

Lesson 2.3 HANDOUT: ELEMENTS OF CONFLICT

ISSUE(S): WHAT IS THE CONFLICT ABOUT?

Conflicts are often about multiple issues at many levels. Conflict analysis must look at all possible causes.

- ◆ Is it about resources (human resources, land, natural resources, possessions)?
- ◆ Is it about power and political control?
- ◆ Is it about emotional needs—fear, respect, recognition, friendship, love?
- ◆ Is it about values and beliefs?
- ◆ Is it about history?

PARTIES: WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT?

Parties can include those who are visible, as well as those behind the scenes.

- ◆ Is it an internal conflict—a conflict with oneself?
- ◆ Is it an interpersonal conflict—a conflict between two or more people?
- ◆ Is it an intergroup conflict—a conflict between two or more groups?
- ◆ Is it an intragroup conflict—a conflict within a group?
- ◆ Is it an international conflict—a conflict between two or more nations?
- ◆ Is it a global conflict—a conflict that affects many people and nations in the world?
- ◆ Outside of the people directly involved in the conflict, who has a stake in the outcome?

RELATIONSHIP: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTIES IN THE CONFLICT?

In some conflicts, the parties know one another and in others they do not. When parties know one another, conflict management includes rebuilding relationships. When parties do not know one another, establishing a relationship means making sure all parties act in good faith.

- ◆ Do the parties have equal power?
- ◆ How well do the parties know each other?
- ◆ How much do the parties rely on each other? Do the actions of one party seriously affect the actions of the other?

HISTORY: WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT?

In conflict, each party has its own story, its own history.

- ◆ How long has the conflict been going on?
- ◆ How often has the conflict come up?
- ◆ How intense is the conflict? Is the conflict life threatening? How does the intensity affect possible solutions to the conflict?

STYLES: HOW HAVE THE PARTIES CHOSEN TO DEAL WITH THE CONFLICT?

Each party may use one or more styles to manage the conflict. It is helpful to identify the styles being used.

- ◆ Confront or compete
- ◆ Accommodate
- ◆ Compromise
- ◆ Problem solve
- ◆ Avoid

MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO MANAGE THE CONFLICT?

It is important to know the impact of prior efforts to manage the conflict.

- ◆ Has this conflict gone on for a long time? What has been the result?
- ◆ Have there been attempts to resolve the conflicts?
- ◆ If so, who made the attempts and what happened? If not, why not?
- ◆ What could be done to resolve the conflict now?