**Definition of conflict**

In this thematic consultation on CSO development effectiveness in situations of conflict, we will focus on the concept of “armed conflict” defined as organized collective violent confrontation between at least two groups, either state or non-state actors. We will consider situations that count 25 battle-related deaths per year as ongoing conflict\(^1\). Throughout the study we will focus on the civil dimension of conflict which involves non-state actors and affects communities.

Conflicts appear in the case of incompatible positions and can involve activities at local, regional, national and/or international levels. These different scales can engage primary parties (which have formed the incompatibility) and secondary supporting parties (which support one of the primary parties aiming to influence the development of the conflict).

In this study unorganized or isolated acts of violence, tensions or crisis, such as riots, coup d’état or terrorist attacks will not be classified as conflict. Whilst we recognize they still have an impact on people’s lives, we will focus on ongoing crises.

**Types of conflict**

Every conflict is multi-dimensional and there is extensive academic attention to the categorization of the type, the character and the values of conflict. In this study will be looking at the following types of conflict\(^2\):

1. **Intra-state conflict** is the most common type of conflict and occurs between the armed forces of the government\(^3\) and an opposing civil organized group, within the state borders. These conflicts are often driven by ethnic, religious or ideological incompatible positions. We will make a difference between “classical” intra-state conflict without foreign intervention and intra-state conflict with a foreign involvement, which involves at least one party engaged in the conflict supported by military troops of a foreign government.

2. **Inter-state conflict** occurs between two governments implying their respective two armed forces. The conflict can occurs anywhere and often began with a formal declaration.

3. **Non-state conflict** is the use of armed forces between two organized groups, neither of which is the government of the state.

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\(^1\) This criteria is adopted by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) based at Uppsala University (Sweden). This data considers a low number of battle-related deaths and is most relevant as we look at a range of armed conflict situations.

\(^2\) This categorization is based on the UCDP definition.

\(^3\) We will consider the government as the entity, recognized by the international community, which is controlling the national power.
4. **Extra-state conflict** occurs between a state member of the international system and a political entity (not a system member) outside of its territorial boundaries. Extra-state is: state vs. independent non-state actor.

The qualification of a conflict (international/inter-state or national/intra-state) is important because it indicates the applicable laws. This qualification is not always obvious due to the possible evolution of the conflict from one category to another.

The character of a conflict is largely shaped by the cause of the incompatibility. The character is often linked to another and many of the ongoing conflicts that we identify in this study have more than one nature. The media today play an important role in the public perception of the qualification of conflict, commonly leading to confusion and misunderstanding by focusing on the cultural or religious dimension of a conflict. We will use the following characters:

1. **Political**: incompatibility over political systems; desire for secession; desire for autonomy; power-relations
2. **Socio-cultural**: incompatibility over ethnic, religious or ideological conception
3. **Economic**: incompatibility over distribution of resources
4. **Territorial**: incompatibility over boundaries; regional predominance or autonomy

**Intensity of conflict**

Using several datasets we will measure the intensity of the conflicts we identify in this study. We will take into account the following dimensions:

1. The frequency of violent attacks, their duration and the destruction they provoke
2. The social dimension and the impact of conflict, taking into account the levels of poverty, the violation of human rights and the levels of inequality between groups

**Post-conflict situations**

The way in which a conflict ends will influence the environment of the post-conflict situation. In this study we will consider the termination of conflict following any of these events: (i) a victory which happens when one group succumbs to the power of the other; (ii) a peace agreement addresses the incompatibilities, or defines a plan to address them (a peace agreement lasts until one of the parties clearly breaks it’s engagement); (iii) a cease-fire is agreed.

The end of a conflict is rarely a clear process and there is a high risk of conflict recurrence for as long as 15 years after the official ending. In this study we will consider post-conflict countries as those that have: (a) suffered a severe and long-lasting conflict; (b) experience a short, but highly intensive conflict; (c) a newly sovereign state that has emerged through the violent break-up for a former sovereign state.

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4 UCDP use the number of battle-related deaths to distinguish between “minor” conflict and “war”. Heidelberg Institute Conflict Barometer identifies five levels of intensity.

5 There is less analysis of this dimension in existing conflict studies. We will consider development indicators including... during this study.
Fragile States

Whilst there is no internationally-agreed definition of the term ‘fragile states’, or ‘fragility’, most development actors define it principally as a fundamental failure of the state to perform functions necessary to meet citizens’ basic needs and expectations. Fragile states are commonly described as incapable of assuring basic security, maintaining rule of law and justice, or providing basic services and economic opportunities for their citizens. Accordingly, the OECD DAC recently characterised fragile states as: ‘unable to meet [their] population’s expectations or manage changes in expectations and capacity through the political process’ (OECD, 2008).

In this study we will focus on post-conflict fragile states, where there was an armed conflict, finished by the signature of a peace agreement (or other kind of ending) but where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor. These situations are often characterized by a lack of social cohesion and stability, and high levels of inequality.

We make the distinction between “government”, which implies the official power, and “state” which includes a society within a defined territory. For example, one of our focus countries, Sri Lanka, can be considered as a post-conflict fragile state, as the government may be very strong but there is social instability.