



Course 4: Structural violence and the underlying causes of violent conflict

Chapter 1: The relationship between development and structural and direct violence

Exercise 1, part 1: structural violence – this should take about 40 minutes

Objective: to give the students time to consider what structural violence is.

Resources: flip chart paper, blue tack, card, felt tip pens

Write the following examples (or incorrect or debatable examples) of structural violence on separate pieces of paper. These are the examples from Course 4 Book 1 but with some incorrect / debatable examples added:

1. There are 2.5 billion people who live on less than US\$ 2 per day
2. The UK now has a coalition government
3. Estimates of the direct death toll due to small arms and light weapons range from 80,000 to 500,000 per year
4. Women in the UK will spend an average £9000 on make up during their lifetime according to research conducted in 2010
5. There is a 30-year difference in life expectancy between those living in Africa and those in rich nations
6. A decline in solar activity may mean cooler temperatures after the present solar cycle peaks in 2013
7. By the year 2020, on current trends, 1.53 million people will die as a result of suicide
8. In 2000 direct violence was a major cause of death in the 15-44 age group, accounting for 14% of deaths among males and 7% among females
9. In Africa, half an hour on average is spent collecting water each day — including walking to the source, sometimes waiting to gather water, and returning
10. There are 800 million people who have no access to essential health services.

Divide the students into groups of 6-8 people (unless you have more than 24 students in which case make the group larger otherwise it will take too long to hear everyone's feedback).

Give each group a copy of the examples on separate pieces of paper (one example on one bit of paper). Ask them to discuss the following questions for each one:

Q: *Is this a case of structural violence? If so why?*

Time: 15 minutes for group discussion.

Feed back in plenary taking one example from each group in turn. Get the students to stick those that everyone agrees are clearly structural violence on the wall. (2&6 clearly are not, there could be some debate about 4).

Make sure the following points are mentioned:

- the 'violence' is more hidden than in the case of direct violence
- structural violence tends to deal with root – or close-to-root causes
- gender issues are mentioned – particularly in relation to 8 (mentioned specifically) and 9 (not mentioned specifically).



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In plenary consider each example and ask what other words could be used to describe each example – write these on a different colour on the examples on the wall. Some words the group may come up with are:

- poverty
- inequality
- injustice
- discrimination

In the light of the fact that other words can be used – is the term structural violence a useful one?

Exercise 1, part 2: Does development cause structural violence? The debate

Objective: to enable the students to explore the arguments around this question whether or not they agree with them.

Time: approximately 30 minutes

Resources: flip chart paper and felt tip pens

Ask for two volunteers to debate the notion:

Development in the last 30 years has resulted in more violence rather than less.

Briefly go through the rules of debating:

- that you have to be in role, this may not be what you really think
- that you should not get aggressive whatever you think of what the other person is saying
- that it is the argument and the debate that is important, and that this will reveal different aspects of the subject
- that there should be a 'cooling off' period at the end when people return to their normal selves

Give the two volunteers different names from their own such as Mr A and Ms B as this will help them if they need to argue against what they really believe – it is more like acting.

Explain that the rest of the group will follow the argument; however if at any time anyone thinks they can argue the case in a clearer and more impressive way than either of the debaters they can tap them on the shoulder; the debater then has to finish her/his sentence and give his seat to the next person (the person who has tapped him/her on the shoulder).

At the end take a vote on who won and why. Bring out the points you think are important. These may include (and there are likely to be many others):

- There are different uses of the word 'development'. People may use it to signify the pursuit of economic growth, the fulfilment of human potential or the action of governments – you need to be clear how you are defining it
- Structural violence can damage development.



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- Structural violence can be result of development if that necessitates rapid social and economic change.
- Did the debate raise the issue of whether any particular nations or groups of nations were more or less responsible for development creating structural or direct violence? What were the points they raised?

Exercise 2, part 1: What would poverty mean to us?

Objective: to get the students to try to set a poverty line for themselves.

Time: approximately 40 minutes

Resources: A4 paper

Introduction to the exercise:

Recap in plenary to cover the following points:

- One of the alternative words used for structural violence is poverty.
- Poverty is directly linked to ill health; and in complex ways to the causes of violent conflict.

Explain that the task is to think about how we would set a poverty line for ourselves / based on our own lives.

Everyone is given a piece of paper on which they write down (anonymously) their approximate expenditure throughout a year; suggest they note down their larger payments (insurance, mortgage, rent etc.) and then estimate their smaller but more regular payments (groceries, electricity bill etc.).

Time 10 minutes

Collect and shuffle all the bits of anonymous paper and give them out again – if anyone receives their own it doesn't matter (the exercise involves no 'insider' knowledge and no one else need know it is their own. However if the student does mind quietly change it with someone else's paper).

Working individually and on a separate sheet of paper each student is asked to:

Reduce this expenditure (the one of the sheet of paper they have been given after the shuffle) to the absolute minimum they think they can survive on.

Time 10 minutes

All the students write the different amounts they have arrived at (for basic survival) on a post it and stick them on the wall arranged from lowest to highest.

Plenary discussion on what made them decide on those amounts. Points that need to be mentioned:

- what is the definition of 'survival'; mention the different levels used globally: living on \$1.25 or \$2 / day and compare them with the amounts the students have come up with



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- Are we thinking of just physical survival or talking about well being, including psychosocial well being? What difference does this make to the amounts? Mention that the cut off points used globally only take into account physical survival
- Think about the 'basket of goods' concept. How have people calculated what they need on a daily basis? Have they assumed they can keep all their present amenities?

Discuss a better way of measuring poverty. Points to draw out in the discussion are:

- poverty as a lack of opportunity
- poverty as a block on realising your potential including through education
- a measure that captures psychosocial well being
- a measure that includes length of life
- ask them what they remember about the 'human development' approach from the course.

Exercise 2, part 2: Inequality, poverty and violence

Ask the group to divide up into pairs. Give half the pairs (Group A) the papers from the first part of the exercise with the first (higher) calculations of expenditure; you will only need a quarter of the papers – use the ones showing the highest amounts.

Give the other half of the pairs (Group B) the papers from the second part of the exercise with the lower (survival) figures on; you will only need a quarter of the papers – use the ones with the lowest amounts.

Tell all the pairs that they suddenly have 50% more income and ask them to decide the two top priorities that they would spend it on.

Give them 10 minutes to discuss this.

Compare in plenary what they have decided. When everyone has had a chance to say what they have decided, ask everybody - now they know the priorities of the others - whether anyone would make any changes to their priorities. Draw out points relating to:

- the greatest good for the greatest number of people
- difficulties in realising this
- the potential for conflict between the two groups

Optional: before this exercise you can ask:

- a couple of students from Group A to act as 'plants' and vigorously protest against any redistribution of income on the basis that their higher income must have been fairly earned, and others must earn a larger income fairly too
- a couple of students from Group B to act as 'plants' and demand redistribution, saying that if this does not happen they will threaten violence.

This will open up new discussion but may not be suitable for all groups / individual students. If this is done it should obviously be explained at the end that these were (perhaps) not the real opinions of the four individuals.



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Exercise 3: The health game

Objective: to enable the students to think about what health means at different times, in different places and to different people.

Time: approximately 30 minutes

Resources: cards

Remind students of the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of health and put this up on a flip chart:

‘A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.’

Prepare cards with the following statements written on them (and others you might like to make up yourself):

- I have a red nose
- I have a snake in my leg
- I have a high fever
- I have a nose that is too large
- I am above average weight
- I am going to live to be 90
- I have cancer of the ovaries
- I have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- I have a cold
- I have carbuncles
- I have schizophrenia
- I have talipes (club foot)
- I am going to live until I am 52

Ask the students to get into two groups:

Group A is the ‘I am not healthy and ...’ group

Group B is the ‘I am healthy and’ Group

They take it in turns to take one of the cards and add it to their group statement; for example:

- Group A will say ‘I am not healthy and I have a red nose’
- Group B will say ‘I am healthy and I have a red nose’.

Then they have to decide which statements are true, whether both of them are true, and whether the ‘I am healthy and ...’ statement fits into the WHO definition of health.

Points to draw out include:

- The WHO definition is aspirational and wide.
- There may be cultural differences between what is considered healthy and not healthy; these may be within societies as well as between individuals.
- There may be differences in how seriously people take some conditions.
- Life expectancy may not equate with health in everyone’s mind.



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Chapter 2: Poverty, inequality and violence

Exercise 4: 'On the Doorstep' – a role play

Objective: to assist students to think more about how/why globalisation might contribute to structural violence.

Time: approximately 50 minutes

Resources: cards

Note: important to emphasise at the beginning that this is a complex subject and different places may have rather different experiences. If you have students who know particular examples very well, try and get them to draw parallels or highlight differences with other situations.

Remind the students of a quote from Lesson 2.2:

'How can the origins of structural violence be uncovered when they appear to be ignored or even accepted by society at large?'

Divide the group into two: Group A & Group B, and ask each group to select their 'politician'. Talk to the politicians alone and explain that they are:

A) a politician in a richer country who is running for office and has come to a rural area to explain why he would lift agricultural subsidies to allow a freer market for farmers in poorer countries (many of the votes for this politician come from the urban areas where they are keen on this policy)

B) a politician in a poorer country who is addressing a business community meeting; s/he has to explain that s/he is going to impose import tariffs on some food commodities to protect the local market.

Organise Group A into four 'families'. Then give out the following details: A1 to two of the families, and A2 to the other two:

A1) You run a small mixed farm and you sell to local organic outlets; you have received some agricultural subsidies for 'set aside' (leaving land uncultivated for a few years) but apart from that you have relied on a relatively small local market which was growing until the recession hit and some people began to find your prices a bit high.

A2) You have a large mechanised farm and have adjusted what you have grown over the years to make the most of the agriculture subsidies on offer; however these have changed rather often and you are now not sure if your latest switch to rape seed to produce rape seed oil was a good idea or not.

Organise Group B into four 'families'. Then give out the following details: B1 to two of the families, B2 to the other two:



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B1) *You run a medium sized business importing foodstuffs which you sell to the growing – but still small - middle class. You are worried that import tariffs may mean you have to charge prices they will not be able to afford, and that the business you have invested your money in may not be able to survive. At the same time you are also affected by the high prices of food items in general in the country.*

B2) *Your family has been struggling to make ends meet. You are a porter in the market and work nights as a security guard but it is still a struggle particularly with the cost of food. You rarely buy imported food except for special occasions. You used to be able to grow some of your own food on the edge of the city but this is harder now – transport is expensive and sometimes people take it at night.*

To all the families you give the following ‘arguments you might want to use’. These are mixed pro and anti globalisation arguments related to trade, they are not specific to these situations – they are reminders for the students of what they covered in the lessons that they need to adapt for this situation. The ‘politicians’ do not see these (although they will know them from the online lessons).

Arguments you might want to use:

- Globalisation is just a search by business for profitable markets.
- Protectionism leads to economic depression.
- The price of primary commodities is too vulnerable to world markets.
- Increased trade will bring peace.
- Inter-regional competition may be very strong.
- An increase in e.g. food prices will hurt as well as benefit poor countries.
- Indicators such as infant mortality may be improving but have actually slowed down – including in countries that have opened up to more trade.
- Increased trade will bring more economic growth; economic growth will increase the incomes of the poor and improve health.
- Inequalities have risen in many countries that have opened up their economies to world trade.

The ‘politicians’ are given time to prepare what they will say while the ‘families’ get to know each other.

Then, while Politician A goes from ‘door to door’ (group to group) trying to convince the families of his/her case, Group B observes

While Politician B goes from ‘door to door’ (group to group) trying to convince the families of his/her case, Group A observes.

Finally there is a discussion in plenary about who was convincing and why.



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Exercise 5: Underlying causes of civil war

Objective: to give the students time to think about a situation they know well and relate it to what they have learnt at a more general level

Time: approximately 30 minutes

Resources: flip chart paper, felt tip pens

Students should select a civil war you know something about, and get together with someone else in the room who knows something about it. They may need to compromise if they can't find someone who knows about the same war as they do. (If the question 'what is a civil war?' comes up at this point ask them to decide themselves on the basis of what they studied in the lesson).

Ask them to discuss and write down a list of the causes of that one civil war.

Write on flip charts – one to a sheet – the following categories of causes of civil war. Don't let the students see them until they have made their lists.

1. Long standing ethnic and/or religious hatred
2. Lack of democracy – no space for peaceful resolution of conflict
3. Poverty and underdevelopment
4. Economic development (of different speeds)
5. Inequality
6. Colonial history
7. Political factors
8. International factors

Ask the students to put the causes of the one civil war they have been discussing into these categories; they can put the same cause into more than one category.

In plenary go through the specific civil war each couple has chosen – does anyone object to this being called a civil war? If so discuss.

In plenary see how many entries there are under each category and discuss each one. Some points you may want to draw out (you will have many more):

- **Ethnic hatreds** may be presented as long lasting enmities but they are also often used for political ends and to gain power.
- **Poverty & underdevelopment** may cause collective grievances, particularly where there is widespread hunger and population displacement, or where there is a sudden worsening in people's living conditions. However there is no clear link between poverty and civil war.
- **Economic development** may reduce conflict or increase the risk of it particularly where the extraction of natural resources is involved.
- **Inequality** may provoke conflict through an increased sense of relative deprivation, but other influences may have more influence in these conflict situations and the relationship between conflict and inequality is not clear. Horizontal inequalities where inequalities in access to various kinds of political, social and economic resources overlap with group identities this may be an important precursor to conflict.



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- **Political factors** may be more likely to instigate violence if the state is insecure, or when there is a lack of social contract between the government and the people, and there are exclusionary policies and/or policies lack legitimacy.
- **International factors** include colonialism and its heritage – including arbitrary borders, the consequences of divide and rule tactics, the slave trade and distorted economies. The cold war, the war on terror, and unequal and discriminatory international economic and trade practices have/can all provoke conflict.

Ask students to think about whether there is any point to comparing the causes of civil war across countries, rather than detailed study to get to the bottom of the context of any individual country's conflict. What are the advantages and disadvantages to each approach?

Answers may be that comparing across countries is hampered by lack of data; while looking at the causes of war in one country alone may lead to such context-specific lessons that they are not useful for policy makers elsewhere.