

# 2

## Understanding the process

Integrating the questions and exercises outlined in the toolkit into conflict analysis design is not in itself enough to ensure either gender sensitivity or that the research captures how gender norms interact with conflict: It is also necessary to ensure that a broad range of people are involved in the research and feel free to speak openly. To do this, planning needs to begin from the design phase.

This section focuses on the analysis process itself and outlines some key guiding issues/questions to think about when designing and conducting your work. Section 5 suggests some further reading related to this.

The exercises in this toolkit are designed to be carried out with groups of community members, though they can also be carried out with civil society organisations (CSOs) or other stakeholders who have knowledge of the local context. In Moroto, the exercises were run with separate groups of women and men in each community, and subsequently key informant interviews (KIs) were held with stakeholders such as local NGOs, government officials and local service providers to fill in any gaps.

Any research process entails certain risks which vary depending on the subject matter, context, and a number of other factors. Before undertaking your work you should conduct a risk assessment to identify any issues that may arise in advance and make plans to address them.

We have identified a number of potential risks in the paragraphs below which relate directly to the research and analysis involved for this toolkit. It is important to bear these in mind and make every effort to mitigate risks before undertaking your work or engaging with communities.

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## Have you done your background research?

- Carry out a literature review. This should be your first step as it is an invaluable way of gathering background information and will help inform the design of your analysis process. Sources could include NGO reports, government reports and academic research. Seek out sources which may pay particular attention to gender, such as publications from women's rights organisations or government ministries for women or gender.
- Identify who else is working on related issues and/or is working in the area where you intend to carry out your analysis. Contact them to see where there may be overlapping areas of work and, if appropriate, carry out KIIs with them (see below).

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## Who is running the analysis process?

- Who is facilitating the discussions? Make sure there is gender balance on the team and, where possible, that it reflects different identities represented in the community (including, but not limited to, class, religion and ethnicity). In Moroto, the discussions were facilitated by local Karamojong women and men in the local language, while international staff did the note taking with the help of a translator. Each group discussion had a male and a female facilitator as participants were comfortable with both, but in other contexts people may prefer to interact with a facilitator of their own sex.
- What background and experience do the different members of the research team have? If possible include those who have experience working on gender and/or conflict issues and with interviewing vulnerable groups, including survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). If this is not possible then identify any knowledge gaps and arrange to fill them either through training or bringing in others with relevant experience.
- Be aware of any sensitivities which mean certain staff (based on their ethnicity, religion, class etc.) may be at risk if they travel to certain areas or may be accused of bias.

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## Is everyone prepared?

- Take time to review the process together to make sure everyone on the research team understands the process and is comfortable with the approaches to be used. Make sure everyone on the team is clear about what gender norms are and how they may be linked to conflict – if possible/appropriate it may be good to organise training/capacity building for team members who are not familiar with this issue, with case studies from different contexts. In Moroto, training sessions were held at the start to help the facilitators understand both the subject matter and the process.
- Practise tailoring the language you plan to use in the community to ensure it is clear, simple and appropriate to the context, and translate questions into local languages if necessary. This should be carried out with the help of people as close to the local context as possible, who will understand the way that language is used and how the issues are understood locally.
- When thinking about which communities to work with, consider which areas may receive a lot of researchers and which may be under-researched. There is often a tendency for the most easily accessible areas to be frequently visited while others are overlooked.
- Consider how many people you need to speak to in order to get a range of views. Most exercises in this toolkit work best with groups of 8–10 people. Ideally it is best to try and find somewhere quiet and private for the discussions so people feel comfortable speaking freely, but if this is not possible then be aware that if more people join in or watch it may impact on the dynamics and conversation. During the test run in Moroto, where the groups met outdoors, there were times when many more community members joined as they saw what was happening, though it did not appear to have a significant impact on the discussions.
- Decide how you will capture the findings. In all of the exercises in this toolkit, even where participants are asked to write or draw answers on a page, it is important to capture the whole of the discussion and not just the final answers people give. In Moroto, the team made audio recordings of each discussion, with the consent of participants, as well as taking written notes. This helped to ensure that nothing was missed and that accurate translations could be made.

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## Who are you going to talk to, where and when?

- Get a clear understanding of the different identities represented in the project/research area, based on your literature review or speaking with local contacts.
- Be clear about any sensitivities over different groups being in the same place together and how this may impact on who feels able to speak and what they feel able to say. Women and men should be spoken to separately and, if appropriate, SGMs too. Consider how other aspects of identity might affect how people interact – for example, if you think young women/men are unlikely to speak up in front of older women/men, hold separate discussion groups with them.
- Are there individuals/groups that it is going to be hard to access and, if so, how are you going to address this? Time, place and duration may affect who can come. Are women able to attend events on their own/unchaperoned? Are there household commitments, childcare issues, work commitments which mean certain times are better than others? Do you need to travel to where day labourers are working so that you can speak to them? If possible, allow participants to determine the best time and place for them.

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## How are you going to talk to people? What participatory methods can be used?

- This toolkit suggests a range of participatory tools which can be used for gathering the information you need. However, these can be adapted or supplemented with other methods of your choice, including more standard research methods such as focus group discussions (FGDs) and KIIs. Think about what research methods are best suited to the task and the team. Chapter 6 contains suggested readings on participatory methods.
- If you conduct KIIs make sure you interview a range of people and not just the 'usual suspects' and organisations. Check if there are people/organisations working on gender and/or conflict who could be potential interviewees and/or could suggest interviewees. Use 'snowball' sampling – where one interviewee recommends someone else to speak to and they recommend someone else and so on – to expand your range.

- In most contexts, we have found it best for all-female groups to be led and reported on by female researchers/facilitators and all-male groups to be better led and reported on by male researchers/facilitators, especially groups of elders or leaders. However, in some contexts male respondents may find a female facilitator less threatening and therefore easier to open up to. Talk to local partners and other contacts who will have useful insights about this.
- Efforts should be made to include a balance of male and female respondents, as well as people with gender expertise, such as women's rights organisations, ministries of gender, or gender desks in local police stations. Where there are organisations working on men and masculinities try to contact them as well. It may be necessary to ask follow up questions to probe for information on gender dynamics – for example, when it is not clear whether respondents are talking about the concerns of just women, just men, specific groups of women or men or SGMs, or the whole community.
- In some contexts it may be appropriate to hold separate discussions with SGMs who do not identify as either women or men, or perhaps even those who do. However, identifying outside of traditional gender categories can be a very sensitive, or even dangerous, thing to do in many societies. Real care must be taken to understand the context before putting people in a position where they may be identified against their wishes. Researchers should do careful background research into the context and make sure they contact any organisations working with SGMs speak to trusted local partners and ask their advice. In Moroto, the team opted not to try to speak to SGMs separately, on the grounds that it would involve too much personal risk for those individuals. In similar cases, key information may be available through desk research or meetings with organisations working with SGMs.

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## Creating a safe environment

- Everyone you speak to should be informed about the nature of the process and what the information they give is being used for. All participants should give either verbal or written consent (using an information or consent form that informs them about the project and their rights) and all participants should be given the option of remaining anonymous. Be aware though that this can be difficult at the local level as while it is best to hold group discussions in a private setting this may not be possible, and if they

are held outside/in a public space it is easy for anyone to identify who takes part. If this is the case, make sure that participants are aware of this and are still comfortable about taking part. Also be aware that obviously everyone involved in the discussions will be able to identify anyone else who took part.

- It is important to create as safe an environment as possible, in which people of all genders feel able to raise sensitive issues, including those relating to cultural taboos around gender, while recognising that it can take time to build enough trust to do this effectively. Skilled facilitation is key to this.
- Just as holding separate groups with SGMs can pose risks to those individuals, asking questions about sexual orientation and gender identity can also carry risks. These include risks to participants: for example, if people who belong to SGMs are made to feel unsafe because of discriminatory views expressed by other participants or if people are 'outed'. It can also carry risks to facilitators: for example, if they are perceived to be promoting homosexuality in a context where this may bring negative consequences, such as from law enforcement or community members themselves. It is therefore important to assess the risks in advance, ideally in discussion with trusted members of the local community who will have a better sense of the possible outcomes.
- Given the potentially sensitive nature of the topics of gender and conflict, identify the potential negative impacts of talking about these issues and try to either prevent these or make a plan for how to deal with them if they arise. Some participants may be survivors of violence and abuse, so it is important to say from the outset that the discussions may bring up sensitive issues which some participants may find difficult or stressful. Let participants know that they should feel free to withdraw from the process at any time or from particular topics of discussion, and inform them that the facilitator (or another appropriate person) will be available to talk to them after the session if they wish. A list of local services should also be provided to participants with information on psychosocial support, health care and shelter (where available).
- Prepare for the possibility that participants could experience a backlash from other family or community members if they disclose details of violence they have witnessed or experienced. In group discussion settings, participants should be reminded that anything they disclose in that space will be heard by those present, and asked to consider the consequences of anything they say. Facilitators should be ready to step in and sensitively stop people from speaking if they feel that the speaker may be putting

themselves or others at risk, perhaps taking them aside to discuss with them privately whether they are comfortable taking this risk.

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## What is going to happen to the data?

- Think about who has access to your data and how they access it. If data has been collected on condition of anonymity or if there is a chance that the identification of respondents may put them at risk, extreme care needs to be taken when considering who may be able to access the raw data. Precautions could include keeping material in a locked room and/or making sure computers are password protected. If visual material is being used consider whether people's faces should be shown or not. Where possible do not keep details of people's names, address and text of their interviews in the same place, and consider whether you need to collect such information at all.
- You may find yourself with a large amount of (qualitative) data and questions about how to make use of it. As the exercises are organised according to the ten key questions in the Introduction, table 2, this should help with sorting your data according to which question it will help you answer. Organising all the information under the ten questions may help to make it manageable.
- You could type up notes for each question or put key points on Post-it notes, stick up all the different flipchart notes and other resources from your research and move the notes/Post-its around so they 'sit' under the right question or, if you are familiar using qualitative data analysis software, input data into your computer. Be aware when using the latter that it can be useful for identifying patterns and keywords but not for the detailed nuances so you would need to use it in tandem with other analysis methods.
- Do you have gaps? If so, are there ways you can fill these through additional field/desk research?
- Once you have analysed your data you should organise a validation meeting where you present your findings back to the community where you did the research and check you got your information right and people agree with what you are saying. Bear in mind that all data can be interpreted differently so it is possible that communities will offer a variety of perspectives on your findings during the validation process. It is important to make a note of these views and keep in mind that there may be no single correct interpretation.