations of a religion, from buildings to dress to ceremonies and rituals
- **Religion as spirituality:** A personal experience that provides a sense of purpose and connectedness to something greater than oneself, as well as a powerful source of motivation

FIGURE 1. **Different dimensions of religion relevant to conflict and peacebuilding**



Too often, considerations of religion's role in conflict include only one or two of these dimensions. It is important to consider all five dimensions for a more complete analysis of religion's role in conflict (see figure 1).³ Oversimplifying religion's role in conflict is as problematic as ignoring its role entirely. For example, explaining the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or Daesh, as simply driven by fundamentalist religious ideology ignores the significant ways different religious identities contribute to alliances in the conflict, how the situation of religious minorities in the region influences the involvement of external actors, and the role of religious actors as peacebuilders, as well as the many economic and historical reasons for the conflict. Staying curious about the many ways religion plays a role in conflict and peacebuilding helps avoid this oversimplification.

² Dan Snodderly, ed., *Peace Terms: Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011), www.usip.org/publications/usip-peace-terms-glossary, which also states, "Religions are internally complex and dynamic, manifesting differently across time periods and places. For example, Islam in Indonesia and in Iran may be practiced, interpreted, and expressed differently. They also contain a range of positions on any one issue. As an example, Christianity contains ideas that both promote and challenge gender equality."

³ The idea of dimensions of religion was originally developed by Ninian Smart (see Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, 2nd ed., New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1976) and adapted by others, e.g., Linda Woodhead "Five Concepts of Religion," *International Review of Sociology* 21, no. 1 (2011): 121–43; and A. Ullmann, "Understanding Religion in Conflict" (presentation at Religion and Mediation Course, Schwarzenberg, Switzerland, 2015).

How Religion Relates to Conflict and Peace

Discussions of religion and conflict often lead to the conclusion that religion can play a role in both raising and lowering levels of violent conflict.⁴ In other words, religion can act both as a “divider” (a source of conflict) and a “connector” (a source of peace).⁵ The questions around which this Guide is structured invite readers to consider how the different dimensions of religion can be both dividers and connectors (see table 1).

As a set of ideas, religion shapes how actors in a conflict think and act. Differing belief systems may be a source of conflict, or shared ideas or values may be the basis for common ground. In terms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, it is important not to view sets of ideas as rigid and unchanging but to recognize room for adaptation and multiple interpretations. Different actors from the same religious tradition may engage in quite different actions and behaviors, while explaining their actions with reference to the same general body of ideas. Every actor operates with a set of ideas. The beliefs shaping the understanding and actions of secular actors are as relevant as those of religious actors.

As a community, religion is closely associated with notions of identity and belonging.⁶ Group identities form around commonly shared characteristics. Everyone has multiple identities related to characteristics they have in common with others, such as their profession, nationality, ethnicity, religion, skin color, class, gender, and even the sports clubs they support. In times of conflict, particular identities may become emphasized as conflict lines develop among different groups. In some conflicts, religious identity groups may become associated with different sides of a conflict. In others, religious identity may not be a divider but rather a point of connection.

As an institution, religion has structures, hierarchies, organizations, and leaders. Different religions are organized differently; even within a religion, institutions and structures may vary from one context to another. Institutions consist of systems of rules and roles within which political and social actors operate, each with their own interests, motivations, and resources that may lead them to become connectors or dividers in any particular context.

Symbols and practices are the means through which religion becomes visible in daily life. They are the manifestations of a religion, ranging from buildings to dress to ceremonies and rituals. In conflicts, symbols and practices can highlight differences or bring people together.

The spiritual experience that religion offers may be a powerful source of motivation for behavior that promotes conflict or peace. Because religion transcends the purely cognitive and engages deep feelings, it can play a strong role in shaping the emotional dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding.

⁴ Referred to as the “ambivalence of religion,” the idea is prominently explored in R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

⁵ CDA’s Do No Harm Program, *DNH Guidance Note, Using Dividers and Connectors* (Cambridge, MA: CDA, 2010), <http://cdacollaborative.org/publications/do-no-harm/dnh-guidance-notes/dnh-guidance-note-using-dividers-and-connectors/>.

⁶ “Identity refers to the way people see themselves—the groups they feel a part of, the aspects of themselves that they use to describe themselves. Some theorists distinguish between collective identity, social identity, and personal identity. However, all are related in one way or another to a description of who one is, and how one fits into his or her social group and society overall. Identity conflicts are conflicts that develop when a person or group feels that their sense of self is threatened or denied legitimacy or respect.” Snodderly, *Glossary*.

TABLE 1. Examples of how the dimensions of religion can be dividers or connectors

DIMENSION	DIVIDER	CONNECTOR
Religion as a SET OF IDEAS	Differences in beliefs about what is right can lead to violent conflict. In the conflict over abortion in the United States, many on the pro-life side are informed by their religious beliefs, and a small minority has engaged in violence against abortion clinics and pro-choice activists.	Using religious teachings to promote messages of peace and tolerance, the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Communities draws on the principles of the Charter of Medina, established between the Prophet Mohammed and the people of Medina to guarantee religious liberty for all. ^a
Religion as a COMMUNITY	Religious identities can be used as a means to emphasize differences among communities, leading to people becoming targets of violence based on their their religious identity, as happened to Christians and Muslims in the conflict in the Central African Republic that began in 2012.	A common religious identity bridges divisions and empowers religious leaders to act as peacemakers whose legitimacy is recognized by both sides. In 1978, the pope mediated the Beagle conflict between the two largely Catholic countries of Chile and Argentina.
Religion as an INSTITUTION	Religious institutions are often patriarchal structures that exclude women and women's voices. The Buddhist Sangha in Thailand does not recognize women's ordination or accept female monks into its ranks.	Due to their reach and influence, religious institutions often have great mobilizing power and can provide important support to peace processes. The Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone mobilized support for the peace process leading up to the Lomé Peace Accords of 1999. ^b
Religion as SYMBOLS AND PRACTICES	Religious symbols and practices can escalate conflict. The visits by Japanese prime ministers to the Shinto Imperial Shrine of Yasukuni, which commemorates those who died in wars involving Japan, regularly contributes to tensions between Japan and China because China considers a number of those commemorated to be war criminals.	Religiously inspired rituals can be a resource for dealing with the legacy of conflict. The Sulha Peace Project brought together Israelis and Palestinians during the Second Intifada, drawing on both Islamic sulha and Jewish teshuva reconciliation practices. ^c
Religion as SPIRITUALITY	Spiritual motivation, a sense of being moved by something greater than oneself, can be a justification for engaging in violent acts. Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, felt possessed by ghosts and spirits. ^d	Shared spiritual experiences can create bonds between people and engender powerful reconciliation processes. Reconciliation activities led by the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy in Kashmir aimed in part to offer participants personal transcendent experiences that would transform attitudes and build hope for the future. ^e

NOTES

a <http://marrakeshdeclaration.org/>.

b O. Frazer and R. Friedli, *Approaching Religion in Conflict Transformation: Concepts, Cases and Practical Implications* (Zurich: Center for Security Studies, 2015), 24–25. www.css.ethz.ch/content/specialinterest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/en/think-tank/themes/mediation-support-and-peace-promotion/religion-and-mediation/details.html?id=a/p/p/r/approaching_religion_in_conflict_transfo.

c James Patton and David Steele, *Action Guide on Religion and Reconciliation* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, forthcoming).

d www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/uganda/10621792/Konys-child-soldiers-When-you-kill-for-the-first-time-you-change.html.

e Frazer and Friedli, *Approaching Religion*, 21.

How to Use This Guide

This Guide can be used in conjunction with a variety of introductory texts and websites on conflict analysis.⁷ Although this Guide focuses on religious factors in conflict, it also situates these factors within the broader conflict context, and thus it can also be used on its own. The Guide should act like a filter that will help you capture the important elements of the conflict that are related to religion and understand how they are relevant to peacebuilding efforts. To that end, we propose a five-step process (see figure 2) that includes asking where, who, what, why, when, and how questions at every step (see table 2).

FIGURE 2. **The five-step process**



TABLE 2: **Key questions to consider at each step of the process**

WHERE?	Geographic and social location; social location is the position people hold in their community as a function of their gender, race, class, age, ability, religion, and other characteristics that relate to power and privilege
WHAT?	Factors and issues that are contributing to conflict and peacebuilding
WHO?	Actors, their characteristics, and their attributes
WHY?	Motivations: why actors behave the way they do
WHEN?	The conflict over time
HOW?	The use of power and resources to achieve goals

Source: Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 2013).

The questions, which appear in detail in the Quick Reference Chart at the beginning of this Guide, are divided into two types:

- General conflict analysis questions (represented by black text)
- Questions that focus more specifically on the religious dimension of conflict and peacebuilding (*represented by italic red text*)

We use different colored text to help you avoid overemphasizing religious dimensions when undertaking a conflict analysis and planning for peacebuilding. Our hope is that you will situate religious dimensions in a broader understanding of the conflict and its causes. We also hope you will include a gender dimension in your analysis. See “How to Apply a Gender Lens.”

⁷ See, e.g., Lisa Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning: Toward a Participatory Approach to Human Security* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 2013); Matthew Levinger, *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2013); www.conflictsensitivity.org/key-readings/.

How to Apply a Gender Lens

Incorporating gender into conflict analysis—often referred to as using a gender lens—is the process of considering how women, men, girls, and boys experience and are impacted by conflict differently. It includes how gender intersects with religion to contribute to and be changed by conflict dynamics.

Gender—the expectations and characteristics a society places on women, men, girls, and boys—is one of the most significant aspects of an individual’s identity. It is usually learned so early in life and is so deeply ingrained that its influence on one’s perception and worldview is completely subconscious.

Gender often determines the ways that an individual experiences other aspects of identity, including ethnicity, class, and religion. Thus, in order to understand the complexities of a particular context, consideration of gender is critical.

To apply a gender lens, consider its three interrelated aspects:

- **Identity:** What does it mean to be a man or a woman in the conflict? How does religion inform, reinforce, and/or challenge these ideas?
- **Stereotypes:** What are the assumptions about the roles of men and women held by society broadly, the conflict actors, and third parties? How does religion inform, reinforce, and/or challenge these ideas?
- **Power:** How does gender determine decision making and access to resources, especially in religious institutions and leadership?

When applying a gender lens, follow these three points of guidance:

- Set aside your assumptions and approach others with curiosity.
- Treat gender as central to the analysis, not as an ancillary.
- Reflect on your assumptions before, during, and after interactions with others.

Apply this inquiry to yourself and other parties, as well as the conflict context and actors, and be prepared to adapt your conclusions as gender dimensions change over time, especially during conflict.

Refer to the *Action Guide on Religion and Gender* for more on gender-inclusive peacebuilding in religious contexts.

Note that the questions in the Quick Reference Chart are not intended to be exhaustive; they are intended to help you reflect more deeply and critically on information collected. They are not necessarily intended to be asked directly to participants or conflict actors, although some may be used in this way. Throughout this Guide, we provide guidance about questions you might ask that can be helpful for eliciting information directly from participants.

Throughout this Analysis Guide, we use the term *actor* to identify any person or group involved in the conflict, or in some way concerned by it. An actor can be an individual, an organization, a network, or an institution. The term may refer to men and women of all ages: children, youth, adults, and elders.

We use *participant* to identify an individual who is directly engaged in the process of collecting information or data on a conflict. The term is intended to recognize the fact that knowledge collection is not a simple matter of one party extracting knowledge from another, but an active and dynamic process of knowledge creation between two or more parties. This concept is discussed in greater detail in “Data Collection,” on page 14.

Three Guiding Principles

These three principles are key to any conflict analysis.

Do No Harm

The most important principle in carrying out a conflict analysis is that the analysis should at the very minimum avoid making a situation worse. Conflict analysts are not objective, passive actors within a conflict context. Their presence, who they speak to, the types of questions they ask, and the issues they focus on will have all an impact on the context.⁸ Care and consideration should be taken to ensure that your presence does not raise suspicions, tensions, or fear or in any way makes the problems worse. If you are from outside the immediate context, work with local partners or organizations that have deep local knowledge and are aware of the types of issues that might be problematic. If you are not experienced in carrying out conflict analysis, seek some expert guidance on how to approach collecting information in certain contexts.

When analyzing religion's role in conflict, there is a risk of overemphasizing the role of religion. Such a tendency could, for example, lead to an overly strong emphasis on religion as a driver of conflict or peace and thereby influence decisions about what the appropriate intervention should be. For example, the assumption in Nepal that a particular conflict was driven by religious identity and that interreligious activities would help rebuild relationships led organizers of a peacebuilding dialogue project to select participants along religious lines. This decision made people more aware of their religious identity and differences and deepened the divides among different religious communities. Conversely, neglecting the role of religion in conflict may slow the progress of peacebuilding efforts, as highlighted in the examples from peace processes in Israeli-Palestine, Sri Lanka, and South Sudan (on page 7).

Be Self-Aware

We all have our own biases that we bring to any situation, and being aware of these biases is extremely important. We may not be able to change them, but we can be aware of how they affect our interactions with coworkers with and our understandings of the conflict. Step 1, Self-Reflect, aims to encourage this awareness.

When trying to understand the role of religion in conflict, be aware that religion and its role in conflict is a sensitive and challenging topic. Everyone's analysis will be shaped by their particular understanding of and experiences with conflict. It is important to maintain a self-reflective awareness about how your own perspective influences what you are seeing or not seeing. Religious beliefs can be unconditional and challenging. When working with actors of different religions, you will likely be confronted with values or beliefs different from your own. Reflect on how you will navigate these differences. Recognize and regulate your own judgments when analyzing actors

⁸ For further reading, see Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

whose actions and ways of seeing the world may be hard to understand or upsetting.

Take special care with the use of labels. Discussion of religion and conflict is full of labels such as “extremist,” “fundamentalist,” “radical,” “spoiler,” and “terrorist.” Such labels often say as much about the person applying the label as they do about the person being labeled. Used imprecisely, labels confuse rather than clarify, and may even escalate conflict. For example, Burmese Buddhist nationalist leader Ashin Wirathu was named by *Time* magazine in July 2013 as “the face of Buddhist terror,” contributing to a sense among the Myanmar Buddhist community that outside actors were partial when it came to Muslim-Buddhist relations in Myanmar. At the same time, statements by authorities and the media within Myanmar on the threat posed by “Islamic terrorism” contributed to the popularity of movements such as Wirathu’s 969 movement and divisions between Muslim and Buddhist communities.⁹

Embrace Complexity

It is important to remember that a conflict analysis is not about trying to find simple explanations. Conflicts are complex, messy, contradictory, dynamic phenomena. One challenge of analyzing religion’s role in conflict is that it adds complexity to an analysis. You should seek to understand deeply the immediate and underlying causes of conflict in your analysis, but not to explain them away. Complexity is good in conflict analysis; at some point, you will have to decide which area or issue your peacebuilding initiative will focus on.

Data Collection

Choices about where and how you collect data will affect your conflict analysis and understanding of the conflict.

Before beginning a conflict analysis, take time to think through carefully what resources, methods, and skills are at your disposal, how they can be best used, and how they are likely to influence your data collection. Local partners can be vital to helping with planning, logistics, travel, and access to participants.

Data Sources

Information, or data, is usually divided into two categories: primary and secondary data.

Primary data is information collected by those carrying out a conflict assessment directly from those affected or in some way involved in the conflict. Primary data gathering is often done face-to-face, but it can also be accomplished through questionnaires or online communication. Who you speak to and how determines what you will be told, and thus how you perceive the conflict.

⁹ <http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/the-roots-of-religious-conflict-in-myanmar/>.

Various methods are likely to be more or less effective at eliciting information from different types of participants. Be conscious of how your methodology may exclude some participants that have different and important perspectives on the conflict.

For example, younger people might respond better to creative or technology-driven forms of interaction such as video or drama. Public figures or authorities may feel more comfortable discussing an issue in a formal setting, and this method may exclude those less articulate or who feel intimidated. Using written questionnaires in places where literacy is low might mean you only get the views of a certain socioeconomic group.

When engaging religious actors, be aware of how cultural and religious factors might impact who is prepared to offer information and which actors are most accessible. A discussion of contentious subjects might deter some religious actors from engaging with the data-collection process; for example, the issue of abortion for some Christian groups or the dispute over Dorje Shugden within Tibetan Buddhists.¹⁰ Similarly, in culturally and religiously conservative contexts, women may be overlooked because they are sometimes harder for external actors, especially male analysts, to access. These issues are discussed further in Step 1, Self-Reflect. Remember to match your methods to the participants you want reach and at the same time to avoid unchecked generalizations about different groups of people.

Although the geographic location of the conflict assessment may seem obvious when collecting primary data, consider whether available resources will allow you to broaden engagement to participants outside the immediate area of conflict. For example, if your assessment is focused on a particular town or region, it may be advisable to seek the insights of national-level actors or those based elsewhere who have a more objective opinion or some influence on the conflict. A broader perspective helps you understand how local issues relate to the broader context.

Secondary data refers to information that is not collected by you directly, but comes from other sources. This might include reports, newspaper articles, and previously conducted research. These sources of information are useful for understanding the conflict context.

Secondary data, particularly in the form of research, may offer explanations that come from a broader or more theoretical understanding of the conflict. It may or may not correspond to the views and perceptions of those on the ground who are directly involved or affected by the conflict. This is an important point to note and one which we will return to in Step 4, Map Peacebuilding.

It is important to examine secondary sources critically because they are the products of other others' biases. For example, reports on a conflict may have a particular political or ideological goal that can be achieved by presenting one conflict actor as better, worse, or more to blame than another. External analysts may label a conflict as "religious" from their perspective, while people in the conflict may reject this description.

Be aware of sensitivity around acknowledging different interpretations of religious sources because sacred texts or religious authorities are often considered indisputable. It may be difficult for actors to question or contradict statements made by religious authorities. When using religious sources

¹⁰ http://info-buddhism.com/dorje_shugden_controversy.html#Notes-DS.

as part of your assessment, be mindful of the risk your sources may face or how you could raise tensions by being critical of religious sources.

The balance between desk-based research and fieldwork will influence your comprehension of the conflict. Desk-based research can give you an abstract overview not necessarily shared by those inside the conflict, so understanding the perceptions and views of those directly involved in the conflict is vital. However, due to resource or safety concerns, analysts may not always be able to travel and engage with the people most affected. Local partners and trusted contacts can help overcome this problem. Religious communities and organizations often have established channels of communication to reach participants not directly accessible by the assessor. “Working with Local Partners to Facilitate Data Collection in Syria” shows how local partners can provide for your safety when accessing participants in places of high risk.

<h3>Working with Local Partners to Facilitate Data Collection in Syria</h3>	<p>Church of England priest Andrew Ashdown has been traveling in the Middle East for decades. Even the Syrian Civil War that started in 2011 did not stop him from traveling extensively to different parts of Syria. In a report on his visit to Syria in 2016, he writes that his goals included “to listen to as wide a range of voices as possible who are not being heard outside of Syria [including] religious leaders, communities and political leaders as well as internally displaced peoples; . . . to see for ourselves the realities on the ground; . . . to visit different religious communities in different Syrian locations; to listen to the voices of their members and leader; to experience their places of worship and view any destruction of churches and mosques and loss of ritual treasures . . . [and] to learn about efforts being made within Syria to bring about a peaceful resolution.” He also emphasizes a commitment to impartiality, independence from external funding, and “solidarity with all who are suffering.” Guided by such goals and commitments, Ashdown’s years of travel have earned him the respect of local religious leaders and communities, who in turn do their utmost to keep him safe.</p> <p><i>Source: www.andrewashdown.me.uk/.</i></p>
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Inclusion

As part of your assessment planning, be intentional about who you plan to collect data from and why you have chosen these participants. Analysis is strengthened by bringing in different perspectives. Include inputs from a diverse range of actors, participants, and organizations connected to the conflict. Varied input is perhaps even more important when attempting to understand the role of religion in conflict. With a diversity of views that extends beyond obviously religious actors, you will have a better chance of understanding the relevance and place of religion in the conflict and how it interacts with other factors.

It is also important to get a diversity of views among religious actors. There can be a diverse range of views, beliefs, roles, and opinions held by different actors of even the same faith within even a relatively small area or community. Go beyond religious leaders or interfaith groups to speak with

other members of religious communities, including women and young people, for a more varied and representative perspective. For example, in some situations, women—who have very different roles and responsibilities within a community—may see the causes of a conflict and peacebuilding priorities in a different way than senior male religious leaders. Similarly, young people who are more liberal in their religious views and beliefs than older people might have a different vision about how religion and religious actors can be active in peacebuilding.

Participation

Participation means getting actors actively involved in collecting information. The more their involvement is welcomed, as well as relevant and meaningful to them, the more they will care about and take responsibility for the process, or “take ownership.” In the course of interacting with participants, you are making contacts, building trust and relationships, and demonstrating that you value the communities and organizations you are working with. This interaction is an important part of peacebuilding because participants who feel a sense of ownership are more likely to support initiatives that result from the peacebuilding process, especially in religious peacebuilding, where organizations and groups working across religious boundaries can help break down negative stereotypes and barriers.

Remember that you are not the only one affected by the data collection process. While you receive new information and perspectives to incorporate into your analysis, the kinds of comments and questions you raise with participants will prompt them to consider issues in a different way and thus change how they think about the conflict and what they share with you. To understand their original views, start with simple, open-ended questions and minimal comments. Afterward, you can move toward a more interactive exchange, which may encourage participants to reflect on the conflict in new ways. Remember that the engagement is not neutral in that it affects the ways participants think about the conflict and may have positive or negative impacts.¹¹

Ownership and Confidentiality

It is important to anticipate issues of confidentiality and ownership. What will be done with the data you collect and the corresponding analysis? Who will you share it with? Deciding on the balance between confidentiality and transparency of the final product is important and the decision must be clearly communicated to participants in the assessment and analysis processes.

A highly participative process can be a peacebuilding tool in itself. As you work with diverse actors to collect information and develop a joint analysis of the conflict, you build relationships and common understanding. However, if you plan to share the analysis with these actors and ask for their support, make sure they will find its conclusions acceptable. Making your conclusions more acceptable may mean limiting your freedom to challenge religious beliefs, narratives, or authorities.

¹¹ For further reading on participatory action research, see J. Chevalier and D. Buckles, *Participatory Action Research: Theory and Methods for Engaged Inquiry* (New York: Routledge, 2013); and C. Elder, *Participatory Action Research (PAR): A Tool for Transforming Conflict: A Case Study from South Central Somalia* (Trycksaksbolaget, Sweden: Life & Peace Institute, 2016).

You may wish to restrict circulation of the analysis or develop different versions of it for different audiences. If you do, carefully consider what could happen if your conclusions are seen by people they were not intended for and how you would deal with such an event.

Interviews and Discussion Groups

Interviews and discussion groups are important methods for collecting information. Interview styles range from highly structured interviews to open conversations. What often works best is a combination of these two, known as *semidirective interviews*. Prepare some key questions to ask in a semidirective interview, but allow participants flexibility to guide the interview in the direction they want. (See “Basic Discussion Group Format” on page 19 for an example of how to conduct a discussion group and “Guidelines for Semidirective Interviews” on page 20 for tips on how to conduct interviews.)

Discussion groups, also called *focus groups*, bring together a range of participants or members of the same group and draw out their views in less time than individual interviews. Participants may reflect and share more in an engaged group than if they were alone. However, be aware of the danger that certain narratives or individuals may dominate the discussion in discussion groups, leading to an unbalanced representation of viewpoints. In discussion groups with religious actors, there may be pressure to appear to be in harmony in the presence of an outsider such that the real issues are not expressed. Minority religious groups may not dare to challenge dominant narratives that emphasize equality and harmony between religions. Similar dynamics may affect voices of marginalized participants such as women and young people. When you anticipate or notice such dynamics, consider conducting separate individual or group meetings with participants who may not be comfortable fully voicing their opinions.

If you begin an assessment by directly asking participants about the role and importance of religion, they will likely focus on religious dimensions more than on other relevant factors. To get a sense of the real importance participants attach to religion, begin with more general questions and see if respondents bring up religion without being specifically asked. Then you can use religion-specific questions to explore religion’s role in greater depth.

Basic Discussion Group Format

This template for a simple discussion group can be adapted to various purposes and audiences. Use it with any group to explore the causes of conflict and religion's role in that conflict.

Both when inviting participants and when opening the meeting, introduce yourself and your intentions for the discussion group. Commit to being open and honest during the meeting and urge participants to do the same. If they express reservations, sensitively explore what the reservations are and how they can be addressed. Ask for permission from all participants to record the meeting if you plan to do so.

Invite participants to introduce themselves as part of the opening. After any further introductory comments or questions, divide participants into groups of four or five that are as diverse as possible in terms of religion, ethnicity, organizational affiliation, and the like. Ask each group to discuss the following key questions and write down their answers on a large piece of paper:

- **What are the main causes of the conflict?**
- **What actions are being taken to address the conflict or improve the situation, and are they working?**
- **What else needs to be done to improve the current situation?**
- **What are the barriers to achieving what needs to be done?**

Give participants at least fifteen minutes to discuss each question in small groups; then have one person from each group report back to the large group and allow for open discussion in the large group before moving on to the next question.

You will notice that there are no specific questions here about religion. If religion comes up, use the questions and tools in this Guide to explore the religious dimensions of the conflict in the larger group discussions. For example, if the religious identity of different actors in the conflict is mentioned, you could ask how important participants think religious identities are in the conflict. Have participants list all the actors and write down a short description for each with their defining characteristics. Rank the characteristics in terms of importance for understanding that actor. Then discuss a series of follow-up questions such as where does religious identity feature? How important is it? Are religious identities something that seem to divide or connect people?

Guidelines for Semi-Directive Interviewing

SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWERS AIM TO BE:

- **Knowledgeable:** Thoroughly familiar with the focus of the interview (use the initial interviews to test and adapt the interview structure).
- **Structured:** Gives a purpose for the interview and welcomes any questions from the respondent. This structure requires being completely engaged with the respondent, while at the same time keeping track of the questions to ask.
- **Clear:** Asks simple, easy, short questions (one at a time) that are free of jargon.
- **Gentle:** Lets people finish, gives them time to think, tolerates pauses, and are not afraid of silence (some questions may require some time to reflect before answering).
- **Sensitive:** Listen attentively to what is said and how it is said and are empathetic (while remaining neutral) in dealing with the respondent. Any judgmental attitudes, shock, or discomfort will be immediately noticed by the respondent. This also means when determining the respondent may not go further in one direction, interviewers find another way to ask the question that the respondent may be more comfortable with.
- **Open:** Follows the respondent's lead. This may mean departing from the order of the interview guide to follow up on information the respondent shares or topics that seem of interest without missing what the interview intended to cover.
- **Focused:** Knows what they want to find out and stays on track.
- **Critical:** Are prepared to inquire and clarify what is said, for example, in dealing with inconsistencies in the respondent's replies, while avoiding judgment.
- **Attentive:** Tracks important details and relates them to what has previously been said.
- **Precise:** Clarify the meaning of the respondent's statements when needed, but without adding meaning to them. One way to avoid misinterpretation is to repeat back what the respondent said and then to ask if this is what was meant and for elaboration if needed.
- **Balanced:** Are aware that talking too much leads to a passive respondent and talking too little leaves the respondent unsure whether they are on the right track.
- **Flexible and aware of time:** Are ready to take the time needed for a full interview while clear and mindful of the respondent's time commitments.
- **Ethically sensitive:** Is aware of and takes responsibility for the way the interview process can pose security and confidentiality concerns.

Source: Adapted by the United States Institute of Peace from Harvard University, Department of Sociology, "Strategies for Qualitative Interviews," http://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/interview_strategies.pdf.

Now that we have covered definitions, principles, and data collection considerations related to an analysis that focuses on the religious dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding, it is time to discuss the process. The next five chapters offer a systematic method for identifying and collecting data to better understand how religion contributes to driving conflict and may assist in peacebuilding. Each chapter focuses on one of the five steps outlined in the Quick Reference Chart. At the end of each chapter, a short case study offers an illustration of how the step covered in that chapter applies to a specific conflict. These case studies are intended to illustrate how each step works and are not an up-to-date or exhaustive account of the featured conflicts. Let's begin with Step 1, Self-Reflect.

STEP 1 Self-Reflect

Understanding your relationship to the conflict is an important first step in the assessment, analysis, and planning processes. Your biases and subjectivities will inevitably have an impact on how you see the conflict, so you need to carry out a process of self-reflection to make yourself aware of them.

Whether it is one organization or team or several carrying out the conflict analysis and the peacebuilding planning, the principles in this guide are relevant. The people carrying out the conflict analysis and peacebuilding work must have a good relationship with each other and work closely together to ensure a strong link between the planning and analysis of peacebuilding engagements.

You should run through the questions in this step with everyone involved in the assessment and analysis processes and anyone likely to be involved in implementing subsequent peacebuilding activity, including local partners. “Key Religion-Specific Points for Self-Reflection” provides some issues to consider as you go through Step 1.

Key Religion-Specific Points for Self-Reflection

CRITICALLY REFLECT ON:

- **Your experience and knowledge:** Prior knowledge and experience of local religions and culture is a major asset. General knowledge or specific knowledge from a different place does not automatically apply to your local context.
- **Your perceived religious identity:** How your religious identity is perceived will affect how you are viewed and accepted by conflict actors.
- **Your existing preconceptions:** Whether you are religious or secular, your personal perspectives and experiences will shape the way you think about a conflict and possible solutions. Individually and as a team, challenge and test your initial ideas and thoughts about the conflict and the role you perceive religion to be playing.
- **Religious calendars:** Your own religious holidays and festivals can affect your and participants’ availability and mobility.
- **Your motivations and constraints:** All conflict analysis and peacebuilding efforts are shaped to some extent by external factors such as funders’ conditions and available resources. Be aware of how beliefs, values, and feelings affect your team and its actions.

WHERE?

Where Have You Been Working and What Do You Already Know about the Context?

Whether you have a basic understanding of the conflict or are deeply familiar with the religion and culture of the context, it is important to take time before you begin the assessment process to reflect on your existing knowledge.

If you have carried out peacebuilding work in other contexts, you may want to reflect on whether there are significant similarities and/or differences, and how these impact your understanding of the conflict and the potential for peacebuilding. If you have worked in this context previously, then you will have existing and potentially useful knowledge.

Reflect on what you know about the context with your team and local partners, who can test underlying assumptions and identify gaps in your knowledge. Be open to learning new information and revising existing ideas.

Your level of familiarity with the context will influence your assessment. Insiders have prior experience with the context, but this experience can compromise their perceived impartiality. They may be insiders only to certain groups in a community, and their familiarity does not guarantee access to all conflict actors (and may inhibit it) or to high-quality data.

Outsiders may appear less biased but run the risk of overestimating their knowledge and understanding of the conflict and context. Humility is important—it is impossible to know what you don't know.

Where Does Your Knowledge of the Society, Religion, and Culture Come from and What Do You Know about the Context that Will Help You with Your Conflict Analysis?

Reflect on what you know about the specific religious and cultural dimensions of the context and where that knowledge comes from. All sources of information have an inherent bias. Be conscious of how your sources influence the type and quality of knowledge about the conflict and the broader context. See the section on data collection in “Getting Started” for more information.

Basic familiarity will help you avoid mistakes in social interactions and give you a starting point for understanding the context. How to pay respect to religious leaders, how to behave and dress in sacred spaces, and when and how to speak about sensitive religious subjects are all examples of issues to consider. If you are seeking familiarity, don't expect one individual to be willing or able to educate you on an entire culture or group identity, or to represent an entire religious community.

Recognize and question assumptions you may make about how individuals think and act or about what they believe based on what you think you already know about their culture or religion. Some

religions are based on foundational beliefs and principles that most followers recognize and accept. However, religions and religious actors are extremely diverse. For example, many Buddhist monks are committed to nonviolence on the basis of their beliefs about cosmology and transcendence, but certain Sri Lankan Buddhist monks have openly supported the violent campaign against the LTTE on the basis of Buddhist scripture and tradition.

WHAT?

What Are Your Assumptions about What is Driving and Mitigating the Conflict?

Avoid making the evidence fit your own assumptions about what is causing the conflict and what needs to be done to resolve it. Without being fully conscious of it, your brain tends to notice, remember, and credit stories and people that confirm your existing beliefs and ignore or discredit evidence that contradicts them. There is also a danger that organizational pressures and focus will determine the outcome of the analysis: gender-focused organizations may speak with like-minded local actors and conclude that gender empowerment is the remedy to the conflict, whereas organizations focused on religion may consult with religious actors and identify religion as key to peacebuilding. By maintaining a heightened level of self-awareness and actively examining the assumptions that shape your beliefs about the conflict, you can try to minimize bias so that your assessment is a genuine product of multiple perspectives.

What Are Your Assumptions about Religion and Its Role in the Conflict?

Religion as a concept, and its relationship to violence and conflict, can be understood in many ways. Some observers argue that religious beliefs make people less willing to compromise or more willing to sacrifice their lives for a cause. Others argue that religious values are a source of peace or that religious ethics restrain the violent nature of humans. Scholars have recognized that most religions contain the potential for both driving conflict and building peace.¹² Your own religious or secular beliefs, identity, and traditions may influence your views on religion and its role in conflict and peacebuilding.

Whatever you believe, your own cultural and religious background, experiences, and knowledge have shaped your understanding of these ideas. You cannot avoid subjectivity, but thoughtful reflection on your assumptions about religion and conflict will limit how much subjectivity influences your analysis. “Explore Assumptions about Religion and Conflict” presents an exercise to help you and your teams recognize assumptions.

¹² Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*; Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and Practice* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003).

EXERCISE

Explore Assumptions about Religion and Conflict

This exercise is a creative way to discuss assumptions about the relationship between religion and conflict with your team members or the group you are working with.

GOAL: To highlight the diversity of ways of understanding religion's role in conflict and to encourage reflexivity about one's own assumptions.

MATERIALS: You will need sheets of paper and drawing materials such as colored pens or crayons.

STEPS: Invite everybody to take five minutes to draw a picture representing their understanding of religion in conflict. Depending on the group, this can be a general question or, if the group is all working on the same context, context specific.

1. Hang up all the pictures on the wall and give the group enough time to look at each of the pictures.
2. Lead the group in a discussion with the following questions as a guide:
 - What interested you when viewing the different pictures? What surprised you?
 - Which different dimensions of religion did you see, or not see, represented?
 - What assumptions about religion's role in conflict might affect our analysis?
 - What are examples that contradict these assumptions?

Once you have completed your conflict analysis or have been working as a group for some time, consider revisiting the drawings and asking the group members to reflect on how their thinking about religion's role in conflict has changed. You could also ask them to draw new pictures.

WHO?

Who Are You and Why Might You Be Suited to Work in this Area?

Ask yourself what specific attributes make you or your organization particularly relevant to, or likely to be effective in, addressing the conflict. Similarly, what barriers does your identity bring to working in a particular context? This reflection process can benefit from the perspective of someone outside your organization on the suitability, strengths, and weaknesses of your efforts in relation to the conflict.

If you or your organization have a history with the conflict or context, be aware of how your involvement has been perceived in the past. Whether your reputation is negative or positive will affect your ability to gather information, to connect with people, and to participate effectively in peacebuilding initiatives. You may not be able to fully understand how others perceive you. Attempt to establish an open and honest relationship with established actors and organizations;

if they invite you to engage, you have their trust and respect. If there is resistance to your engagement, think hard about whether you are the right actor to be getting involved.

Your capability and capacity to conduct assessments will affect the quality of your assessment and thus the potential of future peacebuilding efforts. Acknowledge your limitations. Overconfidence can lead to arrogance and hinder self-criticism. Experience and knowledge combined with humility and self-reflection are key attributes of a good peacebuilder. If you or your team members have limited experience or knowledge, seek advice or support during the process of assessment, planning, and implementation.

What Is Your and Your Organization's Self-Defined and Perceived Religious Identity or Affiliation?

Religious identity or affiliation will impact how people relate to you, especially in contexts where religion plays a central role in society or the conflict. If you do not reveal your religious identity, it will be presumed, often on the basis of your ethnicity or nationality. For example, in many parts of the world, Euro-Americans are often assumed to be of Christian heritage, just as Arabs are often assumed to be Muslim. Similarly, even if your organization does not have an official religious identity, assumptions about religious identity are often made based on where the organization has its headquarters or the ethnicity of its visible members or leadership. Whether your organization's religious affiliation is official or perceived, participants will assign your organization's religious identity to you.

Your explicit or perceived religious identity may make you seem more sympathetic toward some conflict actors than toward others and thus get in the way of engaging a diverse range of participants in your assessment or peacebuilding efforts (see “Religious Identity as an Obstacle to Peacebuilding in Nepal” on p. 26). In contrast, a shared religious identity can sometimes build trust and improve access and engagement. Trust, access, and engagement may also depend on gender. For example, Western non-Muslim women have greater access to male-dominated religious spaces and male clergy in some contexts than local Muslim women do. (Refer to the *Action Guide on Religion and Gender* for more information on navigating gendered identities in religion and peacebuilding.)

Carefully consider how your individual and your organization's explicit or perceived religious identity will impact who you work with and how. If your religious identity is a potential problem, consider how to address this issue (perhaps by partnering with an organization of a different affiliation) or whether you are the right one to carry out the assessment or peacebuilding initiative. We advise careful transparency and honesty when asked directly about your religious affiliation; there are times when openly discussing religious identity may hinder the assessment process.

Religious Identity as an Obstacle to Peacebuilding in Nepal

In Nepal, some Christian faith-based organizations have encountered problems with peacebuilding and development projects because of beliefs and rumors that their underlying motivation is to convert non-Christians. One of the ways they have attempted to address this problem is to employ management and field staff from diverse religious backgrounds..

WHY?

Why Are You Getting Involved in the Conflict?

It is important to be clear about your motivations for leading a conflict analysis and/or peacebuilding effort. Few individuals or organizations engage in a conflict without some preset ideas about what they hope to achieve. Organizational priorities and constraints will typically lead you towards the issues your organization is already focused on. Acknowledging and reflecting on your organization's motivations will help you understand the unchecked assumptions you take with you into the conflict context.

If you have a strong religious identity, seriously consider how your faith influences, and is perceived to influence, your goals. Faith-based organizations are often suspected of having mixed motives, including evangelism or conversion. A mixed agenda can worsen the conflict, particularly where religion plays a role in it. Conflict actors may perceive even well-intentioned approaches that draw on positive dimensions of religion as attempts to impose certain values and beliefs over their own traditions.

Why Do You Think It Is Important to Look at the Religious Dimensions of the Conflict?

It may seem obvious that religion has something to do with a conflict, especially if religion is recognized as important by all conflict actors and commentators. Religion's particular role in a conflict may be harder to determine. Religious ideas and identities may be called upon to justify actions, but may not necessarily be principal causes of the conflict. Consider religion among all the possible contributing factors. Maintain an open mind and be prepared to have your assumptions challenged throughout the analysis process. This open-mindedness will help ensure that you do not consider religion a dominant issue because that is the focus of your organization, because you have a preference for working with religious actors, or because you are using this Guide and therefore presume religion to be significant.

Your desire to analyze the role of religion in the conflict may come from your intention to integrate religion into your peacebuilding efforts. How you plan to do this will likely be shaped by your organizational or individual identity and characteristics:

- As a secular actor or organization that values the role of religion in society, you might be asking questions such as What part can religious actors play in peacebuilding? and In what capacity can you work constructively with religious actors, communities, and organizations?
- As a faith-based organization or peace practitioner, you might be considering what your own religious tradition has to offer for building sustainable and just peace. If your own religious identity and beliefs do not correspond with those involved in the conflict, you might be open to exploring other religious forms of peacebuilding that are indigenous to the conflict context.

Although both these approaches are acceptable and can be effective, they represent different attitudes and approaches to religion and peacebuilding and bring advantages and disadvantages that you should be aware of (see, for example, “Instrumentalization”). It can be helpful to have some ideas of what you would like to do in mind, but ultimately you should let your peacebuilding planning be guided by your analysis.

Instrumentalization

When secular actors and organizations work with religious communities, a degree of instrumentalization may occur. Instrumentalization means secular actors do not value religious actors, institutions, or ideas for their own sake; rather, they value them because of their usefulness in achieving a particular secular outcome, such as mobilizing members of their community to support a political cause or countering certain narratives based on religious ideas.

Instrumentalization is a sensitive issue that can lead to problems if religious actors believe they are being taken advantage of by actors who have little respect for their religious beliefs and practices beyond how they may benefit them. You can avoid instrumentalization by engaging religious partners

with an attitude of openness, respect, sensitivity, and cooperation, prerequisites for all peacebuilding work.

That said, not all religious actors consider instrumentalization a problem. For example, in Hinduism, a broad understanding of religion and how it interacts with society and culture means that many religious relationships and transactions are practical, even driven by economic gains. This relationship often extends to outsiders, who at times may even be labeled “Hindu.”

Consider the perception and consequences of instrumentalization in relation to the context of peacebuilding, which can come about only through a deeper understanding of how religion operates in the context of the conflict.

WHEN?

When, and to What Extent, Can You Engage in Work on This Conflict?

You need to be clear from the beginning of your work about when you can begin your engagement and what time commitment you can make to the conflict assessment, analysis, and peacebuilding processes. Availability of resources, such as staff and funding, may determine the length of the assessment and analysis process, as may organizational deadlines. The exact timing may also be affected by a range of local factors such as weather, holidays, and political stability. Be realistic about what you can achieve in the time you have and with the resources available.

The timing of your assessment and analysis can affect your findings. Carrying out an assessment at times of heightened tensions will influence participants' views and perceptions, as will undertaking it during periods of relative calm. Be aware of this dynamic.

Effective peacebuilding often necessitates a medium- to long-term commitment. Reflect on whether you can guarantee the amount of time and resources needed to make a positive contribution. If not, think carefully whether you should begin to engage in the context.

In situations of risk, engage only when you have the ability to respond quickly and effectively to unexpected challenges so that you can ensure the safety of staff and anyone you work with. Carefully consider strategies to manage risk and build them into both the analysis and the peacebuilding processes.

How Might Religious Calendars Affect the Timing of Your Engagement?

Religion can impact analysis and peacebuilding activities in a number of ways. If you are religious, your own traditions and beliefs may restrict your activities or travel at certain times; for example, during religious holy days and festivals such as Ramadan, Vesak, Easter, or the Jewish Shabbat. You may also be involved in work and projects in several different contexts and religious considerations, and engagement in one may affect your availability and effectiveness in another.

Key religious events may make the conflict context more or less suited to data collection and peacebuilding work. Religious occasions have the potential to be divisive or uniting depending on shared religious history and the role of religion in the conflict (see "How Festivals Affect the Atmosphere Between Religious Groups," on p. 29). Anything that is likely to increase tension or to remind communities of historical injustice can be divisive. Alternatively, religious festivals that bring people together may make data collection easier, but may not represent the day-to-day situation. Examples include Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and Diwali.

Religious festivals can also disproportionality affect some sections of the community more than others. For example, religious leaders might have certain obligations that take up more of their

time; women may be busy with cooking during festival preparations or occupied with children if there is a school holiday.

It is important for multireligious projects or interfaith initiatives to bear in mind that religious festivals or obligations may make some participants less available to engage and seemingly less responsive than others. Indeed, your accommodation of their schedules may be interpreted as a sign of bias. To avoid this perception, openly involve religious actors in scheduling around different religious calendars so that all participants understand, commit to, and, as much as possible, agree to the timing of activities that works for everyone.

How Festivals Affect the Atmosphere between Religious Groups: An Example

In a Northern-Irish diaspora community in Germany in the 1990s, Protestants and Catholics worked and lived alongside each other in day-to-day life with relatively little conflict along religious-political lines. However, each year on Orangemen's Day, July 12, which commemorates Prince William of Orange's victory over King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, sectarian resentment would escalate, occasionally leading to violent attacks on Catholic members of the community. Marches on July 12 also triggered regular riots and violence between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

HOW?

How Can You Use Your Skills, Resources, and Experience to Contribute to Peacebuilding in This Context?

Carrying out a sensitive and valuable conflict assessment requires specific skills. The most important ones are discussed in the introductory section of this Guide.

As you decide what peacebuilding initiative you will engage in, try matching your skills, resources, and experience with the needs and opportunities that exist. This is an important objective of Step 5, Turn Analysis to Action, but in Step 1, reflect on how to contribute your particular expertise to fill a gap. Can you provide funding? Do you have insights to offer from experiences elsewhere? Although you should be mindful of the experience, skills, and attributes you have, make sure these do not bias your understanding of the conflict and potential solutions.

What Additional Skills and Resources Might You Need to Engage with the Religious Dimensions of the Conflict?

Both when assessing and when implementing peacebuilding activities, you may find particular abilities or resources necessary to work effectively on the religious dimensions of the conflict.

These include knowledge of the different religious traditions and actors, which will help you build confidence, show respect, and gain the trust of the religious actors you engage with.

A deep understanding of religious traditions helps you understand the motivations and worldview of religious actors and participants. This understanding requires the ability to respect and empathize with those whose beliefs and actions may be unfamiliar or even disagreeable to you. This does not mean letting go of your own moral or ethical ideals, but putting aside your own cultural and/or religious preconceptions in order to listen and learn with curiosity, and then challenging your preconceptions with the new perspectives you gain.

CASE STUDY: Chad | 2016

In 2016, the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice and its local partner, the Standing Committee for a Call to Peace and Reconciliation (CSAPR), launched the Early Warning and Rapid Response Pilot Project for Vulnerable Communities in Chad with funding from the US Embassy in N'Djamena. Building on prior CSAPR-led mediation and conflict resolution trainings, the project brought on a Nigerian peacebuilding pair, Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, to organize local mediators into coordinated early warning and rapid response networks in two pilot communities—Moundou and Abéché—training them to gather, analyze, and validate information related to emerging conflicts and to address these conflicts through community dialogue and mediation. Salam hoped this pilot project would become a model for other communities to adopt with other funding sources.

Table 3 shows how the framework presented in this chapter could be applied to the Salam Institute's efforts in Chad in 2016.

TABLE 3. Self-reflection in Chad in 2016

MAJOR QUESTION	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	SELF-REFLECTION
WHERE?	<p>Where have you been working and what do you already know about the context?</p> <p><i>Where does your existing knowledge of society, religion, and culture come from, and what do you currently know about the context that will help you with your conflict analysis?</i></p>	<p>The Salam Institute has been working in Chad since 2010. Although we have not worked directly in the communities where the project pilot will run, we have worked across six other regions in Chad and we understand the societal dynamics in the country. We have a close relationship with the key trainers, Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa, who have been to Chad on prior occasions working with the same participants in Moundou and Abéché. We have also developed a close relationship with the local partner, CSAPR, which has been operational in Chad for fifteen years and knows the pilot communities very well.</p> <p><i>The Salam Institute has been working with religious leaders in Chad since 2010, carrying out more than fifty training and dialogue activities for more than fifteen hundred participants on community leadership and civic values, human rights, tolerance, and nonviolence. Its work has been mainly with Muslim leaders and some Christian leaders. Together with the pastor and the imam, we have a strong sense of how religion (particularly Islam) is lived, how it is interpreted, and what controversies exist. Although we have not worked in Moundou and Abéché, we assume that religion is similar there to other parts of the country.</i></p>
WHAT?	<p>What are your assumptions about what is driving and mitigating the conflict?</p> <p><i>What are your assumptions about religion and its role in the conflict?</i></p>	<p>A variety of socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors gives rise to context-sensitive communal conflicts. These include competition for natural resources, especially usable land, which is shrinking due to overcrowding and climate change. Crises in neighboring Central African Republic, South Sudan, Libya, and northern Nigeria can lead to flows of refugees, internally displaced persons, and returnees that destabilize political, social, and cultural balances in host areas. Apart from these larger forces, we lack an understanding of local intergroup and interpersonal dynamics in the pilot communities. We will rely on the local partner CSAPR to fill these gaps.</p> <p><i>In a volatile regional and political context, conflicts about resources can quickly take on ethnic or religious dimensions. The existence of historical grievances between different ethnoreligious groups contributes to religious tensions.</i></p> <p><i>Chad is a majority Muslim county; 35 percent of the population is Christian. The government emphasizes religious coexistence, and religion can be a source of social cohesion. Tension and conflict occurs between different streams of Islam, as well across faith lines.</i></p> <p><i>Religion is not a core driver of communal conflict; however, when tensions arise between ethnic groups in areas where ethnic and religious identities overlap, religion can become an identity marker. Because there is not much deep interreligious exchange, it is easy to for negative stereotypes between religious (and subreligious) groups to develop. There is a risk that fundamentalist influences from outside the country may worsen interreligious and intrareligious conflict.</i></p>

<p>WHO?</p>	<p>Who are you and why might you be suited to work in this area?</p> <p><i>What is your and your organization's self-defined and perceived religious identity or affiliation?</i></p>	<p>The Salam Institute is a US-based organization with extensive experience in Muslim and Arab contexts. We have expertise in Islam, peacebuilding, and interfaith dialogue. Our strength is the ability to network with religious leaders, funders, and partners so as to bridge the secular world and religious actors.</p> <p><i>We are regarded as an exception to the common Chadian belief that the United States is unfriendly to Muslims. We represent the small part of US society that is Muslim or familiar with Islam.</i></p> <p><i>Although Salam does not self-define as a Muslim organization, our history of working with Muslim communities and our expertise on Islam means that Muslims tend to identify with the organization and perceive it favorably. At the same time, local Christians who are familiar with secular civil society organizations, such as the US Agency for International Development, relate to us as an international organization more than as a Muslim one.</i></p> <p><i>The most visible faces of the project will be the director of CSAPR, a well-known Chadian Muslim, and the imam and pastor from Nigeria. It is their identities that will be most relevant. Based on past experience, they will be well received by local communities in Chad.</i></p>
<p>WHY?</p>	<p>Why are you getting involved in the conflict?</p> <p><i>Why do you think it is important to look at the religious dimensions of the conflict?</i></p>	<p>This project falls within Salam's organizational mission. Our strong relationships with CSAPR, the imam, the pastor, and the US embassy mean we can bring together the resources, knowledge, and relationships needed for the project. CSAPR and the imam and pastor have worked in Moundou and Abéché training local mediators, so this project is an opportunity to build on what they have already done.</p> <p><i>Although religion is not a root cause of conflict in these communities, it risks contributing to conflict through radical outside voices or unchecked stereotypes. Religion also has a positive connecting potential, given the moderate Tijaniyah stream of Islam's influence on daily and public life.</i></p> <p><i>The project fits our mission and capacity to elevate religious leaders and ideas as a source of peace. Admittedly, we have greater expertise in Muslim peacebuilding than in Christian peacebuilding.</i></p>
<p>WHEN?</p>	<p>When, and to what extent, can you engage in work on this conflict?</p> <p><i>How might religious calendars affect the timing of your engagement?</i></p>	<p>Funding allows us to plan two capacity-building visits, to be scheduled when travel to the interior is possible and the imam, pastor, CSAPR, and participants are available. After each visit, the local partner will provide follow-up support because it is already committed to working with the pilot communities independent of our support.</p> <p><i>There are many religious and national holidays, both Christian and Muslim, in Chad. These will be taken into account when planning events.</i></p> <p><i>For participants implementing a rapid response network, it is worth considering the opportunity that religious holidays present to emphasize certain religious principles of tolerance.</i></p>

<p>HOW?</p>	<p>How can you use your skills, resources, and experience to contribute to peacebuilding in this context?</p> <p><i>What additional skills, resources, and relationships might you need to engage with the religious dimensions of the conflict?</i></p>	<p>Based on our relationships and familiarity with different cultures, our main contribution will be to connect the secular funding world and the Nigerian training team to the religious and cultural world of the local communities, as well as to integrate secular early-warning rapid response concepts with religious ones. We will also support the Nigerian training team with French and English interpretation. Ultimately, we hope that local organizations and actors will have sufficient relationships and capacity that our involvement as a bridge is no longer needed.</p> <p><i>We plan to involve the imam and pastor as two religious leaders who went from being enemies to cofounders of the Interfaith Mediation Centre in Kaduna. As examples from neighboring Nigeria of the role religious leaders can play, the imam and the pastor can connect and inspire religious actors in the Chadian context. In the future, we hope to recruit Chadian religious leaders as local role models with similar abilities to teach and inspire.</i></p>
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STEP 2 Understand the Context

Before undertaking an analysis of the conflict, it is important to have an understanding of the wider context in which the conflict is taking place. Gaining an understanding of the context involves collecting information on the general social, cultural, and political environment; the histories of these environments; and how religion relates to the situation. You should also develop an awareness of the influence of the wider regional and international context. “Key Religion-Specific Points for Understanding the Context” provides some issues to consider as you go through Step 2.

Key Religion-Specific Points for Understanding the Context

- **Identity dividers:** When religious identities overlap with other identities (such as language, class, geography), strong divides may form.
- **Religion and the state:** The relationship between religion and the state is not only about the formal laws governing religion, but also about the values and norms according to which the state is governed.
- **Religious actors:** Which religious actors are influential and what their roles are in society will vary from context to context.
- **The international context:** The transnational nature of religion means the wider regional and international context may be important for conflicts with religious dimensions.
- **Religion in history:** The historical role of religion, and particularly its relation to any colonial past, is key to understanding the present.

WHERE?

Where Is the Conflict Located within the Wider Geographic and Demographic Context?

Every conflict zone exists within a larger geographic, political, and social environment that influences the conflict. For example, to understand the conflict in southern Thailand, you must take into account the national context of Thailand, as well as the wider regional context (e.g., the fact that the southern provinces border Malaysia and Thailand is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Similarly, understanding the conflict in Syria requires an appreciation of the political situation in the Middle East and globally.

As well as situating the conflict geographically, you will want to understand where in society the conflict is taking place; in other words, which social groups are involved in and affected by the conflict. This understanding requires knowledge of the demographics of the context. Societies are formally and informally made up of many different and overlapping social groups, some of which may or may not be concentrated in specific geographic areas. Social groups are defined by identity markers such as class, language, family, place of birth, religion, gender, and ethnicity. Which markers are socially relevant will vary from context to context. Identify the markers that are important in your context to help you understand relationships and attitudes as well as divisions that affect the conflict. Also consider which identity markers overlap, because this overlap can lead to strongly defined identity groups and increased potential for conflict between groups.

Which Geographic Areas Have Particular Religious Significance?

Being aware of the religious importance of particular places can alert you to potential sources of conflict and peace. Places may have significance due to their religious history and associations, whether the place is a specific religious building (e.g., the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka), a town, a city (e.g., Mecca in Saudi Arabia), or even whole territories (e.g., Israel and the West Bank). Sites that are considered sacred can have enormous symbolic value and therefore a potentially important role in conflict. They may become contested sites (e.g., the shared Temple Mount and al-Haram al-Sharif site in Jerusalem), targets because of what they represent (e.g., the Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan in 2001), or venues for peacemaking (e.g., Coventry Cathedral in the United Kingdom, which was destroyed in a bombing raid during World War II and is now an international center for reconciliation).

A link between religion and land is common in many cultures, and therefore territorial disputes often include a religious dimension. This is true in North America and Australia, where the efforts of Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians to defend and reclaim their lands from foreign settlers were in part motivated by the religious and spiritual importance of those lands, and in Sri Lanka, where many Buddhists believe the territorial integrity of the island must be preserved because Buddha himself designated the island of Sri Lanka as the place where his teachings would be preserved and promoted.

How Does Religious Identity Shape the Structure of Society?

In answering this question, you should consider the main religious identity groups and how important religious identity is perceived to be in social relations. Religious identities may overlap with ethnic, linguistic, geographic, clan, class, or other identity groupings. Figure 3 illustrates how ethnicity, religion, language, and geography overlap in Sri Lanka; “Statistical Information on Religious Affiliation” suggests some useful sources of information.

Statistical Information on Religious Affiliation

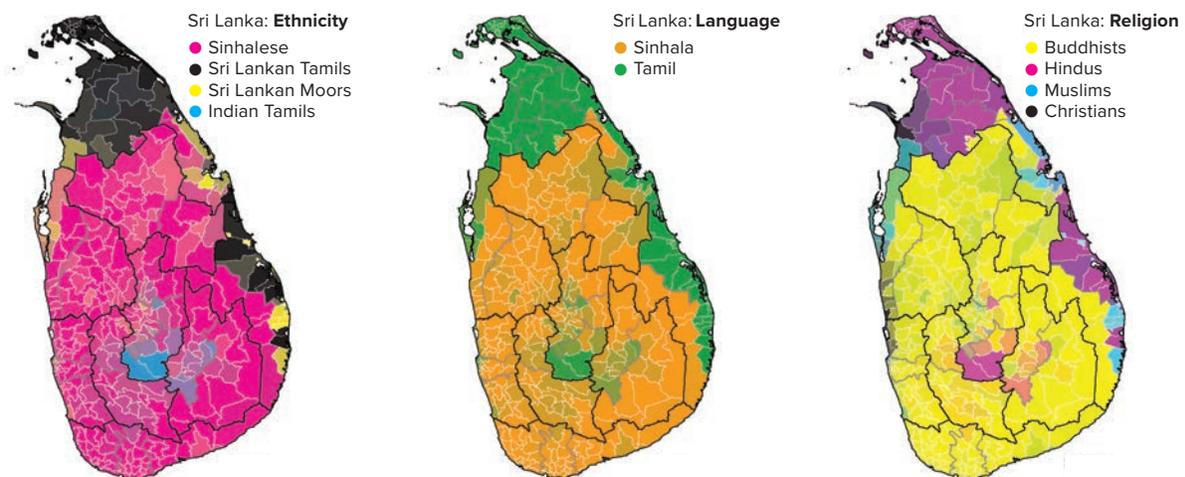
Depending on the country, basic statistical information on religious affiliation may be publicly available. However, there may be widely different estimates, and all numbers should be treated with caution, particularly because the numbers themselves may be a source of conflict. Statistics may also hide different branches and divisions within religious traditions. Possible sources of statistical information include:

- Census information, which may be published by an official government body
- The Pew Forum: Religious Composition by Country, 2010–50, www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2010/number/all/
- UN statistics, including a compilation of census data from around the world, <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode%3a28>

Because religion is only one possible social identity among many, you need to determine how important it is in social relationships. The importance people give to religion indicates how relevant it is to the conflict. Listen to how people talk about each other. If they consistently refer to the religious identity of people and communities, that is a clear indicator that differences in religious identity matter, particularly if religion is cited as an explanatory factor for people's attitudes, actions, or behaviors.

You can learn a lot about how religious identity affects social relations by examining everyday life. To what extent do people from different religions mix and come into contact with each other? Observe whether communities live in religiously separate or mixed areas (regions, villages, neighborhoods) and what occasions people of different religions have to interact (at work, at school, shopping, socializing), keeping in mind that trends may vary by gender, age, or class. The level of interreligious marriages and attitudes toward interreligious marriages are usually indicators of the level of integration of different religious communities. For example, at the height of the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, fewer than one in ten marriages were between a Catholic and a Protestant. In many parts of Egypt, tensions between Muslim and Christian communities mean there is little acceptance of interreligious marriage, and romantic relationships between Muslims and Christians have sometimes sparked violent incidents.

FIGURE 3: The demographics of Sri Lanka



WHAT?

What Are the Context's Main Political, Economic, Environmental, Social, and Cultural Characteristics?

A grasp of general information about the context is essential for the practical planning of a conflict assessment and for identifying the factors that might be drivers for conflict or peace. See “Where to Find Basic Data” for some suggestions on where to start.

General information includes, but is not limited to:

- **Political:** The system of government and the relationship between different parts of government (executive, parliament, judiciary), political participation (who can participate in political debate, hold office, etc.), the relationship between the state and its citizens (what rights and duties exist and are observed), and levels of transparency and corruption
- **Socioeconomic:** The main sources of income and employment, levels of inequality, access to services (health, transportation, education, information), levels of education, age of the population)
- **Environmental:** Climate, notable geographic features, distribution and ownership of natural resources
- **Cultural:** Customs, norms, dress, family structure, languages spoken

Religion can shape all these categories.

Where to Find Basic Data

Much country-level information is widely available. It can be found online from sites such as the Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/), the United Nations and national statistics services (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publications/pocketbook/>), and Wikipedia. Basic travel guides can be a useful starting point. At the local level, some of this information may be harder to gather from desk-based research and will require research effort on site. Characteristics often vary among gender and age groups, so be aware that statistics that are not gender/sex or age disaggregated will not reflect such disparity.

What Is the Relationship between Religion, the State, and Society?

When you considered the “where” of the context, you looked at how religion as a community of people can define a social identity group. Now think about how three other dimensions of religion shape the relationship between religion, the state, and society: religion as a set of ideas (that inspire and guide politics and society), religion as an institution (that defines its relationship to the state), and religion as a set of symbols and practices (that are visible in everyday life).

Norms and values guide how a society should be organized and how individuals and communities live their lives in that society. As a set of ideas, religion may be an important source for such norms and values. In some cases, a religion may be explicitly recognized as the source of law, such as in Saudi Arabia. Assessing norms and values, and where they come from, allows you to understand the logic by which a society functions. Diversity in a society means that some norms and values are contested; places where different norms and values are in tension can point to potential or existing conflict (see also “Understanding Gender Relations” on p. 39).

The relationship between religion and politics may have a formal character specified by the constitution or law. A government institution such as a ministry of religious affairs may exist to handle this relationship. Questions to consider include: Is there an official state religion? Do religious institutions have an official role in government? Is the number of officially recognized religions limited? Is there a limit on which religions can be openly practiced, raising issues of freedom of religion or belief? Understanding the formal institutional framework will help you when it comes to assessing the power and influence of religious institutions on politics (see also “Secularity”).

Secularity

The scholar José Casanova explains that the term *secularity* has its origins in the European Enlightenment, when efforts were made to free different areas of public life (state, economy, science) from the control of religious institutions and norms. He describes how the term is often used to talk about a decline in religious beliefs and practices or to speak about religion as a private matter that has no place in public life.

The idea of a secular state is not a clear one. Although the separation of religion and state may seem straightforward in terms of removing religious symbols from public spaces (as in France) or not having an established state religion (as in the United States),

it is less clear when it comes to the state’s ideals and values. Even where explicit religious references are avoided in the constitution and laws, many of the ideals and values that shape a society have religious origins, including in so-called secular Europe. What secular means must therefore be analyzed and defined within the context in which it is used.

In some countries, a secular state may be viewed as undesirable or meaningless. For example, many readings of Islamic theology demand an integration, rather than a separation, of religion and state. In China, the noninstitutional nature of Confucianism means that the notion of separating religion and state has little relevance.

In addition to assessing formal and institutional relationships, assess a religion’s importance in society by observing how religion is practiced and visible in everyday life. Is religion visible in the way people dress? Are daily and weekly routines shaped by religious considerations such as prayer times or days of rest? Are religious festivals important? Which religious holidays are official national holidays? Do official documents and public figures use religious language or make religious references? These visible signs of religion can become points of contention in conflict, so be aware of them.

Understanding Gender Relations

An important part of a conflict's context is the norms governing the roles and status of women, men, girls, and boys and the relationships between them. In every society, gender roles and relations differ and may be highly contested. Understanding these dynamics is important to actor mapping, identifying which issues are important to whom, and understanding relationships of power and influence. Understanding these dynamics is also necessary to ensure that the voices of these different groups are included in your analysis.

Religion may play an important role in shaping gender norms. In addition to shaping general attitudes about the roles and status of women, men, girls, and boys, religious and cultural traditions shape many everyday practices in a gender-differentiated way, from what kinds of clothing are appropriate for men and women to the role men and women play in specific religious rituals. It is important to be aware of prevailing laws and norms in this area because some conflicts between religious communities are triggered by incidents of interfaith marriage, gender-based violence, or accusations of inappropriate conduct.

Religious institutions often make clear rules around the roles of men and women that institutionalize unequal power relations. Whereas positions of authority may be reserved for men, women may play active roles within religious institutions and organizations such as scholars, teachers, spiritual advisors, and service providers. It is therefore important to engage official leaders and find ways to connect with women within these institutions. For example, in Colombia, the Ecumenical Group of Women Peacebuilders (GemPaz) brought together women from Protestant and Catholic churches whose understanding of social and community identity supported the reintegration of former combatants and the healing of communities.

WHO?

Who Are the Actors with Social and Political Influence?

When it comes to finding key actors in the conflict and potential contributors to peacebuilding, you want to identify those with influence in your context. They are likely to be found across different sectors: government, civil society, business, military, and religion. Age, education, and gender may play a role in determining leaders. Having identified different social groups, you must determine who speaks for each of them. Is leadership of a group contested by multiple actors? Are there groups for whom no one speaks?

Who Are Considered Religious Actors within the Conflict Context?

If religion plays a role in the conflict, religious actors may have a role in shaping the conflict. In order to identify relevant religious actors, first find out how the term is understood in the context.

How “religious actors” is defined will vary from context to context and depend on who you are talking to.

Religious actors may be confined to the religious sphere—offering spiritual guidance, spreading religious teachings, and performing religious rituals—or they may play a wider role in society, providing moral, social, or political guidance and leadership. Religious institutions and organizations also play an important role by supporting social, educational, cultural, and humanitarian activities.

Defining who is a religious actor is complicated by the fact that actors often have multiple roles or identities, for example, as both political and religious leaders or groups. Broadly speaking, there are two overlapping categories: religious authorities, and religiously inspired individuals and organizations.

Religious authorities are the individuals who have a formal leadership role within a particular religion, or the religious institutions themselves. In some contexts, religious authorities may be more clearly defined than others. Religious authorities often have significant influence in society that can be brought to bear on actors in the conflict or may even inspire them to become directly involved. Examples of religious authorities include the pope, the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, and the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand.

Religiously inspired organizations and individuals (also referred to as “faith-based”) may or may not be affiliated with an official religious institution. They often have strong and extensive networks that are engaged in religious, social, or humanitarian activities. Examples of religiously inspired actors include the internationally active humanitarian organization World Vision and the cultural, social, and educational organization Muhammadiyah in Indonesia. Religiously inspired organizations may also be political actors, such as Hamas in Palestinian politics, and therefore potentially important actors in a conflict.

Whom Do Religious Actors Have Influence Over?

In relation to influence and legitimacy, there is great diversity within every religious tradition. Certain religious actors are influential only with certain groups. It may not be enough for religious actors to be from the same religion to have influence over others; they may need to be from within the same branch of that tradition. For example, although the Dalai Lama is a well-known Buddhist leader, his influence in Myanmar is limited because he belongs to the Mahayana branch of Buddhism, whereas most Buddhists in Myanmar follow Theravada Buddhism.

To identify which religious actors have influence on different parts of society, ask people which religious actors they would turn to for advice or leadership and on what issues. Wording is important here, because the term “religious leader” may be used to refer to a narrow category of formal actors. Finding out which terms to use is a process of back-and-forth that takes time. For example, when the United States Institute for Peace mapped the religious sector in Libya in 2015, staff had difficulty finding an appropriate translation of the term “religious leader.” Using local terms like “ulama,” “imam,” and “sheikh” helped, but this meant that other religious people of

influence, especially women and youth, were often missed. An alternative wording, “leaders who use religious language,” enabled a broader identification of actors but faced trouble in translation. “Mapping the Religious Sector in Libya” is a question guide used by interviewers in that study. Some of the questions are also pertinent to Step 3, Analyze the Conflict, and Step 4, Map Peacebuilding, because the aim of the research was to identify the role of religious actors in conflict and peacebuilding.

Mapping the Religious Sector in Libya

A QUESTION GUIDE

Developed by United States Institute for Peace for a 2015 Project [Abridged]

Note: *The elements in parentheses were for the interviewer to be aware of and not intended to be asked directly of the respondent. The interviews were conducted largely in Arabic, so the exact formulation of each question may have changed in translation.*

- What are the different religious trends (*secularism, Sufism, the Muslim Brotherhood, Jihadism, etc.*) that are present in Libya?
- Who do you consider as influential religious leaders in Libya? Why?
In what ways are they influential (*on which issues, negatively or positively, in what sectors, etc.*)?
- Who do you look to for religious guidance?
- Are religious leaders involved in supporting the democratic transition of Libya and in conflict mitigation?
- If yes, to what extent is their role effective and influential?
- If no, what do you think are the obstacles?
- Do you think that Ulama have a political role?
If so what role? Positive or negative?
- How do you see the role of religion in the new constitution?
Do you think it will be a point of disagreement among the political forces?
- How much have religious leaders including Ulama contributed to conflict?
- How would you envision a role of religious institutions (*Dar ul-Ifta, Rabit al-Ulama*) in promoting human rights or social justice?
- How do you see the role of religious leaders in achieving national reconciliation?
What kinds of skills or support would they need to support reconciliation?
- How do you think religious leaders could play an influential role in mediating between militias, or would tribal leaders be more influential in this regard?
- What do religious leaders do to promote or suppress gender equality and women’s rights?
What about equality and rights of ethnic minorities, non-Arabs, etc.?
- Do peace and human rights activists and organizations engage with religious leaders?
If yes, how? If not, why not?
- How does this engagement build social cohesion toward a peaceful and just Libya?

WHY?

Why Are Actors from the Wider Context Interested in the Conflict?

Before focusing in on the conflict, it is important to consider the interest and influence that external actors have. Are there strategic, economic, or other issues that make the context of interest? Is there an impact of the conflict beyond the immediate conflict area, such as through refugee flows, disruptions to trade, or changes of the regional balance of power? Perhaps the conflict is connected to broader concerns, similar to the way many conflicts since 2001 have been associated with the “war on terror” (see “Religion and International Narratives” on page 43). There are many reasons why a conflict may be of interest beyond the conflict area. Examining the different narratives will provide important clues as to how the conflict is viewed and what motivations external actors may have to intervene. Observe what external actors are saying and doing. What kind of public statements are they making? What policies do they have that affect the conflict context? What kinds of actions are they taking that may affect the conflict?

How Are the Interests of Actors from the Wider Context Shaped by Religion?

The transnational nature of religion means that conflicts with religious dimensions are likely to attract interest beyond the immediate conflict area. Recalling the five dimensions of religion (on p. 8), you can identify five corresponding ways in which religion may shape the interest of external actors:

- **Values and ideas:** An actor’s political agenda will be shaped by ideas and values. In some cases, an external actor’s interest in the context may be directly linked to the wish to promote ideas and values. Consider how Britain’s colonial project was sometimes justified as part of a “civilizing” mission that included spreading Christian values across the world.
- **Religious solidarity:** Coreligionists outside of the context may feel a connection to those in the context who share their religious identity or worldview. Based on this feeling of solidarity, they may mobilize in support of their coreligionists. The role of the Jewish lobby in shaping US policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one such example. The role of Sunni-Shia solidarity as one reason for the various alliances across the Middle East is another. However, do not overestimate the role of religious alliances, because strategic calculations often outweigh considerations of solidarity.
- **The interests of religious institutions:** Many religious institutions are transnational or have institutional connections beyond the immediate context in which they operate. They may use a network to mobilize support in protection of institutional interests. The Catholic Church is an example of a religious institution with an international character whose leadership in Rome sometimes intervenes in support of the Church’s local branches.

- **The importance of religious symbols and practices:** Particular places or particular practices of religious significance may be of wide external interest, especially to people for whom these are symbols or practices of their religion. Controversy at a holy site, disrespect toward sacred symbols, or limitations on religious practices can cause an outcry far beyond the immediate context.
- **Spiritual motivation:** Actors may explain their engagement in the context as responding to a calling or feeling inside themselves. They may connect this feeling to some of the motivations above, such as promoting particular values, defending “their” people, or protecting the integrity of a sacred place. They may simply feel moved to act. Some of the Muslims who traveled to Syria to join the Islamically inspired armed groups fighting in the civil war there have cited such spiritual motivations. Similarly, Religions for Peace created a Global Women of Faith Network that supports religious women around the world working for peace, many of whom have a strong spiritual motivation.

Religion and International Narratives

Religion sometimes features in narratives that dominate international politics. Since 2001, the foremost example has been the use of the Western war on terror narrative as a framing for conflicts from Afghanistan to Yemen to Somalia, with a particular emphasis on the threat posed by “jihadi terrorism.” The focus on a small number of violent armed groups that claim to represent Islamic teachings and follow their own version of the Islamic concept of jihad has fed into negative attitudes toward Islam and simplistic arguments linking Islam to violence.

The influence of this counterterrorism narrative on conflicts involving Muslim nonstate actors cannot be

ignored. For example, in the conflict between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), the Indonesian military spoke to Western fears that Aceh could become a new terrorist hotbed and pointed to the Libyan training of GAM as proof of ties to terrorism. The 2002 Bali bombing added momentum to this narrative, with Jakarta warning that GAM could undertake the next bomb attack. GAM denied these claims. Although many of its commanders in Aceh may have been devout Muslims who justified their personal commitment in religious terms, GAM continually emphasized its secular identity and struggle for the internationally recognized right of self-determination.

WHEN?

When Did Major Historical Developments That Shaped the Context Occur?

History plays an important role in all conflicts. To understand the context, you must be familiar with its history. Some group identities may be relevant because of past events and reinforced with reference to history. Similarly, the past movement of people and ideas influences the present nature of society and its conflicts. Major historical events and tensions may continue to shape the conflict and its different narratives. They may also be indicators of possible conflict triggers and sources of tension in the future.

When Were Major Historical Developments Shaped by Religion?

History and religion are strongly linked. Major historical events often have a religious dimension and feature as important moments in religious narratives about the context. Different religions have likely shaped local history, especially if the religious composition and character of the area have changed over time. In such situations, the role of outside influences may be central to understanding the context. The presence of new religions or followers may be the result of foreign colonial and missionary activities, local people returning home after spending time abroad, or the arrival of immigrants. In instances of conquest and colonization, religion served to justify colonial activities and involved forcing new forms of religion on native peoples. Expansion of the British Empire, for example, was in part justified by religiously inspired ideas about “civilizing the natives.” In the Middle East, France was seen as protector of the church that was established there during the Crusades. Spanish colonization of Latin America involved imposing both political control and Christianity. Some religions may be associated with experiences of interference and domination that affect attitudes toward outsiders and followers of particular religions. In Northern Ireland, Catholic animosity toward Protestants is partially explained by the association of Protestantism with British colonization of Ireland.

HOW?

How Is Power and Influence Exercised in This Context?

Power and influence come in many different forms. Under “Who?” you considered who the influential actors are. Now examine how they came to have this power and influence with reference to the following four categories:

- **SOCIETAL BELIEFS AND NORMS:** This refers to the shared understanding of what is possible and not possible, permissible and not permissible, important and not important. What are the primary beliefs and norms in the society? Are they contested? Actors who take part in shaping these beliefs and norms can exercise enormous influence on society.
- **SOCIETAL STRUCTURES:** What hierarchies exist between different social groups and how is access to resources and decision making distributed among them?
- **POLITICAL PROCESSES:** This refers to the decision-making processes regarding societal matters. How does politics work in the context? What are the positions of political power and who occupies them? Where and how are decisions made? What options exist to influence the political process?
- **RESOURCES:** This refers to the financial, intellectual, technical, and human means necessary to influence people or events. Which resources in particular are being used in this context? How are they being used to exert power and influence? What kind of resources do different actors have access to?

How Does Religion Contribute to Power Dynamics?

The sources of power and influence correspond with the five dimensions of religion. Consider each to think about how religion may be a source of power and influence.

- **SET OF IDEAS:** Religion is a rich source of beliefs and norms affecting what people think is possible and acceptable. For example, consider how religious teachings shape attitudes about reproductive rights and sexuality. Religious actors who play a role in shaping ideas can be very influential. Any actor may draw on the teachings of a religion to get support for actions.
- **COMMUNITY:** Religious communities have their own social hierarchies based on their religious traditions. The more important religion is to a society, the greater the influence of religious hierarchies and their leaders. For example, the importance of Catholicism in the Philippines meant Cardinal Jaime Lachica Sin, the thirtieth Catholic archbishop of Manila, was a powerful leader who played an instrumental role in the revolutions that overthrew President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and President Joseph Estrada in 2001.
- **INSTITUTION:** Religious institutions are a form of social and political organization. Occupying official seats within religious institutions gives actors influence over members and followers of that institution. Political and other institutions may offer formal or informal roles for religious ones, as in the United Kingdom, where a certain number of Anglican bishops is entitled to sit in the second chamber of parliament, the House of Lords. Religious organizations also gain influence through their ability to mobilize significant resources (human, financial, etc.) and their presence in social life. For example, in many countries, religious institutions and organizations provide education services and so shape the minds of young people.
- **SYMBOLS AND PRACTICES:** Symbols and practices can be used as resources to give actions, causes, and people sacred meaning. Through religious symbols and practices, other forms of power and influence can be associated with religion. For example, religious rituals often form part of ceremonies to install new heads of state, whether it is the US president taking the oath of office on a Bible or the king of Cambodia engaging in Buddhist and Brahmanic rites in his coronation.
- **SPIRITUALITY:** The spiritual dimension of religion has the power to move people emotionally. For many religious people, this dimension is the most powerful because it provides an experience of connecting to a transcendent unity and purpose. For example, the Spirit in Education Movement in Southeast Asia promotes social justice, cultural integrity, and environmental sustainability through a “holistic approach built upon engaged spirituality which focuses on transformation of the self alongside transformation of society.”¹³

¹³ www.sem-edu.org/about-us/.

CASE STUDY: Northern Ireland | 1992

The Northern Irish conflict, known as the “Troubles,” began in the late 1960s. Its immediate origins were in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, when Northern Irish Catholics began campaigning against discrimination suffered under a local government dominated by Protestant Unionists. At its roots, the conflict was a struggle over the status of Northern Ireland, with Irish Nationalists and Republicans desiring unity with the Republic of Ireland and Ulster Unionists wishing Northern Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom. In addition to the British army and local police forces, paramilitary armed groups emerged on both sides, and the conflict took on a violent sectarian dimension. By 1992, the conflict had claimed more than 3,200 lives. Table 4 shows how the framework presented in this chapter could be applied to the context of Northern Ireland.

TABLE 4. Understanding the context in Northern Ireland in 1992

MAJOR QUESTION	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT
<p>WHERE?</p>	<p>Where is the conflict located within the wider geographic and demographic context?</p> <p><i>Which geographic areas have particular religious significance?</i></p> <p><i>How does religious identity shape the structure of society?</i></p>	<p>Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. With around 1.6 million inhabitants, Northern Ireland makes up less than 3 percent of the UK’s total population. The six counties of Northern Ireland make up the northeastern part of the island. The other twenty-six counties form the Republic of Ireland, with a population of approximately 3.5 million. Both countries are members of the European Economic Community.</p> <p><i>Some Protestants, particularly within the Presbyterian tradition represented by the Democratic Unionist Party, see Ulster as the land given to them by God.</i></p> <p><i>According to the 1991 census, around 38 percent of the population identify as Catholic and 42.8 percent as Protestant. Around 96 percent have grown up as a Protestant or a Catholic.^a By and large, Catholics identify as Irish (Nationalists and Republicans) and Protestants identify as British (Unionists and Loyalists). The northeastern counties tend to be majority-Protestant, whereas those in the south and west are majority-Catholic. There is a high degree of separation along religious lines, particularly in working-class areas in Belfast. Neighborhoods are segregated, children are educated in separate schools, people attend separate health centers and shop in different shops, and intermarriage is rare. Workplaces outside of the main residential areas are among the few places where there is more cross-community mixing.</i></p>

<p>WHAT?</p>	<p>What are the context's main political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural characteristics?</p> <p><i>What is the relationship between religion, the state, and society?</i></p>	<p>Northern Ireland is subject to the (unwritten) constitution of the UK, which is characterized by democratic values such as parliamentary sovereignty, the rule of law, and civil liberties and was inspired by both Christian and secular worldviews. Northern Ireland's economy was traditionally based on industries such as textiles, shipbuilding, and farming. The loss of traditional manufacturing has led to economic decline, rising unemployment, and reliance on significant subsidies from the central UK government.</p> <p><i>The Church of Ireland was the established state church in Ireland until 1869. Since then, there has been no official state church in Northern Ireland. Churches play no official role in state governance in Northern Ireland, and the state plays no official role in church governance. The Queen of England is the official head of the Church of England, the Church of Ireland's sister church. The Church of England's official role in the political system is largely ceremonial, but it does contribute to the perception that the state has a Protestant identity.</i></p> <p><i>The UK is a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which uphold everyone's right to "freedom of thought, conscience, and religion" and the freedom to practice, worship, observe, and teach their religion.</i></p> <p><i>A growing number of people are declaring themselves of no religious affiliation. However, this trend is still relatively weak, and the rate of churchgoing in Northern Ireland remains significantly higher than the UK average.</i></p>
<p>WHO?</p>	<p>Who are the actors with social and political influence?</p> <p><i>Who are considered religious actors within the conflict context?</i></p> <p><i>Who do religious actors have influence over?</i></p>	<p>Leaders of political parties, community leaders, former paramilitary and republican prisoners, business leaders, and religious leaders.</p> <p><i>Religious actors are understood to be the clergy and representatives of religious institutions, primarily the main Christian churches. Churches are the largest nongovernmental institutions in Northern Ireland and play a central role in the economic, social, and cultural life of the communities. They are key government partners in delivering community economic development projects. They organize or host numerous social and cultural activities. Local priests and pastors are widely respected members of the community.⁹</i></p> <p><i>The Catholic Church plays an important role in social and cultural life of the Catholic community, providing an alternative to the Protestant state. It was, and continues to be, heavily involved in the provision of education and various social services, as well as the organization of social and cultural activities. As such, the Catholic Church has been a major unifying force in the nationalist community. Although not exercising direct political influence, it has significant influence over attitudes and behaviors in the community, interpreting Catholic doctrine so as to orient Catholics on how to live their lives.</i></p> <p><i>In the Unionist community, there are many different churches, so they have played a less unifying role. However, in the evangelical tradition (around 30 percent of the Protestant population), the church and religious practices have provided a strong sense of community belonging and unity. The Democratic Unionist Party is closely tied to this branch of Protestantism.</i></p>

<p>WHY?</p>	<p>Why are actors from the wider context interested in the conflict?</p> <p><i>How are the interests of actors from the wider context shaped by religion?</i></p>	<p>The UK government has done its best to avoid internationalizing the conflict. The Irish government has an ongoing interest in the situation in the north, and the constitution continues to define Ireland as the whole of Ireland. Owing to the strong Irish-American lobby in the United States, the US government follows the situation in Northern Ireland closely. Irish-American networks provide an important source of funding for the republican movement.</p> <p><i>Other than the overlap between Catholicism and Irish identity, which also holds true for Irish Americans, religion plays a small role in shaping the interests of actors from the wider context.</i></p>
<p>WHEN?</p>	<p>When did major historical developments that shaped the context occur?</p> <p><i>When were major historical developments shaped by religion?</i></p>	<p>The British presence in Ireland dates to the twelfth century. The plantations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought settlers from the UK mainland to Ireland. The plantation of Ulster was the most successful, and many of the Protestants in Northern Ireland descended from the Scottish and English settlers of this period, while the Catholics descended from the “native” Irish. Resistance to British rule was marked by various uprisings and rebellions. The twenty-six counties of Ireland won a large degree of independence in 1922. The six counties of Northern Ireland remained part of the UK but were governed locally by a Unionist-dominated parliament at Stormont until direct rule by London was reinstated in 1972.</p> <p><i>The marches organized by the Protestant Orange Order every year on July 12 commemorate the victory of Protestant King William of Orange over Catholic King James in 1690, a highly symbolic event for many Protestants</i></p> <p><i>Easter is a special time for Catholic nationalists because it is associated with the 1916 Rising, a short-lived but highly symbolic armed rebellion against the British.</i></p>

HOW?	How is power and influence exercised in this context?	
	<p><i>How does religion contribute to the power dynamics?</i></p>	<p>The main instruments of political and military power are controlled by the British government. Armed Republican and Loyalist groups exercise influence through the use of force. Nationalist and Unionist political parties exercise influence in local government and through community mobilization. Strong social norms concerning allegiance to one's own community ensure that parties and organizations wield enormous influence over people's everyday lives.</p> <p><i>Religion as a set of ideas: Conservative evangelical Protestants are the group that most explicitly draws on religious ideas and teachings to guide their speech and actions. Apocalyptic notions exist that the conflict and violence are a sign of the "end of times." This makes political compromise seem unnecessary if the unavoidable Day of Judgment is near at hand.^c</i></p> <p><i>Religion as community: Religion helps to define community, contributing to solidarity within one's own community and reinforcing differences with the other community.</i></p> <p><i>Religion as institution: See the section on actors ("Who?") for information on the role and influence of religious institutions.</i></p> <p><i>Religion as symbols and practices: Religious symbols have been incorporated into Orange Order parades. Church services serve as important moments of intracommunity solidarity, and political leaders gain legitimacy within their communities by attending such services.</i></p> <p><i>Religion as spirituality: Evangelical Unionists' engagement in politics has a spiritual dimension, such as the sense of Protestants being a people chosen by God.</i></p>

NOTES

- a. Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 94.
- b. *Ibid.*, 72–81.
- c. *Ibid.*, 126.

STEP 3 Analyze the Conflict

Conflicts are dynamic, complex, and messy, and analyzing them is a challenging process. To make sense of a conflict, separate the analysis into different parts (where, what, who, why, when, how), while keeping in mind that these parts are interrelated. For example, what the conflict is about will influence who will be involved, and vice versa. Grasping this dynamic relationship is essential to peacebuilding planning. “Key Religion-Specific Points for Analyzing the Conflict” provides some issues to consider as you go through Step 3.

Key Religion-Specific Points for Analyzing the Conflict

- **Sacred spaces:** The religious significance of land needs careful attention in conflicts where land is an important issue.
- **Identity markers and belief systems:** In some conflicts, religious identities are “labels” that mark different communities that are in conflict, whereas in other conflicts, the differences in beliefs and value systems associated with those identities are themselves drivers of conflict.
- **Understand religious motivations:** Actors may be protecting their religious identity and worldview, promoting their ideas and values, defending the interests of religious institutions, or responding to a spiritual calling.
- **The changing role of religion:** There may be a relationship between the changing role of religion in the conflict over time and the levels of conflict intensity.
- **Dimensions of religion as power:** Religion provides a rich framework to explain and justify actions in a conflict; an identity around which to mobilize people; an institution with access to material and human resources; a collection of meaningful symbols and practices; and a source of inner strength.

WHERE?

Where Is the Conflict Taking Place and Who Is Affected?

In the conflict analysis, define the boundaries or scope of the conflict, even though factors outside the defined boundaries will play a role. How you define the boundaries will be shaped by two factors: the possibilities for intervention and the nature of the conflict.

With regard to the nature of the conflict, there are two main considerations for defining boundaries. First, the geographic scope: it is important to understand whether the conflict is local, affecting one or several communities; national, affecting most or all of the country; or regional or international, crossing state boundaries. Second, the societal scope: understand which parts of

society are involved. Is the conflict taking place between different identity or political groups or across business, education, religious, or other sectors of society? You may need to decide to limit your scope to a subset of the numerous sectors of society that will be affected or to take a broader view. The broader your scope, the more complex the analysis and the more time and resources will be needed to maintain a detailed analysis (see also “Determine the Scope of the Conflict,” below).

What Areas of Religious Significance Overlap with Areas of Conflict?

Identify whether the geographic boundaries of a conflict contain holy sites. Such places of religious significance may relate to religious narratives or identities that act as a source of division and conflict. For example, the conflict in Sri Lanka is linked to the belief that the island is a Buddhist island. Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, India, is contested by Muslims and Hindus as a place of great importance and has seen periodic outbreaks of violence in connection to its origins and ownership. When the area where the conflict is occurring has religious significance or contains contested holy sites, attempts to resolve the conflict must engage with the relevant religious narratives.

What Is the Religious Identity of the Social Groups Affected by the Conflict?

Find out whether the religious identity of the communities or groups in conflict is relevant. Religion may combine with other identities such as ethnicity, in which case the label “ethnoreligious conflict” may be used. Evidence suggests that the greater the overlap between different identities, the greater the potential for division and conflict among groups.¹⁴

One of the characteristics of intercommunal conflict is that identity may be enough to make people targets for attack. Where people are victims of persecution or attack on the basis of their religious identity alone, then religion is an important “identity marker” in the conflict.

There are many examples of religion playing a role in defining group identities in conflict. In Northern Ireland, the labels “Protestant” and “Catholic” were one way of distinguishing between communities. In the Central African Republic, violence flared between Muslim and Christian communities; in southern Thailand, the Malays’ Muslim identity is one characteristic that distinguishes them from the Buddhist majority in the country.

Determine the Scope of the Conflict

One helpful way to determine the scope of the conflict is to look at who is affected. Are victims and attacks limited to a specific geographic area? Against whom are attacks directed? Are victims targeted on the basis of their identity or their support for a particular cause?

¹⁴ Classical cleavage theory. See Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction* (New York: Free Press, 1967); See also <http://desart.us/courses/3180/cleavages.html>.

WHAT?

What Are the Driving Factors of the Conflict?

Understanding the different issues and why they are important to the actors will help you determine how you can contribute to a resolution of the conflict. As well as identifying the key issues, you will need to analyze where there is disagreement and why.

Most conflicts are about multiple issues and have multiple drivers. Different actors will have different views on what the main issues are. It is important to adopt a participatory approach to conflict analysis that draws on a diverse range of perspectives, taking into account things such as gender, age, social group, political beliefs, and attitudes toward the conflict.

Broadly speaking, particular issues may arise in conflict for three reasons:

- First, parties may be in competition over the distribution of something that is in limited supply, such as land, economic wealth, or positions of power. One major cause of conflict is a perception that the distribution of resources between groups is unequal or unfair.
- Second, different groups in a society may be concerned about the promotion and protection of their group and its identity. One group may believe another group is limiting its freedoms, expression, culture, or way of life.
- Third, parties may subscribe to different ideologies—belief systems—leading them to take differing positions on issues such as how to fairly distribute resources and decision making, what norms and practices to permit, and how to organize society and the state.¹⁵

These reasons are often interrelated. For example, competition over land drives the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, distribution of land cannot be separated from questions of identity, with many Israelis committed to an exclusive ethnoreligious state based on a Jewish identity and many Palestinians seeking national identity through the establishment of a separate Palestinian state on overlapping parts of the land. Conflicting religious ideologies are also relevant to the parties' claim to the land. Some Israeli nationalists believe the “promised land” was given to them by God, while Muslim and Christian Palestinians believe in an indigenous right to the land that also has religious associations, namely the life of Jesus Christ for Christians and significant events such as the Isra and Mi'raj in the night journey of the Prophet Mohammed for Muslims.

In conflict analysis, it is common to group issues into categories such as *political*, *security*, *economic*, *cultural*, and *environmental*.¹⁶

¹⁵ Christopher Mitchell, *The Nature of Intractable Conflict: Resolution in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 27–37.

¹⁶ Mediation Support Project, “Understanding the Conflict and (Possible) Process: Key Questions,” based on presentations and interviews with Julian T. Hottinger, March 2011, unpublished.

What Dimensions of Religion, If Any, Are Involved in Driving the Conflict?

Religion may appear in various parts of your analysis because it may relate to different issues in the conflict. Consider how each of the five dimensions of religion may be involved in shaping issues in the conflict and leading them to be defined in religious terms.

SET OF IDEAS

Religion (like any other belief system) shapes actors' positions on many issues, particularly those central to their tradition. Differing belief systems can lead to disagreement and conflict.

Common issues where such differences arise include the relationship between religion and state, the principles that underpin the justice system, and the role of women in society. The controversies in Denmark and France around the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed were a clash between those who argued that publication was protected by the principle of freedom of speech and those who thought publication should be prevented as offensive to Islam.

Disagreements over beliefs can be linked to core values that actors consider nonnegotiable and therefore difficult to resolve (see “Disagreements Shaped by Difference in Worldview” on p. 54). Some actors may refer to an “ultimate authority,” such as God or a religious text, or secular references such as international human rights law. Consider the examples “we have a God-given right to this land” and “freedom of expression is a fundamental human right.” Disagreements also involve big opposing ideas that hard to break into smaller parts and reconcile with each other (see “Indivisibility and Absolutism as Barriers to Conflict Resolution” on p. 54).

When one group believes another is forcing its belief system on them, this threat can be perceived as an existential threat, leading one group to take extreme positions or actions and to become less flexible. This dynamic was evident in the Cold War between the capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union. Each country viewed the spread of the other's ideology in its sphere of influence as an existential threat and concluded that military responses and deterrence were the only means of responding to that threat. This perception led to moments of high tension, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, when, some believe, nuclear war was narrowly averted.

Disagreements Shaped by Differences in Worldview

EXAMPLES

Territory: Some members of Israeli society believe the territory of Israel should include Judea and Samaria (largely corresponding to the territory also known as the West Bank) because this was the land given by God to the Jewish people.

System of governance: The 1979 Iranian Revolution involved groups that did not agree on the system of governance to replace the Shah. Ayatollah Khomeini and his idea of rule by Islamic jurists won power, but a number of opposition groups opposed the role of the clergy in ruling the state and proposed a democratic model of governance.

System of justice: One of the issues in the North-South conflict in Sudan was over the system of justice to be applied. Although an Islamically inspired justice system was brought in by the government in Khartoum, it was opposed by the Christian-dominated Sudan People's Liberation Army.

Use of natural resources: In the Big Mountain Reserve in North America, the Hopi and Navajo tribes came into conflict with the Peabody Mining Company. The company's capitalist worldview that it could buy the rights to mine coal in the area clashed with the tribes' worldview that did not recognize individual or corporate property rights and regarded some of the land as sacred.

Status of particular groups in society: In Afghanistan, one of the issues in the conflict between the Taliban and the Western-backed government in Kabul has been around the status of women in society. The use of women's rights abuses to justify the 2001 US invasion politicized the issue and further cemented the actors' positions on the role of women as central to their beliefs.

Indivisibility and Absolutism as Barriers to Conflict Resolution

In some conflicts, each community may struggle for the right and possibility to live in harmony with its culture and religious traditions. In other cases where conflict actors are divided along more ideological lines than around ethnic or religious identity, each community may seek to organize society in a particular way. For example, a central disagreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government has been on the issue of women's education, each seeking to impose its policy on the whole country. Such disagreements point to the "indivisibility" of an issue, where parties get stuck on something that they perceive cannot be broken down into smaller parts (such as laws that apply across the country).^{*} When parties believe their way is the only right way, there is less room for complexity and context. Such absolutist views are sometimes associated with religiously inspired actors because of the idea that religion is based on ultimate truth. Although some religiously inspired actors hold absolutist views, absolutism is not limited to religion. Many secular actors are convinced that their worldview is the only acceptable one, as demonstrated by language about the universality of human rights.

^{*} Ron E. Hassner, "To Halve and to Hold': Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility," *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (2003): 1–33.

COMMUNITY

Under “Where?” you considered whether religion acts as a marker of identity, defining the boundaries between different communities in conflict. When this is the case, some of the issues in the conflict may be connected to promoting or defending the religious identity of the community.

In situations of conflict between religiously defined communities, it is important to distinguish whether or not the issues are framed in religious terms. In Northern Ireland, for example, one of the early issues in the conflict was the distribution of social housing between Catholics and Protestants, but neither side framed this as a religious issue. Research suggests that when core conflict issues are framed in religious terms by at least one party, the conflict is harder to resolve and special attention is needed to approach these issues.¹⁷

INSTITUTION

Religious institutions can become actors in the conflict (see “Who?” on p. 56). They can also become an issue in the conflict. When the conflict concerns the relationship between religion and society, a related subissue is the place and role of religious institutions. For example, in postindependence Kosovo, there has been increased tension between communities over the issue of which religions will be officially recognized under law and which religious institutions will represent them.

SYMBOLS AND PRACTICES

When religious identity is involved in the conflict, religious symbols and practices can take on new importance. They may take the form of visible expressions of group identity, such as the construction of religious buildings and statues, wearing of particular forms of dress, use of religious objects in public, or celebration of particular religious festivals. Placing restrictions on such symbols and practices reinforces a sense of discrimination. In France, the ban on displaying religious symbols in public buildings includes the head scarf, upsetting many Muslims. When grievances and tensions between groups exist, one group’s visible symbols may be perceived as an attempt to intimidate the other. In southern Thailand, the building of a large Buddhist statue on a prominent hill in one community was perceived as threatening by many in nearby Muslim communities, particularly because the statue was in the direction they face during prayers.

Although these issues may not be at the root of the conflict, they may act as triggers for tension and violence. Addressing these triggers may calm the conflict and thereby create space for dealing with other issues.

SPIRITUALITY

Because spirituality is about the experience of religion and its associated feelings, it can shape the emotional importance of an issue to an actor. Actors may explain their positions on an issue in spiritual terms. These arguments need to be taken into account when considering how to approach negotiations.

¹⁷ Svensson, *Ending Holy Wars*.

EXERCISE

Analyze the Relative Importance of Religiously Framed Issues

1. Using cards or sticky notes, brainstorm the issues in the conflict.
2. Cluster similar or related issues together, putting the most important issue clusters in the center and less important clusters on the periphery.
3. Mark the issues being framed in religious terms with a colored dot.
4. Discuss what you see. What issues are framed in religious terms? How central are they to the conflict?

Analyze the Incompatibilities behind Religiously Framed Issues

1. Consider each of the religiously framed issues in turn.
2. Write the issue at the top of a flipchart. Underneath the issue, make a column for each conflict party.
3. In each column, write down what that party wants with regard to that issue (i.e., their position).
4. Underneath each position, write down the reasons for what the party wants.
5. Compare how actors explain their positions on the different issues. What reference points are they using to justify what they want? Are they referring directly to beliefs, values, or tradition, or are they using other kinds of religious language, such as "As a Christian nation...", "In our culture it is essential...", "The Buddha taught that..."?
6. Separate the issues where positions are different but reference points are the same (e.g., they refer to the same religious concepts or framework) from the issues where reference points are quite different.

A peacebuilding effort needs to approach issues with similar reference points differently from those with different reference points.

WHO?

Who Are the Actors in the Conflict and What Are the Relationships among Them?

The actors are the groups and individuals involved in, or affected by, the conflict. Sometimes a distinction is made between primary, secondary, and tertiary actors. Primary actors are involved in direct confrontation. Secondary actors are those with influence and an indirect stake in the outcome. Tertiary actors are those intervening to resolve the conflict, sometimes called "third

parties” (see Step 4, Map Peacebuilding).¹⁸ Identify the actors, the characteristics that define them, and the alliances and relationships between them.

Which Actors Are Associated with a Religious or Nonreligious Identity?

Actors associated with a religious identity may be inspired by a particular religious belief system or they may claim to speak for a constituency or community defined along religious lines, or both. Consider whether religious identity is something actors actively express as part of their political identity.

It is important to identify actors that claim to be nonreligious or antireligious so you can understand how they are positioning themselves in relation to religious actors; how they are motivated to actively participate in conflict; or how they are affected by marginalization or violence.

How actors self-identify may reveal their interests and concerns and what ideas shape their thinking. For example, the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion, known by as Ma Ba Tha in Myanmar, describes itself as a Buddhist political movement, and its primary constituency is Buddhist. It has a strong Buddhist nationalist agenda that contributes to tensions between Buddhist and Muslim communities.

SET OF IDEAS

Every actor in the conflict adheres to a belief system that shapes the way they talk about themselves and their engagement in the conflict. Actors who consistently use religious language, concepts, and symbolism clearly follow a specific religious worldview and can be considered religiously inspired actors. As primary actors in a conflict, they include the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda/South Sudan, the Ma Ba Tha Buddhist nationalist movement in Myanmar, US Christian right wing groups such as the Army of God, the Israeli Jewish settler movement, and the Indian Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Differences in belief systems between religiously inspired and secular actors contribute to conflicts over specific issues and create problems of understanding and communication that hinder relationship building.

COMMUNITY

Actors may also represent the interests and concerns of communities with clear religious identities. The labels “Catholic” and “Protestant” were commonly used in the Northern Ireland conflict to distinguish between the two main communities. The primary actors in the conflict were automatically associated with one of these communities: the Republican movement and Irish Nationalist political parties with the Catholic community and the British government and Unionist and Loyalist political parties and groups with the Protestant community. However, most of the political actors, with the exception of some Unionist actors, did not explicitly identify themselves as religiously motivated and did not explain their goals in religious terms.

¹⁸ Paul Wehr, “Conflict Mapping,” in Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, ed., *Beyond Intractability* (Boulder: University of Colorado, Conflict Information Consortium, 2006), www.beyondintractability.org/essay/conflict-mapping.

Although some actors may have an interest in presenting the conflict as one between different religious identity groups, for others, religious identity may not be the most important characteristic. Be wary of emphasizing religious identity when actors are not explicitly defining themselves as religiously inspired. Understanding the multiple causes of conflict will put the relative importance of religious identity into perspective. A narrow focus on religious identity may hide other dynamics in the conflict and risk strengthening a particular narrative that only some actors hold.

EXERCISE

Analyze the Importance of Religious Identity

- List all the primary and secondary actors in the conflict.
- List the defining characteristics for each actor.
- Rank the characteristics in terms of importance for understanding the actor.
- Consider how religious identity is expressed and how important it is to defining each actor.

How Does Religion Shape Relationships among Actors?

Analyzing the relationships among actors involves examining who supports whom, their attitudes toward one another, and the possibilities for communication between one another. Religion may affect all three.

ALLIANCES

Actors may support each other out of solidarity based on shared religious identity or goals. Although shared religion may indicate where alliances will appear in a conflict, strategic calculations and other factors will also play a role. For example, rivalries between Muslims and Christians during the Lebanese Civil War of 1975–90 gave way to alliances between Christians and Muslims as the conflict recentered around divisions between Sunni and Shia groups.

ATTITUDES

Religious teachings may guide followers on how to relate to others, so assess whether and how the actors' religious beliefs affect their attitudes toward one another. Moreover, actors' uninformed beliefs about other religions may shape their attitudes toward others. In intergroup conflicts, the phenomenon of *othering* involves one group building up negative attitudes about the other. Such dynamics are often driven by a lack of understanding and meaningful contact, which leads to rumors and stereotypes. When the groups are of different religions, these rumors and stereotypes often relate to the religious beliefs and practices of the other.

COMMUNICATION

When groups have different worldviews, it can seem like they are speaking different languages. An actor's words and actions may take on different meanings, or lose their meaning, when interpreted through a different worldview. This difference can lead to misunderstandings and suspicion. In extreme situations, one party may find that the other is irrational or illogical, speaking and acting in ways that do not make sense or are so far from what they consider acceptable that they are unwilling to talk with them. The other party is then often labeled with dehumanizing terms such as "terrorist" or "extremist," terms that characterize the other party as illegitimate and signal an unwillingness to talk to them (see the section "Three Guiding Principles: Be Self-Aware" on p. 13 for an example of the use of the terrorism label in Myanmar).

EXERCISE

Analyze Whether Religion Shapes Actor Relationships

Map the actors, drawing circles to represent the different actors, solid lines between them to represent cooperative relationships, and dashed lines to represent conflict.*

1. Mark each actor with a colored dot, using different colors for different religions.
2. Mark actors who make explicit reference to religion in explaining their goals with a colored triangle.
3. Consider what patterns appear. How does religious identity correspond with lines of conflict or cooperation? Between which actors might differences in belief system contribute to conflict?

Analyze How Religion Shapes Actors' Attitudes toward Each Other

From the perspective of each actor, write down what they think of other actors.

- What labels and language do they use and why?
- Do they make reference to the religious identity or worldview of others?
- How do they talk about the views and actions of others?

* See Simon Mason and Sandra Rychard, *Conflict Analysis Tools, Tip Sheet*, Bern: Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development, 2005. www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/15416

Who Are the Religious Actors Involved in the Conflict?

In Step 2, Understand the Context, you identified religious actors involved in the conflict. However, to make sure that influential actors are not overlooked, you need to explicitly examine the role of religious actors in the conflict.

Religious authorities that represent the religious establishment tend to be conservative and resistant to change. In situations of conflict, they may support actors who want to preserve the way things are. Religious institutions regularly lend their support to political actors. The support can

be to those in power, adding legitimacy to their rule. For example, the Sangha Supreme Council in Thailand has long been a source of legitimacy for the Thai monarchy and state. The Serbian Orthodox Church supported the Serbian government during the Balkan wars in the 1990s. In Spain, the Catholic Church supported the Nationalists during the civil war. However, actors within an institution do not always act in unity, sometimes supporting different actors in the conflict. In Nicaragua in the 1980s, many Catholic priests and lay people inspired by liberation theology supported the Sandinista government and its pro-poor agenda, while many senior clergy in the church hierarchy sided with opponents of the Sandinistas, fearing their Marxist agenda was a threat to the future of the church in Nicaragua. During the Arab Spring of 2011, many Muslim clergy supported nonviolent protests in Syria and Egypt even though senior religious leaders took a cautious approach or even openly supported the ruling regime.¹⁹

Individual religious leaders may play an important political role in conflict. During the civil war in Lebanon, an increasing number of religious leaders came to occupy senior political positions.²⁰ In Iraq, Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his Al-Mahdi Army were primary actors in the conflict in the 2000s. In Northern Ireland, Reverend Ian Paisley was a prominent figure in the conflict, leading both the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster and the Democratic Unionist Party. In southern Thailand, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir Al-Fatani was a religious leader, scholar, and key figure in the Malay Muslim Community's struggle for greater recognition and autonomy. Alice Auma, a spirit-medium of the Acholi people in northern Uganda, led the Holy Spirit Movement in rebellion against the Ugandan government in 1986–87.²¹

Religiously inspired organizations may be motivated to engage in the conflict or may be established in response to perceived attacks on their religion or religious community. Some may not have defensive motivations, but may seek to promote their religious ideology. Religiously inspired organizations that are, or were, primary conflict actors include the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Khalistan Commando Force fighting for a Sikh national state in Punjab, and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda and South Sudan.

EXERCISE

Identify Which Religious Actors Are Active in the Conflict

List the religious actors you identified in response to the question “Who are considered religious actors within the conflict context” in Step 2, Understand the Context.

- Cross-check these religious actors with your mapping of conflict actors. Are there religious actors who do not feature in the mapping that should?
- Do the religious actors on your list have an interest in, or are they affected by, any of the main issues in the conflict? If so, has this led them to engage in the conflict?

¹⁹ <http://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/faq/arab-spring-egypt> and www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/kat-eghdamian/what-was-role-of-religion-in-arab-spring.

²⁰ Ahmad Beydoun quoted in Tonge, *Comparative Peace Processes* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 97.

²¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6274313.stm>.

WHY?

Why Are the Actors Engaged in the Conflict?

The why of the conflict is intimately connected to the what (the issues) of the conflict. What motivates actors to engage in conflict can vary widely. They may be fighting to get something they want or to keep something they are afraid of losing. There may be moral or ideological motivations: standing up for something, or a belief in a cause. Motivations can be relational: supporting an ally, demonstrating power, gaining influence. They can be emotional: a desire for revenge or feelings of guilt. By understanding actors' motivations, you can envision ways to address their conflict-escalating behavior.

Religion in its various dimensions relates to many of these motivations.

How Are the Motivations of the Actors in the Conflict Shaped by Religion?

The five dimensions of religion correspond to ways that religion shapes the motivations of actors, each requiring a different response.

DEFENDING WORLDVIEWS AND PROMOTING VALUES

As a set of ideas, religion offers a framework for understanding the real world and creating an ideal world. As a framework for understanding the real world, it serves as an important source of meaning, order, and certainty. Competing worldviews can be threatening. As a framework for creating an ideal world, religion offers a set of values or principles that can heavily shape an actor's political agenda. In some cases, an actor's involvement in a conflict will be directly motivated by the wish to promote these values and principles. In other cases, actors may express a political ideology based on religious references, such as with Al-Shabaab in Somalia. In response, other actors may be motivated to oppose interpretations of religious references that they disagree with. Consider the many Muslim leaders who actively stand against the so-called Islamic State and its ideology as un-Islamic. When one actor is motivated by values or worldview, differences with other actors' values or worldview are likely to be sources of conflict.

PRESERVING RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

Religion offers people an identity and a community that serves as an important source of belonging and security. A group is likely to respond defensively when the identity and community that define it are under threat. Such reactions can result in further polarization and escalation. When identities and worldviews are threatened, the sense of "us" against "them" is reinforced, leading to an emphasis on differences. Identities become exclusive and worldviews become inflexible (see "Identities and Worldviews under Threat in Southern Thailand" on p. 62 for more on the challenges related to this dynamic).

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Like any institution, religious institutions have their own interests to protect, which may be

affected by the outcome of the conflict. Analyze the motivations of religious institutions as carefully as any other in the conflict. For example, the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland wanted to maintain its role as a primary provider of education to the Catholic community and resisted joint schooling of Catholics and Protestants, which many observers saw as a solution to ongoing community divisions.²²

DEFENDING SYMBOLS AND PRACTICES

As representations of the identities and worldviews described above, religious symbols and practices may be threatened, pushing actors to defend them. For example, Native Americans carried out a civil rights campaign, including legal challenges to the government, that led to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act in 1978 and removed the ban on sacred indigenous ceremonies such as the Sun Dance.²³ Symbols and practices often have high emotional value and can be used to mobilize people not otherwise active in the conflict.

SPIRITUAL MOTIVATION

Spiritual feelings may motivate actors. For example, Alice Auma, the spirit-medium who led the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces against Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army in Uganda in 1986, felt possessed by a spirit called Lakwena that led her to abandon her work as a spiritual healer and take up arms.²⁴

Identities and Worldviews under Threat in Southern Thailand

A group may fear that its identity or worldview is under threat when it perceives another group seeking to impose its views and way of life. In southern Thailand, an original motivation of the Malay Muslim insurgency was the perception that the Thai state's identity and worldview was overwhelmingly Buddhist. There is a common saying that "to be Thai is to be Buddhist," and the close relationship between Buddhism and "Thainess" left little room for Malay Muslims and their culture. In turn, the Buddhist minority living in southern Thailand views the Malay Muslim secessionist movement as a threat to their identity and worldview if Malay Muslims are granted greater autonomy in the region. This discrepancy has led to tensions around issues related to the identity of each community, such as the sale of halal food, the construction of a Buddhamonthon (a Buddhist park), and the content of school curriculum.

²² <http://scopeni.nicva.org/article/why-integrated-education-getting-nowhere>.

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Dance.

²⁴ www.economist.com/node/8584604.

EXERCISE

Analyze the Role of Religion in Actors' Motivations

Actors' motivations are often linked to their needs and fears. A simple needs-fears map can be used to analyze the role of religion in actors' motivations.*

1. Following the format in table 5, write down the issues that are important for each actor and their related needs and fears.
2. Circle the needs and fears that clearly relate to religion.
3. Revisit the issues, needs, and fears that are not circled and reflect on whether there may be a dimension of religion at play that is not obvious. Add additional issues, needs, or fears this process uncovers.

TABLE 5. **Issues, Needs, and Fears**

ACTOR	ISSUES	NEEDS	FEARS
Community A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attacks on places of worship • Attacks on local businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe place to worship • Ability of community business people to earn a living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of physical safety • Threatened livelihoods
Community B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building of "foreign" religious buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable livelihood • Freedom to practice religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion and culture threatened by foreign influences • New businesses undercut existing businesses
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise in crime rate • Rise in violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime under control • Good relations with both communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of job • Safety threatened when responding to violent incidents

* Simon Mason and S. Rychard, "Conflict Analysis Tools, Tip Sheet" (Bern: Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development, 2005), www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/15416.

WHEN?

When Did the Conflict Start and How Has It Evolved over Time?

All conflicts are related to events in the past. Being aware of the history of the conflict and the different actors' versions of the history is essential to understanding the conflict as it is now. Conflicts are dynamic. They change over time, as do the context, causes, actors, and issues. What the conflict was about when it started may not be what it is about now. The actors who began the conflict may not be the same as those fighting now.

What Is the Role of Religion in the Conflict over Time?

The role of religion in a conflict will change over time; likewise, the conflict may affect the role of religion in society over time. Because of this dynamic interrelationship, you need to continually update your analysis both of the conflict and religion's role in it.

Familiarity with key historical religious events is key to understanding actors' different perspectives. For example, an Israeli religious nationalist perspective cannot be understood without an awareness of the idea of the Promised Land and God's promise to Abraham of a homeland for his descendants. By the same token, some Palestinian and Arab statements cannot be understood without considering the Muslim link to the Holy Land and Prophet Mohammed's journey to Jerusalem.

Past outbreaks of violence or historical grievances between religious identity groups will likely influence current tensions between them. For example, certain narratives about the recent conflicts involving Western actors in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Afghanistan draw on stories of the Crusades in the Middle East; the ethnoreligious conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s were informed by stories of long-standing animosity between the groups, in particular the ethnoreligious violence of World War II.

The following exercise guides you on how to visualize the role of religion in conflict. It is followed by an example timeline of the conflict that took place in Iraq between 2003-2006 in figure 4.

EXERCISE

Visualize Religion's Role in the Conflict over Time

Draw a simple curve of the conflict over time.

- Use the Y-axis to indicate the intensity of the conflict (such as measured by the number of deaths) and the X-axis to indicate the passage of time.
- Mark the key conflict events, such as major incidents and turning points; the entry of particular actors; and peace negotiations.
- Highlight or add religion-related events. Starting with nonreligion-specific events will help you avoid overemphasizing the role of religion.

Use this timeline to analyze if and how certain events may be linked to an escalation or deescalation of the conflict. Examine and address the role of religion in the conflict if there appears to be a close correlation between religion-related events and the level of escalation. Figure 4 (p. 66) is a timeline for the conflict in Iraq from 2003 to 2006.

To identify key religion-related events, consider the following questions and add the corresponding events to your timeline.

- **When did religious identities become important in the conflict?**
For example, the conflict in Central African Republic took on an increasing interreligious dimension following the seizure of power by the ex-Seleka in March 2013. Violence between the anti-Balaka (largely Christian) and the ex-Seleka (largely Muslim) supporters spilled over into attacks on Muslim civilians by the anti-Balaka and on Christian civilians by the ex-Seleka and quickly led to intercommunal violence along religious lines.^a
- **When did primary actors who describe themselves as religiously inspired enter the conflict?**
For example, Hamas was founded in 1987 with an Islamically inspired political agenda and quickly become a primary actor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **When did religious actors make significant statements or take significant actions regarding the conflict?**
For example, in 1986, a group of Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka founded Mavbima Surakime Vyaparaya (Movement for the Protection of the Motherland, or MSV) to maintain the unity and Sinhalese Buddhist identity of Sri Lanka and oppose the Tamil separatists.^b
- **When did key issues framed in religious terms take on or lose importance?**
For example, in 2005, insurgents in the northern Caucasus switched their statements about the goal of national self-determination for Chechnya to one of establishing an Islamic emirate in the northern Caucasus.
- **When were significant violent attacks or incidents perceived to be directed against targets for their religious affiliation or association?**
For example, on December 6, 1992, thousands of Hindu protesters destroyed the Babri Masjid in the northern city of Ayodhya, sparking the worst riots in India since the 1947 partition.^c

Note: It can be interesting to conduct this mapping exercise with different groups and compare the outcomes.

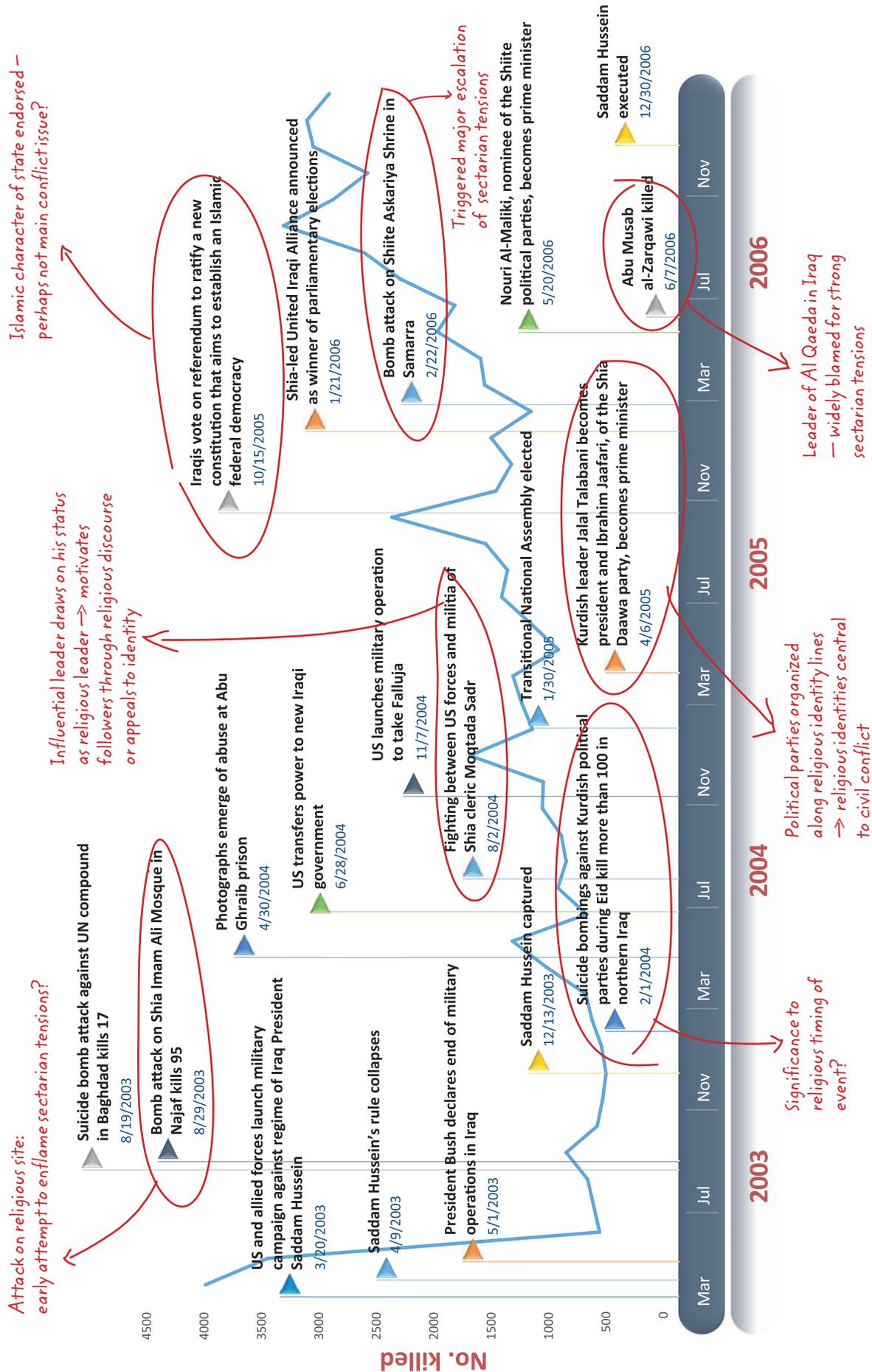
NOTES

a. International Crisis Group, Central African Republic: *The Roots of Violence*, Crisis Group Africa Report No. 230 (September 21, 2015), 16.

b. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_and_violence#Sri_Lanka.

c. www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/04/06/world/asia/modi-gujarat-riots-timeline.html?_r=0##time287_8514.

FIGURE 4. Conflict in Iraq, 2003–2006



Sources: K. Crichton, G. Lamb, and R. F. Jacqueline, "Timeline of Major Events in the Iraq War," New York Times, August 31, 2010, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/08/31/world/middleeast/20100831-Iraq-Timeline.html#time11_3295; "Timeline: Iraq 2003–2009," *Guardian*, June 30, 2009, www.theguardian.com/world/2008/dec/10/iraq-timeline; "Iraq profile," BBC News, October 27, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14546763>; Iraq Body Count, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>.

HOW?

How Are Conflict Actors Using Sources of Power and Influence in Pursuit of Their Goals?

Understanding the dynamics of a conflict requires an awareness of the balance of power between the conflict parties and the different resources available to them. Examine how the sources of power outlined in Step 2, Understand the Context, play a role in the conflict.

SOCIETAL BELIEFS AND NORMS

What beliefs and norms do actors use to legitimize their agenda and delegitimize their opponents? For example, states often rely on the norm that they have a monopoly on the use of force. This norm can legitimize their use of violence to protect the state while delegitimizing groups that fight to oppose the state.

SOCIETAL STRUCTURES

How do societal structures affect which voices are heard and which agendas advance in the conflict? Compared with marginalized groups that may face bias, discrimination, and limited opportunities in the realm of employment, land/housing, education, public services, and civil rights, dominant groups enjoy privileged access to these benefits, as well as greater power to advocate for them.

POLITICAL PROCESSES

Where are the centers of political power and decision making when it comes to the conflict? Who has access and control over these? Different political institutions and processes will address different conflicts. For example, a violent political conflict may be addressed by a formal internationally sponsored peace process, whereas a local-level dispute over the site of a religious building may be dealt with through a legal or administrative process involving local authorities.

RESOURCES

How does actors' access to resources affect their involvement in the conflict? Parties with greater access to financial, human, intellectual, and technical resources are often at an advantage over their opponents.

How Is Religion a Source of Power and Influence in the Conflict?

Recall how the five dimensions of religion help you identify the ways in which religion is a source of power and influence in your context analysis. Specify how these sources apply to the conflict.

SET OF IDEAS

Actors may explain their goals and behavior with reference to religious ideas, thereby gaining support from like-minded people. For example, Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, justifies his agenda on the basis of the Ten Commandments.

COMMUNITY

Actors may win popular support by mobilizing religious identities, presenting themselves as promoters and defenders of their religion, and incorporating religious symbolism into their campaigns. Where such tactics emphasize differences with others, they can escalate conflict. In contexts where actors link religious and national identities, it is common to speak of religious nationalism, which may create problems when other religious communities are seen as excluded from that national identity. Examples include Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka, Hindu nationalism in India, and Georgian nationalism, which implies being a follower of the Orthodox Church.

INSTITUTION

Religious institutions may use their official positions, broad membership, networks, and resources to support a particular side, position, or process in a conflict. For example, the Ma Ba Tha movement in Myanmar has benefitted from institutional networks to spread a message that has been perceived as raising anti-Muslim sentiment and contributing to intercommunal violence.

SYMBOLS AND PRACTICES

Actors may harness the power of religious symbols and practices to gain support, build solidarity and confidence, or associate their agenda with something sacred. There are accounts of monks blessing Sinhalese soldiers before going off to fight the LTTE in Sri Lanka and accounts of members of Mai-Mai groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo purifying themselves with sacred water to protect themselves from bullets.

SPIRITUALITY

Actors may draw on their spirituality to provide inner strength and motivation to act. Spirituality is often overlooked by those with a secular point of view, but readily mentioned by religious people when explaining the role of religion in conflict. For example, a spiritual dimension played an important role in recruitment of Japanese kamikaze fighters in World War II.

CASE STUDY: Meiktila, Myanmar | 2013

This conflict analysis uses data collected by Anna King and Mark Owen to support a peacebuilding project by Religions for Peace Myanmar. Meiktila is a strategically important town in the Mandalay region of Central Myanmar. Meiktila township has around 310,000 inhabitants, most of whom are Bamar Buddhists. Meiktila also has a comparatively large Muslim population (reportedly 30–40 percent) and a number of smaller ethnic and religious groups, including Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians. On March 20, 2013, communal violence in Meiktila broke out between self-identified Muslim and Buddhist individuals and groups. The rioting supposedly began over an argument between an elderly Buddhist couple from a village outside Meiktila and a Muslim gold shop owner and his staff. Over the next two days, violence continued and grew with attacks and counterattacks between the two communities. Reports suggest that more than 1,500 homes and shops and a dozen mosques and madrassas were destroyed. Between 40 and 120 Muslims and Buddhists were killed, with exact numbers contested. The violence in Meiktila led to incidents across Myanmar throughout 2013, including in the towns of Lashio, Othekone, Tatkone, Thandwe, and Yamenthin. Table 6 shows how the framework presented in this chapter could be applied to the context of Meiktila in 2013.

TABLE 6. Analyzing the conflict in Meiktila in 2013

MAJOR QUESTION	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	ANALYZING THE CONFLICT
WHERE?	<p>Where is the conflict taking place and who is affected?</p> <p><i>What areas of religious significance overlap with areas of conflict?</i></p> <p><i>What is the religious identity of the social groups affected by the conflict?</i></p>	<p>Meiktila, Myanmar. Certain wards within Meiktila township were affected more than others during the riots. Tensions within certain wards still exist at the time of the analysis.</p> <p>Those from lower socioeconomic groups were mainly involved in the original violence and are most likely to be affected by ongoing tensions and rumors.</p> <p><i>There are numerous claims that mosques in Meiktila have been used for storing weapons and planning attacks. As a result, some mosques were attacked or permitted to be open only at particular times.</i></p> <p><i>There is tension between Buddhist and Muslim communities. Members of both suffered and were killed, although many more Muslims were killed than Buddhists. There are numerous examples of Buddhists and Muslims protecting each other from attacks, indications that communities are not completely divided. Complex and nuanced relationships exist, which should be noted for peacebuilding purposes and planning.</i></p> <p><i>Although Hindus are not directly involved in the conflict, they are often assumed to have a close allegiance with Buddhists, but they have also been mistaken for Muslims and attacked on account of their appearance and ethnicity.</i></p>

<p>WHAT?</p>	<p>What are the driving factors of the conflict?</p> <p><i>What dimensions of religion, if any, are involved in driving the conflict?</i></p>	<p><i>Supposedly, an argument arose in a gold shop between an older couple selling gold and shopkeepers who broke the item and then beat the customers. Other people carried out violence in revenge for the attack. There is a sense of injustice on both sides among those who claim that the perpetrators of violence were not punished.</i></p> <p><i>In Myanmar, people of all faiths identify strongly with their religion. This identification is reinforced at an institutional level with religious and ethnic status marked on national identity cards. A historical lack of trust between Buddhist and Muslim communities feeds suspicion and negative stereotypes. Because the shop owner was a Muslim and the older couple were Buddhists, the incident triggered violence between Muslim and Buddhist groups.</i></p> <p><i>A 1982 law provides citizenship to those who could prove Burmese ancestry before 1823, effectively denying many Muslims citizenship. Along with other historical and contemporary forms of discrimination and prejudice in Myanmar society, this has led to inequality in employment, education, marriage, reproduction, and freedom of movement.</i></p> <p><i>The situation in the Myanmar state of Rakhine and the ongoing conflict between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists has contributed to Muslim-Buddhist tensions. In the wider context, persistent comments from a range of international actors about Muslim fundamentalism and militancy and regional fears about Muslims taking over Buddhist South Asian countries have similarly contributed to tension. As a result, the oppression of Muslims is considered necessary to protect Myanmar Buddhist heritage and identity.</i></p>
<p>WHO?</p>	<p>Who are the actors in the conflict and what are the relationships among them?</p> <p><i>Which actors are associated with a religious or nonreligious identity?</i></p> <p><i>How does religion shape relationships among actors?</i></p> <p><i>Who are the religious actors involved in the conflict?</i></p>	<p>Primary conflict actors include the old couple and the shopkeepers. Members of the couple's village were said to have entered the town and attacked the gold shop and other Muslim properties. Over the next couple of days, wider violence was committed by both Muslim and Buddhist communities.</p> <p><i>There are numerous claims that some of the rioters were government agents sent to set off intercommunal violence.</i></p> <p><i>Before the violence, the media was identified as a key factor in raising anti-Muslim sentiment in Meiktila and across Myanmar.</i></p> <p><i>There is a lack of trust and compassion among community members. Attitudes have hardened because community reconciliation has not taken place since the violence. Some people will not help people of their own religion for fear of being caught up in the conflict.</i></p> <p><i>Violence and tension are occurring along religious divides, which are marked by a lack of trust and respect, traditional separation, and negative stereotypes, particularly of Muslims. Religious leaders on both sides have been accused of talking out against other religious communities, thereby deepening division and mistrust. Buddhist nationalist organizations such as Ma Ba Tha have added to anti-Muslim ideas and sentiment.</i></p>

<p>WHY?</p>	<p>Why are the actors engaged in the conflict?</p> <p><i>How are the motivations of actors in the conflict shaped by religion?</i></p>	<p>There are claims that the military government bribed some people to start the violence to destabilize communities and justify a more security-oriented government. No evidence was found during the assessment to support this claim.</p> <p>Many of those involved in the violence lacked material wealth or formal education. There is some research to support the argument that these factors make the use of violence more likely. Poverty and low education may leave conflict actors with little to lose and few skills for critically assessing rumors.</p> <p>Some eyewitnesses claimed the police watched violence and failed to intervene. This would encourage the conflict actors to use violence without fear of intervention or consequences.</p> <p><i>Buddhists believe the traditions and status of Buddhism as the state religion are under threat from minority groups, and from Muslims in particular.</i></p> <p><i>In Myanmar, many people have strong religious conviction but not a critical and deep understanding of their religion. Influential religious leaders and arguments easily motivate them to take part in violence.</i></p> <p><i>In the months leading up to the violence (and continuing since), Buddhist nationalists and monks promoting discrimination against Muslim businesses campaigned regularly in Meiktila. This increased divisions and left Muslims feeling defensive.</i></p> <p><i>There is no strong religious leadership within Meiktila speaking out against violence.</i></p>
<p>WHEN?</p>	<p>When did the conflict start and how has it evolved over time?</p> <p><i>What is the role of religion in the conflict over time?</i></p>	<p>Myanmar society has experienced cycles of violent conflict, including state repression and armed resistance, for a long time.</p> <p>Violence in Meiktila started in March 2013. Many people in the area were surprised and claimed there were no signs of it coming. Since then, tensions have continued to exist. The risk of repeated violence has been linked to political events such as elections and the establishment of a new democratic government. Many people now believe violence is sure to happen again, making it an extremely sensitive context to work in.</p> <p><i>Religion has remained a consistent identity marker since the riots.</i></p> <p><i>Trigger points of violence include religious activities such as Friday prayers, festivals, large gatherings of religious communities, and religious training.</i></p>

<p>HOW?</p>	<p>How are conflict actors using sources of power and influence in pursuit of their goals?</p> <p><i>How is religion a source of power and influence in the conflict?</i></p>	<p>Buddhist-dominated authorities have used legislation and propaganda to discriminate against Muslims and foster fear and resentment.</p> <p>Monks, Buddhist nationalists, and possibly government officials have distributed pamphlets and DVDs encouraging discriminatory behavior in Meiktila. Buddhist individuals and organizations use social media to spread negative messages and rumors about Muslims.</p> <p><i>Religious centers such as mosques were reportedly used as places to rally religious communities, at times to perpetuate and incite violence. In some cases, religious leaders were involved, allowing their institutional affiliation to give them greater authority.</i></p> <p><i>Buddhist nationalists have used history and tradition to strengthen claims to state power and argue that Muslims are not equal and in some extreme cases should be made to leave the country.</i></p> <p><i>Buddhist leaders have used their authority and standing within communities to promote anti-Muslim sentiment and encourage discrimination and, in some cases, violence against Muslims. Stories linking Buddhism with Myanmar state institutions and territory have been used to justify defending the faith against Muslim aggression.</i></p>
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STEP 4 Map Peacebuilding

This step involves figuring out which peacebuilding actors are already in the context; what they are doing with whom and why; and what their impact is. You can learn from others' successes and mistakes to identify specific opportunities and challenges to peacebuilding activities. You may uncover issues relating to security, physical access, acceptance by conflict actors, or bureaucratic barriers to working within a country or community.

What you learn from mapping will help you avoid unnecessarily repeating existing efforts. Aim to develop initiatives and offer resources that fill a gap or support and complement what is already happening. Peacebuilding is most effective when efforts are coordinated.

Mapping shows how other actors have understood the causes of, and possible solutions to, the conflict. Compare this peacebuilding map with your analysis thus far to assess the assumptions and conclusion behind your thinking.

Mapping peacebuilding allows you to:

- **Cross-check your analysis:** How does your analysis compare with that of other peacebuilders? Are there elements you have missed?
- **Identify gaps:** What is being done and what is not being done?
- **Learn from success and failure:** What works and doesn't work, and why? What is the evidence for this?

In practical terms, mapping relevant peacebuilding actors and understanding their motivations, relationships, and methods is similar to Step 3, Analyze the Conflict. "Key Religion-Specific Points for Mapping Peacebuilding" provides some issues to consider as you go through Step 4.

Key Religion-Specific Points for Mapping Peacebuilding

- **Peacebuilding participants:** Religious communities are diverse and nuanced. Be specific when mapping which actors are engaged in peacebuilding initiatives and do not limit your analysis to simple or general religious categories.
- **Sacred spaces:** Traditional forms of conflict resolution may be practiced at sites of religious and cultural significance. Analyze how places of religious significance are, or could be, involved in peacebuilding.
- **Religious drivers of conflict:** Peacebuilding actors are often reluctant to engage with religious drivers of conflict. Analyze whether this leaves a gap to be addressed.
- **Religious peacebuilders:** Religious actors, and their existing and potential contributions to peacebuilding, are often overlooked. Include them in your analysis without assuming that their goals and motivations necessarily align with your own.
- **Learn from the past:** Consider what can be learned from past successes and failures, specifically the ways that religion has contributed to peacebuilding.

WHERE?

Where, and with Which Sections of Society, Are Peacebuilding Actors Working?

Understanding which geographic areas and sections of society peacebuilding actors are working with enables reflection on the motivations and understandings of organizations and actors involved in peacebuilding.

Collect information on which geographic areas other peacebuilding actors are working in and compare it with your understanding of where the conflict is taking place. Consider why the peacebuilding actors chose these particular areas. Find out who other peacebuilders consider to be key conflict actors and target beneficiaries of their projects, mapping the different social, religious, and ethnic groups involved in peacebuilding initiatives.

Peacebuilding initiatives can be found in local and international civil society, formal and informal education institutions, art establishments, and local and national governments. Approach these actors with friendliness and humility so as to discuss openly and honestly their thinking about what they do, where they work, and whom they target. Websites and publications can offer information about their work. Postproject evaluation reports are sometimes made publicly available or supplied on request.

Next, determine where peacebuilding projects with a religious dimension are taking place, using the five dimensions of religion to assess religion's role in the project. Are projects targeting similar geographic areas and sections of society as other peacebuilding projects? If not, what does this tell you about how conflict analysis and resolution differs among religious and secular peacebuilders? Each question covered in this chapter includes a checklist of the mapping peacebuilding issues to consider under that question.

How Do Areas of Religious Significance Feature in Peacebuilding Activities?

As you saw in Step 3, Analyze the Conflict, places of religious significance can play an important role in conflict and potential peacebuilding. Sacred spaces such as religious buildings can act as safe areas for those affected by conflict. Sites of particular religious and cultural significance may be places where traditional forms of conflict resolution are practiced. Take time to understand how these places contribute to peacebuilding.

Which Different Religious Identity Groups Do Peacebuilding Activities Engage With?

Map the different religious groups and communities that existing peacebuilding initiatives engage with. The map will show how other peacebuilding actors understand the conflict, including, for example, which religious actors are considered aggressors or victims in the conflict. Do not

generalize about religious groupings; recognize the complexity and divisions within broader religious traditions. For example, in Syria, the Sunni Shafi'i, Ithna Asharia Shia, Alawites, Ismailis, Druze, and Ahmadiyya all fall under the label "Muslim," but each has its own ideologies and allegiances that characterize and differentiate it.

<p>Map Peacebuilding Checklist: WHERE?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-check your analysis: How do the geographic areas and sections of society you have identified compare with those other peacebuilders have identified as important? <input type="checkbox"/> Identify gaps: What relevant areas or sections of society have been overlooked? <input type="checkbox"/> Learn from past successes and failures: Where have peacebuilding efforts been successful? Where have they not? What does this tell you about the different geographic areas and sections of society?
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EXERCISE

Map the Contributions and Potential of Religious Actors as Peacebuilders

This group exercise can be used to identify the existing and potential role of religious actors.*

1. Brainstorm the main drivers of the conflict with the group.
2. Invite the participants to group these drivers into different categories such as *economic*, *political*, *social*, *cultural*, and *environmental*.
3. Distribute sticky dots of two colors. Invite participants to place a dot of one color next to drivers of conflict that they know religious actors are already involved with.
4. Invite participants to place a dot of the other color next to drivers that religious actors could affect positively.
5. Facilitate a group discussion with the following questions: What does the arrangement of dots say about the current and potential involvement of religious actors in peacebuilding? What types of activities did you have in mind when placing the dots?

* For an example of an analysis that this exercise can feed into (and a list of identified conflict drivers), see Owen Frazer and Martine Miller, *Working on Religion, Peace and Conflict in Theravada Buddhist Countries: Reflections by Practitioners* (Zurich: Center for Security Studies, 2015), www.css.ethz.ch/content/specialinterest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/en/think-tank/themes/mediation-support-and-peace-promotion/religion-and-mediation/details.html?id=w/o/r/k/working_on_religion_peace_and_conflict_i.

WHAT?

What Conflict Drivers Have Past and Current Peacebuilding Initiatives Addressed?

During your conflict analysis, you determined factors perceived to be driving the conflict. As part of mapping peacebuilding, you want to identify the conflict drivers that peacebuilding actors and initiatives are attempting to address.

Link the peacebuilding activities to the various political, security, economic, cultural, environmental, and other issues you have already identified. This exercise may help you discover issues you had not originally identified. To what extent do people believe issues stem from competition over resources, identity concerns, and/or differences of ideology? As noted in Step 3, Analyze the Conflict, these are all likely involved in violent conflicts. Consider which projects take strategic and comprehensive account of these elements and how well those projects are doing.

What Religious Drivers of Conflict Are Being Addressed by Existing Peacebuilding Initiatives?

Identify the religious drivers of conflict that are being addressed by existing peacebuilding initiatives, as well as which religiously framed issues are not being addressed and why. Often issues are highly sensitive, and peacebuilding actors may feel nervous or unprepared to address them. Consult your local partners if you need to understand and address these dynamics better.

Map Peacebuilding Checklist: WHAT?

- Cross-check your analysis:**
How do the issues and drivers you have identified in your analysis compare with those other peacebuilders have identified?
- Identify gaps:**
What relevant issues and drivers have been overlooked?
- Learn from successes and failures:**
What issues have peacebuilding efforts been successful at resolving? What have they not? What does that tell you about the issues?

WHO?

Who Are the Peacebuilding Organizations and Actors and Who Are They Working With?

Map the peacebuilding organizations and projects in the defined area to record the actors involved in peacebuilding activities and to reflect on what this map tells you about their understanding of the conflict. Remember that definitions of peacebuilding can vary significantly and not all organizations call what they do “peacebuilding.”

Map existing relationships, positive or negative, between peacebuilding actors. What is the extent and quality of cooperation? You may have done this mapping as part of the actor-mapping exercise carried out in Step 3, Analyze the Conflict. In complex contexts, make a separate corresponding map specifically for peacebuilding actors.

Finally, map who the peacebuilders are working with. What actors are they involving in their projects and who are the projects intended to benefit? Consider whether there are actors of influence you have identified who are not currently engaged in peacebuilding, but could be.

Who Are the Actors Initiating or Involved with Religious Peacebuilding Activities?

The term *religious peacebuilding* encompasses a range of activities, actors, and objectives.²⁵ When mapping religious peacebuilding activities, consider distinguishing among:

- Faith-based organizations with a clear religious motivation using religious resources for peacebuilding, such as Religions for Peace International
- Religious actors with a public religious identity using either religious or secular resources and methods, such as religious and community leaders or local or national interfaith bodies
- Faith-based peacebuilding organizations using secular peacebuilding methods, such as Caritas or World Vision
- Secular peacebuilding organizations working with religious actors and communities to enhance the effectiveness of their work, such as the United States Institute of Peace, the United Nations, and Safer World

Note that some actors (such as the United Nations and Safer World) may not see themselves as involved in religious peacebuilding and may hold a range of opinions about what the term means. It can be helpful to distinguish those who describe their efforts as religious peacebuilding from those who say they are working on religion and peacebuilding.

²⁵ There is significant literature on the activities of religious peacebuilders. See, e.g., Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall, *Women, Religion, Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2015); and David Little, *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). See also Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, *Peacebuilding Practitioner Interview Series* at <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/peacebuilding-practitioners-interview-series>.

Any peacebuilding initiative that aims to address the religious dimensions of conflict is likely to involve religious actors. Find out who those religious actors are and who may have initiated peacebuilding activities themselves.

<p>Map Peacebuilding Checklist: WHO?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-check your analysis: How do the key actors you have identified in your analysis compare with those other peacebuilders have identified? <input type="checkbox"/> Identify gaps: What relevant actors have been overlooked? <input type="checkbox"/> Learn from success and failure: Who has been important to include in successful peacebuilding initiatives? Who has been difficult to include or an obstacle to success? What does that tell you about who to include in peacebuilding activities?
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EXERCISE

Map the Contribution and Potential of Religious Actors as Peacebuilders

This group exercise can be used to identify the existing and potential role of religious actors.*

1. Brainstorm the main drivers of the conflict with the group.
2. Invite the participants to group these drivers into different categories such as *economic*, *political*, *social*, *cultural*, and *environmental*.
3. Distribute sticky dots of two colors. Invite participants to place a dot of one color next to drivers of conflict that they know religious actors are already involved with.
4. Invite participants to place a dot of the other color next to drivers that religious actors could affect positively.
5. Facilitate a group discussion with the following questions: What does the arrangement of dots say about the current and potential involvement of religious actors in peacebuilding? What types of activities did you have in mind when placing the dots?

* For an example of an analysis that this exercise can feed into (and a list of identified conflict drivers), see Owen Frazer and Martine Miller, *Working on Religion, Peace and Conflict in Theravada Buddhist Countries: Reflections by Practitioners* (Zurich: Center for Security Studies, 2015), www.css.ethz.ch/content/specialinterest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/en/think-tank/themes/mediation-support-and-peace-promotion/religion-and-mediation/details.html?id=w/o/r/k/working_on_religion_peace_and_conflict_i.

WHY?

Why Are Actors Engaged in Peacebuilding?

Although it may be difficult to determine, understanding why actors are involved in peacebuilding will help you assess how their motivations might influence the effectiveness of their activities. It will also help you reflect on your own motivations and anticipate negative perceptions of your motivations for getting involved. Finally, it may provide ideas for how to inspire the involvement of potential peacebuilders in the initiatives you wish to support.

How Are the Motivations of Peacebuilders Shaped by Religion?

If you are from a secular perspective, or a religion that is different from that of the peacebuilders you are analyzing, it may be difficult to understand the range of religious motivations an actor may have for participating in peacebuilding. However, grasping this motivation is important for understanding actors on their own terms and avoiding unintended mistakes or tensions. It can also help you align your project activities and objectives with those actors you want to work with.

You can use the five dimensions of religion to identify and categorize motivations for peacebuilding. Motivations are often complex, incorporating several of the dimensions. The five dimensions provide a framework for understanding how religion may be considered a source of peace, an understanding that you can take into account in your own peacebuilding work. For example:

- Actors' religious ideas can act as a powerful motivation for peacebuilding. The motivation may be a sacred duty to work for peace or something more practical such as protecting or advancing their own worldview. Many religions have a strong pacifist and forgiving narrative that runs throughout their religious texts and teachings. Some Tibetan Buddhists, for example, have drawn on their belief in nonviolence to maintain a campaign of passive resistance against Chinese annexation of Tibet (see also "Religious Conversion and Peacebuilding" on p. 81).
- A strong sense of communal responsibility or shared humanity can motivate religious people to work for peace. Peacebuilding initiatives often value a common religious identity and sharing resources for peace. An example is the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.²⁶
- Formal religious institutions can bring people and resources together to drive peacebuilding activities. Participation may come from a sense of common purpose, an institutional mandate, or individual roles and obligations. The Community of Sant'Edigio²⁷ is one example of an institution whose support has made peacebuilding efforts more effective.

²⁶ See www.peacemakersnetwork.org.

²⁷ See www.santegidio.org/pageID/30008/langID/en/THE-COMMUNITY.html.

- Ritual practice and symbolism can be a powerful influence shaping the attitudes and beliefs that motivate peacebuilders. William Lowery describes how important ritual and symbolism were in brokering peace accords between Nuer and Dinka tribes in Sudan.²⁸
- Actors may act out of a deep spiritual calling. The Dalai Lama frequently calls upon his religious experiences as inspiration for his humanitarian and peace work.

Where peacebuilders have religious motivations, analyze whether religion has an impact on the effectiveness of their work. Compare their success with those who you perceive not to have religious motivations. If there is any difference, figure out whether this can be explained by their actual motivations, such as the commitment they show, or by others' willingness to work with them on account of their perceived motivations.

Why Are Religious Actors Engaged in Peacebuilding?

In an effort to protect their religion from an association with violence, religious actors who participate in peacebuilding may dismiss religious actors from the same tradition with alternative views and motivations as illegitimate. However, doing so may also reduce the possibility of influencing religious actors who advocate violence on religious terms.

Religious peacebuilders may be motivated to defend against a perceived threat to a religious group or community, their religious institution, freedom of practice and belief, or values and ideas. It is important to acknowledge and explore these perceived threats and to aim beyond a “negative peace,” in which violence has stopped but insecurity and inequality remain.

Also consider why some religious actors are not involved in peacebuilding. When religious identities or actors are part of the conflict, religious actors may not be trusted or perceived as impartial by the different parties. Religious actors may be unwilling or unable to engage in peace initiatives when the community they represent is resistant or opposed to it. They may fear being perceived as betraying their community, losing its support, or even being put in danger. Such fears were factors that kept religious leaders from participating in peacebuilding activities across the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland. If you plan to engage religious actors, be aware of the constraints that they face.

²⁸ W. Lowery, “The Power of Ritual,” in Little, *Peacemakers in Action*, 186–211. See also Lisa Schirch, *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 2005).

Religious Conversion and Peacebuilding

Religious actors have sometimes participated in peacebuilding to grow their influence and convert people to their own religion. Even when conversion is not a goal, people may perceive conversion to be a motivating factor of openly faith-based organizations. Real or perceived, the issue of conversion can increase tension and seriously challenge peacebuilding objectives.

Attempts at conversion may result from kind and compassionate intentions based on different ideas about the afterlife and the meaning of peace. For example, some Christian groups carry out evangelical missions as part of peacebuilding because they believe peacebuilding will save the souls of those they are converting and provide peace in the afterlife.

However, conversion raises serious ethical concerns in the peacebuilding context. We encourage you to understand what conversion means to those practicing it and to engage them in an open discussion about how it affects your and their peacebuilding objectives. Simply condemning religious conversion is not likely to get rid of it and may alienate potential allies.

Map Peacebuilding Checklist: WHY?

- Cross-check your analysis:**
How do the motivations for engaging in peacebuilding you have identified compare with those that other peacebuilders have identified?
- Identify gaps:**
What motivations for peacebuilding have been overlooked?
- Learn from successes and failures:**
How have the real or perceived intentions of peacebuilders, including their religious motivations, affected their peacebuilding activities?

WHEN?

When Have Peacebuilding Efforts Been Most Successful?

It is widely recognized that timing can make a big difference in the outcome of peacebuilding efforts. Study the timelines of peacebuilding activities to determine what timing factors have contributed to peacebuilding. What events have past or present peacebuilding projects taken into account and how have these events impacted peacebuilding effectiveness?

When Has Religion Been Involved in Previous Peacebuilding Efforts?

At this stage in your analysis, you should have a comprehensive view of the role of religion in the conflict and its potential to contribute to peacebuilding. Now look at the role religion played in past peacebuilding efforts. What role did religion play that you have not yet identified as important? How did past peacebuilding efforts take religion into account? This inquiry will point you to the potential importance of religious actors and institutions in your peacebuilding efforts.

If religion has been involved in past attempts at peacebuilding, assess what effect it had on the outcome of peacebuilding activities. Reflection on how and when religion has had a positive impact will help you recognize when future circumstances are windows of opportunity for religious peacebuilding initiatives.

How Have Religious Calendars Affected Past Peacebuilding Efforts?

Many religions have their own “sacred chronologies” that come with deep meaning and motivation, including religious festivals, anniversaries, future prophecies, and daily timetables such as Muslim prayers or Buddhist meal times. There are dozens of religious calendar systems besides the widely used secular Gregorian solar calendar. The different ways time is experienced affects people’s perceptions and beliefs about a conflict, situation, or context. Be aware of this possibility and attempt to understand alternative notions of time and space.

As noted in Step 1, Self-Reflect, events of religious significance can affect the dynamics of the conflict and the opportunities for peacebuilding. Understand how religious calendars have affected past peacebuilding efforts to take better account of the various days and times that may present opportunities and obstacles in the future.

Map Peacebuilding Checklist: WHEN?

- Cross-check your analysis:**
How does your analysis of religion’s role in the conflict compare with your analysis of its role in other peacebuilding initiatives?
- Identify gaps:**
What religious dimensions to the conflict have been overlooked?
- Learn from successes and failures:**
How has timing, including religious calendars, affected the outcome of peacebuilding initiatives?

HOW?

How Are Individuals and Organizations Attempting to Build Peace?

“How” is about determining the ways peacebuilding actors build peace using their particular sources of power and influence. One approach to answering how is to find out a project’s theory of change (ToC). A ToC is a statement of the assumptions about causes and effects that project activities are based on.

A ToC often takes the form of a two-part statement with *if* and *then* elements. For example, “If religious actors visit each other’s places of worship, then this will increase interfaith understanding and reduce the likelihood of conflict.”

ToCs can be explicit or implicit. Projects may write out and share their ToCs with partners and beneficiaries or they may not reflect on them consciously. Either way, seek to understand the assumptions behind project activities. ToCs are discussed in greater depth in Step 5, Turn Analysis into Action.

How Do, or Could, the Power and Resources of Religion Contribute to Building Peace?

Find out how secular and faith-based peacebuilding organizations already understand and use religious peacebuilding and the effect that is having on the conflict.

Determine how past or present projects use the power and resources of religion for peacebuilding. Resources may include human or material resources, spiritual or religious inspiration, leadership, interfaith committees, and religious networks and meetings.

Understanding how religion plays a role in other projects will help you design your own initiatives. For example, seek to know why other organizations value religious leaders or grassroots movements in a peacebuilding context. Why are they using religious ritual or scripture? Why are they forming interfaith groups or working with religious communities separately?

The characteristics and function of religion affect each context. It makes sense to involve religious leaders in peacebuilding where religion gives them authority and influence. For example, more than two hundred Islamic religious leaders, scholars, and heads of state supported the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration in “defending the rights of religious minorities in predominantly Muslim countries.” The declaration was widely welcomed and had a profound impact.²⁹ However, in a religion as diffuse and decentralized as Hinduism, this kind of initiative would not have the same impact, and working with local religious leaders and grassroots organizations might prove more effective.

²⁹ <http://marrakeshdeclaration.org>.

Map Peacebuilding Checklist: **HOW?**

- Cross-check your analysis:**
How does the way other peacebuilders have attempted to address the conflict make sense based on your analysis? What does your analysis say about their ToCs?
- Identify gaps:**
What particular approaches or resources have been overlooked?
- Learn from successes and failures:**
Which approaches are working? Which are not? Why?

CASE STUDY: Syria | 2016

The conflict in Syria became actively violent in 2011 after nonviolent protests broke out against the regime, as happened in many Arab countries that spring. By July 2011, the country had descended into civil war. The conflict involves many armed groups and coalitions fighting each other and government forces, supported by various external actors pursuing their own conflicting interests. The conflict has resulted in what the United Nations has termed the “biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time,” with no end in sight.

Applying the questions from this chapter, table 7 presents key points from Reverend Andrew Ashdown’s mapping of peacebuilding activities. It is an example of what a small-scale peacemapping exercise carried out with few resources might look like. It is not intended to be complete. It is based on information provided by religious contacts and networks.

TABLE 7. Mapping peacebuilding in Syria, 2016

MAJOR QUESTIONS	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	MAPPING PEACEBUILDING
WHERE?	<p>Where, and with which sections of society, are peacebuilding actors working?</p> <p><i>How do areas of religious significance feature in peacebuilding activities?</i></p> <p><i>Which different religious identity groups do peacebuilding activities engage with?</i></p>	<p>There are many local reconciliation committees in towns and villages under government control throughout the country. The most significant example is in Homs, where the reconciliation committee helped negotiate a cease-fire and the evacuation of extremist fighters. Other examples are at Darraya and other suburbs in the Damascus countryside, as well as in towns and villages in the Homs countryside. Wherever there have been prolonged sieges from either side, efforts have been made to negotiate cease-fires and begin reconciliation. The government claims that those who wish to lay down their arms can do so and will be given amnesty to return to their community. Those who do not wish to lay down their arms are allegedly allowed safe passage to another area, although some claim this has not always been the case. This process has reportedly resulted in an end to fighting in several areas of the country.</p> <p><i>Syria is a socially and religiously diverse society. Local Christian and Muslim leaders often coordinate peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts with the involvement of numerous volunteers to help different groups and factions engage in dialogue and work toward a cease-fire. Many places of religious significance, whether churches or mosques, have become sites for dialogue and engagement activities, as well as serving the physical needs of the internally displaced. The projects visited claim to work with any willing sectarian or religious group, and have had some success in doing so.</i></p>
WHAT?	<p>What conflict drivers have past and current peacebuilding initiatives addressed?</p> <p><i>What religious drivers of conflict are being addressed by existing peacebuilding initiatives?</i></p>	<p>Many peacebuilding efforts, including reconciliation committees, attempt to address the sectarian and political divide. In recent years, there has been an increase in the presence of conservative Sunni ideologies. This presence has grown since the 1980s and 1990s, when many Syrians started to travel to Saudi Arabia for work and trade, and it feeds tensions between Sunni and Shia, particularly Alawite groups with whom Sunnis have long had strained relations. The fact that Alawites, though a minority group, hold the balance of power in the country has contributed to the tension. At the same time, that balance has provided a measure of protection to Syria's minority communities.</p> <p><i>Local communities are attempting to address the rise in religious extremism, which strengthens and is strengthened by the conflict. Various outside religious actors such as ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates have been identified as worsening the conflict and its ethnic and religious divisions.</i></p>

<p>WHO?</p>	<p>Who are the peacebuilding organizations and actors and who are they working with?</p> <p><i>Who are the actors and organizations initiating or involved in religious peacebuilding activities?</i></p>	<p>Internationally, the United Nations and the International Syria Support Group have been attempting to negotiate a temporary cease-fire with varying success. The United States and Russia are the most vocal and apparently influential outside actors.</p> <p>The government reconciliation committees come under the umbrella of the Ministry of Reconciliation, led by Ali Haider, the head of an internal opposition party.</p> <p>Peacebuilding organizations are attempting to initiate or continue their efforts within Syria or with refugees in neighboring countries. These include the United States Institute of Peace and International Alert, along with smaller peace education and peace leadership initiatives working in areas not directly affected by the conflict such as Latakia. Some individuals are working with grassroots groups to build civil society awareness and local initiatives for inclusive community development.</p> <p><i>Faith-based charities have been providing care for refugees and the internally displaced both inside and outside Syria. Faith communities and reconciliation committees are working together for reconciliation. They model cooperation and have at times earned the legitimacy and financial support to work in social, religious, and political sectors at local and national levels.</i></p> <p><i>Local faith leaders often coordinate and implement local initiatives and seem willing to work with partners from any group.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders of the Syrian Orthodox, Melkite, Greek Orthodox, Chaldaean Catholic, Armenian, and Protestant churches in Syria are all involved in peacebuilding activities to varying degrees, and have the potential to do more.</i></p> <p><i>Many women are active in supporting faith-based peacebuilding initiatives in a less formal capacity.</i></p>
<p>WHY?</p>	<p>Why are actors engaged in peacebuilding?</p> <p><i>How are the motivations of peacebuilders shaped by religion?</i></p> <p><i>Why are religious actors engaged in peacebuilding?</i></p>	<p>Many conflict actors recognize the need for peace and an end to the conflict. Syrian society has become profoundly divided. It is widely acknowledged by many factions and actors that the rebuilding of trust between communities will take time and effort. Some doubt it will ever be possible.</p> <p>The Ministry of Reconciliation's local initiatives are being carried out with the stated intention of building a foundation for a national dialogue once the violence ends.</p> <p><i>At the core of both Christian and Muslim faiths is a call to peace and respect for humanity. Syria has typically respected freedom of religion and expression. Most Syrians wish to maintain these values, which are rooted in their particular faiths.</i></p> <p><i>Local religious leaders and volunteers from different faith groups work together for a vision of a Syria that respects and honors its rich cultural, social, and religious diversity. Religious leaders and actors from all religions have stated that it is a moral and spiritual duty to support peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.</i></p>

<p>WHEN?</p>	<p>When have peacebuilding efforts been most successful?</p> <p><i>When has religion been involved in previous peacebuilding efforts?</i></p> <p><i>How have religious calendars affected past peacebuilding engagements?</i></p>	<p>Some doubt the effectiveness and wisdom of peacebuilding and reconciliation interventions given the ongoing scale of violence. Feedback suggests that some local actors do not find many of the peacebuilding strategies and ideas relevant at the present, but as something that may be helpful in the future.</p> <p>The Ministry of Reconciliation has claimed success with peacebuilding efforts during conflict by adopting a two-part approach in local contexts that includes ending fighting and encouraging dialogue. There have been reports of successes and failures with this approach. It is claimed that this approach is less successful where foreign fighters have prevented the implementation.</p> <p><i>As a vital part of the social, cultural, religious, and political life of the country, faith communities have been important in building trust and promoting peace over the years. Competing interests have sometimes gotten in the way of progress.</i></p> <p><i>There have been attempts to reduce violence on all sides during religious festivals. On occasion, “rebel” attacks on civilian areas have increased during Ramadan, when people are in town centers in larger numbers. Such attacks can escalate violence and slow peacebuilding efforts.</i></p>
<p>HOW?</p>	<p>How are individuals and organizations attempting to build peace?</p> <p><i>How do, or could, the power and resources of religion contribute to building peace?</i></p>	<p>The international community is maintaining a strategy of pushing for a transitional agreement on all conflict actors, but this strategy seems to have little support from the Syrian government, key allies, and some opposition factions. The many factions and interests add considerable complexity to the process.</p> <p>Agencies such as the United Nations and Syrian Red Crescent are serving the needs of all affected by the conflict, whatever their sectarian, faith, or political identity.</p> <p>Several organizations such as the Awareness Foundation are attempting to implement peace education programs to prevent younger Syrians from being drawn into the conflict and to help them deal with the psychological impact.</p> <p>There is some evidence that efforts have had the most impact where there has been high participation and low outside influence.</p> <p><i>Religion plays an important role. Institutionally, religious leaders often serve as a bridge between their communities and those in power. Although Christians are a minority, Christianity as a set of ideas has respect among many Syrians for its commitment to peace, diversity, and mutual respect. The values of peace, justice, and diversity are seen as the heart of Christian and Muslim faiths, making religion and faith leaders important to peace processes, reconciliation initiatives, and the reduction of violence and extremism.</i></p>

STEP 5 Turn Analysis into Action

At this point, you should have a strong basis from which to reflect on your potential role in the conflict. Given what you have learned about yourself, the context, the conflict, and what others are doing in the previous steps, is there a meaningful action you can take that responds to a real need and adds value to what is already being done? Stay open to the possibility that it may be better not to become involved.

If you honestly conclude that you can contribute, you are ready to move from analysis to action. The first stage in this step is to plan what you will do. This chapter presents a systematic approach to transforming the insights from the previous chapters into effective, locally adapted peacebuilding work. “Key Religion-Specific Points for Analyzing the Conflict” provides some issues to consider as you go through Step 5.

Key Religion-Specific Points for Turning Analysis into Action

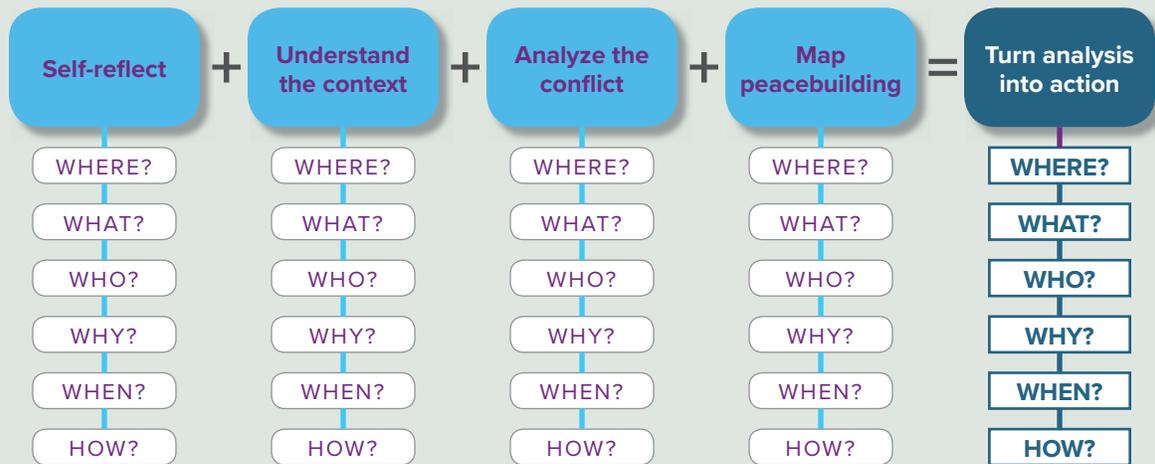
- **Put it all together:** Your answers to the questions in the preceding four steps will help you determine the where, what, who, why, when, and how of your own efforts. Will you address a particular religious dimension of the conflict, use a religiously inspired approach, or bring an understanding of religion to efforts that are not religion specific?
- **Check your assumptions:** Critically reflect on how your analysis of religion’s role in the conflict informs your efforts. Carefully test your understandings of religion and your ToCs (see “Theories of Change” on p. 90).
- **Engage religious actors:** Religious actors are often important actors to involve. Be aware of who the key religious actors are and how they can best contribute.
- **Consider power and resources:** The many ways in which religion can contribute to peacebuilding are often overlooked. Carefully consider their potential in your peacebuilding planning.
- **Consider secular and religious peacebuilding:** Secular and religious approaches can be taken at the same time and often with great impact. Conflicts with significant religious dimensions do not require only religious peacebuilding responses and those without them do not necessarily require only secular peacebuilding responses.

In each prior step of this guide, you responded to a set of questions (where, what, who, why, when, and how) to gather knowledge. In this step, you will bring together the knowledge you gained from answering those questions to come up with the where, what, who, why, when, and how of your proposed peacebuilding plan. “Moving from Analysis to Action” shows the stages in this step.

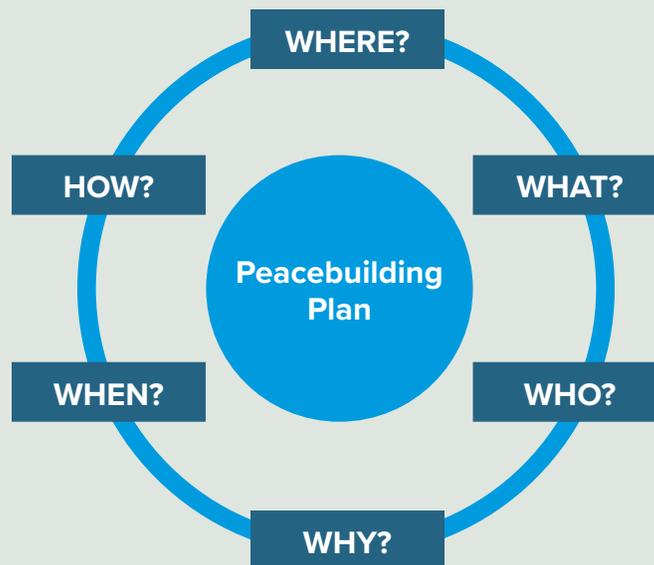
For example, to decide where you will engage in peacebuilding, you need to look at what you have learned about where you work, where the conflict is taking place, and where peacebuilding initiatives and resources already exist. Then you will bring these parts together into a consistent plan by examining how they will interact, as represented in stage 2.

Moving from Analysis to Action

STAGE 1: Answer the where, what, who, why, when, and how questions of peacebuilding planning.



STAGE 2: Consider the relationship between the answers to the questions to arrive at your final plan. In other words, *who* you will work with depends on *what* driver of the conflict you wish to address, *how* you will achieve your goal depends *where* you decide to work, and so on.



Theories of Change

In Step 4, we discussed that one way to understand a project's methods and assumptions is describing its theories of change (ToC).

ToCs are implicit in all projects, but a self-reflective peacebuilding project should be based on explicit ToCs that have been carefully thought through. ToCs put into words the assumptions about cause and effect that project activities are based on. ToCs allow you to examine and test your assumptions. They are often statements with "if" and "then" elements.

For example, a project might be based on the assumption that if you encourage Buddhists to reflect on inner peace and nonviolence, then this reflection will lead to a decline or end to violence. Or if you get Christian priests to include messages of tolerance toward others in Sunday worship, these messages will lead to a more compassionate attitude toward other religious communities.

Often the assumptions of ToCs that inform religious peacebuilding are questionable or wishful due to a poor understanding of the role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding. Step 5 is about using the information you have gathered to ensure that your ToCs are informed by a comprehensive conflict analysis. Once you have worked through Step 5, carefully examine your own ToCs.

HOW TO EXAMINE YOUR TOCS

Working backwards from the desired result of your project, write down all the assumptions that connect your project actions and outcomes. An example might be:

Outcome: Reconciliation between two religious communities that have been in conflict.

Activity: A series of interfaith dialogue workshops for members of each community that will be promoted by religious leaders.

ToC: If positive attitudes and relationships grow between the religious communities, then reconciliation can take place.

- If community members learn more about each other's religion, then this knowledge will break down negative stereotypes and help people develop deeper relationships.
- If religious leaders draw on religious teachings and authority to encourage attendance, then community members will participate in workshops.

Carefully look at the reasoning behind each phase of your project and what it means in terms of capacity and resources. Does your logic make sense? Where are the weaknesses and risks in your plan? What can be done to reduce risk? Make a comprehensive inventory of all the resources you will need to successfully complete your project.

For example, if religious leaders encourage attendance at workshops and people attend, this does not necessarily mean that attendees will learn more about another's religion or that their attitudes will change. Identify ways of measuring change in people's attitudes and behavior in order to test your assumptions about the effect of the workshops. Or think about different and/or supporting activities that will help you achieve your goal.

Even if more positive attitudes develop between communities, a process of reconciliation might also need to address political, economic, educational, environmental, or legal issues. You may need to add activities such as rebuilding damaged property or revising school curriculum to address these issues, or you might need to recognize that the ambitious goal of community reconciliation is beyond the scope of your project, expertise, and resources.

WHERE?

Where Will You Work?

Bring together what you learned in the previous steps about your own presence, the larger context, the specific conflict, and prior peacebuilding efforts as they relate to where you will take action. Consider this information in terms of both geography and social groups. If you are already involved in peacebuilding efforts in a location, you can draw on your experience to continue working in the same geographic and social location. If your prior efforts were successful and you fully understand why and how they were successful through careful evaluation, then it may be practical and desirable to continue or expand those activities.

Refer to your conflict assessment to identify where the conflict is taking place. Decide whether it is realistic and safe to work in those areas. If it is not, consider working outside the conflict zone in a way that will have an effect on the conflict.

Peacebuilding and development may focus on particular areas where the conflict is most intense or violent, but it may also focus on areas that are easy to get to. Working in places based on convenience can be a problem if those places are not the areas of greatest need. For example, some organizations in Nepal have been criticized for working in the areas around Kathmandu that are easy to access, leaving worse-off rural areas with less support. Do not use resources where they will have little value just to appear engaged, even if it is your only option.

A similar problem arises when targeting social, ethnic, or religious groups that are willing and accessible, or likely to attract donors, but that are not necessarily the most in need. Although funding may be necessary, do not let it become the main motivation for your peacebuilding work.

Important groups may be difficult to involve because of social norms. For example, working with women may be socially and culturally unacceptable in some situations. These kinds of situations may be overcome by building trust with key partners and representatives of these groups.

What Areas of Religious Significance Will Feature in Your Peacebuilding Work?

If places of religious significance overlap with areas of the conflict and are a disputed issue in the conflict, consider addressing this overlap directly in your peacebuilding work. As with Sri Lanka and Israel/Palestine, conflicts over land with religious significance can be strongly tied to religious narratives and identity and therefore may be very difficult to resolve. That said, the complexity and variability of religious histories mean there are often less dividing alternative narratives that may be supported by open-minded and inclusive actors. Working with them is one way of approaching such geo-religious disputes.

Consider the specific venue for your peacebuilding activities and the religious associations of that place. For example, if you are organizing a dialogue activity, decide whether a religious or secular building would be more effective. You should have identified any religious sites that make good venues during the map peacebuilding step (Step 4).

What Religious Identity Groups Will You Work With?

As part of your analysis, you identified whether the conflict is between groups of different religious identities and to what extent their religious identities are relevant to the conflict. Division among groups can occur for many reasons, and religion can create or maintain it. If the groups in conflict are of different religious identities, decide whether your peacebuilding activity will be interreligious—working with members of groups on different sides of the conflict—or intragroup—working with one group.

Whether a peacebuilding initiative is inter- or intrareligious affects the kind of third parties leading the initiative and how religion is integrated into their activities:

For intrareligious work, a third party from the same religion can easily relate to the groups and draw on common religious language, identity, ideas, symbols, and practices.

In interreligious work, leadership that represents different traditions of the conflicting groups can model interreligious cooperation. Or consider a third party that is not identified with any one of the religions more than another, yet brings an understanding of both and credibility.

All religious traditions have the potential to unify or divide. For example, Hinduism has a strong and honored tradition of welcoming guests as if they were divine as well as of supporting the caste system that has been used to oppress people who are not Hindu. Incorporate religious language, identity, ideas, symbols, and practices with care for all groups and take account of their religious sensitivities.

If differences in religious identity are relevant to the conflict, consider whether one of the goals of your work will be to address misperceptions and stereotypes between religious groups so as to ease tensions and divisions. This is covered in more detail in the “What?” and “How?” sections.

WHAT?

What Conflict Drivers Will You Address?

Based on the earlier steps, you should now understand the drivers of the conflict from a variety of perspectives, including which drivers others seek to address and which drivers you have the capacity to address. This understanding is key to having a positive impact.

Set a clear and realistic goal for your efforts. The scope of the goal can range from addressing a specific part of the conflict to addressing the entire conflict, depending on your ability and capacity. For example, if you plan to intervene in an armed conflict where a religious or ethnic group is fighting a government for autonomy or independence, many factors beyond your direct influence or control will be involved in resolving the conflict. These may include political policies, the actions of top-level leaders, and traditional and social media. However, you may be well placed to advocate for peace at the community level, to help those suffering make the harmful impact of the conflict more visible, to support those directly affected by conflict, or to work with third parties and influential actors to pressure both sides to negotiate an end to the conflict.

What Religion-Related Issues Will You Address?

As part of the conflict analysis, you may have identified drivers of conflict with a religious dimension. Conflicts driven by competition over scarce resources, divided identities, or ideological differences can all be shaped by religion. You may end up addressing disagreement between actors with conflicting religious beliefs, improving relations between those who see others' religious identities as a threat, or addressing concerns tied to religious institutions.

Whether or not to address religious drivers of conflict takes careful consideration. What did you determine about the conflict drivers with religious dimensions? Which other peacebuilding actors have taken these into account? Which of them are you best suited to address?

Answering the “What?” of your actions will determine your goals and thus shape the where, who, why, how, and when of your planning. When the drivers you have chosen to address have a religious dimension, consider how to include religion into other elements of your plan.

Working with Religious Actors to Prevent Atrocities

Beginning in 2015, the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect organized the "Fez Process" with support from the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), World Council of Churches, and the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. It consisted of a series of global consultations on the prevention of incitement that could lead to atrocity crimes. More than two hundred religious actors from over seventy countries participated, representing religious traditions, denominations, and minorities—with at least thirty percent of them women. The outcome was an extensive plan of action with detailed recommendations for religious actors, as well as state actors, civil society, and media.

Source: United Nations Office for Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. "Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that could Lead to Atrocity Crimes." New York: United Nations Office for Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, 2017. www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Plan%20of%20Action_Religious_Prevent-Incite-WEB-rev3.pdf.

WHO?

Who Will You Work With?

Based on the influential actors in the context, the primary and secondary conflict actors, and the peacebuilders you have identified, along with your reflections on your own role and identity, you can now form a clear idea of who to involve in your efforts. They may be primary, secondary, or tertiary actors from certain social, ethnic, religious, or political groups. They may be a combination of different actors from various parts of society.

Consider three categories of actors: those actively in conflict whom you wish to engage, those harmed by conflict whom you wish to help, and peacebuilding partners. You may not work with all three, and some actors might fit in more than one category. Ultimately, whom you decide to work with will be shaped by what you have set as the goal of your efforts in response to the “What?” questions above.

Which Religious Actors Will You Involve in Your Peacebuilding Activities?

Religious actors can be powerful peacebuilders. The *Action Guide on Religion and Mediation* explains how religious actors may be especially effective as mediators in particular contexts because of their legitimacy and credibility among conflict actors, motivation, status, spiritual and moral authority, spiritual resources, financial and human resources, time and availability, knowledge of the context, and religious fluency. Religious actors are present at all levels of society and fill a wide range of roles. Religious actors include religiously inspired individuals, institutional and charismatic religious leaders, interfaith groups, faith-based organizations and NGOs, and state-appointed religious bodies. From their different positions in society, they can serve as or influence primary, secondary, and tertiary conflict actors. When connected to both grassroots and political elites, religious leaders can bridge the two and coordinate their efforts, as exemplified in the following story about the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone.

The Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, 1997–99

In April 1997, six years after the start of the Sierra Leone civil war, Muslim and Christian leaders came together to establish the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL). Supported by the World Conference of Religions for Peace, the organization began to advocate for a peaceful, negotiated end to the conflict.

The IRCSL issued public statements calling for President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah to enter into dialogue with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group. The IRCSL met with the president to encourage him to negotiate, an idea that was not acceptable to some civil society groups, politicians, and citizens. The IRCSL also wanted to persuade the imprisoned RUF leader Foday Sankoh to negotiate and to release child soldiers as an act of goodwill. As a main backer of the

RUF, the IRCSL traveled to Liberia to gain President Charles Taylor's support for the peace process. In addition, the IRCSL provided food, clothing, and other support to civilians and surrendered soldiers, building trust and confidence in peace negotiations among the RUF and the general public. The IRCSL was invited to participate in the RUF's preparatory meetings for the 1999 Lomé peace negotiations. When formal negotiations began, IRCSL members acted as observers, informal mediators, and intermediaries.

Throughout this time, IRCSL members recognized the importance of faith in guiding their work. Prayer and preaching were part of their work and activities. The Lomé Peace Accords were signed by both sides on July 7, 1999, with the key role of the IRCSL openly acknowledged.

Source: T. M. Turay, "Civil Society and Peacebuilding: The Role of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone," *Accord* 9 (2000), 50–53; and O. Frazer and R. Friedli, *Approaching Religion in Conflict Transformation: Concepts, Cases and Practical Implications* (Zurich: Center for Security Studies, 2015).

If your analysis identifies religious dimensions to the conflict, then religious actors may be uniquely suited to reshaping religious messages about the conflict, influencing or bringing together particular actors, and offering a unifying vision. To engage religious actors who are not presently part of your peacebuilding efforts, work with those who already have relationships with the actors you want to work with. These may include coreligionists or interreligious groups, either from the conflict context or elsewhere, nationally or internationally. Depending on religion's role within a society, politicians, militants, and business and community leaders could be key allies in engaging religious actors in peacebuilding initiatives.

There are seven key points to keep in mind when involving religious actors in peacebuilding.

OPENNESS TO PEACEBUILDING

Influence does not necessarily mean positive influence. Just because a religious leader, institution, or organization has authority does not mean they will use it for peacebuilding. Identify and collaborate with religious actors who are willing to explore the possibilities for peace and their role in it. This advice does not mean you should work only with so-called moderates. Successful peacebuilding requires involving those whose views differ from the mainstream because they may be important actors in a peacebuilding process. Be sensitive to how peacebuilding can be risky for religious actors and affect their willingness to participate. Within each religious community, you may find individuals who are open to peacebuilding and willing to take risks even when the larger group is not. They may become your bridge to that community.

INCLUSION

When religious groups are not included in peace processes or political reform, they perceive themselves to be marginalized and threatened.³⁰ As a result, these communities may turn inward, isolating themselves and becoming more vulnerable to prejudice and radicalization, eventually leading to violence. In Nepal, the Maoists insisted on excluding religious actors in the peace process and redefining the country as a secular democracy, which led to increasing support for right-wing Hindu groups and attacks on other religions. Ensure that the voices of a variety of actors are present. All the different religious groups involved in the conflict need to be represented in peacebuilding efforts in ways that take careful account of the subdivisions within religious traditions and local and indigenous faith communities. If such groups are not involved, let it be because they chose not to participate.

Involving a wide variety of actors may be difficult due to legal constraints such as when a government designates certain groups as illegal terrorist organizations, prohibiting them from operating and anyone else from supporting or contacting them.³¹ The exclusion of Hamas from much of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is one example. In such cases, seek ways to keep informal or indirect lines of communication open that do not place yourself at risk (see “Talking with Extremists”).

Talking With Extremists

Jimmy Carter is the thirty-ninth US president, serving from 1977 to 1981; founder of the Carter Center; and winner of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize. He is known as a devout southern Baptist who professed that Jesus Christ was the driving force in his life. In a New York Times opinion piece, he describes the Carter Center’s efforts to

engage Maoist rebels in Nepal in mediation and his personal meetings with Hamas leadership in Palestine, both considered terrorist organizations by the US government. Critical of foreign policy rejecting contact with terrorist organizations, he argues that “the path to peace lies in negotiation [with your enemies], not in isolation.”

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Carter#cite_note-376; and Jimmy Carter, “Pariah Diplomacy,” *New York Times* (April 28, 2008), www.nytimes.com/2008/04/28/opinion/28carter.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin.

GENDER AND AGE

Women and young people are important to peacebuilding.³² Particularly in religious peacebuilding, make sure to meaningfully include the religious women and youth identified in your mapping. The involvement of adult or male religious leaders may make inclusion of female and young participants difficult if there are strong norms around gender separation and deference to elders. Carefully make sure women’s and youth’s perspectives and participation are not lost.

Understand the specific roles women play in their society and community, including their religious group. The roles women are given or choose for themselves may allow them to act at

³⁰ See Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*; M. Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*; and Daniel Philpott, Monica Toft, and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011).

³¹ As upheld by the US Supreme Court in 2010, the US Patriot Act, e.g., makes it illegal to provide material support to a designated terrorist organization, including expert advice, training, or services, even when the aim of such assistance is making peace.

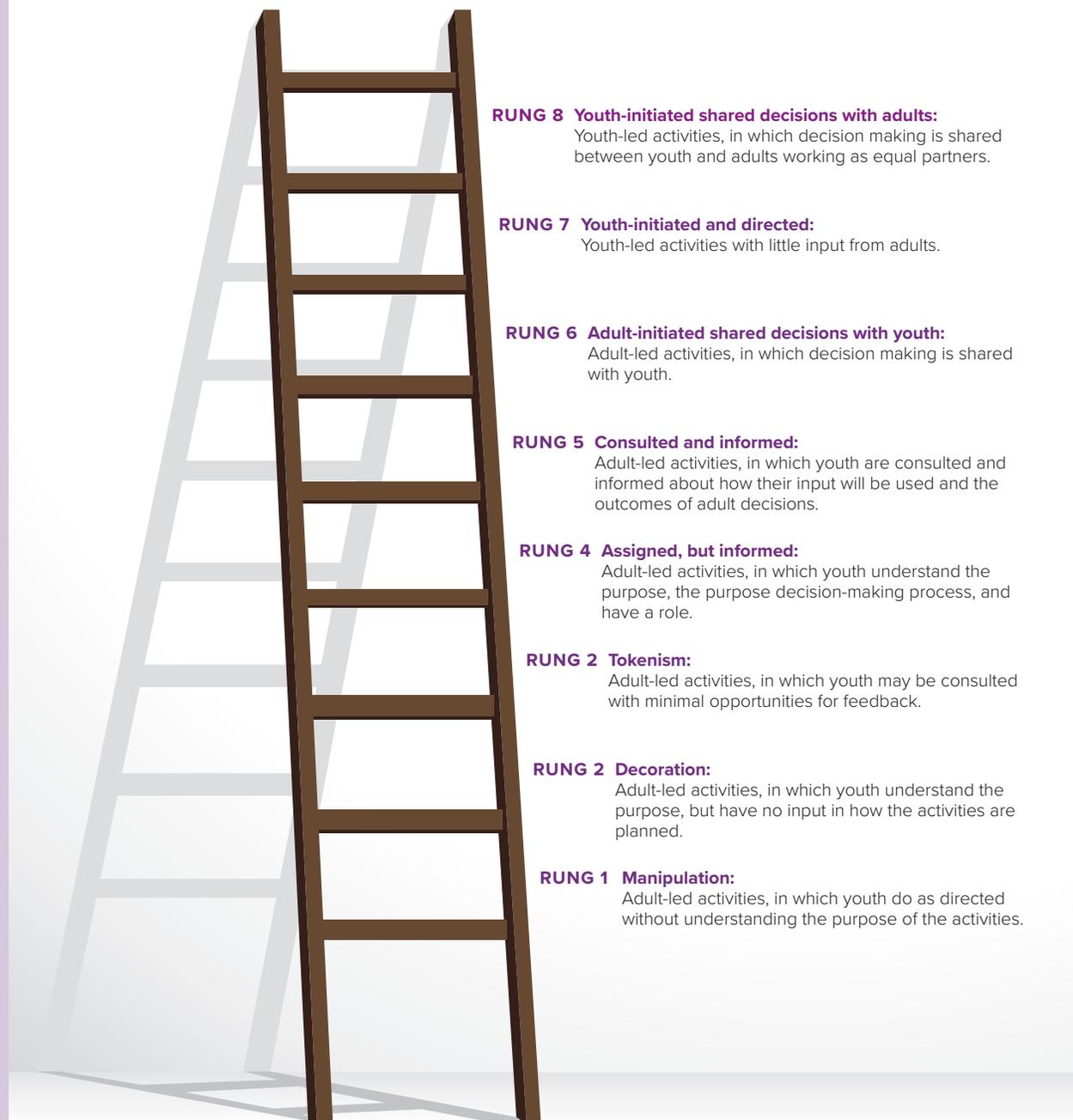
³² Susan Hayward and Katherina Marshall, *Women, Religion, Peacebuilding*.

The Ladder of Youth Participation

In 1997, sociologist Roger Hart wrote *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care for UNICEF*.^{*} His work criticizes existing efforts and offers guidance. The Ladder of Youth Participation shown in figure 5 is one of many tools from the book. Consider what level of participation efforts are engaging to youth and find ways to move up to higher levels.

^{*} Roger Hart, *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care for UNICEF* (New York: Earthscan, 1997).

FIGURE 5. **Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation**



Adapted from R. Hart, *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship* (Florence, Italy: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 1992), as cited in www.freechild.org/ladder.htm

different levels of society without the expectations and pressures men might have.³³ Be careful not to stereotype women. Not all women of faith are nurturing and healing. Thinking of them in these terms might keep you from recognizing how they add to conflict or contribute to peace in ways that are traditionally associated with men. For more guidance on gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive religious peacebuilding, refer to the *Action Guide on Religion and Gender*.

In including youth, be aware of how the actions and thinking of young people are shaped by peer pressure, personal identity formation, and adolescent brain development. Under certain circumstances, these factors may make youth more likely to participate in violence. With encouragement and support, however, youth tend to bring fresh perspectives and ideas, take initiative and leadership based on ideals, and contribute great amounts of energy and time. Furthermore, their involvement is an investment in future adult leaders (see “The Ladder of Youth Participation”).

MULTIPLE WORLDVIEWS

Bringing together actors from different backgrounds, whether religious or secular, can be challenging. When conflict actors have different frameworks for understanding the world, they may struggle to understand, accept, or talk with one another. It may be difficult for a third party to frame things in terms that all actors understand the same way. Furthermore, if a third party’s worldview is closer to one actor than to another, the third party may lose perceived impartiality. For example, after the 2011 revolution in Egypt, there were tensions between secular and Islamic political parties. It was difficult for secular Western actors to play a third-party role because they were perceived as favoring the secular parties.

When disagreement arises from widely different worldviews, typical dialogue and negotiation may not work. Talking about the differences may only make the differences seem more difficult to resolve. Consider alternative strategies such as cofacilitated mediation, where facilitators represent the different worldviews of the parties, or facilitation by a third party that is considered neutral. A focus on joint action rather than dialogue may move things forward because working together toward practical objectives that are acceptable to all parties builds trust and understanding.³⁴

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

Religious actors are not just religious actors. They have other identities that need to be considered in order to understand their role in peacebuilding. A Hindu Brahmin may belong to an ethnic group, be tied to a geographic location, and hold social status that depends on the kind of rituals he performs and for whom. All these factors will make him more or less authoritative in different situations or be seen at the same time as a friend or an enemy by different groups.

TRUST

Building trust and a working relationship with religious actors takes honesty, modesty, and the willingness to accept and understand each religious actor on their own terms. This does not mean agreeing with or adopting their worldview, but respecting the profound spiritual meaning it has for them, their followers, and members of their faith community. Not to appreciate this dimension limits the peacebuilding potential of religious actors and endangers your constructive relationships with them.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ For more on how to work across worldviews, see Jean-Nicolas Bitter, *Secularism in International Politics* (Geneva: Cordoba Foundation, 2015), 52.

DO NO HARM

Peacebuilding can be dangerous in some contexts. Be sensitive to what you are expecting from your partners. Openly describe the activities you are asking them to participate in and with whom. Discuss the potential risks to their personal security or reputation and give them time and space to reflect before making a decision.

WHY?

Why Would Actors Be Motivated to Engage in Your Peacebuilding Project?

It is important to understand why actors would engage in your peacebuilding project. Reflect on whether you enjoy enough trust with the actors you wish to work with, whether they believe their participation will help them achieve their own goals, what the obstacles might be to their participation, and how to ensure that your initiative is as attractive as possible. Your answers will vary for different actors. Make sure your inquiry is honest and open. Invite outside participants to identify gaps in your understanding of yourself and others.

How Do You Take into Account Motivations Shaped by Religion?

Think carefully about how you plan to address any actors' religious motivations for engaging in conflict that you identified in your conflict analysis and mapping, as well as how your efforts can build on the motivations of religious peacebuilders. If you hope to engage with actors on their own terms, seriously consider the reasons they are engaged in the conflict or peacebuilding, including those expressed in religious terms.

You may seek to address motivations by offering, through your peacebuilding initiative, a peaceful means of pursuing their agenda, for example, through dialogue or negotiation. Or you may seek to support actors who offer alternative approaches and solutions. For example, if conflict actors are using religious arguments to justify their use of violence, you may support religious actors who are inclined or equipped to voice alternative interpretations that reject the use of violence.

WHEN?

When Will the Engagement Begin and How Long Will It Last?

Timing can be critical in peacebuilding. Vulnerable situations (such as elections) or opportunities for bringing people together (such as national celebrations) can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of a peacebuilding project. Work with local partners and participants to determine windows of vulnerability and opportunity. Use data generated in the earlier steps to identify how past events contributed to an escalation of violence or strengthened peacebuilding.

Make a practical timeline for project implementation and completion, considering the possible events that may disrupt or enhance it. Give adequate time to reach intended outcomes. Peacebuilding often seeks profound changes in individual and community attitudes and perceptions, which takes a long time. Many of these changes cannot be achieved in a typical project cycle of one to five years, so be realistic about what you can achieve in the time you have. Collaborating with local partners allows long-term change to continue after external actors are gone. Remember that for religious actors and traditions, change is often a slow, gradual process.

How Might Religious Calendars Affect the Timing of Your Peacebuilding Efforts?

Consider how the specific events, timetables, or anniversaries you identified in the prior steps fit into your peacebuilding timeline. Important events such as holy days can have a large impact, promoting exclusion and hostility or inclusion and unity. For example, the Hindu festival of Dashain in Nepal is also celebrated by Buddhists and other religious and ethnic groups, and so serves as a national holiday to bring people together.

Even when the impact is small, taking religious events into account demonstrates knowledge of and respect for religious traditions. It is also important for managing logistics. For example, Islam has set times for prayers each day, so schedule breaks in your meetings or events around these times. Similarly, avoid scheduling activities between the Friday and Saturday sunsets when you are involving Conservative and Orthodox Jews who observe Shabbat and thus will not travel or take part in any type of work during this time.

HOW?

How Do You Plan to Reach Your Goal?

By this point, you have thought about the where, what, who, why, and when, but not about the specific activity your peacebuilding initiative will consist of. The how is what pulls together your answers to the where, what, who, why, and when into a concrete action plan.

For example, if your analysis has led you to conclude that a conflict between two communities of different religious identities is in part driven by mutual suspicion of each other's religion, you may aim to increase interreligious understanding through a series of exchange visits between places of worship. If you conclude that one of the main actors in the conflict is using religious arguments to justify violence, you may decide to support religious authorities of the same faith to develop a religiously based counter-narrative to reduce the actor's ability to recruit new followers.

Depending on the circumstances, all these actions could be valuable activities. To gauge how effective they will be, articulate and reflect on your assumptions, or ToCs. Use your in-depth understanding of the conflict context and work with project partners and participants to refine your ToCs until you are confident your plan is based on solid assumptions.

It is also important to develop a relevant and realistic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework so you can monitor the progress of your project and respond to changes and challenges as they arise (see "Monitoring and Evaluation"). There are many resources to help develop peacebuilding M&E frameworks; one that may be of use is *Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring & Evaluation of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding*.³⁵

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is the process of tracking and assessing the implementation and effects of a project over time in order to learn from the effort, and making adjustments when the desired impact is not occurring. M&E helps practitioners avoid continuing efforts that are ineffective, irrelevant, or making the situation worse. There are many M&E resources that will help practitioners develop effective indicators of a project's progress, but few are specific to religious peacebuilding.³⁶ Including religious dimensions in your M&E system will help you obtain more information on the role of religion in the conflict

and your peacebuilding efforts, allowing you to test the assumptions and conclusions of your conflict analysis and action planning steps.

An important benefit of an M&E system is its early warning function. When you are implementing M&E, you will be better able to identify and manage risk, especially as it relates to religious sensitivities. You can identify changing circumstances and enable project staff to respond early. Make sure your M&E system includes the procedures and staff needed to respond to risk quickly and effectively.

³⁵ Peter Woodrow, Nick Oatley, and Michelle Garred, *Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring & Evaluation of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding* (Cambridge: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2017).

³⁶ For general M&E resources, see www.dmeformpeace.org/. Note that the Alliance for Peacebuilding is developing a specific M&E guide on effective interreligious action in peacebuilding; see www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/our-work/about-our-work/peacebuilding-evaluation/effective-inter-religious-action-in-peacebuilding/.

How Will Religion Contribute to Your Peacebuilding Efforts?

Based on what you learned from your self-reflection, context assessment, conflict analysis, and mapping peacebuilding, consider how religion can contribute to your peacebuilding plan. Religious mediation and religiously inspired reconciliation are two common approaches of religious peacebuilding, each of which is explored in great depth in the *Action Guide on Religion and Mediation* and the *Action Guide on Religion and Reconciliation*. Resources for interfaith dialogue and other religious peacebuilding approaches can be found in the appendix to this Guide.

Consider how religion in its five different dimensions may play a role in peacebuilding. Figure 6, on p. 104, provides an overview of how the dimensions of religion can affect peacebuilding.

RELIGION AS A SET OF IDEAS

Religious teachings and narratives can be a call to engage in peacebuilding, a moral reference in support of tolerance and nonviolence, or a source of ideas and tools for resolving conflict. These dimensions are often most powerful when parties to a conflict are from the same religious (or nonreligious) tradition and thus share norms, values, and culture, in which case the actors are more likely to agree on what a conflict resolution process should look like and the reasons why violence is not desirable.

When actors are from different traditions, one approach is to identify values and ideas that are common to the different traditions. Every religion and culture has its own strategies for resolving conflict, and there may be limits to how well these fit together. The concept of peace varies across cultures and religions, and there may be disagreement about the goals of peacebuilding. Consider how a peacebuilding approach based on secular ideals of universal human rights, liberalism, democracy, and capitalism may be in tension with particular local, religiously inspired approaches to peacebuilding.

Self-reflective peacebuilding means recognizing your own values and beliefs and how they shape your approach. There is no easy answer to the challenges of peacebuilding. Developing strategies through dialogue and cooperation is likely to be more productive than forcing, rejecting, or excluding others because of their differences. The most important concern is not to add to the harm that the conflict is already causing.

RELIGION AS A COMMUNITY

The tendency for religion to strengthen group identity can strengthen or weaken peacebuilding efforts. The collective power of a community working for peace can be greater than the individual efforts of its members. Their shared knowledge can help you better understand the problems and possible solutions. Their influence can make conflict actors reflect on their actions and increase participation in peacebuilding initiatives.

A danger of group identity is that it can lead to negative stereotypes. When religious identity is a factor in conflict, activities aimed at sharing knowledge about different groups' religious beliefs and practices can counteract rumors and misperceptions about the "other."

Communities that have strong religious identity but weak knowledge of their religion may be at greater risk for radicalization and violence.³⁷ Religious actors can strengthen religious knowledge in such a way as to increase critical thinking and resistance to radical narratives that promote violence.

RELIGION AS AN INSTITUTION

Although they vary in influence and complexity, most religions have some form of institutional hierarchy and structure. Institutions give religious leaders legitimacy and authority, as well as material and human resources to carry out peacebuilding activities. Influential religious leaders associated with an institution may be scholars, practitioners, and locals, some of whom will be women and young people, not just official high-level representatives.

Where relationships between different religious groups need to be strengthened, institutions can come together to form interreligious associations. These groups can model unity and respect, make joint statements, or take cooperative action to advance peace and harmony. That said, take care to understand the differences and tensions between and within religious groups, which may be hidden for fear of upsetting relations or provoking retaliation.

Institutions can offer funding, labor, communication and media networks, transportation, and logistics to support a wide range of activities. Do not ignore these important dimensions of peacebuilding.

RELIGION AS A SET OF SYMBOLS AND PRACTICES

For some religious actors, what they do is as important as what they believe. The use of symbols and practices in peacebuilding is increasingly recognized as an important part of peacebuilding work.³⁸ When conflicting beliefs make talking difficult, rituals and icons can serve as a language for connection and renewed understanding during and after conflict. If not used carefully, however, religious symbols and practices can be divisive. They are often tied to beliefs that may be challenging and threatening. There are many examples of new and adapted ritual practices used in a sensitive and inclusive way for interreligious peacebuilding purposes.

RELIGION AS SPIRITUALITY

The spiritual dimension of religion refers to the feelings of connection and transcendence that distinguish rational thought from religious belief. Katrien Hertog argues that because of its spiritual dimension, religion is particularly relevant to many of the emotional processes that drive conflict or prevent a just and sustainable peace after conflict.³⁹ She suggests that traditional approaches often ignore this so-called soft dimension of peacebuilding.⁴⁰ Consider this argument in your planning. What soft dimensions such as feelings of insecurity has your analysis determined to be contributing to the conflict? Think of ways the spiritual dimension of religion can be a source of peacebuilding.

³⁷ See Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*.

³⁸ Schirch, *Ritual and Symbol*.

³⁹ Katrien Hertog, *The Complex Reality of Religious Peacebuilding* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).

⁴⁰ Ibid. Hertog specifies the soft dimensions of peacebuilding as including “the emotional, psychological, socio-psychological, and existential-spiritual issues involved in peacebuilding, such as attitudes, perceptions, cognitive thinking patterns, values, expectations, desires, emotions, traumas and wounds, assumptions, motivations, relationships, frustrations, intentions, concerns, taboos, principles, norms, beliefs, identities, loyalties, worldviews, and memories” (120).

CASE STUDY: Buddhist Dialogue Project, Southern Thailand | 2015

More than 94 percent of the Thai population follows Theravada Buddhism, which has a large influence on Thai culture and beliefs. However, Malay Muslims make up the majority of Thailand's southern provinces, where they have experienced decades of discrimination and forced integration by the Buddhist-dominated government. This discrimination has led some to turn to violence in a search for independence. Since 2004, the conflict between Malay Muslim rebels and the Thai government has taken more than six thousand lives. The conflict has also affected the Buddhist minority in the south that see themselves as forgotten or ignored by the state and their fellow Buddhists in the rest of the country. They are largely unaware of or uninvolved in peacebuilding efforts.

Believing that sustainable peace requires the participation of all, the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University; the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich; and the Human Security Division of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) jointly planned a project to establish an intra-Buddhist dialogue platform in 2015. This case study is based on project documentation prepared by these three institutions.⁴¹ Table 8 shows how the framework presented in this chapter could be applied to the context of southern Thailand.

TABLE 8. Turning analysis into action in southern Thailand in 2015

MAJOR QUESTIONS	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	TURNING ANALYSIS TO ACTION
WHERE?	Where will you work? <i>What areas of religious significance will feature in your peacebuilding work?</i> <i>Which religious identity groups will you work with?</i>	The project will work in the conflict-affected provinces of southern Thailand, but also in the capital, Bangkok, to reach influential national-level actors. <i>As with the proposed construction of the Buddhamonthon Buddhist park in Pattani, religious sites are sometimes a source of dispute.</i> <i>The project will work with the Buddhist community in the southern provinces and at the national level.</i>

⁴¹ Religion, Politics, Conflict Desk of the Swiss FDFA, Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich, Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University, *Buddhism and Majority-Minority Coexistence in Thailand* (Salaya: Mahidol University, 2016), www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/Frazer-2016-Thailand%20Booklet.pdf; See also www.berghof-foundation.org/programmes/southeast-asia/insider-peacebuilders-platform/.

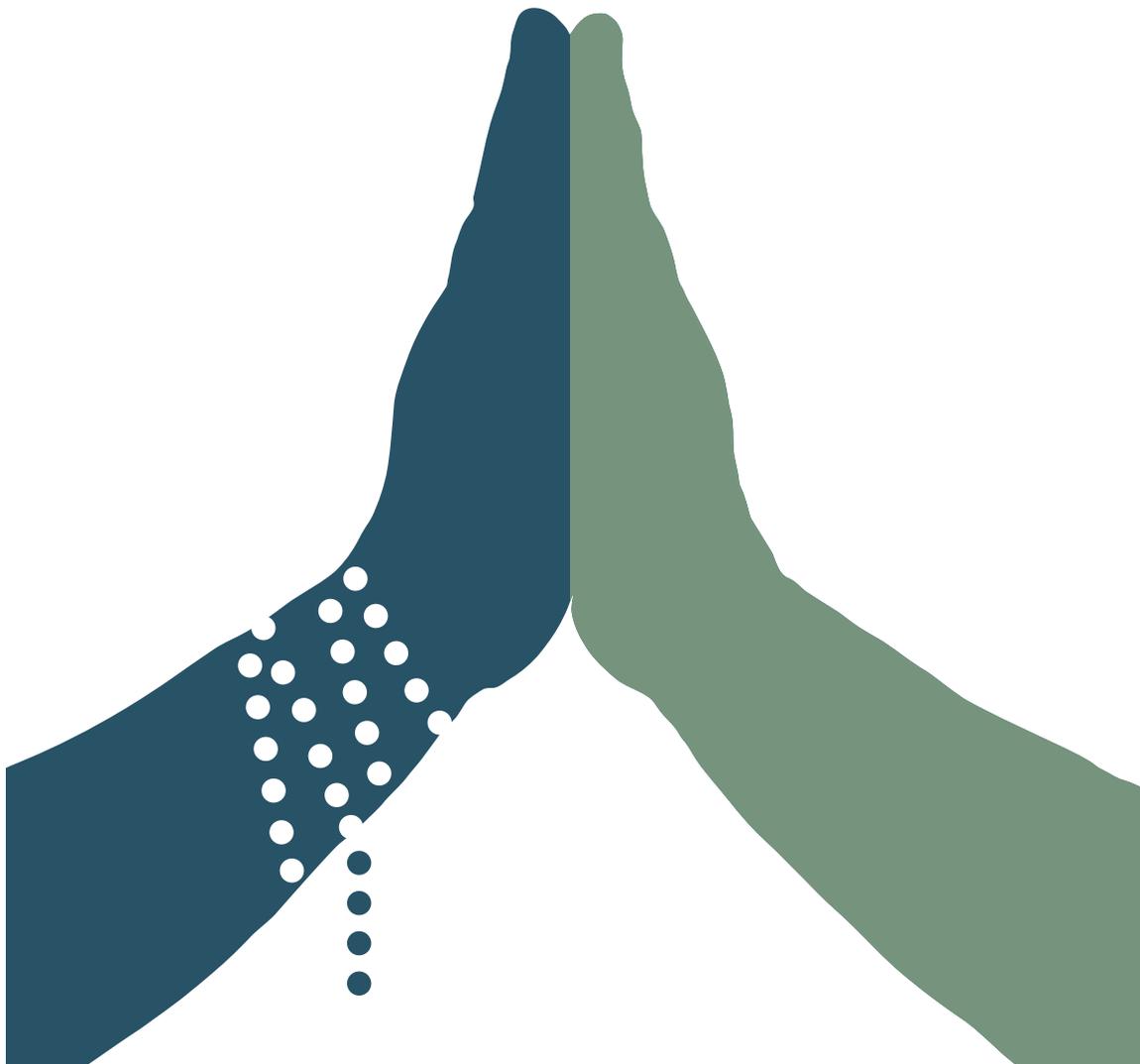
<p>WHAT?</p>	<p>What conflict drivers will you address?</p> <p><i>What issues will you address that are related to religion?</i></p>	<p>The project aims to address worsening relations between Buddhist and Muslim communities in southern Thailand, perceptions of isolation and discrimination among the Buddhist community in the south, and actions from Buddhist groups that could block the peace process.</p> <p><i>Participants will determine the issues to be addressed. Some issues will likely have a religious dimension, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Perceived discrimination linked to religious practices such as state support for the Muslim pilgrimage (hajj)</i> <i>Attacks on monks and temples</i> <i>The relationship between religion and the state, wherein some Buddhists want to see Buddhism as the national religion and fear that Muslim separatists will impose Sharia law in the south</i>
<p>WHO?</p>	<p>Who will you work with?</p> <p><i>Which religious actors will you involve in your peacebuilding activities?</i></p>	<p>The project will bring together representatives of the Buddhist community of monks, nuns, and laypeople, including moderates who are open to dialogue with Malay Muslims and hardliners who oppose dialogue.</p> <p>The project will encourage participants to engage with other peacebuilding initiatives in the south such as the track 1 negotiations between the government and insurgents, the Insider Peacebuilders Platform, the Network of Civil Society in Southern Thailand, and the Interreligious Council of Thailand dialogue initiative.</p> <p><i>The project will involve Buddhist monks from different strands of Buddhism: establishment monks who are well connected to the Buddhist Sangha; government officials working in the National Office of Buddhism, which bridges the official community of monks known as the Sangha and the government; engaged (socially progressive) Buddhists; followers of the Dhammakaya Buddhist movement; monks known to spread anti-Muslim views; and female monks (Bikkhuni) who are not officially recognized by the Sangha.</i></p>
<p>WHY?</p>	<p>Why would actors be motivated to engage in your peacebuilding project?</p> <p><i>How do you take into account motivations that are shaped by religion?</i></p>	<p>The Buddhist community in the south feels weak and ignored. Members perceive the Malay Muslim community as much better organized and may therefore welcome an initiative to strengthen their solidarity and have their voices heard.</p> <p>Because the conflict is underreported in the media, Buddhist actors in central Thailand may welcome the opportunity to learn about the situation in the south. The challenge will be to involve influential Buddhist actors in the south who have been inactive until now. To engage them, one could explain that their lack of involvement leaves a gap that is being filled by other Buddhist actors whose influence they oppose, such as the Dhammakaya movement.</p> <p><i>One motivation for many Buddhist actors will be their concern for the decline of Buddhism and Buddhist communities in the south. It will be important to manage the risk that the project is perceived as promoting Buddhism and to focus on peaceful coexistence between religious communities in the south.</i></p>

<p>WHEN?</p>	<p>When will the engagement begin and how long will it last?</p> <p><i>How might religious calendars affect the timing of your peacebuilding efforts?</i></p>	<p>The project will begin in 2015, with dialogue rounds held about every three months. It will run for one year as a pilot with the intention to continue for three to five years, by which time it is hoped the Buddhist community will engage constructively in peacebuilding and the peace process on its own.</p> <p><i>Buddhist religious holidays will be avoided. In addition, any activities that involve Malay Muslim participants will take account of Muslim holidays. Bringing Buddhist clergy and laypeople together will be challenging because many laypeople work during the week and clergy have religious duties on the weekend.</i></p>
<p>HOW?</p>	<p>How do you plan to reach your goal?</p> <p><i>How will religion contribute to your peacebuilding efforts?</i></p>	<p>The project will provide a safe space for structured dialogue between different actors within the Buddhist community.</p> <p>Facilitated dialogue for southern Buddhists will help them develop a common understanding of the conflict, agree on common actions to promote peaceful coexistence, and identify shared concerns to address in constructive dialogue with authorities, Malay Muslims, and other actors.</p> <p>Facilitated dialogue for Buddhists in Bangkok will provide space to raise awareness of the situation in the south. Exchanges with the southern group will both build solidarity with southern Buddhists and allow their voice to be heard at a national level. Buddhists in central Thailand will become more aware of the impact their statements and actions have in the south.</p> <p><i>Religious identity will be the key criterion for selection of participants. Solidarity with coreligionists will motivate people to participate. At the same time, the project must take care not to strengthen divisions along religious lines.</i></p> <p><i>As a source of ideas and teachings, Buddhism can provide participants with a common language and a common source of inspiration.</i></p> <p><i>Buddhist practices such as meditation can be incorporated into dialogue sessions to build relationships between participants. Buddhist temples, often used as community meeting points, could be used as venues for meetings.</i></p> <p><i>Different formal and informal Buddhist groups and networks exist. The project will communicate the work of the dialogue groups through the participants' own networks, thereby prompting discussions within the wider Buddhist community. Outreach to senior monks in the Sangha will help the project gain passive support from the top of the Buddhist hierarchy.</i></p> <p><i>As respected and influential members of Thai society, those monks who are included in the dialogue group will represent the concerns of the Buddhist community and become important voices for constructive engagement on the conflict in the south. Many monks perceive the conflict as an attack on Buddhism. This project hopes to empower a sufficient number of them to counterbalance any reactions from the monkhood that could further threaten community relations and peacebuilding efforts.</i></p>

Final Remarks

Many peacebuilding activities look similar. This is not a bad thing. As a peacebuilding community, we have gained knowledge and experience about what works, and it makes sense to take advantage of this learning. Your peacebuilding initiative will likely not be very different from what has been done before. It may be more effective because it will take account of your own strengths and weaknesses, be adapted to the context and conflict, and build on the efforts of and lessons learned from other peacebuilding activities. We hope this Guide is a useful aid in this regard and that it increases the religion sensitivity of your initiative in the process.

Remember that an individual peacebuilding initiative rarely, if ever, resolves conflict on its own. It can address some issues, but it must be part of a comprehensive and strategic approach to peacebuilding for a just and sustainable peace. Understanding and strengthening the links between religious and secular peacebuilding theories and approaches is key. It is our hope that this Guide is a step in that direction.



Blank Quick Reference Charts: **WHERE?**

STEP 3: Analyze the Conflict

Where is the conflict taking place and who is affected?

What areas of religious significance overlap with areas of conflict?

What is the religious identity of the social groups affected by the conflict?

STEP 4: Map Peacebuilding

Where, and with which sections of society, are peacebuilding actors working?

How do areas of religious significance feature in peacebuilding activities?

Which different religious identity groups do peacebuilding activities engage with?

STEP 5: Turn Analysis into Action

Where will you work?

What areas of religious significance will feature in your peacebuilding work?

What religious identity groups will you work with?

Questions to Consider

WHAT?

Factors and issues that are contributing to conflict and peacebuilding

STEP 1: Self-Reflect

What are your assumptions about what is driving and mitigating the conflict?

What are your assumptions about religion and its role in the conflict?

STEP 2: Understand the Context

What are the context's main political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural characteristics?

What is the relationship between religion, the state, and society?

Blank Quick Reference Charts: **WHAT?**

STEP 3: Analyze the Conflict

What are the driving factors of the conflict?

What dimensions of religion, if any, are involved in driving the conflict?

STEP 4: Map Peacebuilding

What conflict drivers have past and current peacebuilding initiatives addressed?

What religious drivers of conflict are being addressed by existing peacebuilding initiatives?

STEP 5: Turn Analysis into Action

What conflict drivers will you address?

What issues will you address that are related to religion?

Questions to Consider

WHO?

Actors, their characteristics, and their attributes

STEP 1: Self-Reflect

Who are you and why might you be suited to work in this area?

What is your and your organization's self-defined and perceived religious identity or affiliation?

STEP 2: Understand the Context

Who are the actors with social and political influence?

Who are considered religious actors within the conflict context?

Who do religious actors have influence over?

Blank Quick Reference Charts: **WHO?**

STEP 3: Analyze the Conflict

Who are the actors in the conflict and what are the relationships among them?

How are the motivations of actors in the conflict shaped by religion?

STEP 4: Map Peacebuilding

Who are the peacebuilding organizations and actors and who are they working with?

Who are the actors initiating or involved with peacebuilding activities?

STEP 5: Turn Analysis into Action

Who will you work with?

Which religious actors will you involve in your peacebuilding activities?

Questions to Consider

WHY?

Motivations: why actors behave the way they do

STEP 1: Self-Reflect

Why are you getting involved in the conflict?

Why do you think it is important to look at the religious dimensions of the conflict?

STEP 2: Understand the Context

Why are actors from the wider context interested in the conflict?

How are the interests of actors from the wider context shaped by religion?

Blank Quick Reference Charts: **WHY?**

STEP 3: Analyze the Conflict

Why are the actors engaged in the conflict?

How are the motivations of actors in the conflict shaped by religion?

STEP 4: Map Peacebuilding

Why are actors engaged in peacebuilding?

How are the motivations of peacebuilders shaped by religion?

Why are religious actors engaged in peacebuilding?

STEP 5: Turn Analysis into Action

Why would actors be motivated to engage in your peacebuilding project?

How do you take into account motivations that are shaped by religion?

Questions to Consider

WHEN?

The conflict over time

STEP 1: Self-Reflect

When, and to what extent, can you engage in work on this conflict?

How might religious calendars affect the timing of your efforts?

STEP 2: Understand the Context

When did major historical developments that shaped the context occur?

When were major historical developments shaped by religion?

Blank Quick Reference Charts: **WHEN?**

STEP 3: Analyze the Conflict

When did the conflict start and how has it evolved over time?

What is the role of religion in the conflict over time?

STEP 4: Map Peacebuilding

When have peacebuilding efforts been most successful?

When has religion been involved in previous peacebuilding efforts?

How have religious calendars affected past peacebuilding efforts?

STEP 5: Turn Analysis into Action

When will the engagement begin and how long will it last?

How might religious calendars affect the timing of your peacebuilding efforts?

Questions to Consider

HOW?

The use of power and resources to achieve goals

STEP 1: Self-Reflect

How can you use your skills, resources, and experience to contribute to peacebuilding in this context?

What additional skills, resources, and relationships might you need to engage with the religious dimensions of the conflict?

STEP 2: Understand the Context

How is power and influence exercised in this context?

How does religion contribute to power dynamics?

Blank Quick Reference Charts: **HOW?**

STEP 3: Analyze the Conflict

How are conflict actors using sources of power and influence in pursuit of their goals?

How is religion a source of power and influence in the conflict?

STEP 4: Map Peacebuilding

How are individuals and organizations attempting to build peace?

How do, or could, the power and resources of religion contribute to building peace?

STEP 5: Turn Analysis into Action

How do you plan to reach your goal?

How will religion contribute to your peacebuilding efforts?

Key Terms

The Religious Peacebuilding Action Guides make reference to the following key terms. These terms, as well as others, can be found in *Peace Terms: Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding*, which is published by the United States Institute of Peace.⁴²

Conflict: An inevitable aspect of human interaction, conflict is present when two or more individuals or groups pursue what they perceive to be mutually incompatible goals. Conflicts can be waged violently, as in a war, or nonviolently, as in an election or an adversarial legal process. When channeled constructively into processes of resolution or transformation, conflict can be beneficial. **Intractable conflicts** are conflicts that go on for a long time, resisting attempts at resolution. Typically, intractable conflicts involve fundamental value or worldview disagreements, high-stakes distributional questions, domination issues, or denied human needs—usually the most difficult kinds of problems.

Conflict analysis: The systematic study of conflict in general and of individual or group conflicts in particular. Conflict analysis provides a structured inquiry into the causes and potential trajectory of a conflict so that processes of resolution can be better understood. In specific conflicts, the term **conflict assessment** refers to the data-collection phase of a larger conflict analysis process; within this, **conflict mapping** describes the process of identifying stakeholders and their relationships.

Conflict management: A general term that describes efforts to prevent, limit, contain, or resolve conflicts, especially violent ones, while building up the capacities of all parties involved to undertake peacebuilding. Conflict management is based on the concept that conflicts are a normal part of human interaction and are rarely completely resolved or eliminated, but they can be managed by measures such as negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration. Conflict management supports the longer-term development of societal systems and institutions that enhance good governance, rule of law, security, economic sustainability, and social well-being, all of which help prevent future conflicts. A closely related term is **peacemaking**, although peacemaking tends to focus on halting

ongoing conflicts and reaching partial agreements or broader negotiated settlements.

Conflict prevention: Used most often to refer to measures taken to keep low-level or long-festered disputes from escalating into violence, but the term can also apply to efforts to limit the spread of violence if violence does occur or to avoid the reoccurrence of violence. It may include early warning systems, confidence-building measures (hotlines, notification of troop movements), preventive deployment, and sanctions. Sometimes referred to as **preventive diplomacy**.

Conflict resolution: Efforts to address the underlying causes of a conflict by finding common interests and overarching goals. It includes fostering positive attitudes, generating trust through reconciliation initiatives, and building or strengthening the institutions and processes through which the parties interact peacefully.

Conflict transformation: A recently developed concept that emphasizes addressing the structural roots of conflict by changing existing patterns of behavior and creating a culture of nonviolent approaches. It is an integrated approach to peacebuilding that aims to bring about long-term changes in personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions. Recognizing that societies in conflict have systems that still function, conflict transformation focuses on building up local institutions as well as reducing drivers of conflict.

Culture: The shared beliefs, traits, attitudes, behavior, products, and artifacts common to a particular social or ethnic group. The term **cross-cultural** refers to interactions across cultures and reflects the fact that different cultures may have different communication styles and negotiating behavior. The term **multicultural** refers to the acceptance of different ethnic cultures within a society. Cultural sensitivity means being aware

⁴² Dan Snodderly, ed., *Peace Terms: Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011), www.usip.org/publications/usip-peace-terms-glossary.

of cultural differences and how they affect behavior and moving beyond cultural biases and preconceptions to interact effectively.

Dialogue: A conversation or exchange of ideas that seeks mutual understanding through the sharing of perspectives. Dialogue is a process for learning about another group's beliefs, feelings, interests, and needs in a nonadversarial, open way, usually with the help of a third-party facilitator. Facilitated dialogue is a face-to-face process, often among elites. It takes place at a meeting site, whereas other third-party assisted processes may occur indirectly or by means of proximity talks.

Do no harm: A maxim that acknowledges that any intervention carries with it the risk of doing harm. Practitioners should proceed with programs only after careful consideration and widespread consultation, including with other institutions in the field so as not to duplicate or undercut their efforts. In assistance activities, the maxim recognizes that resources inevitably represent the distribution of power and wealth and will create tensions if careful attention is not given to how they are distributed and delivered.

Escalation: An increase in intensity or scope of a conflict. The number of parties tends to increase during escalation, as does the number and breadth of issues. **De-escalation** is the lessening of the intensity of a conflict as parties tire out or begin to realize that the conflict is doing them more harm than good or as conflict management efforts begin to take effect. The ultimate intent of de-escalation is to create space for more intensive efforts to resolve the conflict.

Gender sensitivity: The ability to recognize gender issues, especially the ability to recognize women's different perspectives and interests arising from their different social situations and different gender roles. Gender sensitivity is considered the beginning stage of gender awareness, leading to efforts to address gender-related impacts of conflict and peacebuilding.

Identity: Identity refers to the way people see themselves—the groups they feel a part of and the aspects of themselves that they use to describe themselves. Some theorists distinguish among collective identity, social identity, and personal identity. However, all terms are related in one way

or another to a description of who one is and how one fits into his or her social group and society overall. **Identity conflicts** are conflicts that develop when a person or group feels that their sense of self is threatened or denied legitimacy or respect. Religious, ethnic, and racial conflicts are examples of identity conflicts. **Identity politics** tries to exploit those conflicts for political advantage.

Impartiality: In mediation or peacekeeping, impartiality means treating contending sides equitably and with fairness.

Interfaith activities: Efforts to promote understanding of and cooperation among different faiths, especially as a tool to advance peacemaking and peacebuilding. Some consider interfaith activities as activities that address religious topics or issues or involve religious symbols or practices, and thus distinguish them from **interreligious** or **multireligious** activities, which involve participants of different faiths but do not necessarily have religiously related content or processes.

Mediation: A mode of negotiation in which a mutually acceptable third party helps the parties in a conflict find a solution that they cannot find by themselves. Unlike judges or arbitrators, mediators have no authority to decide the dispute between the parties, although powerful mediators may bring to the table considerable capability to influence the outcome.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E): The ongoing observation and systematic collection and analysis of data on an activity or project to assess its implementation and results and to redirect the project if necessary.

Parties to the conflict: Disputants can be divided into **first** or **primary parties**, those who are directly involved in the confrontation; **secondary parties**, those who have influence and an indirect stake in the conflict; and **third** or **tertiary parties**, those who intervene to resolve the conflict.

Peace: The word **peace** evokes complex, sometimes contradictory, interpretations and reactions. For some people, peace means the end of violence or the formal cessation of hostilities; for others, it means resolving differences by political means. Some define peace as the attainment of justice and social stability; others define it as economic

well-being and basic freedom. Peacemaking can be a dynamic process of ending conflict through negotiation or mediation. Peace is often unstable because sources of conflict are seldom completely resolved or eliminated. Because conflict is inherent in the human condition, the striving for peace is particularly strong in times of violent conflict. However, a willingness to accommodate perpetrators of violence without resolving the sources of conflict—sometimes called “peace at any price”—may lead to greater conflict later.

Peacebuilding: Originally conceived in the context of postconflict recovery efforts to promote reconciliation and reconstruction, the term *peacebuilding* has more recently taken on a broader meaning. It may include providing humanitarian relief, protecting human rights, ensuring security, establishing nonviolent modes of resolving conflicts, fostering reconciliation, providing trauma-healing services, repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons, supporting broad-based education, and aiding in economic reconstruction. As such, it also includes conflict prevention in the sense of preventing the recurrence of violence, as well as conflict management and postconflict recovery. In a larger sense, peacebuilding involves a transformation to more manageable, peaceful relationships and governance structures—the long-term process of addressing root causes and effects, reconciling differences, normalizing relations, and building institutions that can manage conflict without resorting to violence.

Peacekeeping: Traditionally, action undertaken to preserve peace where fighting has been halted and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers. Typically authorized by the UN Security Council under chapter 6 or 7 of the UN Charter, peacekeeping operations usually include lightly armed military personnel and have the consent of the parties. The scope of peacekeeping activities has gradually broadened since the end of the Cold War to include civilian and humanitarian activities such as food distribution, electoral assistance, refugee return and reintegration, civilian protection and prevention of gender-based violence, restoration of transportation and other basic services, and establishing safe havens.

Peacemaking: Activities to halt ongoing conflicts and bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in chapter 6 of the Charter of the United Nations: “negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or agreements, or other peaceful means.” Peacemaking typically involves the process of negotiating an agreement between contending parties, often with the help of a third-party mediator. A closely related term is *conflict management*.

Reconciliation: The long-term process by which the parties to a violent dispute build trust, learn to live cooperatively, and create a stable peace. It can happen at the individual level, the community level, and the national level. It may involve dialogue, admissions of guilt, judicial processes, truth commissions, ritual forgiveness, and *sulha* (a traditional Arabic form of ritual forgiveness and restitution).

Religion: A human response to a perceived nonphysical reality concerning the origin, meaning, and purpose of life. It is typically organized by communities into a shared system of symbols, rituals, institutions, and practices. Religions are internally complex and dynamic, manifesting differently across time periods and places. For example, Islam may be practiced, interpreted, and expressed differently in Indonesia and in Iran. Religion may also contain a range of positions on any one issue. For example, Buddhism contains ideas that both promote and challenge gender equality.

Religious peacebuilding: A form of peacebuilding practice that explicitly targets religious actors, institutions, practices, and ideas as partners and resources to address and transform both religious and other broader drivers of prejudice, exclusion, and violent conflict. It entails one or more of the characteristics below, often but not necessarily found together (for example, a religious leader may have the credibility to mediate a conflict but does so using entirely secular methods).⁴³:

- A third party explicitly draws on the influence or legitimacy they enjoy because of the role, position, or function they occupy in a religious

⁴³ Mir Mubashir and Luxshi Vimalarajah, *Baseline Study: Tradition- and Faith-Oriented Insider Mediators (TFIMs) as Crucial Actors in Conflict Transformation Potential, Constraints, and Opportunities for Collaborative Support* (Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2016).

tradition, such as the role the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone played in shaping the Lomé Peace Agreement.⁴⁴

- The initiative uses overtly religious methods and resources, such as the work of Dadi Janki, who has sought to bridge national and religious divides by bringing people together around what her Hindu organization, Brahma Kumari, call “living values.”⁴⁵
- The initiative is religiously motivated, such as the work of the highly respected Kenyan peacebuilder Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, who was motivated by her Islamic faith.⁴⁶

Ripeness: Period in a conflict where parties are most likely to be open to negotiation (or mediation), usually due to conditions of a mutually hurting stalemate. A conflict is said to be ripe when it has reached such a stalemate and all the parties have determined that other alternatives will not get them what they want or need. It is possible for third parties to help create a perception of ripeness by introducing alternative ways of framing a conflict or by providing actual incentives or disincentives

Tracks of diplomacy: Over the years, scholars have delineated several levels of diplomacy. **Track 1** and **track 2** are the most frequently used terms. A composite term is **multitrack diplomacy**.

- **Track 1 diplomacy:** Formal discussions typically involving high-level political and military leaders and focusing on cease-fires, peace talks, and treaties and other agreements. Third-party interveners are almost always official—a government or international organization, for example.
- **Track 2 diplomacy:** Unofficial dialogue and problem-solving activities aimed at building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the formal process. Track 2 activities typically involve influential academic, religious, and NGO leaders and other civil society actors who can interact more freely than high-ranking officials. The range of unofficial interveners is similarly broad—religious institutions, academics, former government

officials, nongovernmental organizations, and think tanks, among others. Some analysts use the term **track 1.5** to denote informal dialogue and problem-solving formats with high-ranking politicians and decision makers. These activities involve track 1 participants but employ track 2 approaches in an attempt to bridge the gap between official government efforts and civil society. Track 1.5 can also refer to situations where official representatives give authority to nonstate actors to negotiate or act as intermediaries on their behalf.

- **Track 3 diplomacy:** People-to-people diplomacy undertaken by individuals and private groups to encourage interaction and understanding between hostile communities and involving awareness raising and empowerment within these communities. Normally focused at the grassroots level, this type of diplomacy often involves organizing meetings and conferences, generating media exposure, and political and legal advocacy for marginalized people and communities.
- **Multitrack diplomacy:** A term for operating on several tracks simultaneously, including official and unofficial conflict-resolution efforts, citizen and scientific exchanges, international business negotiations, international cultural and athletic activities, and other cooperative efforts. These efforts may be led by governments, professional organizations, businesses, churches, media, private citizens, training and educational institutes, activists, and funders.

Violence: Psychological or physical force exerted for the purpose of threatening, injuring, damaging, or abusing people or property. In international relations, violent conflict typically refers to a clash of political interests between organized groups characterized by a sustained and large-scale use of force.

Structural violence refers to inequalities built into the social system, such as unequal income distribution.

⁴⁴ www.c-r.org/accord-article/civil-society-and-peacebuilding-role-inter-religious-council-sierra-leone.

⁴⁵ S. Hayward and K. Marshall, eds., *Women, Religion and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2015), 108.

⁴⁶ www.opendemocracy.net/5050/scilla-elworthy/feast-with-your-enemies-dekha-ibrahim-abdi.

Organizations Working on Religion and Conflict

The following organizations work on religion and conflict at an international scale. The list does not capture all the international organizations, nor the countless actors throughout the world deeply engaged in religious peacebuilding in their local communities. Please visit www.usip.org/programs/religious-peacebuilding-action-guides to find an updated and keyword searchable directory of local and international organizations working on religion and conflict or to add your own.

Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University

<http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu>

Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, George Mason University

<http://crdc.gmu.edu>

Centre of Religion, Reconciliation and Peace, University of Winchester

www.winchester.ac.uk/wcrrp

Community of Sant'Edigio

www.santegidio.org

Cordoba Foundation of Geneva

www.cordoue.ch

Culture and Religion in Mediation Programme, Center for Security Studies, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich)

www.css.ethz.ch/policy_consultancy/Mediation_and_Peace_Promotion/Religion/index_EN

Institute for Global Engagement

<https://globalengage.org>

Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University

www.ihrp.mahidol.ac.th/

International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD)

<http://icrd.org>

King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)

www.kaiciid.org/en/the-centre/the-centre.html

Network of Religion and Traditional Peacemakers

www.peacemakersnetwork.org

Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution

www.pardes.org.il/program/pcjcr/pardes-center-for-judaism-conflict-resolution/

Pax Christi International

www.paxchristi.net

Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project

www.pewforum.org

Religions for Peace

www.religionsforpeace.org

Religion, Politics, Conflict, Human Security Division, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/foreign-policy/human-rights/peace/religion-and-conflicts.html

Salam Institute for Peace and Justice

<http://salaminstitute.org>

Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding

www.tanenbaum.org

United States Institute of Peace, Religion Program

www.usip.org/issue-areas/religion

United Religions Initiative

<http://uri.org/>

World Council of Churches

www.oikoumene.org

Additional Religious Peacebuilding Resources

Many of these written resources are found in the Resource Library of the Peace and Conflict Hub of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLIFLC), where you can find other resources that are more focused on a specific topic or region.⁴⁷ The resource library also has resources related to JLIFLC's other hubs: antitrafficking and modern slavery, ending violence against children, gender-based violence, mobilizing local faith communities, and refugees. Please visit www.usip.org/programs/religious-peacebuilding-action-guides to find an updated and keyword searchable directory of religious peacebuilding resources or to add your own.

Effective Inter-Religious Action in Peacebuilding (EIAP) Guide for Program Evaluation, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Alliance for Peacebuilding
<https://jliflc.com/resources/eiap-guide-for-program-evaluation>

Faith-Based Interventions in Peace, Conflict and Violence: A Scoping Study, Coventry University
<https://jliflc.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/JLI-Peace-Conflict-Scoping-Paper-May-2016.pdf>

Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring & Evaluation of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Alliance for Peacebuilding
www.dmeformpeace.org/resource/faith-matters-guide-design-monitoring-evaluation-inter-religious-action-peacebuilding/

Guide to Building Women of Faith Networks, Religions for Peace
www.rfpwomenoffaith.eu/pageimg/building-and-equipping-women-of-faith-networks.pdf-343865966.pdf

Interfaith Peacebuilding Guide, United Religions Initiative
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About the Action Guides

Why were the Religious Peacebuilding Action Guides written? Although it is difficult to deny that religion plays a role in many conflicts across the world, only relatively recently has there been an increased interest in what this means for peacebuilding.⁴⁸ “Religious peacebuilding” has developed as a recognized field in its own right since the turn of the century.⁴⁹ However, religion continues to be relatively neglected in the wider field of peacebuilding, both because of a secular bias that tends to downplay the importance or relevance of religion and because of a shortage of practical tools to help peacebuilders navigate the complexities of the religious dimensions of a conflict.

The Action Guides aim to address this shortage of practical tools and, in the process, to challenge the persisting secular bias in peacebuilding. We hope they will bridge the divide between secular and religious peacebuilding by ensuring that peacebuilding actors are comfortable and capable of understanding and acting within the religious landscape of conflict environments.

These four Action Guides are the product of a collaborative process involving eight authors coordinated by three editors with support from the religion and peacebuilding team at the United States Institute of Peace. Two consultations, one in New York and one in Thailand, with stakeholders from the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia; a global survey of some eighty respondents; and two symposia of religious and thematic specialists fed into the process. Editors were then responsible for reviewing and finalizing the publications, ensuring consistency across all four Guides.

⁴⁸ See Susan Hayward, *Religion and Peacebuilding: Reflections on Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, Special Report no. 313 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2012), www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR313.pdf, for an account of the increasing interest in religion and conflict since the 1979 revolution in Iran, reinforced by the events of September 11, 2001, and followed by the emergence of a number of academic and government initiatives in the subsequent decade.

⁴⁹ Katrien Hertog, *The Complex Reality of Religious Peacebuilding: Conceptual Contributions and Critical Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010), 1–6.

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About the Supporting Organizations



The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers builds bridges between grassroots peacemakers and global players in order to strengthen the work done for sustainable peace. The Network strengthens peacemaking through collaboratively supporting the positive role of religious and traditional actors in peace and peacebuilding processes.

See www.peacemakersnetwork.org/about-us for more information.



The Salam Institute for Peace and Justice is a US-based nonprofit organization for research, education, and practice on issues related to conflict resolution, nonviolence, human rights, and development, with a focus on bridging differences between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The Salam Institute has extensive experience directing projects focused on peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue and exchange in Muslim countries.

See <http://salaminstitute.org> for more information.



The United States Institute of Peace is an independent national institute, founded by the US Congress and dedicated to the proposition that a world without violent conflict is possible, practical, and essential for US and global security. The Institute pursues this vision on the ground in conflict zones, working with local partners to prevent conflicts from turning to bloodshed and to end it when they do. The Institute provides training, analysis, and other resources to people, organizations, and governments working to build peace.

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