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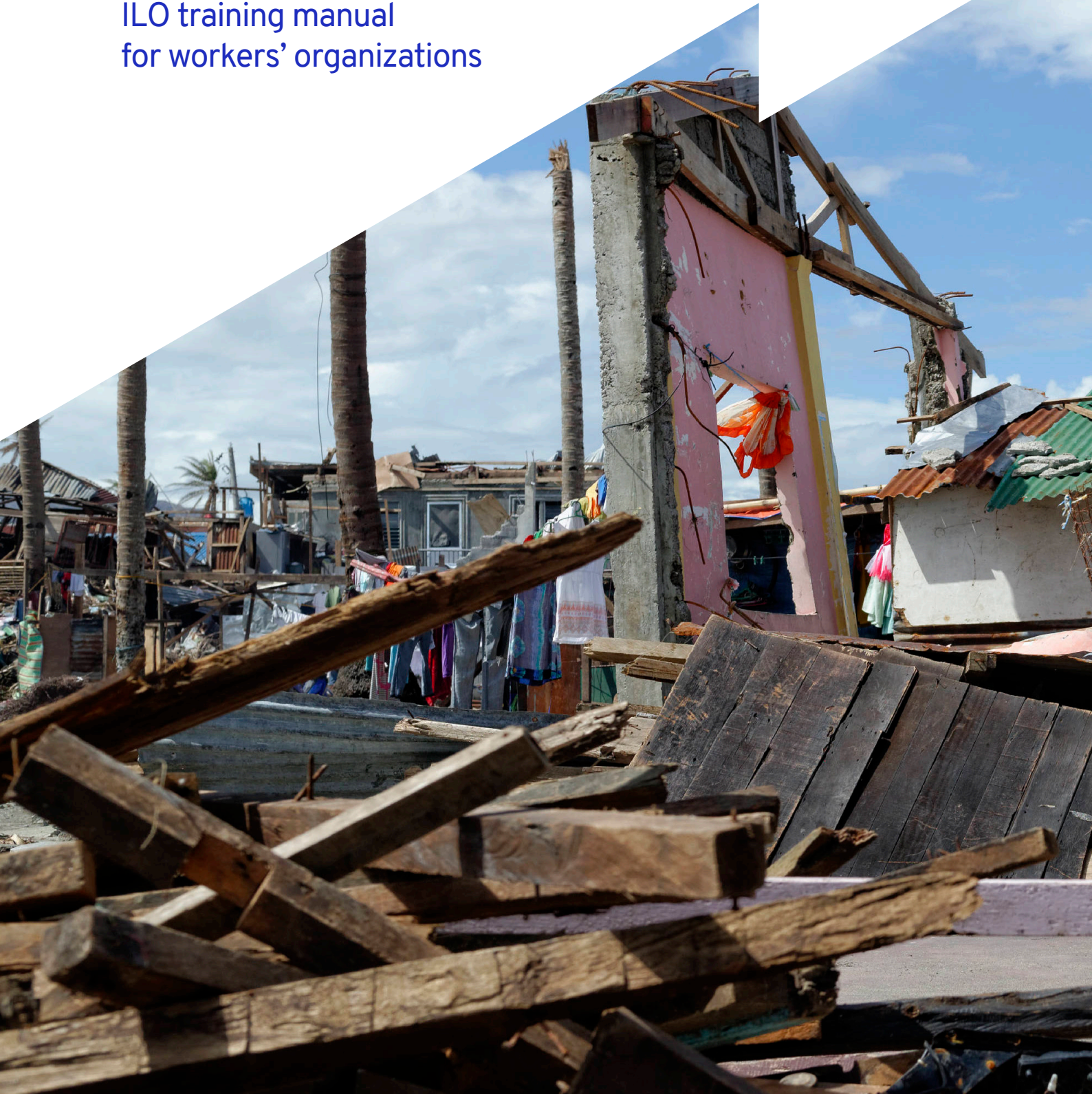
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# ► Dealing with crises arising from conflicts and disasters

ILO training manual  
for workers' organizations



# ▶ **Dealing with crises arising from conflicts and disasters**

ILO training manual for workers' organizations

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## ► Foreword

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Since its foundation in 1919, the ILO has addressed conflicts and disasters within its mandate of promoting social justice through decent work, with the understanding that the latter are essential ingredients to maintain peace. The form and shape of conflicts and disasters has changed greatly since 1919, however. They have become more complex, as they interact with multiple crises such as climate change, giving rise to more fragility and an increased frequency and intensity of disasters. This can create situations of increased grievances, or decent work deficits that may also give rise to more violence and conflict. Furthermore, we know that many of the countries that are dealing with protracted conflict, recurrent natural disasters and forced displacements are now facing the additional burden of COVID-19. The health crisis may also exacerbate existing drivers of conflict and social unrest, and undermine trust and the social contract between citizens and workers' organizations, the private sector and governments.

In 2017, the tripartite constituents of the ILO adopted an international labour standard to guide them in addressing this new landscape and to fine-tune the role of the ILO in crisis situations. Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience explicitly addresses the role of employment and decent work in prevention, recovery, peace and resilience with respect to crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters. It deals with situations that are at the crossroads of humanitarian assistance, development, peacebuilding and resilience. It contributes to anchoring the role of the ILO and the social partners across this field.

From a workers' organization perspective, a conflict or a disaster can also offer opportunities to shape societies and create a better future. It is crucial to ensure that employment and decent work are a key aspect of this and that workers' organizations take a central role in contributing to the prevention and mitigation of the effects of conflicts and disasters; engage in early warning and preparedness; assist in the immediate response in a conflict-sensitive manner; promote long-term recovery; and contribute to sustaining peace.

In the short term, this engagement process can strengthen the capacity of workers' organizations to influence the design and implementation of actions generally taken by humanitarian organizations and government as emergency responders. In the longer term, taking an active role in questions surrounding conflicts and disasters may have an impact on opening avenues to engage in social dialogue, on trust, on workers' organizations' coverage, and/or giving workers a voice. However, in order to grasp this opportunity, workers' organizations must be prepared, and – from an ILO perspective – reminded of what Recommendation No. 205 is, the potential it brings, and how best to use it. In short: workers' organizations cannot be passive bystanders when crises emerge. This is the topic of ILO Recommendation No. 205 and the theme of this training manual.

At ACTRAV, we have done extensive work to promote Recommendation No. 205 after its adoption. This work is not finished, however, and we should continue to promote it both in times of peace (to be better prepared), and in times of crisis (to be able to respond better to the situation faced). Building on a previous version, this thoroughly revised guide has both expanded its geographical scope and covers disasters as well as conflicts.

It is of crucial importance to have a holistic approach to the problem of conflicts and disasters, to the engagement of the crisis, with the clear intention of going beyond humanitarian relief to taking all aspects of decent work into account. In that regard, the ILO gives a special place and role to workers' organizations by insisting that social dialogue is an essential tool for responding to a crisis, building peace and resilience, reducing poverty, tackling unemployment which weighs heavily on young people and women, promoting the transition from the informal to the formal economy, and tackling climate change to achieve social justice, peace, inclusive growth, sustainable development and good governance.



We hope that this manual will serve as a valuable resource, giving practical guidance to workers' organizations as well as to ILO officials, governments, employers' organizations and other partners active in this field to better understand their roles and involvement in promoting peace and resilience through decent work.

This manual was coordinated by Claire La Hovary and Mohammed Mwamadzingo from ILO-ACTRAV with the support of Inviolata Chinyangarara and Mamadou Kaba Souaré (ILO-ACTRAV) as well as that of Nieves Thomet and Federico Negro (both from the ILO Coordination Support Unit for Peace and Resilience (CSPR) of the Development and Investment Branch (DEVINVEST)). The manual was prepared with the help of Oliver Jütersonke and Augusta Nannerini from the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, with additional inputs from CCDP colleagues Darine Atwa, Muriel Esposito, Kathryn Ginchini, Kazushige Kobayashi, Marie Lobjoy, Emilio Rodriguez and Sina Zintzmeyer. The guide was partly developed with the support from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

**Maria Helena André**, ACTRAV

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## ► List of acronyms and abbreviations

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<b>ACTRAV</b>	Bureau for Workers' Activities
<b>BASTUN</b>	Baltic Sea Trade Union Network
<b>CEACR</b>	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
<b>CAS</b>	Committee on the Application of Standards
<b>CFA</b>	Committee on Freedom of Association
<b>COTU</b>	Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya)
<b>CRE</b>	Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
<b>DDR</b>	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>FEWER</b>	Forum on Early Warning and Early Response
<b>GCM</b>	Global Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration
<b>GCR</b>	Global Compact on Refugees
<b>GDACS</b>	Global Disaster Alerting Coordination System
<b>HDP</b>	humanitarian-development-peace nexus
<b>ICG</b>	International Crisis Group
<b>IDP</b>	internally displaced person
<b>IFCR</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Office/Organization
<b>ILS</b>	international labour standards
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ITUC</b>	International Trade Union Confederation
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>OATUU</b>	Organization of African Trade Union Unity
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OSH</b>	occupational safety and health
<b>PBSO</b>	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
<b>UGTT</b>	Tunisian General Labour Union
<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN Refugee Agency)
<b>WANEP</b>	West African Network for Peacebuilding
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization





## ► Introduction

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Countless workers lose their jobs during periods of crisis, and there is a lack of social protection as state and societal institutions cease to function effectively. As a result, inequalities and social exclusion are worsened amidst a lack of respect for labour standards. Vulnerable groups – including minorities, children, the disabled and the elderly – are particularly affected, as are migrants and populations experiencing forced displacement.

The world of work plays a particularly important role in times of conflicts and disasters – as again emphasized during the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted people's livelihoods globally since late 2019. Activities include creating decent employment and income-generating opportunities, making basic social services and social protection available, upholding labour rights and standards, building representative and accountable institutions, and promoting social dialogue to mitigate the devastating consequences of crises and build peace.

In June 2017, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience. The focus of the Recommendation is on conflicts and disasters, which constantly destroy livelihoods, interrupt business activities and damage workplaces worldwide.

Workers' organizations are not passive bystanders when crises emerge. They have the potential to make important contributions to preventing and mitigating the effects of conflicts and disasters, engaging in early warning and preparedness, assisting in the immediate response, and promoting long-term recovery. This is the topic of ILO Recommendation No. 205 and the theme of this training manual.

## The role of workers' organizations in settings of conflict and disaster

Owing to their privileged position in society, workers' organizations have an important role when it comes to crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters. Key functions include:

- **Safeguarding work and promoting employment** in the interests of all workers, including migrants, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, as well as those working in the informal economy.
- **Advocating for good governance and accountable institutions** in the pursuit of peace and social justice.
- **Acting as a pressure group against the violation of workers' rights and discrimination** against all workers, in particular those who have been made vulnerable by the crisis.
- **Finding creative solutions to crisis situations** via constructive social dialogue and partnerships in the world of work.
- **Using the membership base to act as a source of early warning** for conflicts, and a reservoir of volunteers that can be mobilized in the immediate aftermath of disasters.
- **Ensuring that all workers are included in efforts to build peaceful and inclusive societies**, with a particular focus on the needs as well as the contributions of migrants, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, women, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.
- **Engaging in the establishment of a sustainable peace through recovery and reconstruction** after periods of conflict or disaster, emphasizing rights, skills development and the reinsertion of workers into the labour market through decent work.
- **Building alliances and solidarity with workers' organizations in other countries**, and consolidating regional and global support networks that can be drawn upon in times of crisis.

In order to maximize their potential as societal actors, workers' organizations mobilize skills, human and financial resources to respond to the specific challenges emerging from conflicts and disasters. As is expected from all ILO constituents, workers' organizations also adopt and nurture an open attitude that champions diversity, societal inclusion and sustainable peace, not least with respect to those who are made vulnerable by a crisis (such as children, the elderly, the disabled, and the forcibly displaced).

This training manual will highlight several issues relevant to workers' organizations in situations of crisis and disasters. These issues may include:

- The very functioning of workers' organizations when their existence and effectiveness may be put to the test due to conflict sensitivity.
- Fostering institutional resilience and sustaining peace, requiring investment in alliance-building across social partners and via trade union networks in other countries.
- The establishment of robust communication strategies within union channels and other societal actors, including at the regional and international levels.

## Objectives of this training manual

The overall aim of this manual is to encourage union leaders and professional staff of workers' organizations to increase their role in dealing with crises arising from conflicts and disasters. That agenda has been boosted through the adoption of ILO Recommendation No. 205. The training proposed here builds on the substance of that Recommendation and seeks to promote discussions around the topic of crisis management among workers' organizations, and in collaboration with governments and employers' organizations.

At the end of the training, participants should be able to:

- Understand how conflicts and disasters affect workplaces and workers.
- Contribute to the analysis of the causes, effects and drivers of crises on societies and the world of work.
- Recognize the potential of workers' organizations to make vital contributions to the prevention and resolution of tensions and conflicts and to the mitigation of disaster effects, as well as efforts related to preparedness, humanitarian response, recovery and reconstruction, and ultimately the establishment of sustainable peace.
- Acknowledge the importance of fostering strong ties and building alliances with societal institutions (including the media), and carrying out activities aimed at strengthening social dialogue. This includes establishing links with regional and international networks of workers' organizations.

## How the training manual is organized

This manual is divided into five modules. Each module comes with a set of learning objectives and involves a combination of analytical materials, exercises, and background information.

**Module 1** offers an introduction to the concepts of "conflict" and "disaster". It explores the linkages between the two in crisis settings, discusses some of the causes and drivers of such dynamics, and emphasizes the important roles workers' organizations can play in such settings.

**Module 2** develops basic analytical tools that can be used to make sense of conflicts and disasters, and to reflect on entry-points towards contributing to sustainable peace. These include the notions of "conflict sensitivity" and "resilience", as well the crisis management cycle of prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

**Module 3** looks at prevention and preparedness in more detail. Workers' organizations are vital actors in preventing political tensions from turning into violent conflict, and in mitigating the effects of disasters. Identifying warning signs early is thus key, as is being well prepared for the onset of crisis periods.

**Module 4** addresses response and recovery for peace and resilience. It examines the role of workers' organizations in the immediate response to conflicts and disasters, as well as the important contributions they can make to recovery and reconstruction in efforts to establish sustainable peace.

**Module 5** focuses on the role of international labour standards (ILS) in promoting decent work and employment in preparing for, and responding to, all forms of crisis situations.

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This manual should be used in conjunction with the Workers' Guide to ILO Recommendation No. 205, to which it makes repeated reference. The Workers' Guide contains important country examples and illustrations that help contextualize the materials covered (see [box 1](#)).

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► **Box 1. The Workers' Guide to Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation (No. 205)**

In order to familiarize workers' organizations with ILO Recommendation No. 205, the Workers' Guide:

- outlines how and why ILO Recommendation No. 205 was adopted;
- provides a section-by-section commentary of the text of the Recommendation;
- illustrates some of the main themes through real-world examples of activities pursued by workers' organizations in crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters; and
- offers a number of action points for worker's organizations, including suggestions on how to include some of the key messages of the recommendation in communications materials and awareness-raising campaigns.

The exercises are meant to be carried out having a specific conflict or disaster in mind. We suggest readers choose at least one conflict and disaster scenario they are familiar with, related to their country of origin or place of work, for example, or to a setting they are interested in exploring further. For simplicity, these scenarios are referred to as "your country" in the exercises.

One way to choose a conflict or disaster context is to browse the databases available on the internet websites indicated in the exercises.

The manual itself does not include details about the crises described in these databases, as the situations are constantly evolving. It should be noted that access to the internet is not a prerequisite for using this manual and undertaking the exercises.

The manual ends with a series of further readings, a glossary of key terms, and a list of some of the key international labour standards and texts related to the role of the world of work in settings affected by conflicts and disasters.

## Follow-up and feedback

With the support of the ILO, users of this manual are responsible for making use of the insights gained by seeking to instil concrete change within their own workers' organizations and the social dialogue of which they are a part.

Through joint training and the implementation of some of the action points suggested, the manual, together with the Workers' Guide to ILO Recommendation No. 205, can also help build alliances and foster regional and international networks.

Users of this manual are encouraged to submit their comments and suggestions to ILO-ACTRAV relating to the substance of the manual, as well as details regarding the way it is being put to use. This will inform subsequent updates of the text, as well as the design of training courses and similar manuals in the future.



# Module 1

## ► Making sense of conflicts and disasters

### Learning objectives

- Be aware of the different ways in which we use the term “conflict” to refer to disputes and tensions between individuals, groups and societies.
- Recognize that many forms of violence occur in situations that are not formally affected by wars.
- Understand the concept of “disaster”, and how it includes a variety of natural and human-made hazards – including global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Understand conflict and disaster settings and how to embrace the logic of “crisis management”.
- Acknowledge the various consequences conflicts and disasters can have on societies, and what role there is for workers’ organizations to become involved in dealing with such crises, not least by fostering social dialogue.

### 1.1. Conflict and violence

A **conflict**, in its most general terms, occurs when individuals or groups pursue their interests and objectives in a way that is seen as incompatible with the interests being pursued by other individuals or groups. In such cases, one side may seek to pressure the other side to back down; if the other side resists or counteracts such pressures in some way, then we have a “conflict”.

Conflict is part of every society, and may not necessarily be a bad thing: we want people and societies to be ambitious and pursue their well-being. However, when one or more parties to a conflict realize they are unable to resolve their differences peacefully, they may turn the conflict into a violent confrontation. When the actors involved are states or armed groups with an internal chain of command, then the **use of force** is referred to as **organized violence**.

**Armed conflict** is a type of organized violence that may involve both state and non-state actors. If the armed conflict involves more than one State, then it is referred to as an “international armed conflict”; if, instead, the conflict is occurring within the borders of one particular State (i.e. between government forces and non-state armed actors, or indeed among non-state actors fighting each other), then it is labelled as a “non-international armed conflict”.

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Armed conflict is the formal term for what we might commonly refer to as war.

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Since the end of the Cold War, key trends can be identified in relation to armed conflicts:

- **Asymmetric warfare** – Instead of state armies waging war on the battlefield, many of today’s violent conflicts are protracted, long-term struggles involving small yet heavily armed factions, often pitting themselves against state authority. This has resulted in a change of military doctrine too: moving away from trying to “win” an outright military victory, to counter-insurgency tactics and stabilization efforts as employed, for example, by external forces in Afghanistan or Mali.



- **A proliferation of non-state actors** – Many violent conflicts of today do not just involve state armies, but a variety of non-state armed actors – from rebel insurgents to militias, gangs, self-defence forces, and organized crime networks. In addition, there is a noticeable increase in the number of such groups operating in certain conflict zones: research has identified hundreds of armed groups in Libya, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is this fragmentation – marked by successive rounds of splintering and alliance formation – that poses a significant challenge to peacemaking efforts.
- **Proxy wars** – In today's globalized world, practically no armed conflict is “localized”, whether in terms of territory, or in terms of the actors involved. Instead, a variety of material, geopolitical and ideological interests bring forth various “supply chains”, with each conflicting party being supported with resources (money, weapons, training, mercenaries, etc.) from one foreign power or another.
- **Cities as the venue of violent conflict** – With the world rapidly urbanizing, war is also increasingly being fought in built-up areas, which in itself brings not just particular challenges for military doctrine (how to do battle in urban areas without civilian and military loss of life, and the massive destruction of basic infrastructures), but also for prevention work and humanitarian response (including protection and access concerns).

Often, it may be difficult to determine the **root causes** of a violent conflict, and the longer the conflict continues, the more likely it is to lose sight of the original differences. In other words, the conflict gets a life of its own, and becomes a state of existence and a source of income for some. This is why conflict analysts speak of **war economies**.

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The duration of violent conflict can vary, as can its intensity over time.

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The harmful effects of violent conflict are felt by all parts of society, including the world of work. Notably, conflicts have a profound impact on employment and income-generating opportunities, and disproportionately affect disadvantaged parts of the population such as women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. They destroy livelihoods, displace populations, and disrupt education processes.

Yet **violence** – between individuals or groups – also occurs in many societies that are not formally witnessing armed conflict. It does not always have to be lethal: many societies suffer from high levels of domestic violence, gender and sexual-based violence, as well as a variety of physical and psychological threats and coercion that are just as harmful to both individual and societal well-being and socio-economic prosperity (see [box 2](#)).

### ► Box 2. Defining violence

Various academic and practitioner circles define violence in different ways. The World Health Organization (WHO), for its part, has been very active through its Violence Prevention Alliance in stressing the need to go beyond homicide rates and battle deaths when seeking to make sense of the full scale of violence in society. Distinguishing between “self-directed violence”, “interpersonal violence” and “collective violence”, it defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation”. This definition is important when differentiating “conflict” and “violence” in the way suggested in this manual.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, there are cities and regions that feature levels of deadly violence that compare with, if not exceed, those found in war zones. Countries such as El Salvador, Mexico or South Africa experience criminal violence on an alarming scale, and even Brazil, a powerful regional economic player, is witnessing over 50,000 violent deaths in its cities every year. This is why our understanding of conflict needs to expand beyond traditional notions of “armed conflict” or “war” in order to also capture **chronic violence in non-conflict settings**.

### Exercise 1



Consider trends in organized violence for your country. Look back at the past and answer the following questions:

- 1.1. Has violent conflict increased or decreased over the past three or four decades?
- 1.2. Which years would you identify as “periods of crisis”?
- 1.3. How would you consider the country’s current situation?

Now try to compare the history of organized violence in your country to that of neighbouring States, answering the following questions:

- 1.4. How has armed conflict evolved throughout the region?
- 1.5. Do the moments of crisis in the region reflect the increase or decrease of organized violence in your country, and vice versa?

For detailed information on the level of violence in your country or the surrounding region, you can consult the Uppsala Conflict Data Program at <https://ucdp.uu.se/>.

## 1.2. Disasters

Beyond conflict, most countries around the world have to deal with natural disasters and other forms of catastrophic events, including health pandemics such as those related to COVID-19. In humanitarian circles, it is common to speak of different forms of **hazards** faced by societies, and these can be divided into human-made and natural hazards.

Human-made (and technological) hazards include famine and displaced populations, as well as industrial and transport accidents. Also included are other phenomena that are caused by humans and have serious consequences for human settlements, notably environmental degradation and pollution.

Natural hazards, by contrast, are naturally-occurring physical phenomena that are caused by either the slow or rapid onset of events. Disasters caused by them are becoming more frequent. These events can be:

- geophysical (earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and volcanic activity);
- hydrological (avalanches and floods);
- climatological (extreme temperatures, drought and wildfires);
- meteorological (cyclones and storms/wave surges); or
- biological (disease epidemics or pandemics, and insect/animal plagues).

Some of the natural hazards listed above may also be caused – or clearly exacerbated – by human involvement, and the distinction between natural and human-made disasters is thus not always clear or even useful to make. Landslides, for example, are often the result of deforestation or unsafe construction practices. Global warming and its effects (rising sea levels or extreme weather patterns, etc.) are also explicitly attributed to human action. Damage and disruption of urban infrastructures, including highways, buildings or bridges, may be correlated to phenomena such as corruption, public mismanagement, and other forms of societal dysfunction.

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*In general terms, poorer and more vulnerable parts of the population tend to be more affected by natural and human-made hazards than richer ones.*

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Moreover, there are a number of aggravating factors – challenges that risk making matters worse, both in terms of the likelihood of the disaster occurring as well as in terms of the possible effects. These include (but are certainly not limited to): unplanned urbanization, under-development and chronic poverty, or the spread of disease. **Box 3** lists some sources of information about disasters.

#### ► Box 3. Information about disasters

There are many sources of information about disasters, including real-time updates about the possibility of their occurrence, and classifications of their different types. Please consult these sources to have a better understanding of the different types of disasters.

- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) website: <https://www.ifrc.org/what-disaster>.
- Global Disaster Alerting Coordination System (GDACS) website: <http://www.gdacs.org/>.
- Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRE) website: “EM-DAT: The International Disaster Database”. <https://www.emdat.be/classification>.

For the sake of consistency, the vocabulary adopted by this manual is the same as that of ILO Recommendation No. 205, which speaks broadly of “conflicts and disasters”. Throughout this manual, and for the “crisis management” concerns that are its focus, we will take “disasters” to be broadly synonymous with the various “hazards” that are outlined above.



#### Exercise 2

Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, reflect on at least three disaster events your country has experienced over the past decade:

- 2.1. List the main actors at the local (i.e. grassroots) and institutional level that intervened to help mitigate the consequences.
- 2.2. To what extent was your organization involved in the response?

### 1.3. Linkages between conflicts and disasters

Conflicts and disasters rarely occur in isolation. Frequently, they happen in cycles – many disasters are linked to seasonal events. Similarly, conflicts tend to break out repeatedly, despite the best peacemaking efforts. Moreover, most countries experience multiple hazards simultaneously, not least because of domino effects in the face of weakening capacities of state and society.

Let us work with a simple analogy. Human society is like a machine – a system made up of many moving parts. When certain parts malfunction, the entire machine may stop working properly. It is the same with society: when some aspects of it – such as key government institutions – cease to operate effectively, the societal system breaks down and is no longer able to cater to the needs of people.

There is a growing evidence base on the complex linkages between climate change, environmental degradation and violent conflict.

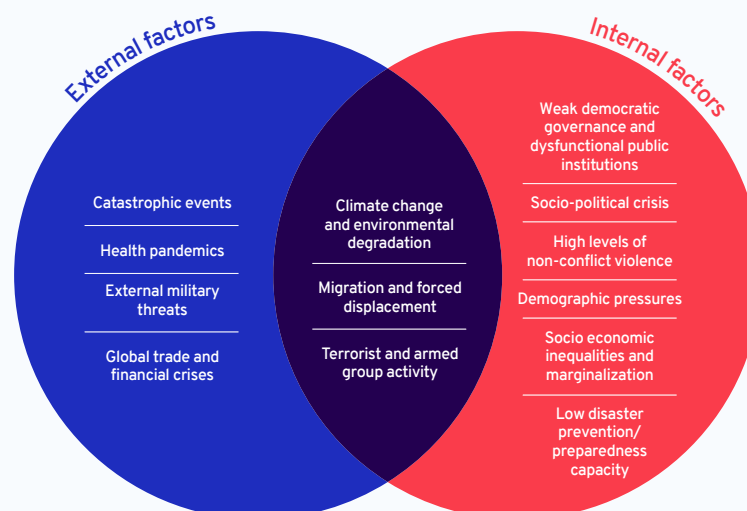
Systems theorists thus speak of **crisis** as being an event or series of events leading to a dangerous or unstable situation with respect to the functioning of the system. When one of the cylinder pistons of my car engine breaks, the entire system (my car) will probably stop moving. Systems theorists thus also speak of **signs of stress**: my car engine may start to overheat, and the steam coming from under the bonnet is a sure signal that something is about to go wrong.

In general, therefore, it is important to **recognize** signs of stress and quickly **respond** to the crisis. What has caused the crisis may be unknown at this point, or at least too complicated to figure out in the short term: many factors may come together and lead to a crisis. This is why analysts begin by making sophisticated risk calculations to get a sense of the probability, or likelihood, of a crisis event occurring: it is uncertain if and when my car engine might break down, but with sufficient knowledge of car mechanics (and existing data from other cars), I know that the chances of engine failure are greater if I do not undertake regular oil changes, for example.

The reasons for a crisis occurring can be internal to the system or external – my car engine might break down because of a design flaw or a lack of maintenance (internal factors), or because another car crashed into mine (external factor). The same goes for society: a socio-political crisis may be due to flawed institutions or bad governance (internal factors) or because of a global stock-market crash or an invading army (external factors).

**Figure 1**, in very basic terms, tries to depict this distinction between internal and external factors that lead to periods of crisis.

► **Figure 1. External and internal factors leading to crisis situations**



The interesting idea here is to see societies as systems that have to deal with a variety of stress factors – some of which can be controlled (to an extent) from inside, while others come from the outside. We can put better policies in place to tackle chronic poverty and marginalization within a particular society, but health pandemics (such as the Ebola virus or COVID-19) defy state borders. The same goes for climate change, which may have both very localized and more global effects, and “causes” that are often beyond the control of one particular State – which is why collective action is so important. Either way, we need to be aware of the potential sources of crisis, and be continuously engaged in **crisis management**. This involves seeking to prevent and/or mitigate the effects of crisis, being better prepared for their occurrence, and ready to respond effectively.

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For more information on Recommendation No. 205 and its innovations, the *Workers' Guide to ILO Recommendation No. 205*, pp. 13–14.

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The notion of “crisis” also helps us think through conflicts and disasters, and the relationship between them – this is also the innovation behind ILO Recommendation No. 205. Sustainable peace is at times difficult to attain despite the best efforts to resolve disputes, precisely because of the numerous actors involved, and the various and overlapping drivers of conflicts and disasters that societies have to deal with at any one time.

All local and international actors seeking to deal with conflicts and disasters need to embrace the logic of crisis management. Conflict-affected countries may also be hit by disasters that will have a profound effect on conflict dynamics, while disasters themselves may weaken state and societal institutions and thus potentially exacerbate socio-political tensions. This is why ILO Recommendation No. 205 introduces the vocabulary of **resilience**, as well as the focus on prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery in pursuit of establishing a sustainable peace.

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The notion of “resilience” will be discussed in more detail in Module 2 of this training manual.

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## 1.4. Social and economic consequences of conflicts and disasters

Conflicts and disasters come in multiple forms, and the consequences they bring on the human, political, and socio-economic levels are varied as well. Such crises may affect the very existence of States, reduce or nullify development efforts, and compromise or weaken societal values and trust relationships. The vicious circle within which States and societies affected by conflicts and disasters often find themselves is illustrated graphically in **figure 2**.

Specifically, and from the perspective of the world of work, some of the negative effects of conflicts and disasters include:

- **A changed base population** through casualties and population displacements, leading to severe distortions in the labour market.
- **A lack of skilled labour to foster recovery and reconstruction** as many try to flee crisis-affected areas.
- **The destruction of local infrastructure**, including transport networks, public utilities and social facilities. This exacerbates a general sense of insecurity and disrupts production and commerce as workers cannot or dare not go to their place of work.
- **The destruction of housing and properties**, including businesses.
- **A lack or shortage of basic goods and services** due to an interruption of production and trade, the loss or damage to goods, crops, or productive assets, and limited access to markets because of destroyed infrastructure and/or insecurity.

► Figure 2. Types of conflicts and disasters: A vicious circle



- **A loss of income and rising unemployment** through the disruption and/or cessation of productive and commercial activities (with enforced lockdowns and curfews imposed on societies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic offering a recent illustration).
- **A breakdown of social protection** due to a reduction in economic activities and income-generating opportunities, a breakdown of societal institutions, and population displacements.
- **A distortion of markets and prices** because of a scarcity of essential goods and services, leading to reduced purchasing power, economic slowdown, and the possibility of uncontrolled inflation.
- **An expansion of the informal economy** as affected populations seek alternative sources of income, goods, and services.
- **An increase in criminal activities** such as the trafficking (of people and goods) and the illegal extraction of natural resources in the face of low state capacities to enforce law and order.
- **An erosion of the social fabric** as people live in a climate of fear and suspicion.



- **Changes in the structure of the household** and consequent responsibilities for women and children.
- **Brain drain**, as some might leave a region or country in search of a better life.
- **Increased violations of human rights** due to the fragility of the context and the breakdown of society.
- **Societal insecurity of those who have been made vulnerable by the crisis**, including youth, the elderly, forcibly displaced populations and the disabled, as social services are compromised and basic education and health facilities are damaged or destroyed.
- **A growing sense of social injustice** amidst chronic grievances related to a lack of stable employment and decent work deficits.

Not all the consequences of conflicts and disasters are necessarily negative, however. Studies have shown that societal crises can, in certain circumstances, also **bring people together, create societal change, and build trust relationships**. They may also entail **changes in gender-specific roles, positive change to family and community structures,**

and the possibility for **women to claim more active roles in mediation and peacebuilding activities**, for example. None of this is to say, of course, is that we should wish for more conflict and disaster in order to induce positive change in our societies – but it is a call to embrace and harness changes when they do occur. We will return to this thought in the next module, when we speak about resilience.

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For further details on the negative effects of conflicts and disasters, see ILO: *Local Economic Recovery in Post-Conflict: Guidelines* (2010), pp. 39-40.

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### Exercise 3



COVID-19 has rightly been called a “pandemic” – an epidemic on a genuinely global scale. Countries affected by armed conflict were not spared the consequences of the coronavirus. On the contrary, in situations where the national health systems are already fragile and where humanitarian actors are facing serious access challenges to conflict-affected communities and populations, the impact of COVID-19 has been tremendous.

- 3.1. Can you think of at least five ways in which the pandemic has influenced conflict dynamics in your country or region?
- 3.2. What has been done in response?
- 3.3. Describe the role played by your organization.

## 1.5. The inclusion of migrants, refugees and other forcibly displaced populations

Migration has always been a feature of humanity. Much of this flow is voluntary as people move within countries and across state borders in the search for higher wages and better lives for themselves and their families.

Migration does not come without challenges. For instance, the proportion of female migrants has been rising to almost 50 per cent, and this requires specific types of protection measures against human trafficking, sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation. There are also new types of forced labour that have appeared as a result of migration.

Many people leave their homes and homelands not because they want to, but because conflicts and disasters have obliged them to do so. We can thus distinguish **forcibly displaced populations** as being a subset of migrants. Although there is no international definition of forcibly displaced persons, they fall into several categories: **internally displaced persons (IDPs)** are those who have had to flee their homes but have remained within the territory of their particular State, while **refugees** are those who have crossed international borders and cannot return to their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution, conflict, violence, or other circumstances that would put their lives at risk if they had to return home. Many of the forcibly displaced do not fall into the category of “refugees” but still have the right to various forms of international protection in order not to be returned (i.e. *non-refoulement*) to their home countries (see [box 4](#)).

The UNHCR’s Global Trends estimates that there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced persons in 2020, among whom 26.4 million were refugees, 48 million IDPs and 4.1 million asylum seekers. Developing countries host 86 per cent of the displaced. Over two-thirds of all refugees come from just five countries: Syrian Arab Republic (6.7 million), Venezuela (4.0 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million), South Sudan (2.2 million) and Myanmar (1.1 million).

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According to the *World Migration Report 2020* of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2019 there were 272 million international migrants globally (3.5 per cent of the world’s population).

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#### ► Box 4. The challenge of defining people on the move

The distinction between different categories of migrants and forcibly displaced people is complex and controversial. Lawyers, governments, and international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, UN Refugee Agency) spend much time trying to clarify when a particular person is able to acquire the status of refugee, as such a status comes with certain benefits and obligations on the part of host States. When large numbers of the population leave their war-torn country over a short period of time, as was recently the case in Syria, neighbouring countries struggle to register everyone and process their applications in a fair and timely manner.

The legal definition of refugee in the UN Convention Related to the Status of Refugees (1951) also adopted by ILO Recommendation No. 205, is quite restricted, in that individuals need to demonstrate that they would have to fear for their very existence were they to remain in their country or return to it. Many people fleeing from the chronic effects of climate change, political instability, or poor economic conditions, for instance, are excluded from this definition. In 2007 the UN Refugee Agency coined the term “**refugee-like situations**” to cast the net somewhat wider and also include, to take two recent examples from Latin America, thousands of Venezuelans crossing over to Colombia, or Nicaraguans fleeing to Costa Rica.

ILO Recommendation No. 205 is important because it discusses migrants, IDPs, forcibly displaced across borders, and refugees at large (in Sections II, IV, XI and XII, specifically). All these categories of people, be they migrants or those forcibly displaced in some way, should have rights equal to those of citizens of the host countries – and thus should be able to find decent work and join workers' organizations.

This is particularly crucial in light of the fact that the UNHCR's Global Trends estimates that in 2020, 76 per cent of the world's refugees lived in so-called “protracted refugee situations”, meaning that “more than 25,000 individuals from the same nationality have been in exile for at least five consecutive years in a given host country”. Instead of decent work, however, a variety of societal, political, and legislative factors (e.g. the fact that many countries deny asylum seekers the right to work, or the fact that they are confined in camps far away from work opportunities) push many to work in the informal economy, making them even more vulnerable to discriminatory practices, exploitation, and in some cases even child labour or forced labour.

Given the scale of the phenomenon, and its impact on the labour market, it is thus extremely important for workers' organizations in countries experiencing conflicts and disasters, as well as in countries welcoming incoming populations fleeing the effects of such crises, to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in dealing with it. Specifically, activities to this effect could include the following themes:

- **Pursue just, peaceful and inclusive societies** – establish awareness-raising campaigns among union members and activists on the merits of seeking to integrate incoming populations into workers' organizations in order to foster social tolerance, combat discrimination and xenophobia, and strengthen the membership base.
- **Clarify key terms** – ensure that workers' organizations and their members distinguish refugees and other categories of forcibly displaced persons from migrant populations in general. In Arabic, for instance, there is a tendency to use the term “*higra* (هجرة)” as an overarching word for all these categories, thereby undermining the quest for a common understanding.

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*The ILO Workers' Guide*, pp. 44-45, offers a list of legal instruments and good practices for workers' organizations to support the integration of refugees in their hosting societies.

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- **Champion workers' rights** – produce leaflets, e-applications, and other appropriate materials, available in the languages of origin, highlighting that all those who work should have rights at work, and outlining the merits of engaging with workers' organizations.
- **Reach out** – to organize those who are of working age and engaged in or seeking meaningful employment.



#### Exercise 4

Using available data sources at your disposal (including from UNHCR and IOM, or government statistics, etc.):

- 4.1. What have been the migration trends in your own country over the past five years?
- 4.2. What proportion of in- and out-migration falls under the category “forced displacement”?
- 4.3. Explain some of the reasons behind this displacement.

## 1.6. Social dialogue in the context of conflicts and disasters

Social dialogue is both a communication strategy and a process, and always a means to an end (e.g. a way of reaching a balanced compromise or a collective agreement). It is a crucial vehicle to make the voices and interests of workers heard in deliberative exchanges that foster democratic representation, accountability, and the establishment of sustainable peace. As such, social dialogue is a key resource to deal with conflicts and disasters in a peaceful, just and inclusive manner.

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Social dialogue is a central tool for promoting livelihoods and striving for social justice.

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A series of conditions are needed to conduct social dialogue, including:

- a demonstrated **political will** by all parties to engage in social dialogue;
- **strong and independent workers' and employers' organizations**, with the appropriate technical capacities and access to information enabling them to take part in social dialogue;
- **observance of fundamental rights** as set out in the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organize and to Bargain Collectively Convention, 1949 (No. 98);
- functioning **tripartite social dialogue institutions** and **appropriate** institutional support for timely and regularly exchanges; and
- **reciprocal recognition and mutual respect** between each social partner representative.

All of these conditions are significantly affected by situations of conflict and disaster. Such settings generally lead to a deterioration or freezing of institutional mechanisms and democratic deliberation. Social dialogue may well break down and fundamental freedoms (such as the freedom of association) could be suspended. Workers' organizations themselves may be negatively affected in a variety of ways (see [box 5](#)). Especially in conflict settings, union leaders and activists are often intimidated, arbitrarily arrested

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Effective social dialogue and cooperation between governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations have proven indispensable to designing and implementing appropriate strategies and policies to address the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis and to building inclusive societies. See ILO: “A Global Trend Analysis on the Role of Trade Unions in Times of COVID-19” (2021).

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and penalized, tortured and reduced to silence and inactivity. Furthermore, some members may even be forced to fight with militias and other combatants.

On the other hand, social dialogue can be a powerful mechanism in the search for creative solutions to prevent societal conflict from turning into violence or mitigating some of the effects of impending or actual disasters – if activated at the right moment and by leaders who are accepted by all parts of society as fair and well-intended representatives of their constituents. As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, existing **dialogue platforms**, including industrial relation and social dialogue mechanisms, can be used or adapted to collect concerns and ideas of local communities, healthcare workers, and civic and business leaders, as well as representatives of the informal economy and unemployed. Social dialogue can be activated to channel discontent with and resistance to response efforts, and ensure that dissatisfaction is both expressed and tackled in non-violent, constructive ways that can increase trust in institutions.

#### ► Box 5. The violation of freedom of association

Crisis settings have the tendency to increase the vulnerability of workers' organizations towards abuses, including:

- Anti-trade unionism and hostility of employers;
- Intimidation and sanctions inhibiting trade union activity (arrests, torture, threats, etc.);
- Violent repression of strikes;
- Arrest of strikers;
- Dismissal of trade unionists under false pretexts;
- Lack of regard for signed agreements;
- Rejection and violation of collective agreements;
- Discrimination among workers' organizations;
- Destabilization of the trade union movement;
- Disrespect for human and labour rights.

Even if not directly targeted, workers' organizations suffer all the negative consequences of conflicts and disasters – including a slow-down in economic activities, changes in the profile of the workforce, and a reduction in the number of workers employed in the formal economy. This impact may be reflected in a decrease in union activities, a drop in membership, doubt surrounding accepted social privileges, a freezing of collective bargaining, and a reduction in the benefits and services provided by workers' organizations to their members. What is more, societal conflict is often reflected within the workforce itself, as societal tensions pit workers against each other. Insisting on the common cause of workers despite social or political differences is thus a crucial task of workers' organizations.

In spite of this extremely challenging environment, it is key that workers' organizations acknowledge and embrace their role of facilitators in societies. The aim of social dialogue in such settings could include:

- Helping to resolve conflicts and disputes and/or mitigate societal tensions.
- Identifying the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in ensuing negotiations and in the post-agreement phase.
- Seeking compensation for victims.
- Promoting reconciliation and peaceful coexistence within the workforce and across society more broadly.
- Finding creative solutions together with employers to keep as many workers employed and remunerated to get through the crisis.
- Lobbying for the swift political, economic and societal reconstruction of the country.



#### Exercise 5

Social dialogue is fundamental in addressing crisis situations.

- 5.1. Describe the social dialogue mechanisms existing in your country.
- 5.2. List the social dialogue agenda items addressing crisis situations that are discussed in the social dialogue forums.
- 5.3. Explain how your organization has been involved in crisis social dialogue.

## 1.7. Conclusion

The vocation of workers' organizations is to defend and promote workers' material and moral interests. It is also to preserve social peace and champion the values of solidarity and justice. Workers' organizations thus have a frontline role to play in the identification and implementation of policies aiming to address conflicts and disasters. This is part of their rightful mission, since in all crisis settings, workers suffer significantly from both the immediate effects as well as the long-term consequences.

Owing to the potential credibility and trust they enjoy both in-country and internationally, and in light of their experience and capacity for organization, mobilization, negotiation and dialogue, workers' organizations are a crucial societal actor. They can raise awareness amongst the general population and motivate debate and deliberation on a variety of issues, including the observance of the rule of law, democratic values, good governance, social justice, solidarity and peace.



# Module 2

## ► A crisis management approach

### Learning objectives

- Recognize the importance of carrying out peace and conflict analysis on a regular basis.
- Acknowledge that most conflicts are cyclical in nature, and vary in scope, intensity and duration.
- Understand how to apply a conflict sensitivity lens to settings of conflict *and* disaster, and how it differs from a “do no harm” approach.
- Become familiar with the basic phases of conflict and disaster management: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, in pursuit of sustainable peace.
- Understand the notion of “resilience”, and how it helps us to identify and deal with the risks faced by our societies

### 2.1. Peace and conflict analysis

In order to think more coherently about what the world of work – and in particular workers' organizations – can do in situations of conflict and disaster, how they can position themselves, and what actions they could engage in, we need to undertake **peace and conflict analysis**. “Conflict” is used here in its broadest sense – from tension or disputes in societies, to war. These situations or events can be triggered by a conflict and/or a disaster. “Conflict analysis” should be carried out both in situations of conflict and in situations of disaster, to prevent, contain, diminish or eliminate a crisis situation and maintain peace.

In general terms, conflict analysis is undertaken in various ways, in both conflict and disaster situations. Many organizations, including UN agencies, international NGOs, government ministries or private-sector corporations, have developed their own set of tools. Overall, there are two main angles such analysis covers: (1) *how did we get here?* – this involves understanding past and present conflict dynamics; and (2) *where we could and should go from here?* – this involves looking into future scenarios for how a sustainable peace can be maintained or attained. In order to answer these questions, it can be helpful to apply analytical lenses that differentiate between social fault lines, conflict drivers, conflict triggers and amplifiers (see [box 6](#)).

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Peace and conflict analysis is a process aimed at understanding the immediate and structural causes of conflict/violence/ hardship. It involves listing the parties involved; specifying their motivations, needs and interests; and thinking about the incentives they may have to either continue with the conflict or work towards the establishment of a sustainable peace.

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**► Box 6. Defining societal fault lines, conflict drivers, triggers and amplifiers**

**Fault lines**, or **societal cleavages**, cut across and divide society according to the discourses and perceptions of groups and their interests. For example, divergences between workers employed in urban factories and in agriculture might be perceived as a divide between urban and rural settings.

**Conflict drivers** indicate the deep-rooted reasons for tension or dissatisfaction in society. They might be related to societal fault lines, but they are not necessarily caused by them. An example could be low wages for agricultural workers, making them feel disadvantaged in comparison to workers in factories.

**Conflict triggers** are incidents or decisions that spark tensions or dissent. Again, they might be connected to societal fault lines, but not necessarily in a causal manner. For instance, if a new law increases the minimum hourly wage for categories of workers employed in factories, this can trigger a reaction in the agricultural sector, where workers might feel marginalized and discriminated against.

**Amplifiers** are factors that magnify social discontent and accelerate the conflict process. For example, social media can act as an amplifier of the dissatisfaction of the agricultural workers left behind; it can catalyse the spread of hate speech and facilitate incitements to violence against those who are perceived to be the perpetrators of injustice.

**Exercise 6**

Drawing on your context, please provide brief examples illustrating the following:

- 6.1. Fault lines, or societal cleavages
- 6.2. Conflict drivers
- 6.3. Conflict triggers
- 6.4. Amplifiers

Whenever possible, peace and conflict analysis should be carried out on both the local, community level where much of the “action” takes place, and on the macro-level of the country or region in question. The dynamics of the conflict may become clearer when these two levels are studied together and when the ways these two levels interact are examined.

## **The majority of conflict analysis tools have the following four elements in common:**

### **Societal context (situational analysis):**

- What is the socio-political and economic background to the ongoing or emerging conflict?
- What are the key historical events in the country? Has conflict occurred in the past? If so, how was it resolved?
- Is the violence (anticipated or actual) localized – in terms of territory or population groups – within this broader context? Or is it a threat faced by the entire country?
- Most crises, be they armed conflict or disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic, disproportionately impact the lives of specific sectors of society.
  - How are marginalized communities affected?
  - What is the impact on children and the elderly?
  - What is the impact on and the role of women in the conflict?

### **Stakeholders (actor analysis):**

- Who are the main conflict parties?
  - What are their stated and perceived interests, motivations and needs?
  - What are their capacities, constituencies, power bases and resources?
  - What incentives might they have to continue the conflict, and/or to end it peacefully?
- What other societal actors have a stake in the conflict, as well as in ending it? What institutional mechanisms or capacities could be mobilized to help resolve the conflict?
- Are there foreign interests fuelling the conflict and/or able to pressure the conflict parties into negotiating a settlement?
- What is my or my organization's perceived or actual role in the conflict? If my organization is seen as being party to it, what potential role could my organization play in preventing or reducing tensions and violence, or indeed in finding a sustainable solution to the crisis?

### **Possible causes (root cause analysis):**

- What are some of the main fault lines or societal cleavages along which the conflict is structured?
- What is driving the violence, and what possible triggers can be identified that might worsen the situation?

### **Conflict dynamics (scenario-building):**

- What are the current conflict dynamics, in terms of scope, intensity and duration?
- Have there been any positive developments or opportunities for peace that could be capitalized upon?
- Using the knowledge of actors, context and causes derived above, can possible scenarios be sketched out in terms of how the conflict is likely to continue, as well as the conditions under which an end to the violence can be anticipated?

It is important to stress that conflict analysis is not a scientific task seeking to “prove the facts” – it is an analytical, real-time process, often undertaken in a team within an organization, to inform decision-making. It is not about academic research, although existing documents can and should be referred to in order to inform the process. But it need not be a heavy, lengthy, “data-driven” exercise.

Peace and conflict analysis needs to be conducted in settings prone to disasters just as much as in situations of violent conflict.

Also worth noting is that peace and conflict analysis should not only be undertaken **during** times of conflict and violence. Many crucial activities for workers’ organizations occur around the themes of prevention, early warning and preparedness: it is just as important to engage in such analysis in times when societal tensions risk escalating, as it is when violent conflict has broken out. Importantly, this also includes disaster settings, as already stated: when natural or human-made hazards may weaken institutions and societal cohesion, and thereby raise the likelihood of exacerbating societal tensions and conflict. Ideally, if conflict analysis leads to more informed decision-making, all parts of state and society can do their bit to prevent crises from turning into violent confrontations.

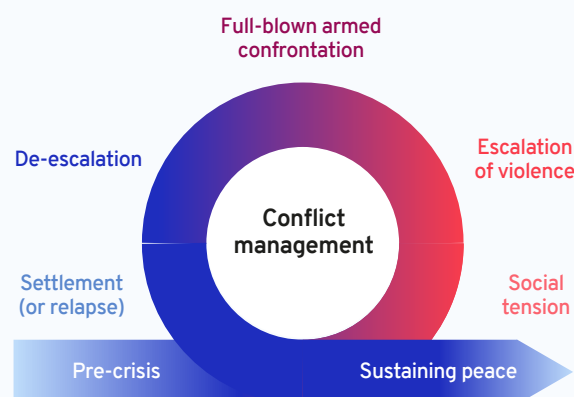
## 2.2. The conflict cycle

An important reason why peace and conflict analysis needs to be undertaken on a continuous, regular basis is the cyclical nature of societal crises. Research has shown that around two thirds of all armed conflicts break out again within a few years of their formal termination. What is more, even within one armed conflict, there are periods of relative calm coupled with others of intense fighting. The continuous monitoring and analysis of conflict and disaster trends must thus acknowledge this **cyclical nature of conflict and violence**. It is important to make sense of crises over time.

“War” is not a linear process from the declaration of hostilities to the signing of a peace agreement.

Consider **figure 3**. It tries to visualize how any society can move from a setting of relative peace and stability into a crisis situation marked by a worsening of societal tensions that, if not dealt with quickly, risk escalating into violence and ultimately full-blown armed confrontation. If that point is reached, then activities move beyond only the resolution of conflict through social dialogue and preventive diplomacy to also encompass humanitarian assistance for affected populations and, in the long run, recovery and reconstruction activities that promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

► Figure 3. The cycle of escalation into a crisis situation



From the figure, we can see that the development of a conflict scenario goes through several moments. The crucial period is when societal tensions are exacerbated (for whatever reason) and the “pre-crisis” situation risks escalating into violence. As captured graphically by the arrow in the figure above, there are still entry points for social partners to prevent these tensions from spiralling out of control and into a full-blown armed confrontation between the parties. If these efforts fail and the escalation of tensions reaches a tipping point, however, then the ensuing full-blown armed confrontation needs to be dealt with via efforts aimed at the de-escalation of hostilities and ultimately the settlement of the underlying conflict. This is why the scenario-building element of the analysis is so crucial.



### Exercise 7

With reference to a period of violent conflict in your country:

- 7.1. Construct a timeline that sketches out the stages of the conflict cycle.
- 7.2. Can you identify some moments, or tipping points, where the intervention of social partners contributed to preventing the tensions from escalating into violence?
- 7.3. Where possible, identify some moments where the intervention of social partners aggravated existing tensions.
- 7.4. Did the crises go through multiple cycles or just one?

## 2.3. Conflict sensitivity

The world of work, and worker's organizations in particular, can make important contributions to each of these “moments” along the conflict cycle. What peace and conflict analysis can help to do is locate activities – be they an awareness-raising campaign, the training of vulnerable groups in society, actively pursuing social dialogue, etc. – within these conflict dynamics. Moreover, such analysis allows reflection on how these activities are contributing to an improvement of the situation, and what risks could be faced in the process. In other words, it is **conflict sensitive**.

In a nutshell, conflict sensitivity is an attempt to relate programmes and activities to the ongoing societal situation within which they are situated. **Conflict sensitivity applies to situations of peace as well as conflict, and to settings of disasters as well.** Being conflict sensitive in our work means asking ourselves three important questions:

- What is the context within which my programme, activity or intervention is operating?
- How does my programme, activity or intervention relate to that context? In other words: in what way do we think our work will make things better for someone affected by the crisis or have a positive result on the situation itself?
- What are the risks involved in implementing this programme or activity? What could be the unintended negative effects of the intervention and how can I minimize them while also maximizing the positive contribution we can make?

Regarding the third question, it is important to highlight that conflict sensitivity goes well beyond seeking to prevent or minimize the negative effects of our activities. A “do no harm” approach acknowledges that there are both “connectors” and “dividers” in any crisis setting, and that our well-intentioned efforts might exacerbate conflict dynamics in ways we may have not anticipated. But conflict sensitivity goes well beyond “do no harm” as such: beyond being careful not to make matters worse, it seeks to embrace the aspiration of having the most positive effect possible and to be aware of conflict-relevant considerations in all aspects of our activities. For example, hiring decisions can have very important implications on the conflict, as the “affiliation” of a recruited person to one party of the conflict or another sends important signals, as does the composition of the leadership of an organization.

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Conflict sensitivity is not the same thing as “do no harm”.

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All our professional activities can – and should – be conflict sensitive, regardless of whether we are operating in a setting of violent conflict or not. If development cooperation and technical support to poorer countries is not conflict sensitive, for instance, the socio-economic and political situation may well worsen, rather than improve. We may also be trying to help one group of people in society while forgetting about, or making things worse for, another group or sector. Disasters and other “shocks” to society may give rise to their own set of reactions and interventions that may entail negative side-effects, even if they are trying to do good. Conflict sensitivity is thus all about recognizing that the circumstances we work in are complex, and that, despite our best intentions, we may end up causing harmful consequences if we are not careful.

## 2.4. Sustaining peace

In any crisis setting, the ultimate aim of our efforts must be the establishment of conditions that nurture peaceful, just and inclusive societies, as also reiterated by Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **Sustaining peace** involves a variety of coherent, coordinated and complementary activities that – in both the short and long term -- foster resilience and promote the non-violent resolution of tensions and disputes (see [box 7](#)).

### ► Box 7. The stages of conflict resolution

- **Conflict management** – with the objective of containing violence and hostilities within certain territorial limits, and lowering the intensity of the fighting and the number of people involved.
- **Conflict settlement** – which involves convening the conflict parties to the negotiating table and (often with the help of neutral mediators) laying out the terms of an agreement that will put an end to violent confrontation.
- **Implementation of the peace agreement** – with the objective of respecting the conditions laid out in the agreement and ensuring that all parties to the conflict abide by the terms specified therein.
- **Reconciliation and peacebuilding** – which entails establishing and maintaining a sustainable peace in society by addressing the factors that led to violent conflict, or within which conflict dynamics were embedded.



As discussed in section 2.2 above, most conflicts do not just involve one cycle, and sustaining peace is thus certainly not a linear process. Violent confrontations often take years to resolve, and the longer the conflict continues, the more the parties to the conflicts (and parts of society) become entrenched in their views and ideological divisions. At times, it may even appear that the original differences are forgotten or manipulated, not least when certain people or parts of the population begin to profit from the conflict and thus develop an incentive for it to continue.

Finally, it is worth recalling, as discussed in Module 1, that conflict is not only a destructive process. Differences of opinion are a central component of human society as we all strive, individually and collectively, to further our interests and well-being. Seen in this way, conflicts are an inherent feature of political and socioeconomic development. They may even, at times, create the possibilities for initiating large-scale societal, cultural, and political change and reform.

In most cases, however, it is worth making the most of societal institutions and mechanisms seeking the peaceful resolution of tensions that derive from societal dysfunction (exacerbation of conflict drivers along societal fault lines), and that may lead to violence and armed confrontation. This is perhaps the defining feature of a well-functioning society: if conflict resolution and dispute settlement mechanisms are sufficiently robust, societal tensions can be addressed before they reach the tipping point at which violence may escalate. Most violent conflicts, indeed, originate from a collective sense of inequality and oppression in the face of unaccountable and unrepresentative leadership. This is where workers' organizations have a role to play, as they are part of those societal structures and mechanisms. In crisis situations, including during periods affected by disasters, they have a potential to become a sustained interlocutor representing the interests of their members in a peaceful dialogue, contributing to conflict resolution between conflicting groups amongst their membership, protecting all their members by applying rules in equitable ways to everyone regardless of their belonging to one group or another.

Some workers' organization have even become facilitators among different parties, thereby increasing a society's capacity to deal with conflict. Alternatively, workers' organizations can also take sides in a conflict and apply measures unequally to their members based on their allegiance to different conflicting parties, thereby worsening the conflict. Which role organizations adopt depends on their leaders' attitude towards the conflict, but also on the extent to which they understand their context and the role they may play in it. It is the task of everyone to advance this understanding and with the leaders, to make the right choice.

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Disasters exacerbate the pursuit of a sustainable peace. Natural disasters, environmental degradation due to climate change, or global pandemics such as COVID-19 all harbour the potential of either constituting a new conflict driver or at least amplifying existing divisions in society.

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See the Workers' Guide, p. 20, to read about the ILO's intervention in Haiti, in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake in 2010 and for long-term development strategy.

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### Exercise 8

In exercise 7, we examined whether the conflict you selected went through multiple cycles before being resolved. Research has shown that many violent conflicts break out again within a few years after the signing of a peace agreement or after their resolution.

- 8.1. Can you identify such cases of relapse into violent conflict in your region or even in your country?
- 8.2. For each case, can you think of possible reasons why the conditions established in the peace agreement were not sustainable or why violent conflict reoccurred?
- 8.3. If applicable, analyse your own organization's role in the conflict.
- 8.4. Describe the extent to which the conflict was reflected within your organization.
- 8.5. Explain whether there were any missed opportunities where your organization could have contributed to managing, resolving, or mitigating the conflict in addition to what was done.

## 2.5. Conflict and disaster management

Module 2 has so far concentrated more on conflicts than disasters. However, similar thinking may be applied to disasters. While the resolution of violent conflict and the prevention of disasters is – and must remain – our ultimate objective, most of the time we must content ourselves with lessening the harmful impacts of such crises when they occur. **Crisis management** is thus an important component of our professional activities.

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“Prevention”, “preparedness”, “response” and “recovery” constitute programming entry points for us to begin thinking about concrete activities that workers’ organizations can make in times of crisis.

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In order to manage conflicts and disasters, it is vital to know what stage of the process we are currently going through: the logic is similar to project management. The conflict cycle we developed in section 2.2 above, and the peace and conflict analysis on which it is based, is a useful starting point. Depending on where we are in the cycle: latent societal tensions, on the verge of violence, in the midst of armed conflict, or in a reconstruction phase, for instance, the contributions the world of work and workers’ organizations in particular can make will vary accordingly.

In **figure 4**, we have superimposed some of the main management phases onto the conflict cycle: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. These constitute four of the main types of activities that could be envisaged: preventing violent conflict from occurring, being better prepared for the effects of conflict when the situation does escalate, being able to respond swiftly and effectively in the face of violent conflict, and being able to contribute in a meaningful way to finding a sustainable peace and help society recover from the crisis.

A similar exercise can be undertaken for disasters. While some hazards (e.g. industrial accidents) tend to be one-off events, others, especially natural hazards such as storms, periods of drought or earthquakes, are more or less cyclical in nature: they reoccur at more or less regular intervals (e.g. seasonally). Moreover, while some disasters are preventable, others are not, and preparation is the key to mitigating their effects. This is why we talk of **disaster management** in a way similar to conflict management (**figure 5**).

► Figure 4. Management of the conflict cycle



► Figure 5. The disaster management cycle



For disasters, the “peak” of the crisis is not all-out violent conflict, but the hazardous event itself. This is depicted in [figure 5](#). The logic, however, is the same. We continuously monitor the weather, geological activity, environmental degradation and so on, in the hope that we can detect the signs of a disaster as early as possible. The better prepared we are, the more likely it is that we can quickly respond to any emergency that arises (see [box 8](#)). The next steps are to stabilize the situation by focusing on damaged infrastructure and affected populations, before moving on to long-term reconstruction.

What affects the likelihood of loss of life, injury, or destruction and damage from a disaster (i.e. disaster risk)?

**Hazard + Exposure + Vulnerability**

#### ► Box 8. Disaster analysis

Disasters – natural and human-made hazards in all forms – are so diverse that it is difficult to establish generalizable analytical tools. But it is nonetheless possible to apply the basic conflict analysis logic outlined in section 2.1. Questions to ask include:

- **Situational analysis** – What is the societal context within which a certain type of disaster is likely to occur? Does the country have a history of such events? Are the effects and the damage localized?
- **Actor analysis** – Are there parts of the population that are most affected by a certain type of disaster? Which institutions are tasked with monitoring the likelihood of disasters to occur? Which actors are best equipped to rapidly respond to them?
- **Root cause analysis** – What factors contribute to specific disaster events, as well as to their magnitude? Which of these factors can be influenced, and which are beyond our control? Could certain events have been avoided, and if so, how?
- **Scenario-building** – For each type of hazard, can we learn from past experience? How have state and society dealt with similar disasters in the past? Can we identify best practices from other country contexts?





### Exercise 9

With reference to a disaster event in your country:

- 9.1. Construct a timeline that sketches out the stages of the disaster cycle.
- 9.2. Did the crises go through multiple cycles or just one?
- 9.3. Describe in detail the situational analysis, actor analysis, and root cause analysis, and conclude with detailed scenario building.

## 2.6. Resilience thinking: The ILO's perspective

The main takeaway point of the previous section is the reality that we are rarely in a position to prevent or solve crises ourselves – the world is a complicated place, and with complexity comes the recognition that we need to **manage risks**. Instead of preventing violent conflict and being perfectly prepared for every possible disaster, we need to put measures in place to lessen the effects of such events if and when they do occur.

Coupled with this realization is an awareness of the multiple threats that our societies face at any one time. Conflicts and disasters rarely come alone, and societies are complex social systems, parts of which are constantly facing a variety of internal and external threats. Ultimately, our hope is that the overall system does not break down in the face of such challenges – and on the contrary, that we emerge stronger each time and can learn from previous crisis episodes.

To make sense of these dynamics, we are beginning to use and apply the notion of **resilience** – as also echoed in the title of ILO Recommendation No. 205: “Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience” (see [box 9](#)). At its most basic, resilience means the capacity to “bounce back” after a disturbance or shock, whether chronic or acute or a sudden crisis. Just as building materials have varying levels of elasticity and resistance, so too can individuals, communities, or social systems exhibit different degrees of **coping** in the face of stress before they surpass the threshold at which they permanently deform or break.

► Resilience means the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.

► ILO Recommendation No. 205

### ► Box 9. The rise of “resilience”

Commonly associated with the fields of child psychology, ecology, and engineering, “resilience” has come to play a key role in the vocabulary of practitioners and scholars working on global issues of sustainable development, peacebuilding, disaster relief, urban planning, and humanitarian action. The term features prominently in recent documents by a number of United Nations agencies, bilateral donors, and non-governmental organizations. It has furthermore been applied on a variety of analytical levels, from the resilience of individuals, communities and affected populations, to institutional, urban and political system resilience. In the ILO, it has now been introduced through ILO Recommendation No. 205, which speaks of employment and decent work for peace and resilience. It has also been widely used when addressing the COVID-19 crisis.



Yet most things in the social world are not like building materials – they do not return to their original form after succumbing to stress or shock. Individuals subjected to famine, or a city experiencing chronic violence will perhaps never be the same again – but could still have demonstrated a significant degree of resilience despite not returning to the (psychological, material, or structural) state they were in prior to the disturbance.

Thinking about society as a social system is useful in this regard, and lies at the heart of the resilience vocabulary. The term allows us to study the ways in which the functioning of the household, community or ecosystem can be maintained in the event of a disturbance – in other words: to what extent the component parts of a dynamic, constantly changing system can absorb a shock without experiencing overall system failure.

Beyond coping with crisis, social systems are able to adapt and self-organize when certain parts of the system cease to function properly. A state may no longer be in a position to provide basic services to its citizens amidst an ongoing civil war, but a local community may nonetheless be able to respond by finding ways of providing these services at the neighbourhood level, for instance. Resilience thinking invites us to take into account such **adaptation**.

The notion of resilience can be applied to the crisis management cycles outlined in section 2.5 above. At its very basic preliminary level, resilience is about seeing how society and its institutions **cope** with the onset of a conflict or disaster. With repeated episodes of violence, insecurity, or seasonally reoccurring natural disasters, societies will begin to **adapt** to such crises – by investing in preventative measures, early warning systems and preparedness activities, on the one hand, and by responding more effectively when conflicts and disasters do occur, on the other. The ultimate aim, therefore, is to **transform** society and institutions in such a way that violent conflict can be avoided, and the effects of disasters mitigated as much as possible.

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Resilience thinking can be useful because it shifts the focus from deficits to strengths. Instead of thinking in terms of vulnerability, resilience invites us to emphasize what is strong and robust about affected communities and institutions.

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As emphasized by ILO Recommendation No. 205, the world of work has important contributions to make in this regard. In general terms, from an **ILO perspective, resilience is about promoting employment and decent work by fostering a healthy social dialogue that breeds inclusive societies; such a society offers socio-economic and political stability, which in turn is the basis for sustainable development – and such development is the basis for decent work.** One typical example of building a resilient society is through strengthening its social protection systems or its social dialogue institutions, including workers' organizations.

Building resilience is not a concrete activity. Rather, resilience is built by undertaking the kind of efforts outlined in figures 4 and 5 above, all of which, together, contribute to making societies more resilient in the face of crisis. What resilience offers is a way of making sense of the challenges we face as human beings, as workers, and as organizations representing their interests. "Resilience thinking", similar to conflict sensitivity, is not necessarily a programming item – it is a brainstorming tool and a call for action.



# Module 3

## ► Sustaining peace I: Prevention and preparedness

### Learning objectives

- Understand the difference between “prevention” and “preparedness,” and how both involve inter-related sets of activities in conflict and disaster settings.
- Appreciate the importance of early warning mechanisms that foresee crises, and the importance of robust communication channels to deliver warning messages in a timely and effective manner to the appropriate stakeholders.
- Recognize the crucial role of social dialogue – both bipartite and tripartite relationships – in ensuring that workers' organizations and their members can be active participants in prevention and preparedness efforts.
- Acknowledge the importance of alliance-building across union networks, nationally and abroad, for exchange of information and expertise related to prevention and preparedness.

### 3.1. Prevention basics

Prevention involves all activities that are undertaken in order to avoid a crisis event from happening. Prevention efforts should thus be pursued all the time, on a continuous basis – regardless of whether or not there is a risk of violent conflict, or whether the likelihood of a disaster is high.

In conflict-affected environments, prevention activities include all efforts made by state and societal institutions, as well as external mediators, if necessary, to find a peaceful resolution of tensions and disputes. While not all forms of conflict are avoidable, and in the absence of violence some conflict dynamics may even have positive implications for the future of society, violence must be prevented at all costs. This means that conflict prevention is **violence prevention**.

Workers' organizations can play an important role by pursuing **peaceful actions** aiming to:

- maintain strong and independent trade unions;
- defend freedom of association;
- promote rights at work;
- strengthen social dialogue and tripartite structures; and
- lobby for the ratification or application of international labour standards.

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In Kenya, where over 1,300 people died and more than 600,000 were displaced during election violence in 2007, the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) played a significant part in preventing a repeat of such violent confrontations during the national elections of 2013 and 2017. For more information, see the Workers' Guide, p. 35.

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In disaster settings, prevention is equally important. It might be impossible to prevent the next hurricane or earthquake, for instance, but many natural or human-made hazards are preventable. At the very least, there are steps that States and societies can take to prevent the **effects** of disasters – building protective walls against tidal waves, for instance, or setting up back-up electricity systems, or investing in earthquake-resistant housing. And in settings such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it makes sense to speak of preventing the spread of the disease and the resulting breakdown of health systems should the spread remain unchecked. This is why prevention is often related to **mitigation**.

For human-made hazards, moreover, the prevention aspect is more obvious: activities could include stopping deforestation to prevent landslides and wildfires, investing in safety features to prevent industrial accidents, investing in green jobs, or enforcing stricter building codes in crowded urban areas, for example. In all of these and many more cases, the well-being and lives of the working population is at stake, and workers' organizations thus have a vital role to play in ensuring that State and society do their utmost to keep the population safe and secure (see **box 10**).

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The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) offers a useful list of definitions to promote a common understanding of many of these terms:  
<https://www.undrr.org/terminology>.

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See also the **glossary** at the end of this manual.

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Overall, **prevention** has become an important preoccupation of development donors and multilateral agencies – the logic being that it is better for those involved (and cheaper for those having to pay) to prevent conflict and violence than to rebuild afterwards. It should be noted, however, that prevention programming also involves serious monitoring and evaluation challenges: for how do you prove that a prevention effort was successful if nothing happened? How can you demonstrate that funds targeting prevention were used wisely and effectively? These are important concerns that go beyond the scope of the present manual.

#### ► Box 10. Workers' organizations and climate change

Active participation in just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies is essential to prepare for climate change and to prevent further damage to the planet and to the world of work. The ILO's "Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All" (2015) give specific roles and responsibilities to both governments and the social partners at different levels (international, national, sectoral and enterprise level). They also call for consultation with other stakeholders where necessary.

- Workers' organizations should raise awareness of the ILO Guidelines and provide guidance among members regarding the just transition framework. This can, for instance, be done through campaigns, training and education, research and media outreach.
- Workers' organizations should play an active role in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national sustainable development policies, and promote participation in social dialogue at all levels.
- Collective agreements could take a leading role in driving the just transition towards a carbon-neutral economy, but in practice, they do not regard this objective as a priority. Environmental clauses in collective agreements are still exceptional.
- Many international labour standards (ILS) are relevant to just transitions. Workers' organizations should demand their ratification and/or application.

For more on actions to be taken, see Olsen and La Hovary, "User's Manual to the Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All" (2021).

How can you demonstrate that funds targeting prevention were used wisely and effectively? These are important concerns that go beyond the scope of the present manual.

### 3.2. Communication activities for the prevention of conflicts and disasters

Communication activities and advocacy campaigns are an essential part of social dialogue. They are a crucial instrument to challenge the status quo and strengthen the respect for workers' rights. At the same time, workers' organizations have a critical responsibility for planning their communication activities to prevent the escalation of violence and support sustainable peace. They can achieve this by maintaining a constructive and open dialogue with policy-makers, employers, and workers' communities.

It is therefore important for workers' organizations to undertake continuous research to define the profile of their target audiences in order to understand their interests, beliefs, and levels of knowledge on relevant issues. Based on this, the appropriate communication channels (e.g. social media, informal meetings, high-level dialogues, local newspapers, international media outlets, etc.) can be identified.

Effective campaigning can strengthen the impact of messages and actions aimed at raising awareness to prevent or mitigate the impact of conflicts and disasters, and it ensures that workers' voices are respected and heard throughout these processes.

**Below is a checklist of questions to ask while preparing such campaigns:**

- **Why?** To define clearly the goal and objectives of the campaign
- **Who?** To define the target audiences, including potential allies, opponents and partners
- **What?** To define key messages tailored to the audiences
- **When?** To define the best timing for the launch and the timeline for implementation
- **Where?** To define the level of implementation of the campaign (company, sectoral, local, national, etc.), and to identify a list of key gatekeepers that need to be influenced to make change happen
- **How?**
  - To identify communications assets and channels (publications, key events, meetings, email communication, TV, radio, the printed media, press releases, formal statements, press conferences, website entries, social media posts, podcasts, etc.), along with a timeframe to decide when to use what.
  - To define resources (human, financial).
  - To define tactics: positive/negative messages? How to deal with allies, opponents, partners?
  - To prepare the necessary materials: visuals, flyers, podcasts, videos, etc.

In today's media environment, people hear more "noise" than ever and they tune out far more than they tune in. For successful campaigning, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Ensure that the campaign is carefully planned, adequately staffed and funded, and has clearly defined objectives.
- Plan and respect a timeline for the campaign, highlighting milestones (i.e. report launches, press conferences, strikes, etc.) and define what success looks like for each of them (e.g. the launch of the report is well attended and at least three newspapers mentioned the event in their daily coverage).
- Base the campaign on research and testing, and not on assumptions. Research specific audiences to help with campaign targeting: it is crucial to speak to people on their own terms, in ways that resonate with them.
- When possible, hire people who have experience with conducting successful campaigns.
- Ensure the campaign is driven by short, clear and easily understood messages and use them often and consistently, while avoiding jargon. When suitable, find a short slogan, (e.g. "Me Too") and make sure to advertise it as much as possible in different formats, also beyond paper-based publications (e.g. pins, t-shirts, tote bags, etc.).
- Keep the campaign content appealing and focus on the impact on real people and the human stories that reflect the issues that are being raised.
- Go beyond using "union elders" to carry messages to journalists and the public. Include spokespeople who are more like the people the campaign is trying to reach. Moreover, if possible, approach celebrities and influential individuals (including influencers on social media) and ask them to express their support in public.
- To get the most out of the potential that social media offers, trust and support rank-and-file members of the organization to carry the messages.
- Make extensive use of images and video content, which often do not need translation into local languages and dialects in order to be understood.
- Prepare for the long haul. Do not expect goals to be immediately achieved and be prepared for setbacks. Sometimes a campaign that fails in the short term will end up succeeding in the long run.

Finally, it is important to note that well-planned communication activities also need to occur **within** workers' organizations and not just to speak to an external audience. An efficient internal communication plan ensures that all the members of the organization are aware of the means and purposes of advocacy campaigns; it guarantees more substantial support and avoids the eventual radicalization of specific means of communication or issues at stake. These factors, taken together, play a crucial role in preventing conflicts and disasters.

### Exercise 10



Using one case of conflict and one disaster from your country:

- 10.1. Note down any prevention efforts and explain how they were implemented.
- 10.2. Describe any communication activities and awareness campaigns undertaken by workers' organizations that you are aware of.
- 10.3. What additional prevention efforts can you think of for similar events in the future?

Case of conflict	Prevention activities	Additional future efforts
► .....	► .....	► .....
► .....	► .....	► .....
► .....	► .....	► .....
► .....	► .....	► .....
Case of disaster	Prevention activities	Additional future efforts
► .....	► .....	► .....
► .....	► .....	► .....
► .....	► .....	► .....
► .....	► .....	► .....

### 3.3. Preparedness basics

In contrast to prevention, preparedness includes all the efforts taken by government and societal organizations to know what to do in case a crisis does occur: making emergency arrangements, monitoring the data for signs of stress, and warning the population of imminent danger. In Japan, for instance, workers' organizations are known for their active involvement in responding to disasters by issuing warning messages to workers and their families of an impending danger, and mobilizing significant numbers of workers in a very short time to help with the response. All this requires a focus on **preparedness**: training workers in the skills needed to provide immediate assistance, developing and testing operating plans and procedures, and establishing robust communication channels that enable quick reactions and rapid deployment.

Preparedness is thus very much related to **early warning mechanisms**: these days we are equipped with sophisticated technology (sensors and computer algorithms) that enable us to monitor hazards, engage in prediction and forecasting, generate risk assessments, and put in place a variety of communication tools to help us when a threat is imminent. Early warning, as part of our overall preparedness activities, is thus based on extensive **data mining** as well as **coordination**: it must be clear who is responsible for early warning systems, and who is the authoritative entity to ring the alarm in an effective, credible and accountable manner.

Preparedness, however, is not only related to disasters: state and societal actors can also prepare themselves for conflicts by constantly monitoring and analysing societal tensions and disputes so that the potential for violent conflict can be anticipated. On this basis, programmes and interventions can be designed to prevent violence from erupting or to mitigate the scale and intensity of such events if they do occur. As with disasters, early warning mechanisms that seek to gauge when tensions in society are at risk of spiralling into violent confrontation are a key element. The "sensors" used are different, based less on scientific measurement and more on people's (necessarily subjective) impressions of a societal situation – but the logic is similar. Some of the available sources of global information in this regard are listed in **box 11**.

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As with prevention, "preparedness" involves actions undertaken on a continuous basis, even when conflict or disaster is not imminent.

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► **Box 11. Sources of information for early warning**

Signs of conflict are often reported by various international news agencies. This can prove to be a more reliable source of information, particularly in situations where national press freedoms are restricted. The following can be utilized to gain knowledge and information on a national, regional, and international level:

- The ECOWAS early warning system database (ECOWARN), <http://www.ecowarn.org/>.
- The early warning programme of the **West African Network for Peacebuilding**, (WANEP), <https://wanep.org/wanep/>.
- The **International Crisis Group**, which produces *Crisis Watch* with articles and recommendations, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/>.
- The **Forum on Early Warning and Early Response** (FEWER), which provides analyses and information concerning early warnings in the event of conflict, <http://www.fewer-international.org>.
- ReliefWeb, providing information, articles, and maps concerning current humanitarian crises worldwide, <http://www.reliefweb.int/>.
- **The New Humanitarian**, which provides daily information with special reports in French, English, and Swahili on numerous humanitarian problems, <http://thenewhumanitarian.org/>.
- **Local, national, and international newspapers** with their internet portals and social media platforms.

In practical terms, workers' organizations may wish to consult the following checklist as they seek to establish and maintain their early warning and preparedness capabilities:

- **Verify institutional capacities at the union level**, in terms of monitoring the situation and maintaining communication channels.
- **Identify the main disaster risks** present in your country.
- **Establish a list of data points and indicators** that can be monitored and analysed by unions on both a continual and an *ad hoc* basis. In other words, what would be the early signs of a simmering crisis? These signs would constitute the indicators that would then need to be monitored in a regular manner.
- **Identify a list of sources of reliable information** available locally and internationally.
- **Identify the relevant recipients** of the information to be disseminated, including migrants and forcibly displaced populations entering or already part of the workforce.
- **Prepare and communicate early warning messages simply, precisely, and in a timely manner**, to the right audience, having carefully selected the most appropriate media and social media outlets.
- **Ensure that information is accurate and precise**, with the relevant sources quoted.
- **Avoid excessive dramatization of crisis events** and the exploitation of societal fears and resentments stemming from uncertainty, even when such framings seem to serve short-term goals of immediate mobilization and collective action.



- **Ensure the establishment of internal mechanisms to deal with conflict or disaster.** In particular, in the case of conflict, setting up internal dialogue groups or facilitators may be a way to contribute to prevention in the first place.
- **Continue with monitoring activities** and pay attention to changes in patterns in the data observed.
- **Coordinate** with other public and private actors that are also involved in early warning (see below) to ensure that different early warning mechanisms are complementary and not overlapping.

An effective and resilient organization needs to be well prepared for the onset of conflict or disaster. Once possible threats have been identified, workers' organizations should develop and regularly update **Crisis Management Plans** with pre-assigned tasks and responsibilities for a designated **Crisis Management Team**. The composition of the team may depend on the type of crisis, but will generally include the senior officials and experts from the communications, legal, security, IT, finances and human resources divisions.

Equally important is offer media training to at least two **spokespersons** who will be the key contacts for the organization and can respond effectively to the needs and expectations of the media. **Key messages** should be prepared in advance by communication experts before validation by legal teams and management. These should be well written and balanced and should avoid any inflammatory language that can cause further harm or escalation of violence. It must be remembered that whilst communication efforts are intended to have positive effects on the organization, information thus provided can also cause harm to certain groups in society (discrimination, stigmatization, etc.). This is why peace and conflict analysis, as described in Module 2, is the key to any prevention and preparedness efforts.

### 3.4. Levels of engagement

In order to design and implement concrete activities related to prevention and preparedness with the aim of sustaining peace, it is useful to engage on multiple levels in a participatory manner. For the sake of simplicity, we will distinguish between four levels here (see **figure 6**), but others could be identified depending on the country context and the type of conflict or disaster situation faced.

At the **community level**, regular discussion groups among workers and with community leaders are at the front line of any efforts to spot the onset of crises. Indeed, most societal violence and tensions occur at the local level – and even in some zones of armed conflict, violence is confined to very specific places. This is another reason why a strong union presence in rural villages and urban neighbourhoods is so crucial. In times of conflict, tensions may then be recognized early and dealt with in a peaceful manner. In disaster settings, active unions with resilient communication channels will help warn workers and their families of imminent dangers, and will also ensure the rapid mobilization of volunteers for immediate response. It is also the level at which households can be sensitized through awareness campaigns on issues with more long-term implications, such as the effects of global warming on livelihoods and future generations. Empowering the local level means involving workers (including the poor, the marginalized and the forcibly displaced) in decision-making and policy implementation.

At the **district level** (or other sub-national level, depending on the context), the focus is on the wider societal repercussions of potential or imminent crises. Conflicts may swiftly widen in scope (e.g. if armed groups begin taking territory or seek to control critical infrastructure) or induce people to flee their homes. Supply lines for basic goods and services may also be affected. In disaster settings, power and communication lines may be cut, or humanitarian aid might need to be delivered from specific access points (e.g. airports). Similarly, in more long-term crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, stabilizing the public health system (e.g. hospital intensive care units) requires such a broader approach. Workers' organizations may thus wish to be involved in emergency measures taken, in close collaboration with state officials and other public authorities (e.g. provincial governments, mayors' offices, etc.).

► Figure 6. Levels of engagement



The **national level** is the one at which overall decision-making in times of crisis is located, and from where the State should pursue its basic functions of providing for individuals residing in its territory. It is here that state institutions can be lobbied by workers' organizations and where an effective social dialogue can be pursued. Particularly in settings facing protracted crises (e.g. chronic armed violence, the lasting effects of climate change, or pandemics such as COVID-19), it is important to sustain communication channels throughout this extended period. But it is often this central level that is also the most affected in times of crisis – in conflict settings, because state security forces have lost control over parts of the territory, or because the government is itself being questioned (e.g. coup d'états or popular uprisings); and in disaster settings, because access to affected regions may have been cut or the provision of basic public services has been compromised. This is also the level where early warning and prevention efforts need to be coordinated at the central level with public authorities that have the primary mandate of early warning and prevention.

At times, countries are unable to deal with crises on their own – conflicts and disasters spill across state boundaries, or humanitarian relief from outside is necessary to deal with the situation. It is thus crucial to maintain strong, continuous communication with relevant stakeholders at the regional or **international level**. For workers' organizations, this could be union networks, but also regional organizations and humanitarian relief agencies.

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During the Jasmine Revolution in 2011, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) was one of four key societal actors that ensured a peaceful political transition at the national level, following the fall of Ben Ali's regime. For more information, see the Workers' Guide, pp. 37–38.

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It is important here to recognize that the framework provided should not be seen as favouring top-down or bottom-up processes of action and decision-making. Instead, the emphasis is on **the interplay between the various levels**, and on the entry points for trade union engagement offered on each level. Understanding and perceiving signs of distress together can build social cohesion and encourage the effective mobilization of people and resources in a timely manner. Using existing societal networks and by fostering a culture of exchange with government officials, employers and civil society, workers' organizations can be key actors in this regard.

### Exercise 11



With reference to your example of conflict or disaster:

- 11.1. How independent do you think workers' organizations are in your selected context?
- 11.2. Did the crisis compromise this independence?
- 11.3. What are the repercussions on social dialogue?
- 11.4. What challenges and opportunities can be identified, particularly if the crisis deteriorates further?
- 11.5. Are there any partners and stakeholders excluded from the dialogue processes?
- 11.6. On each of the four levels identified in this section (community, district, national and international), discuss what entry points there might be for engagement by workers' organizations. Focus your attention in particular on early warning activities.

Community	District	National	International

- 11.7. What are the possibilities of synergies and contradictions emerging at different levels of trade union activity?

If you wish to know about your case study or explore other scenarios, the International Crisis Group (ICG) offers an interactive map of crises on their "Crisis Watch" website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>.

You can access the webpage and click on "Browse map". Crisis situations that ICG is monitoring are highlighted, with countries in red being those in which the situation has recently deteriorated. Try to select one of the deteriorating situations by clicking on it. A new window will pop up, offering an update on the situation. Answer the questions above with the information you find on the website.

### 3.5. Strengthening the prevention capacities of member and tripartite structures

In view of the vital role played by workers and their organizations in crisis response, the strengthening of the technical capacities of members, union leaders, and professional staff at all levels is key. Activities in this regard could include (but are certainly not limited to):

- Introducing **courses on conflict prevention, early warning systems, and disaster preparedness** into training programmes wherever possible and financially feasible.
- Encouraging workers' organizations to **draft and publish a strategy and policy paper** on prevention, early warning and preparedness.
- Promoting **the culture and practice of deliberation and transparent management** in the operational structures of workers' organizations.
- Encouraging and actively supporting the **participation of women**, for example within the organizational structure of workers' organizations and particularly in roles with decision-making responsibilities.
- Developing specific **training and support programmes for vulnerable groups in society**, if and when feasible, including for migrants and the forcibly displaced, youth populations and the disabled. To this end, the ILO has developed materials on **conflict management and mediation**, as well as on **social cohesion and peaceful coexistence** that can be accessed via the reference section at the end of this manual.
- Taking the initiative to **encourage and create partnerships and collaborative activities with other political and social actors** at the sub-national and national levels in an effort to promote the principles of solidarity and dialogue.
- Being involved in **the organization, instruction and mobilization of workers in the informal economy**, with a view to expanding union membership and including the needs and legitimate demands of such workers into their lobbying activities.
- Seeking the **technical and financial support** of regional and international trade union organizations, the ILO, and other relevant multilateral agencies in order to develop and draw on expertise and training services.

Beyond strengthening the prevention capacities of workers' organizations, social partners can also establish institutional spaces in which social dialogue, in its many forms, can be maintained and consolidated. Such collaboration across the world of work can include prevention and preparedness in its mission statements and articles of association – for instance by laying out the details of an ad hoc cell, with its own mission and rules of procedure that can be convened in crisis periods.

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The **ITUC Peace, Democracy and Rights** pillar offers insight and guidance into how workers' organizations can produce and disseminate content on prevention, early warning and preparedness for the benefit of their members.

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The greatest challenge for social partners will be to finance such an institutional space, and guarantee that it will have the necessary staff and the mission of a sustainable tripartite platform. Clearly formulating the mission statement to convince all concerned stakeholders of the platform's merits is key. Positive actions and initiatives to be included are:

- **Promotion of social dialogue** and the values of solidarity, tolerance, and mutual respect.
- **Promotion of a civic spirit** that champions a peaceful and inclusive society in which all individuals – including groups of society that risk being marginalized, such as migrants and forcibly displaced persons – take part, individually and collectively, in the socio-economic development of the country.
- **Respect of national laws**, fundamental human rights and international conventions that guarantee the rights of expression, organization, and negotiation.
- **Preservation of national unity** and territorial integrity, and strengthening friendly relations and cooperation with tripartite institutions in neighbouring countries.
- **Promotion of democracy** and the rule of law on the basis of progress and social justice.

### 3.6. Consolidating regional and international partnerships to foster a culture of prevention and disaster mitigation

Conflicts and disasters are often immune to national borders. With globalization and the constant movement of people, health crises such as Ebola or COVID-19 soon become issues of regional and indeed worldwide concern – and so do storms such as Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which swept through the entire Caribbean in September 2017, devastating over a dozen countries and territories in the space of a few days. Armed conflict, especially when involving a variety of non-state armed groups and external support, also tends to spill across borders, destabilizing entire regions, as witnessed for instance in the Sahel or the Middle East. Conflicts and disasters moreover lead to flows of migrating and forcibly displaced populations that can only be tackled by countries that cooperate. Preventing, preparing for and responding to crises is thus not a national but an **international** task.

For workers' organizations, it is essential to **maintain close ties and build alliances** with social partners in neighbouring countries and also in other regions of the world (see [box 12](#)). This cooperation, which is the emphasis of Part XIII of ILO Recommendation No. 205, can take on many forms, ranging from punctual logistical, technical or financial support for acute crises such as a natural disaster, or more sustained collaboration for chronic challenges such as societal conflict or the effects of climate change.

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To read more about international cooperation and partnership among workers' organizations, see the Workers' Guide, p. 48.

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#### ► Box 12. Harnessing cooperation

International cooperation can be multilateral or bilateral, global or regional. It can involve UN agencies and international NGOs, donor governments, or regional structures, including those of the ITUC. Such cooperation is perhaps at its strongest at the regional level, not least among workers' organizations. Long-term collaborations include the well-established **Baltic Sea Trade Union Network (BASTUN)** involving 22 organizations with over 20 million members, and the **Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU)**. For more information, see the Workers' Guide, p. 48.



In pursuing transnational cooperation in order to deal with conflicts and disasters, workers' organizations may wish to bear the following ideas in mind:

- **Document local and national experiences** with crisis settings in order to elaborate good practices and learn from past mistakes.
- **Foster exchanges of knowledge** through informal meetings, joint seminars or regional union networks – so that others may benefit from such insights and identify common challenges.
- **Build regional alliances** in order to facilitate dealing with population flows across borders, including migrants and those forcibly displaced by conflict or disaster.
- **Strengthen continuous interactions** with the ILO and ITUC (including regional and national offices and partners) in order to remain aware of programming innovation and ongoing activities.
- **Develop close ties** with regional and international organizations, as well as donor governments and foundations, in order to benefit from funding opportunities and networks.

### Exercise 12



Most countries were poorly prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic when it began to spread worldwide in early 2020. With reference to your country:

- 12.1. List some of the ways in which workers' organizations could prepare for future pandemics.
- 12.2. Explain how bipartite and tripartite structures can be useful in contributing to the society's preparedness.
- 12.3. Describe steps workers' organizations themselves could undertake to be better prepared in the future.
- 12.4. What networks can your organization mobilize to seek and offer support?





# Module 4

## ► Sustaining peace II: Response and recovery

### Learning objectives

- To recognize the potential of social mobilization and awareness campaigns as key components of a timely and effective response to conflicts and disasters.
- To acknowledge the importance of establishing the needs of affected populations in times of crisis, in order to formulate and implement activities targeting employment and decent work for peace and resilience.
- To articulate the concrete contributions workers' organizations can offer for immediate humanitarian response, while also paving the way for medium- and long-term contributions to development and sustainable peace.
- To acknowledge the ways in which workers' organizations can become involved in the negotiation of agreements to alleviate socio-political tensions and end violent conflicts.

### 4.1. Response and recovery basics

In cases when prevention efforts have been unsuccessful and violent conflict does erupt – or when the disaster hits despite best attempts at mitigation – the focus turns to the immediate humanitarian **response**. Here workers' organizations can be key actors as well. The key activities to be considered include social mobilization, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, analysing the humanitarian needs of workers and their families in conflict- or disaster-affected zones, and taking part in aid relief work and other forms of swift and effective support. The objective is to, at least, stabilize working conditions and minimize the number of workers who lose their source of income because of the crisis. Moreover, workers' organizations can be instrumental in providing support and opportunities for people who have been displaced – including refugees and migrants fleeing from or seeking to avoid conflicts and disasters in neighbouring countries.

A “rapid needs assessment” is a commonly-used tool to analyze the immediate consequences of a conflict or disaster for affected populations.

Once the peak of the crisis has been overcome (confrontation has been reduced in scale and intensity), workers' organizations are vital actors in a more long-term **recovery** process to build peace and resilience and restore social cohesion. In conflict settings, activities include demanding access to dialogue platforms with the objective of restoring political stability and moving society onto the path of sustainable peace, social justice and inclusivity. Activities may also include becoming involved in political negotiations and the development of agreements. The key task will be to support workers in returning to or finding decent work and income-generating opportunities, and using social dialogue to seek a resumption or improvement of social services such as education, healthcare and social protection mechanisms.

Since workers are always amongst the frontline victims of the direct and indirect consequences of conflicts and disasters, workers' organizations should adopt a proactive attitude. Through the tools and mechanisms of mediation, arbitration, formal and informal consultations and negotiations, including collective bargaining, workers' organizations have acknowledged experience that can be put to good use in such environments.

## 4.2. Mobilization and awareness-raising campaigns as part of the immediate response to conflicts and disasters

What makes workers' organizations stand out among societal actors is their potential to mobilize a large number of people for a non-partisan cause. Collective mobilization can take on a variety of forms including meetings, petitions, awareness campaigns, and seeking to influence political and societal decision-makers through consultation, dialogue, and effective media campaigns.

Building on the prevention and preparedness activities discussed in Module 3, mobilization and awareness campaigns then constitute the immediate **response** to the detection of signs of crisis and distress. How can those most affected by the conflict or disaster be identified, and aid be delivered to them in a timely manner? As a starting point for any response measure, it is crucial to ensure that internal agreement has been reached on the objectives to be pursued, the most suitable means of attaining them, and who is going to organize and direct these initiatives. This is why peace and conflict analysis is such an important activity already before the start of any crisis, as discussed in the previous module.

All crises are societally and political sensitive contexts in which some people suffer while others seek to benefit from or gain from the situation. This is especially the case during political upheaval, widespread violence, or armed conflict. Much caution is

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*In all settings affected by conflicts and disasters, it is vital that all response measures are conflict-sensitive.*

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required on the part of workers' organizations seeking to contribute to a response. For instance, an action with the best intentions may inadvertently worsen the crisis and polarize conflict parties further, particularly if conflicts are portrayed in the manner of "political/corporate elites versus the working class". In such cases, response measures may even put the lives of workers and union activists at risk. Much consideration should therefore be given to the likely consequences of any actions, and the costs and benefits should be carefully weighed through continuous monitoring and analysis.

Specific activities for workers' organizations seeking to mobilize popular support in order to respond to the onset of conflicts and disasters might include the following:

- **Establish cooperation, partnerships and unity of action** with societal actors that share the same values and whose objectives are complementary to those of workers' organizations in terms of respect for fundamental human rights.
- **Propose measures and initiatives** to take account of the context and the needs of different components of society. The aim is to find consensus solutions aimed at preventing an escalation of societal tensions and a resort to violence. In case of conflict, such action should also be addressed at the members of the organizations themselves, to ensure they refrain, if possible, from siding with the conflict parties. This includes signing petitions and collecting signatures.
- **Detect, denounce and counter mobilization efforts** made by militias, armed groups and criminal gangs – such groups tend to recruit young people by exploiting their frustrations and weaknesses. Money and other benefits are routinely used to win their trust and support in settings where state and societal institutions are weak and/or oppressive. In order to counteract such trends, it is necessary to **contribute to the establishment of youth employment programmes and vocational trainings**, to offer credible alternatives and promote the values of tolerance and social justice.
- **Give voice to women** in order to ensure their active participation in raising awareness and communication activities able to reach different groups in society.

- **Undertake campaigns of support and solidarity** with national, regional and international trade union organizations and solidarity networks, in conjunction with the ILO, its partners and the broader system of donor agencies and civil society.
- **Implement a meaningful communications strategy** that takes into account the following elements (see also **box 13**):
  - **Respond swiftly** to media inquiries by organizing interviews and press conferences. This will help minimize rumours, “fake news” and misinformation.
  - **Be accurate** by telling the truth from the beginning based on the known facts.
  - **Be consistent** by preparing spokespersons with key messages and keeping them updated on the latest development of the crisis.
  - **Focus first on public safety**, in particular during health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic when people need to know what they must do to protect themselves.
  - **Show empathy and understanding** for victims or anyone who may have been harmed or impacted by the crisis. It is very important to show that the organization is concerned about people's welfare rather than its own reputation.
  - **Do not forget to involve members and the general public** by issuing key messages to explain what happens, what they should do and how the crisis will affect them.
  - **Provide stress and trauma counselling** to victims of the crisis and their families if needed.

#### ► **Box 13. Communication management: What to avoid in times of crisis**

Many things can go wrong with the communications strategy when conflict or disaster strikes and people are panicking. Here are a number of things to avoid when crisis is imminent:

- Not preparing in advance for a potential crisis situation.
- Underestimating the crisis and hoping it will go away without decisive interventions from external actors, including workers' organizations.
- Avoiding an honest assessment of the impact of the crisis on the organization (it may be worse than at first thought or not as bad as predicted).
- Striking a defensive posture and making off-the-cuff, unrehearsed remarks.
- Making only written statements and avoiding face-to-face (or telephone) contact with inquiring media.
- Using technical jargon and other language the public does not understand.
- Assuming that truth and good reputation will always triumph.
- Not spending time on social media to keep abreast of the public reaction to the crisis. It is important to engage with the broad public and make sure to convey key messages repeatedly on different fora.
- Not engaging “the other side”, assuming that divisions and tensions are already clear-cut and unsurmountable.
- Treating the media like the enemy and thereby validating whatever negative presumptions reporters are making about the organization.
- Failing to get ahead of the story and instead reacting to news as it unfolds.
- Not consulting stakeholders and other allies in efforts to address the crisis.



### Exercise 13

Using the example of conflict or disaster in your country:

- 13.1. Note down how workers were mobilized in the immediate aftermath of the crisis.
- 13.2. From the world of work and beyond, which societal actors were involved in providing humanitarian assistance?
- 13.3. How important, in your view, was the contribution offered by workers' organizations on the local, regional and national levels?
- 13.4. What are some of the key roles, strengths and obstacles for workers' organizations to become involved in peace processes?

## 4.3. Analysing the needs of workers in crisis settings

In settings of conflict and disasters, new needs emerge within affected populations: immediate humanitarian needs as well as those related to re-establishing "normal" living conditions in the medium and long term. This is why UN agencies and donor governments have begun speaking of a triple nexus between humanitarian, development and peace concerns: many States and societies affected by conflict and disaster are caught in cycles of fragility in which humanitarian aid is being delivered on a continuous basis – spanning years and even decades rather than weeks and months. Humanitarian activities and programmes thus overlap and run in parallel to those promoting livelihoods, sustainable development and a pathway to peace and resilience, not least through employment and decent work. This is why there have been calls to embrace the logic of the "HDP nexus" as a way of acknowledging the important synergies between the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding domains.

Humanitarian needs are strictly associated with survival and are those that have to be covered in the response during and right after a crisis. These needs have to be met in order to save lives and minimize the number of additional casualties. Elements include access to basic food, drinking water and shelter; access to medication and urgent health-care; and protection against attack, violence, or further violence. Other, non-humanitarian needs are then tackled in the subsequent recovery period (see section 4.7).

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See the resource section at the end of this manual for further readings on the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus.

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It is very important to carefully assess the needs of affected populations as swiftly and accurately as possible when a crisis sets in. While it may not be the function of workers' organizations to provide humanitarian assistance, their societal reach (a large membership base) and mandate (addressing grievances and pursuing social justice) make them key players in furthering the aims of the HDP nexus. The fact that workers' organizations are already "on the ground" when conflict or disaster strikes make them a particularly valuable institution to complement the aid operations of professional humanitarian organizations that may take some time to deploy. Moreover, workers' organizations can use their trust capital, networks and convening power to facilitate the crisis response – bringing their constituents together beyond divisive conflict lines. Nevertheless, erratic and uncoordinated activities can lead to a waste of resources, a risk of duplication and, most importantly, the likelihood that not all those in urgent need of assistance receive the necessary help.

From the perspective of workers' organizations, it is key to collect disaggregated data about the ongoing crisis situation. Generating the necessary data to establish a response plan could include the following tasks:

- **Identify victim workers**, including overall death and injury figures as well as those in detention as a result of the crisis, reporting data disaggregated by age and sex.
- **Identify groups made vulnerable by the crisis** (children, elderly, people with disabilities, religious and ethnic minorities, etc.), and assess how their specific needs were affected by the emergence of the crisis.
- **Identify the families of union members** who have lost their homes and are displaced by the conflict or disaster, as well as those who have lost individuals who used to be responsible for providing the household's income.
- **Draw up an inventory of workplaces of union members**, equipment, and tools which have been destroyed or damaged, as well as critical societal infrastructure that has broken down.
- **Estimate the number of jobs (and hours of work) lost** by means of rapid surveys of union members.
- **Remain updated on population movements**, especially in settings affected by forced displacement (IDPs and refugees).
- **Begin collecting the testimony of workers** whose rights have been violated (right of association and expression, for example), who have been exploited or who have been subjected to other forms of injustice and are suffering owing to a deterioration in working conditions related to the crisis.
- On the basis of the assessment of needs and loss, get in contact with the relevant authorities and request **financial and material compensation, changes in legislation or in applicable policies**.

Generally, the difficulties hindering the capacity to analyse and respond to humanitarian needs are mainly logistical in nature and are associated with reaching affected populations as quickly as possible. The number of people requiring assistance and the geographic dispersion of the families affected, who are sometimes in zones that are difficult to access, are factors which make the analysis and response effort very complex.

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Remember to disaggregate your data by age and sex, and to collaborate with employers' organizations on each of these aspects as much as possible.

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The probable presence of various governmental players, civil society, and the international community requires a high capacity for coordination, i.e. the capacity to know exactly who is to do what, when, with whom, and with what human, financial and material resources. In the societal upheaval arising from conflict or disasters, it is difficult to coordinate humanitarian activities properly.



There are many repercussions of ineffective aid delivery. Beyond the obvious deteriorating circumstances of those in need, humanitarian assistance, if not dispersed in an equitable manner (e.g. because of partisan interests or corrupt officials), can itself be a conflict driver or at least a factor that exacerbates marginalization and social exclusion further. In order to avoid such consequences, workers' organizations may want to:

- **Prepare an emergency plan in advance** so as not to be taken by surprise. This plan should define possible intervention scenarios, who should do what in specific contexts, when, with whom, and with what human, financial, and material resources.
- **Establish an emergency communication plan** at several levels (local, district, national and international).
- **Be rigorous and transparent** when collecting humanitarian data and analysing them (see **box 14** for a checklist). Verify the information so as not to risk making errors or fuelling discrimination.
- Analyse the data in light of future **funding needs**, and reach out to institutions and other societal actors.
- **Be sure not to undertake activities already carried out by others**; in this case, establish partnerships, and share responsibilities and tasks with them.
- **Share the information collected** with other actors operating in the zones affected.

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The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) provides useful “Data Responsibility Guidelines” to explain the ethical principles, processes and tools to support the effective management of data in humanitarian response: <https://centre.humdata.org/data-responsibility/>

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**► Box 14. Checklist of questions to ask when seeking to rapidly assess the needs arising from crisis situations**

**Objective 1: Evaluate the impact of the crisis on workers' organizations**

- Who are your members?
  - How many of them were there before the crisis? How many are there today? How many of them are women?
- In which sectors of activity do you have affiliated unions or members?
  - How many were there before the crisis? How many are there today?
- Have you recorded job losses in these sectors and firms? How many? What kinds of jobs have been lost?
- What type of activities would your union normally undertake with its members?
  - To what extent has the crisis affected your activities?
  - How is your union reacting to this situation?
- What assistance does your organization require in the short term?
- What can your organization do in order to support recovery plans led by the government or international institutions?
- What changes are needed in your organization in the long term in view of the current exceptional situation?

**Objective 2: Ascertain the effect of the crisis on the local means of subsistence**

- What are the main means available to vulnerable populations (including displaced populations) to access income-generating opportunities? Try to establish different percentages for relevant categories, for example: small farmers, remittance of funds, trading, small industries, salaried work, intermittent work, or migrant work. Differentiate by age and sex, if possible.
- What were the consequences of the crisis for the entire population and the ways in which people earn a living in the region?
- Who are the most vulnerable workers? Which groups have been most affected and why? Describe the situation, if possible with respect to:
  - Geographic region
  - Gender
  - Job or occupation
  - Wealth or socio-economic status
  - Age (young children, elderly people)
  - Legal immigration status, including the right to work and access to welfare
  - Other factors (e.g. health or disabilities).

## 4.4. Humanitarian relief work

With workers being among those societal groups paying the heaviest price for conflicts and disasters, workers' organizations have a potentially crucial role in immediate response efforts (as well as, of course, in generating sustainable peace and development in the long run). Beyond demonstrating moral and material solidarity with union members, workers' organizations can play an active role in humanitarian assistance and societal relief efforts during periods of conflict or in the immediate aftermath of disasters and catastrophes. This engagement often depends on one or a few "champions" who are ready to mobilize themselves and their organization or its management. It is crucial that such efforts are seen as a civic duty for the benefit of the country as a whole, and not part of a political agenda in any way.

Humanitarian assistance and other forms of relief support provided by workers' organizations should build on their capacities in terms of mobilization, advocacy and technical expertise in specific areas. Indeed, workers' organizations wishing to support crisis-affected populations and contribute to humanitarian assistance should do so in collaboration with employers' organizations, and with other national and international relief agencies in a way that maximizes each organization's respective strengths. Regular communication among all these stakeholders is key to avoid duplication, enhance coherence, and ensure a coordinated response. Examples of relief initiatives in which workers' organizations may wish to play a role include:

- **Stimulate mutual aid** among the population and collect funds, including in the manner of cooperatives that can play an important role in crisis response.
- Seek support from and **partnerships with employers' organizations as well as international and regional trade union organizations** and act as an outpost for the acceptance and distribution of aid.
- Collect and **store food and non-food products** and distribute them to households in need.
- Help in dispensing necessary and appropriate **care to the wounded**.
- Manage the distribution of **crisis response activities** (such as debris management), including the inflow of volunteer workers, with a particular attention to safety standards and regulations.
- **Show solidarity** with the families affected (for example, displaced families in camps).
- **Keep as many people as possible in the active work force** for those who are able to work, by reducing occupation rates or increasing part-time work engagements. These can safeguard the livelihoods of entire families and prevent them from falling into poverty and further hardship.

Depending on the context and the crisis dynamics witnessed, workers' organizations should make an inventory of existing dialogue measures and communication channels, and of grievances and legitimate claims on the part of workers. This will help in the effort to determine which themes need to be prioritized, and in what order or sequence they should be addressed.

## 4.5. Including migrants and refugees

As discussed in Module 1, the sudden influx of people into a country is a key "exogenous shock" that societal systems need to contend with. If the receiving country is itself affected by conflict or disaster, their arrival can exacerbate societal tensions and put additional strains on the job market and the provision of basic services. Yet, it is also widely recognized that refugees and migrants can contribute positively to host societies by bringing skills, extensive social capital, talents and competences that can contribute to the country's development and prosperity. The Workers' Guide (p. 45) provides specific examples of situations where workers' organizations helped maximize these societal benefits, by facilitating the economic integration of refugees and migrants.

Overall, workers' organizations can provide different forms of support to integrate and protect migrants and refugees. They can refer to the principles provided by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration (GCM), as well as in the ILO's international labour standards, to contribute to the provision of safe and legal pathways for migrants and refugees to cross international borders, for example by supporting labour mobility cooperation frameworks. Examples of such support mechanisms include:

- Offer **language courses** to migrants/refugees to increase their employability and societal integration.
- Provide a **skills assessment** to recognize the set of skills of migrants/refugees and match them with economic and job opportunities.
- **Lobby to ensure that workers' skills, qualifications and competences are mutually recognized** across different countries.
- Lobby to ensure that **vocational and technical training** is available for migrants/refugees when needed, to meet the demand for certain skills (and to facilitate voluntary return).
- Request the government to **strengthen international and bilateral cooperation** in order to work towards the implementation of labour mobility cooperation frameworks, taking into account the needs of the local labour market.



#### Exercise 14

Using the example of a disaster in your country, try to describe the humanitarian response in terms of the main local, national and international actors involved. This might require a bit of background research and the consultation of documents, if time and resources permit.

- 14.1. What partnerships or alliances were established or consolidated in the process of the crisis response?
- 14.2. What resources were mobilized to support displaced populations?
- 14.3. What was the contribution of workers' organizations (if any) to the relief effort?
- 14.4. With hindsight, what more could workers' organizations have done to support these efforts?

## 4.6. Becoming involved in political negotiations and the development of agreements

The negotiation of agreements intended to settle political and social conflicts – particularly those that entailed armed violence and/or regime change – is a crucial moment for the future of the societies in question. Agreements lay the foundations for a post-crisis period of recovery and reconciliation. They define the parameters for the political stability and socio-economic prosperity of the country.

It is important that workers' organizations, as key societal actors representing a large proportion of the population, know when it makes sense for them to be part of these negotiation processes. Many conflicts break out again after only a few years, usually because some conflict parties – so-called “spoilers” – are unwilling to adhere to the implementation of the agreements signed. Non-partisan, neutral workers' organizations have a potentially crucial role to play in informing union members about the negotiations as they ensue, raising awareness about the key clauses of agreements pertaining to the world of work, and helping to ensure that societal conditions are created in which the implementation of the agreements can be pursued.

Political processes of this nature usually entail three phases: pre-negotiation, negotiation, and implementation. In order to conduct the process and achieve results, the parties may turn to a mediator whose role is defined in each of the phases.

- In the **pre-negotiation** phase, the role of the mediator consists in winning the trust of each of the parties involved in conflict and understanding their respective positions, their specific interests, and their assessment of the situation. It is important to satisfy the conditions imposed by this phase to address the actual preparations for the negotiation, including the choice of venue, the objectives, the points to be negotiated, the timetable and – perhaps most importantly – the participants.
- The **negotiation** itself may relate to an analysis of the participants' problems and points of view and to a search for immediate, short- and medium-term solutions likely to restore peace, security, the principles of democracy, and the rule of law in order to meet the population's fundamental needs.
- The purpose of the negotiations is to emerge with an agreement that all participating parties are willing to respect and adhere to in the subsequent **implementation** phase. The agreement should thus outline a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the terms of the agreement, usually under the auspices of an impartial authority.

When engaging workers' organizations in such processes, it is important to emphasize the centrality of the world of work in building peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Social investment, including the promotion of employment and decent work, the active role of social dialogue, and the explicit acknowledgment of the special needs of vulnerable populations (including migrants and refugees, the disabled, and the elderly) should be at the heart of visions for the future regardless of the nature of the crisis situation that is being tackled.

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Throughout crisis times, it is essential for workers' organizations to remain a credible partner in dialogue processes and a trustworthy interlocutor in the eyes of workers and society at large.

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The issues raised by workers' organizations in political negotiations must take into account the context, the needs of victims and affected populations, the priorities of the social partners and other societal stakeholders, and the financial and human means and resources available. Themes to bear in mind include (but are certainly not limited to):

- **Restoring the authority of the state** (through elections, new constitutional structures, and rebuilding representative and accountable state institutions).
- **Promoting justice and reconciliation** among conflicting parties, including by identifying individuals who have committed crimes and violations of fundamental human rights and bringing them before the competent courts. State officials and members of the security forces should not be exempt from such endeavours.
- **Implementing job programmes and income-generating opportunities** to maintain livelihoods and restore the national economy.
- **Establishing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes** for ex-combatants and their dependants, focusing in particular on overcoming societal stigma and reinserting these persons into employment and income-generating activities.
- Insisting on **the respect of rights** and the principles of democracy – most importantly through a clear division of executive, legislative, and judicial competences. Indeed, an independent justice sector is a key component of any sustainable solution.

- Ensuring that **the rights (to work) of migrants and forcibly displaced populations** (including refugees and IDPs) are respected, and that efforts are made to integrate them into social and economic life. This includes the promotion of an equitable distribution of post-crisis employment, which often tends to be skewed and disproportionately distributed in favour of particular communities, professions, or clan allegiances.
- Ensuring that **women are represented** in decision-making processes and that they are offered employment opportunities, including post-crisis employment, in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.
- Exploring the possibility of **establishing wealth-sharing agreements** for natural resources – in particular if the country in question has a legacy of state contracts with large-scale businesses (e.g. national enterprises or multinational companies in the extractive industries).

Through the negotiation process, there may be a variety of measures workers' organizations could adopt in order to raise awareness around these issues and inform the negotiating parties about their relevance and importance, including:

- **Awareness and information campaigns for social partners**, and the organization of formal and informal meetings with other societal stakeholders in order to encourage exchanges of points of view and analyses on what is required to confront the consequences of crises and societal conflict.
- Clarification with members, union leaders and professional staff about **the role of the social partners**, their duties as citizens and the collective and individual advantages brought about by inclusive, just, and sustainable peace.
- Emphasis on the need to **promote unity of action** among the social partners and to combine their initiatives wherever possible.

During these formal and informal exchanges and information campaigns, it is important to:

- Identify **peace dividends** and underline the implementation challenges faced in the post-agreement phase.
- Make a **detailed inventory of the costs of conflict**, including loss of human lives, the public health ramifications of injury, trauma and disability, the socio-economic challenges related to integration displaced populations, as well as the material and financial damages incurred by society during the crisis period.
- Emphasize the importance of the **human and financial resources** that need to be mobilized for the reconstruction of state and societal institutions, and the rehabilitation of key public infrastructures.



### Exercise 15

Using the example of conflict in your country:

- 15.1. Map out the main societal, non-governmental actors who were or have been involved in the peace negotiations.
- 15.2. Did stakeholders from the world of work participate in such discussions – and if so, what were their contributions to peace and resilience, in your opinion?



## 4.7. Pathways to peace and resilience

The specific non-humanitarian needs of workers in conflict and disaster settings are perhaps more complex than the humanitarian needs – spanning as they do a more extended time period of **recovery** and **reconstruction**, and ultimately requiring the building of pathways to peace and resilience. These needs have to do with restoring some form of “normality” in the political, socio-economic and legal spheres of life as people seek to re-establish their daily routines and live in peaceful societies. This involves returning to or finding meaningful employment and income-generating opportunities, a resumption of social services such as education, healthcare and social protection mechanisms, and participation in public and community life. With these goals in mind, in 2016 the ILO launched its Jobs for Peace and Resilience flagship programmes, which seek to engage stakeholders from the world of work in settings affected by conflicts and disasters to explain how they can contribute to sustainable peace in the long term. Figure 7 gives a preliminary overview of some of the activities promoted by these programmes.

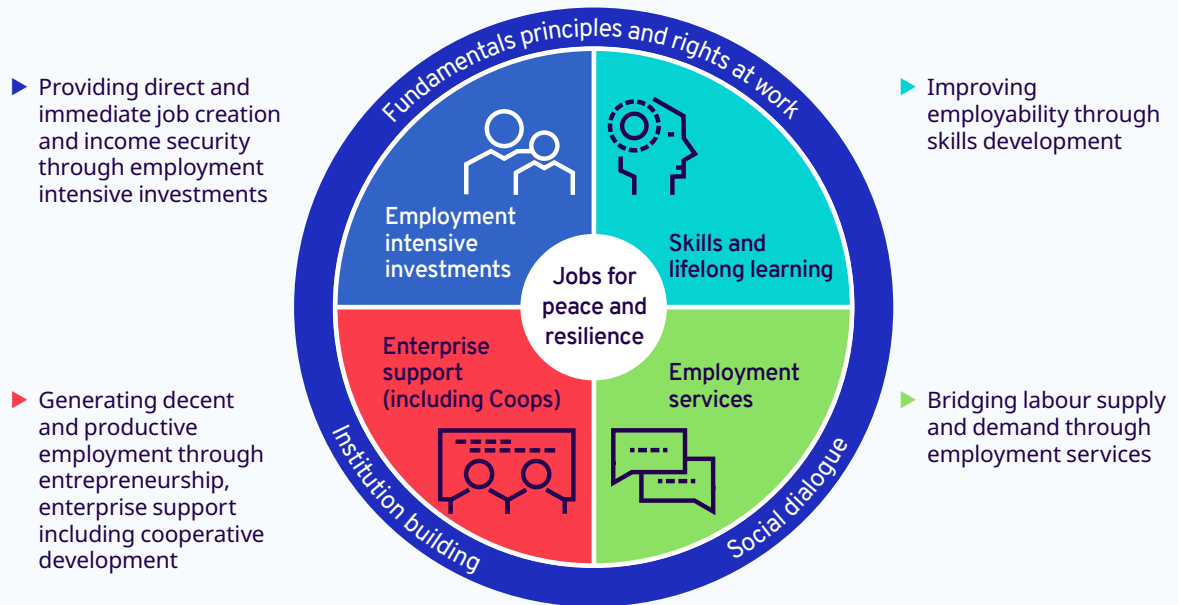
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Restoring worker participation in public and community life is a key ambition in post-conflict and post-disaster settings.

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► **Figure 7. Pathways to peace and resilience**

Furthermore, walking the path towards peace and resilience also involves advocacy for business continuity and income security, and collaborating with government authorities to ensure that occupational safety and health (OSH) measures are adapted to new workplace risks. As in the other periods of the crisis management cycle (prevention, preparedness and response), the role of social dialogue is equally important in the recovery period. Social dialogue strengthens trust and builds consensus among social partners as well as the population at large. Existing dialogue platforms can be used or adapted to collect concerns and ideas of local communities, healthcare workers, and civic and business leaders, as well as representatives of the informal economy and the unemployed.

Some of the initiatives that workers' organizations may wish to consider in the medium and long term include the following (see also [box 15](#)):

- Organize **training programmes** to facilitate reintegration into the labour market.
- Offer advice and **employment services** for those who have lost their jobs as a result of the crisis.
- Implement **credit programmes** and cash-based social protection schemes.
- Engage in **social mobilization** and awareness-raising in support of the reintegration of displaced people (including refugees) as well as those injured or disabled as a consequence of the crisis.
- **Encourage effective social dialogue** and negotiate agreements between employers and workers to foster cooperation in the process of reconstruction.
- **Conduct advocacy campaigns and raise awareness with municipal and local government to provide adequate policies for recovery**, taking into account workers' needs and key contributions to the peacebuilding process. For example, lobbying efforts might focus on making sure workers are proactively involved in reconstruction and that standards of decent work are met throughout their hiring process.

- Ensure the **rehabilitation of children** who were exploited during or because of the conflict or disaster (e.g. child soldiers, trafficking for prostitution, etc.).
- **Ensure that women have a voice** at the decision-making table.
- Direct attention to **workers with special needs**, who tend to be further marginalized in settings of conflict or disaster.
- Contribute to **peace education** by promoting the values of solidarity, social justice and reconciliation among workers and their families, in order to enable an intergenerational exchange of experiences of crisis (see also Part VI of ILO Recommendation No. 205).

Moving from offering “quick fix” solutions in the immediate aftermath of a crisis to more sustained development and peace programming is no easy task – as mentioned above, the notion of an HDP nexus is a call for action on precisely this issue. Many quick-impact activities may have long-term consequences that are often ignored or insufficiently harnessed, while some initiatives usually taken to be part of long-term reconstruction can already have important effects in an “early” recovery period. Meaningful peace and conflict analysis, and hence conflict sensitivity in general, is thus a key ingredient of all decision-making in such settings.

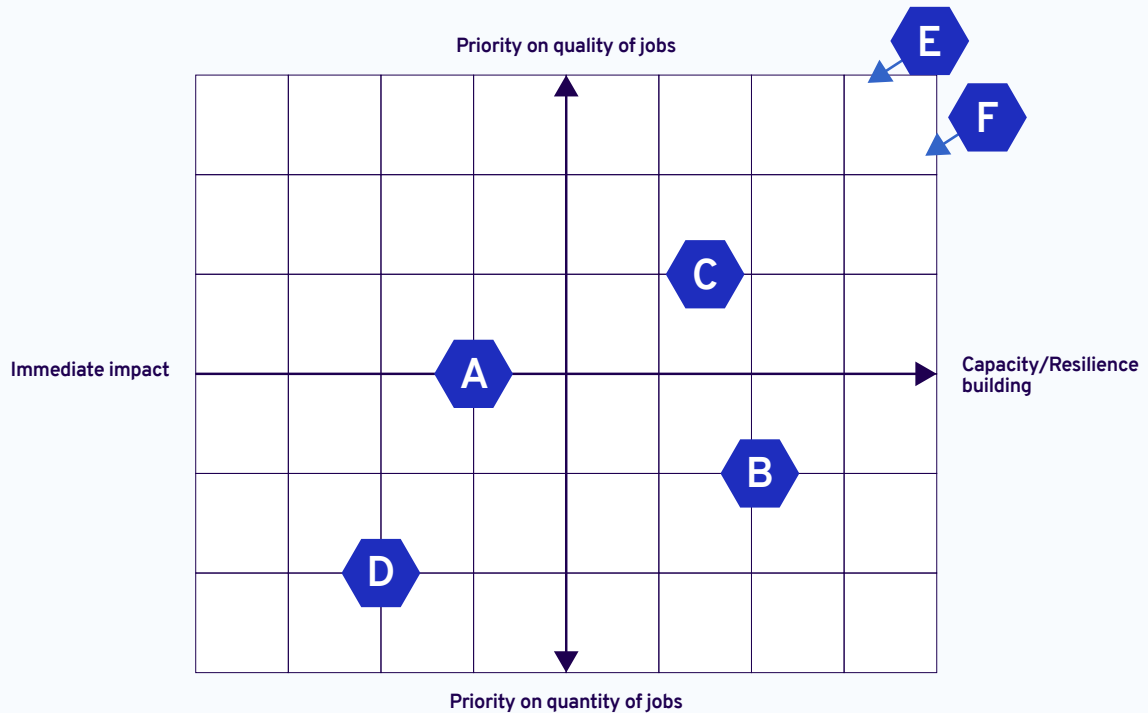
#### ► Box 15. A checklist for workers’ organizations responding to crisis-affected settings

In terms of responding to conflicts and disasters and playing an active role in post-crisis recovery, workers’ organizations may wish to bear in mind the following (non-exhaustive) checklist:

- What are the immediate priorities to “put people to work”, including rebuilding critical infrastructures?
- What role should be played by workers’ organizations, in collaboration with employers’ organizations and the ILO, in organizing an effective, coordinated response?
- What type of support is required in the rapid recovery phase?
- What changes are needed for the longer-term recovery of the populations affected?
- What changes are needed to reduce the vulnerability of jobs and income to societal conflicts, natural disasters, and other large-scale hazards in the future? This might include changes of policy direction, a strengthening of the active population, training in new skills, the creation of new businesses, an improvement of support services, better infrastructures, “stronger” workers’ organizations, or a focus on cooperatives, for example.

In order to brainstorm around these dynamics, it is useful to plot possible projects and activities on two axes – what are here called the “response parameters” for the world of work (see [figure 8](#)). On the horizontal axis, we try to estimate the time at which the activity is supposed to have an effect on the crisis situation. This ranges from immediate-impact actions (e.g. mobilizing volunteers just hours after an earthquake) to long-term capacity-building and resilience (e.g. re-training workers). On the vertical axis, we try to gauge whether the activity is geared more towards generating new employment and income-generating opportunities (i.e. the quantity of work), or towards decent work and thus the quality of the jobs.

► Figure 8. Response parameters

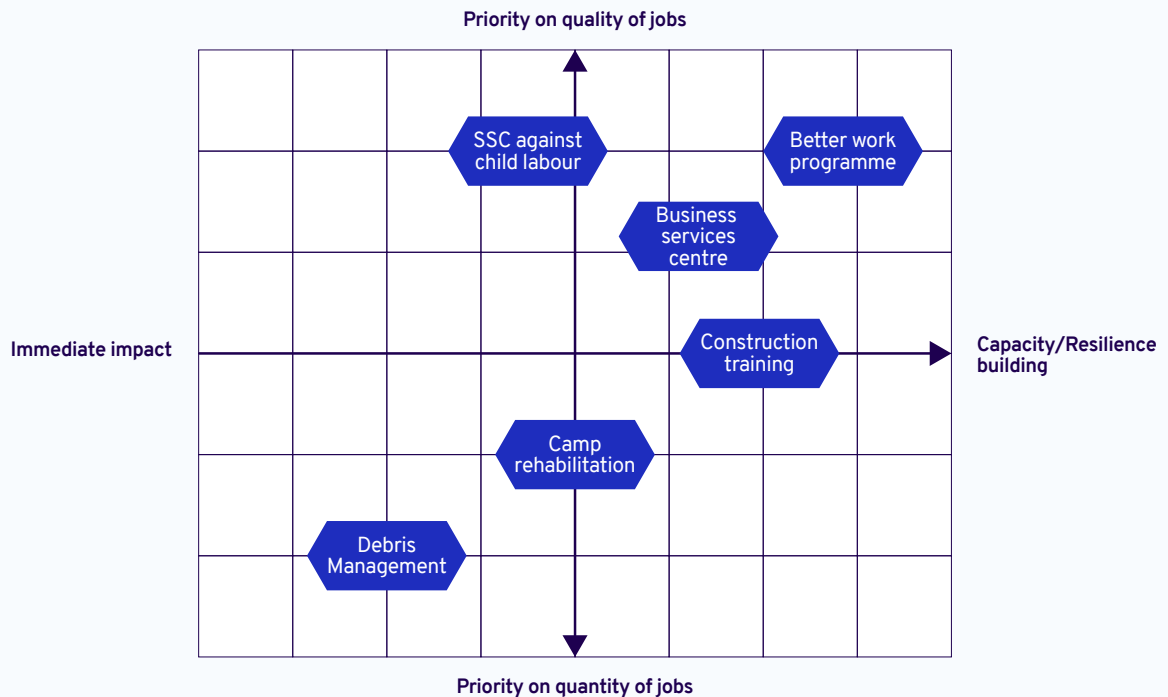


Some ongoing projects implemented under the theme of employment and decent work may be difficult to categorize along the continuum between immediate responses and longer-term capacity/resilience-building. Nonetheless, the framework is relevant as a brainstorming aid and enables actors from the world of work to:

- position their project vis-à-vis similar or complementary initiatives;
- explore the diversity of approaches taken with respect to employment and decent work activities;
- recognize prospects for collaboration across agencies and project partners; and
- identify missing elements and/or necessary adjustments to the existing project portfolio.

For instance, if you are pursuing an activity focusing on immediate job provision (e.g. a project on debris management), you need to be aware of other projects with different priorities and orientations, such as skills training of micro-entrepreneurs, the elimination of child labour, the enforcement of labour standards (e.g. through the establishment of a business service centre), South-South cooperation against child labour, or a better work programme. Figure 9 shows how these different activities could then be plotted on the graph.

► Figure 9. Response parameters: Plotting activities on the matrix



Note that there is no one right answer, and that this remains a very basic tool that does not seek any numeric measurements. While it does not pre-determine which activities could or should be linked together, it compels us to envision how we might design and initiate joint actions across workers' organizations and with social partners in crisis-affected settings. The tool also helps us understand the overall picture of crisis response activities in the world of work and avoid an unbalanced distribution of activities.

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The aim of the matrix tool is to avoid working at cross-purposes while at the same time maximizing the synergies of simultaneously ongoing project activities.

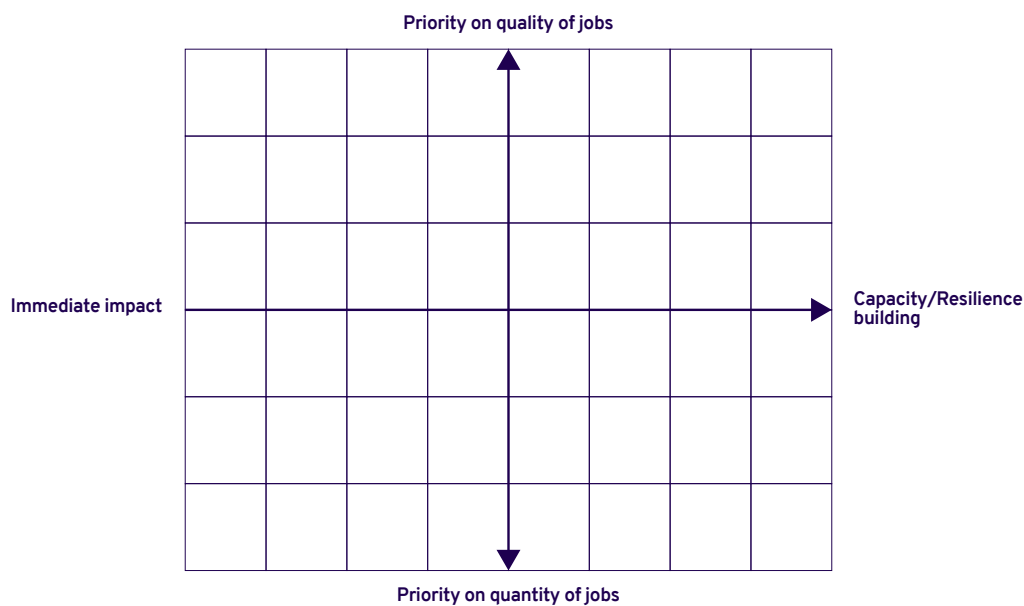
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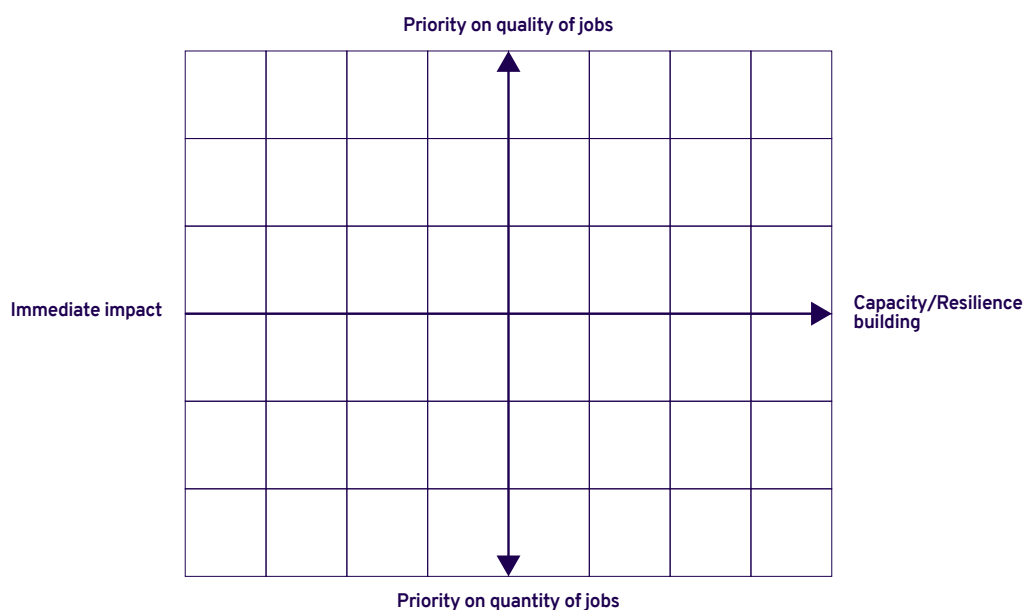
### Exercise 16

Using your example of a conflict or disaster:

- 16.1. Try to list the role and activities of workers' organizations in as much detail as you can.
- 16.2. Use the empty matrix below to plot some of the activities you had noted down – in terms of the impact period (horizontal axis) and in terms of whether the emphasis is more on creating new jobs or about the quality of employment (vertical axis). Use the first graph to note down the activities that you know were carried out.



- 16.3. Now fill out a second graph for activities that, with hindsight, could have been pursued to strengthen peace and resilience further.



- 16.4. What influence do you think the activities in the second graph could have on the way the conflict has (or has not been) settled thus far?

# Module 5

## ► The role of international labour standards in crisis settings

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### Learning objectives

- Acknowledge the importance of observing international labour standards in a systematic effort to prevent and mitigate the effects of conflicts and disasters.
- Know the difference between Conventions, Protocols and Recommendations.
- Embrace the crucial role that workers' organizations can play in championing international labour standards across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
- Understand how the ILO supervisory bodies function, and how they can be mobilized in support of workers' rights in times of crisis.

### 5.1. The role of international labour standards for peace and resilience

One of the main missions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) is to improve people's lives by advancing social justice and promoting decent work for all. This is grounded in the understanding that "peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice", as stated in the very first line of the preamble of the ILO 1919 Constitution. This powerful statement is the strongest argument for the ILO, its Member States and its social partners to be involved in all aspects of sustaining peace in settings affected by conflicts and disasters.

The ILO contributes to achieving its objectives through the adoption and promotion of international labour standards (ILS). As the ILO 2019 Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work has recalled in its Part IV(A); "The setting, promotion, ratification and supervision of international labour standards is of fundamental importance to the ILO."

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*In settings affected by conflicts and disasters, international labour standards need to be fully integrated into all UN and national frameworks related to sustaining peace.*

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ILO Recommendation No. 205 is the overarching instrument on the topic of what to do in crisis situations from an ILO perspective: it recalls obligations and commitments that have already been made through existing ILS, and gives guidance on how to ensure that ILS are fully integrated into all activities of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.



The promotion of ILS and rights at work is a central element of the actions of workers' organizations: it is through the realization of decent work that a society can achieve prosperity and wellbeing. As emphasized by Part V of ILO Recommendation No. 205, conflicts and disasters can seriously undermine these rights as societal institutions are challenged or their capacities weakened. But even in normal situations, the repeated or sustained violations of rights at work (e.g. through child labour, forced labour, various forms of discrimination, freedom of association deficits, or occupational health and safety risks) worsen conditions of poverty and marginalization. Such violations can also exacerbate the effects of disasters, including those related to climate change or major health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, they can spark social unrest, sustain chronic violence, and in some cases even lead to open conflict with government authorities. Social justice is a central element to peace and stability.

## 5.2. ILO Recommendation No. 205 and international labour standards

ILO Recommendation No. 205 is embedded in other ILS adopted by the ILO. Its purpose is to give guidance on what to do in the context of crises arising from conflicts and disasters. This includes the ratification and implementation of the ILO's main tool: ILS. These take the form of Conventions, Protocols and Recommendations (see [box 16](#)).

### ► Box 16. Conventions, Protocols and Recommendations: What is the difference?

Conventions, Protocols, and Recommendations are international labour standards (ILS). All are adopted by the ILO tripartite constituents using the same procedure. All ILS give rise to obligations under the ILO Constitution in terms of reporting. They form part of public international law.

In 2020, a total of 190 Conventions, six protocols, and 206 Recommendations that had been adopted since 1919. Protocols are adopted to complement an existing Convention. While a Convention or Protocol is a binding instrument when ratified, a Recommendation is non-binding. A Recommendation is either self-standing or in support of a Convention or Protocol. Recommendations are important tools, as they recall obligations that might be in Conventions or Protocols. Recommendations offer guidance on specific topics – as in the case of ILO Recommendation No. 205, which deals with conflict and disaster settings.

Details of all international labour standards can be found on the ILO's online database NORMLEX ([www.ilo.org/normlex](http://www.ilo.org/normlex)), which includes the latest information on ratifications as well comments and procedures of supervisory bodies. There is also a very useful section with "country profiles" that contains specific information on national labour law, ratifications and reporting obligations to the ILO supervisory bodies.

The preamble of ILO Recommendation No. 205 emphasizes the "need to ensure respect for all human rights and the rule of law, including respect for fundamental principles and rights at work and for international labour standards, in particular those rights and principles relevant to employment and decent work". It also recalls, in paragraph 43, that crisis responses should be "consistent with applicable international labour standards". As such, the Recommendation offers the opportunity for workers' organizations to request the ratification of ILS, as well as their application if they have been ratified but are not fully applied in practice.

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For guidance on international labour standards, see the text boxes on "relevant international law" in specific sections of the Workers' Guide to ILO Recommendation No. 205. (e.g. pp.16, 25, 29, 32, 34, 36, 38, 41).

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A system for monitoring the application of ILS has been established by the ILO in order to examine the application of Conventions, Protocols and Recommendations in law and in practice. This examination is done by the independent Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR). Specific cases (about 24 per year) are then examined by the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS). Moreover, complaints and representations may be lodged, including with the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA). The ILO publication *Rules of the Game* (2019, centenary edition) offers an overview of the ILO's standards policy.

### 5.3. International labour standards in times of crisis

It is important to note that ILS are applicable at all times – in times of peace and societal stability just as much as during armed conflict or as when being confronted with a major natural disaster or a global pandemic (such as the COVID-19 outbreak). ILO Recommendation No. 205 emphasizes the need to ensure respect for all human rights and the rule of law, including respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, and for international labour standards. With a few limited exceptions covered in the next section, no derogations to international labour standards are possible.

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See the publication “ILO Standards and COVID-19 (Coronavirus): FAQ” (2020), listed in Annex II of this manual, for key provisions of international labour standards relevant to the pandemic.

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Furthermore, ILS are relevant to all aspects of situations affected by conflicts and disasters, and thus to all phases of the crisis management cycle. A fundamental objective of ILS is to increase social justice: the topics they cover and the protection they offer are crucial to preventing crisis situations from occurring, mitigating their effects, and facilitating response and recovery in order to build resilience and promote sustainable peace and stability.

In the aftermath of armed confrontation or a major disaster, it is equally important to insist on the application of ILS, as well as on their ratification if this is still outstanding. The importance of this continuous lobbying task is reiterated in ILO Recommendation No. 205, which suggests to “review, establish, re-establish or reinforce labour legislation” (para. 23(a)). Robust labour legislation is a crucial ingredient of any attempt to put a crisis-affected country back on the path of a peaceful, inclusive, just and prosperous society.

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If a Convention or a Protocol has been ratified by a government, that government must conform to it.

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Concerning the observance of national labour legislation, workers' organizations should:

- **Have an in-depth knowledge of national labour legislation** and raise any omissions and aspects that may disadvantage workers and require revision, including instances of discrimination based on sex, race or religion.
- **Study their own national country profile in NORMLEX.**
- **Detect and note abuses and violations** committed against workers (union members or otherwise).
- **Conduct dialogue with employers** and collaborate with them in order to reach agreements and to raise their awareness of the application of standards with a broader perspective on conflict prevention and preparedness.
- **Take into account the percentage of women in positions of power** and use it as an indicator to evaluate the level of gender equality at the workplace.
- Ensure that **national decent work programmes and poverty reduction initiatives** include precise measures intended to protect rights at work and social dialogue.

- **Participate in the formulation of specific programmes** aiming to reduce the incidence of violations of rights at work.
- **Learn from best practices of other countries' national legislations** and seek consultations with international partners.



### Exercise 17

List the ILO Conventions that your country has ratified. You can use the NORMLEX database ([www.ilo.org/normlex](http://www.ilo.org/normlex)).

- 17.1. Can you think of a specific worker-related challenge that you are witnessing in your professional setting?
- 17.2. How could the labour Conventions ratified by your country support your negotiation efforts with employer organizations or government?
- 17.3. Which external actors (e.g. international organizations, other workers' organizations, etc.) could you involve to strengthen your advocacy?

## 5.4. Permissible derogations or suspensions

Very few international labour standards provide explicitly for possibilities to derogate to the general obligations they set in case of emergencies or force majeure. This is the case, for example, of the fundamental **ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)**. This Convention, in article 2(2)d, stipulates that the term "forced or compulsory labour" does not include "any work or service exacted in cases of emergency (...) and in general any circumstance that would endanger the existence or the well-being of the whole or part of the population." This provision, permitting compulsory labour in very acute crisis settings, has been applied in a restrictive way by the ILO supervisory bodies, as shown in the following quotations:

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► **... the power to call up labour should be confined to genuine cases of emergency, or force majeure. Moreover, the duration and extent of compulsory service, as well as the purpose for which it is used, should be limited to what is strictly required by the exigencies of the situation ...** [The exception of art. 2(2)d)] concerning emergencies should not be understood as allowing the exaction of any kind of compulsory service in case of war, fire or earthquake; this exception can be invoked **only for work or service that is strictly required to counter an imminent danger to the population.**

► **CEACR**, General Survey, 2007, para. 62; emphasis added

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► **In all cases, recourse to compulsory labour should continue only as long as strictly required to meet the emergency situation ...**

► **CEACR**, General Survey 2012, para. 285; emphasis added

Most ILS, however, do not have any provisions permitting derogations or suspension. The CFA and the CEACR have emphasized this in the case of the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). Both supervisory bodies have commented on situations where the rights enshrined in these Conventions have been affected by emergency measures, as the following quotations again illustrate:

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▮▮ The Committee requested a government to ensure that any emergency measures aimed at national security **did not prevent in any way the exercise of legitimate trade union rights and activities**, including strikes, by all trade unions irrespective of their philosophical or political orientation, in a climate of complete security.

► CFA, 2018 Compilation, para. 74; emphasis added

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▮▮ When a state of emergency has continued over a period of several years, entailing serious restrictions on trade union rights and civil liberties that are essential for the exercise of such rights, the Committee has considered that **it is necessary to safeguard the exercise specifically of trade union rights such as the establishment of employers and workers organizations, the right to hold trade union meetings in trade union premises and the right to strike in non-essential services.**

► CFA, 2018 Compilation, para. 300; emphasis added

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▮▮ As general prohibitions of strikes resulting from emergency or exceptional powers constitute a major restriction on one of the essential means available to workers, the Committee considers that they are only justified in a situation of **acute crisis**, and then **only for a limited period** and to the **extent necessary to meet the requirements of the situation**. This means genuine crisis situations, such as those arising as a result of a serious conflict, insurrection or natural, sanitary or humanitarian disaster, in which the normal conditions for the functioning of society are absent..

► CEACR, General Survey 2012, para. 140; emphasis added





What we can take away from this brief overview is that, in examining how emergency measures are implemented, the ILO supervisory bodies have considered that restrictions should only be resorted to in circumstances of extreme gravity constituting an emergency in the strict sense of the term (i.e. when the existence or well-being of the whole or part of the population is endangered). In addition, the measures taken should be limited in time and scope to what is strictly required to meet the specific emergency situation (immediate necessity).

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Measures suspending international labour standards should respond to situations of extreme gravity and be proportional to the matter at hand, both in terms of scope and length (see extracts from the CEACR, General Report, 2020)

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## 5.5. The ILO supervisory system and crisis situations

The ILO supervisory bodies operate in settings affected by conflicts and disasters. For example, the CEACR has examined the case of Libya, which has been dealing with a protracted armed conflict since 2011. Its observations were discussed in the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS). These concerned the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122); and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

- In 2017, the CAS examined the application of ILO Convention No. 182 in Libya. While “acknowledging the complexity of the situation prevailing on the ground and the presence of armed conflict, the Committee deeply deplored the current situation where children are forcibly required by armed groups ... to undergo military and religious training”. It also “deplored the situation of children, especially girls, who are deprived of education due to the situation in the country where although mandatory and free education exists in the country, many schools were closed, damaged and used as military or detention facilities which prohibits children from attending them” (see Individual Case (CAS) – Discussion 2017, ILC.106, 2017).
- In 2018, the CAS examined the application of ILO Convention No. 122 in Libya. It “highlighted the impact and consequences of conflicts on poverty and development, decent work and sustainable enterprises, and recognized the importance of employment and decent work for promoting peace, enabling recovery and building resilience”, before requesting information on several measures that needed to be put in place to secure respect for the Convention (see Individual Case (CAS) – Discussion 2018, ILC.107, 2018).
- Finally, in 2019, the CAS examined the application of ILO Convention No. 111 in Libya. The CAS “deplored that persons from sub-Saharan countries are being sold in slave markets and that they are subjected to racial discrimination” and asked for several measures to be taken. The Worker Member stated that the conflict situation in Libya made it very difficult to resolve the problems that were under scrutiny. However, he stated that “the Libyan Government, which is responsible for appearing before [the CAS], must ensure the fulfilment of the commitments made by Libya through the ratification of the Convention. This is the consequence of the sovereignty recognized to the Government that appears before [the CAS].” An observer from the International Transport Federation (ITF) remarked on “the need for the Government to be guided by [ILO Recommendation No 205] which, among other things, sets out measures to combat discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, in situations of conflict” (see Individual Case (CAS) – Discussion 2019, ILC.108, 2019).

The example of Libya shows how, even when there is a crisis situation, governments have **obligations stemming from Conventions that they have ratified**. It also shows that there are no legitimate reasons not to be guided by ILO Recommendation No. 205 and other international labour standards. Finally, it demonstrates that even if there is a crisis, governments have to comply with their constitutional obligations to send reports to the ILO on the application of ratified Conventions (Article 19 of the Constitution).

If possible, workers' organizations should, for their part, also continue to provide information to the CEACR on the application of ratified Conventions in practice and in law, even if their country is facing a crisis situation (Article 23 of the Constitution). This will ensure that the CEACR has all the facts at hand to assess the situation. It will allow the case to eventually be discussed at the CAS. In case of violation of freedom of association principles, a complaint can be brought to the CFA (see **box 17** and section 5.6).

#### ► Box 17. ILO Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA)

Within the ILO Governing Body, the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) has examined complaints relating to violations of freedom of association since 1951 – regardless of whether a Member State has ratified the relevant Conventions or not. At each Governing Body meeting (i.e. three times a year), the CFA publishes a report in which it examines complaints, at various stages, and formulates conclusions and recommendations. It has examined more than 3,300 complaints so far. Its decisions are compiled in the 2018 ILO publication *Freedom of Association: Compilation of Decisions of the Committee on Freedom of Association*, available online:

[https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/freedom-of-association/WCMS\\_632659/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/freedom-of-association/WCMS_632659/lang--en/index.htm).



#### Exercise 18

In times of crisis related to your own country, have the supervisory bodies ever commented on the application of the ILO Conventions that your country has ratified?

18.1. Have possible violations of international labour standards been brought to the attention of the CEACR in this context?

Imagine witnessing a violation of international labour standards in your country.

18.2. How could you bring public attention to the issue?

18.3. How would you plan a communication and advocacy strategy to demand that the violation is corrected?

As for the previous exercise, please consult the NORMLEX website if possible when formulating your answers.

## 5.6. The role of workers' organizations in championing international labour standards

One crucial aspect of the process of ensuring that ILS are applied and ratified is of course the respect of freedom of association (see **box 18**) and ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98. Strong trade union activity and social dialogue exists when there is the freedom to organize and the independence of workers' organizations. In turn, this independence must be based on the democratic principles that govern the operations of workers' organizations – observing the will of members and seeking their involvement in activities, identifying workers' needs and demands, and being aware of the socio-economic and political factors that shape and constrain possible action.



### ► Box 18. Violations of freedom of association

The “Labour Rights Indicators” of the Center for Global Workers’ Rights provide comprehensive information on country-level compliance with freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. The indicators are based, amongst other sources, on the work of the ILO supervisory bodies. The website establishes a list of possible violations, in law and in practice, of freedom of association and collective bargaining. See: <http://labour-rights-indicators.la.psu.edu/>.

Another source is the ITUC “Global Rights Index”, which depicts the world’s worst countries for workers by rating countries on a scale from 1 to 5+ on the degree of respect for workers’ rights See: <https://www.ituc-csi.org/2021-global-rights-index?lang=en>.

Detailed information exposing violations of workers’ rights in each country is published in the ITUC “Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights” found at <https://survey.ituc-csi.org/ITUC-Global-Rights-Index.html?lang=en>.

Workers’ organizations draw their strength from the support, trust and credibility they enjoy among their members, first and foremost, but also among workers in general and indeed the general public – both within their respective countries as well as regionally and globally. They are judged on the objectives and causes they seek to pursue, on the value of solidarity they defend, and on the results they are able to obtain.

In settings of conflict and disaster, the role of workers’ organizations is particularly important to ensure the establishment of sustainable peace. Not only do workers and their families bear the brunt of such crises, but their capacities and mobilizing potential also mean that they can be at the forefront of preventing the escalation of violence and mitigating the effects of disasters. Their extensive membership base, as well as their ability to harness inclusive dialogue with state authorities and employers, makes workers’ organizations a crucial vehicle for establishing and sustaining early warning measures and contributing to disaster preparedness.

Moreover, by taking action, reaching out to workers, and positioning themselves in the area of conflict and disaster management, workers’ organization may also increase awareness of non-unionized workers as to their relevance, thereby potentially increasing their membership and impact.

### What can workers’ organisations do to champion ILS?

- Study your country’s **ratifications** on NORMLEX.
- Lobby your Government to **encourage the ratification** of Conventions and Protocols and observance of all ILS, including its Recommendations.

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A useful ILO tool is:  
[The ILO supervisory system: A guide for constituents](#)

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- **Use the ILO supervisory mechanism**, i.e. by sending comments on the application of ratified Conventions to the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (note the reporting year for sending comments in NORMLEX – under “Regular reporting (Art. 22/35)” in your country profile). Comments can be submitted by email to: [ORGS-CEACR@ilo.org](mailto:ORGS-CEACR@ilo.org).
- **Follow-up** on the work of the supervisory bodies: use it to lobby for application of ILS in your country and request action from your government.

In sum, workers' organizations are collective, independent and democratic institutions that transcend religious, ethnic, gender-based or communal divides and allegiances. Their knowledge and experience in the fields of mediation, dialogue and arbitration make them a key player in societal processes to prevent and mitigate the effects of crisis – and indeed to also respond to and recover from them in order to help build peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

In many countries, workers' and employers' organizations are often accused of (or perceived as) favouring the interests of certain groups and neglecting those of others. Moreover, certain categories of workers – notably workers in the agricultural sector and the self-employed – are often excluded from trade union legal coverage. So as not to feed inequality and frustrations, workers' organizations should:

- **Not discriminate between workers** and guarantee to all (even workers with no job security, migrants, or the unemployed) the attention needed to protect their rights; in this regard, it should be remembered that all forms of discrimination are prohibited, whether based on sex, race, colour, national origin, social origin, the family situation, or political opinion.
- **Take an interest in the economic and global social situation** in their own countries, and be aware of societal dynamics that shape long-term stability and peace.
- **Expand the trade union base as much as possible** (“the union brings strength!”), in particular to categories that are generally excluded, such as workers in the agricultural sector or migrant populations, for example. This may increase the power and influence of workers' organizations, and make it possible to fight more effectively against anti-democratic movements and societal attitudes that may be at loggerheads with the pursuit of social justice.
- **Be receptive to the problems and worries** formulated by their members and other workers, including migrants and forcibly displaced populations, as well as those of a wider public.



# Annexes

## ► I. Glossary

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### Definitions of the most commonly used terms related to conflicts and disasters

**Actor mapping**

A component of **conflict analysis** that involves listing the conflict parties, specifying their motivations, needs and interests, and thinking about the incentives they may have to either continue with the conflict or pursue its resolution.

**Amplifier**

A factor in a crisis that intensifies or accelerates the effects of a conflict or disaster.

**Armed conflict**

A term used in international law to denote the use of military force by States or armed groups. See: **conflict**.

**Conflict**

An antagonistic relationship between individuals or groups of individuals, brought about by differences in interests or ambitions amongst the parties involved. Examples range from social conflicts at the workplace to interpersonal **violence**, state repression and civil war. While *violent* conflict should always be avoided, conflict itself can be a driver of social change.

**Conflict analysis**

Efforts to identify the immediate and structural factors involved in a setting that is experiencing, or risks experiencing, **conflict**. See: **situational analysis**; **actor mapping**; **scenario-building**.

**Conflict driver**

A factor that has fuelled disagreement and antagonism among different societal groups over time. Examples include social exclusion and disempowerment.

**Conflict resolution**

A process meant to address grievances among the conflict parties in view of reaching an agreement that can pave the way for long-term peace. It may involve societal actors beyond the conflict parties themselves, including from the world of work.

**Conflict sensitivity**

An approach that organizations can embed in their activities in order to ensure that: (i) the design of programmes is always informed by a specific vision of what is considered to be good for the society and strives to reach positive results to improve the current living conditions of the community; (ii) the implementation of their actions always contributes to either the prevention of violent conflict or to an effect response; and (iii) their planning foresees and avoids the negative consequences that they could cause in the future (the “**do no harm**” principle).

**Conflict trigger**

An event that, on top of the existing **conflict drivers**, provides the spark for an eruption of societal unrest or an escalation of violence.

**Crisis**

An umbrella term for conflicts and disasters covering natural and human-made hazards. It refers to a shock that alters the equilibrium of society. See: **risk management**.

**Crisis cycle**

The notion that many conflicts and disasters are recurring, and/or are made up of recurring episodes or events. According to this model, it is possible to identify entry-points for **prevention**, **preparedness**, **response**, and **recovery** activities, depending on the current stage of the crisis (see Module 2 of this manual).

**Disaster**

A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts (Recommendation No. 205, para 2(a))

**Do no harm**

The principle that invites stakeholders to be aware of the possible unintended consequences of their activities and encourages them to always refrain from initiating operations that might hamper or negatively affect the local settings in which the programme or intervention is taking place.

**Early warning mechanism**

Processes established to monitor the natural and societal environment for signs of an impending crisis. Collecting and processing relevant **data points** is an essential component of **prevention** and **preparedness** activities. Workers' organizations have an important role in such processes, given their broad membership base.

**Emergency communication plan**

A plan or strategy to share information in times of crisis. It ensures that members of the community are not left behind while at the same time keeping institutions informed about developments happening at the local level. It is a two-way street, whereby actors on the ground communicate with authorities and vice versa.

**Forcibly displaced person**

An individual who involuntarily fled his or her home and moved to a different country or a different area of the home country (i.e. without crossing international borders). Reasons for displacement include persecution, societal conflict, chronic violence, climate change, and environmental disasters. See: **internally displaced person**; **refugee**.

**Force majeure**

Reasons that justify extraordinary measures that would not be permitted under normal circumstances.

**Hazard**

A risk or danger able to drastically change the course of events, including in conflict or disaster settings. Hazards need to be identified and monitored continuously as part of **risk management** and **early warning mechanisms**.

**Humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus**

A notion, coined by international organizations and donor agencies, seeking to acknowledge the intricate linkages between the three forms of programming in settings persistently experiencing conflicts and disasters over long periods of time. Also known as the "triple nexus". See: **peacebuilding**.

**Internally displaced person**

An individual who was forced to leave his or her home for reasons that would put life at risk if they returned, and who did not cross international borders and is still living inside the country of origin, in a different area or region. See: **forcibly displaced person; refugee**.

**Migrant**

an individual who left his or her country of origin and is currently living in a different one. Migration can be voluntary. See: **refugee; forcibly displaced person**.

**Mitigation**

Efforts to reduce the tensions, reasons for conflict, or damages related to conflict or disaster.

**Monitoring**

An activity meant to control and report on the developments of a particular phenomenon, be it the evolution of a crisis or a programme's outcomes. See: **early warning mechanism**.

**Natural hazard**

The term "natural hazards" should be preferred to "natural disaster(s)" as no disaster is fully "natural". See <https://www.nonaturaldisasters.com/> for more information. Hazards such as earthquakes, hurricanes or flooding are inevitable but their impact on society is not. See: **disaster**.

**Peacebuilding**

Efforts and activities undertaken to establish peaceful, just and inclusive societies, particularly in countries that experience protracted periods of conflict and/or disaster.

**Peace education**

A process to foster reconciliation, community dialogue, and the sharing of past experiences related to conflict among different generations.

**Preparedness**

Efforts undertaken to respond more effectively to the onset of a crisis, particularly when a conflict or disaster cannot be prevented from occurring. **Early warning mechanisms** and **risk management** are critical components of preparedness activities.

**Prevention**

Efforts undertaken to ensure a crisis does not occur. While some natural hazards are almost impossible to stop (e.g. earthquakes or violent storms), many human-made hazards, including industrial accidents and violent conflict, can be avoided through good analysis and effective action. See: **conflict analysis; conflict trigger; risk management**.

**Protracted crises**

Situations of conflict and/or disasters that extend over a long period (i.e. several years or even decades).

**Reconciliation**

A process of healing and dealing with the past that allows communities that used to be in conflict with each other to prosper and live together in a tolerant and inclusive society. It is a crucial component of **peacebuilding** processes. Workers' organizations can play an essential role in facilitating the reconciliation of different parties, thanks to their strong ties with members of local communities.

**Recovery**

Activities undertaken in the post-crisis phase. It involves efforts to repair the material and emotional damages caused by a conflict or disaster, in order to strengthen the social fabric and promote social justice.



**Refugee**

A person that fled his or her country of origin and whose life would be put at risk if returned. The word refers to the legal status conferred when an asylum claim is recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and/or accepted by a State. Notably, not all forcibly displaced persons with recognized need of international protection are officially labelled as “refugees”. See: **migrant; internally displaced person; forcibly displaced person**.

**Resilience**

The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management (Recommendation No. 205, para 2(b)).

**Response**

Activities related to the immediate reaction to the onset of conflict or disaster.

**Risk management**

A process that seeks to identify and assess risks pertaining to conflict and disasters, in an effort to minimize the likelihood of the crises occurring and/or the effects the event may have on societal well-being. It can be considered a critical attitude to be embraced when carrying out activities related to **prevention, preparedness, response and recovery**.

**Scenario-building**

As an element of conflict analysis, scenario-building involves detailing the dynamics of a crisis in view of identifying the ways in which the conflict or disaster is likely to continue, as well as options for mitigating the effects and/or finding a peaceful resolution to it.

**Situational analysis**

As an element of a conflict analysis, situational analysis focuses on the socio-political and economic background of the ongoing or emerging crisis, seeking to situate conflict drivers and societal fault lines within a broader historical context.

**Societal fault line**

A structural feature of the society perceived as a division along which different groups and interests are defined. See: **conflict analysis**.

**Use of force**

The decision to resort to armed violence in the context of a conflict.

**Violence**

The intentional use of physical force or power. It can take many forms, ranging from interpersonal to collective, and it can be threatened or actual, physical or psychological.

**Vulnerability**

A situation in which individuals, groups or institutions are exposed to risk due to external circumstances related to crisis events.

**War economy**

Goods and services whose production is prioritized in the context of violent conflict.



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This Manual aims to give practical guidance to workers' organizations, but also to ILO officials, governments, employers' organizations and other partners active in this field, to better understand their roles and involvement in promoting peace and resilience through decent work.

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