

INTRODUCTION TO NONVIOLENT SOCIAL ACTION



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Trainer's Introduction	4
How To Use This Toolkit	6
Introduction	7
Session 1: Understanding Violence	7
Principled and Pragmatic Nonviolence	8
Conflictual and Non-Conflictual Actions	10
Principles of Kingian Nonviolence	10
Gene Sharp	11
Session 2: Understanding Your Case	11
Tree Analysis	12
Onion Analysis	12
Stakeholder Mapping	13
What Is Power?	14
Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding	15
Session 3: Examples of Nonviolent Movements	17
Mahatma Gandhi	17
Dalai Lama	19
UNPO Examples	20
Session 4: Conditions for Effective Nonviolence Social Action	20
Internal Conditions	21
Strategy	22
External Conditions	22
Session 5: The Outcomes of Nonviolent Actions	26

WELCOME TO OUR INTRODUCTION TO NONVIOLENT SOCIAL ACTION!

We have prepared this training toolkit on nonviolent social action adapted from the workshop held in September 2024 in Brussels and UNPO's Conference on Nonviolence and Conflict held in Tallinn, Estonia in 1977. The toolkit is designed for you to train your own groups and peers on nonviolent social action through running your own training workshops. We hope you and your group find this toolkit useful and educating.

The training sessions are broken down in five sessions. For each session, we indicate whether it is based on a:

- Powerpoint presentation
- Small group activity
- Whole group discussion

Below is the overview of the workshop:

Session 1: Understanding nonviolence

Session 2: Understanding your case

Session 3: Examples of nonviolent movements

Session 4: Conditions for effective nonviolent social action

Session 5: The outcomes of nonviolent actions

You do not have to be an expert on these topics in order to lead the training. These trainers' notes will guide you through how to teach these topics to your group.

There is a slideshow that accompanies the training materials, which is a teaching aid to help you go over the issues, without being an expert yourself.

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

In order to use this document appropriately, the trainer would need the PowerPoint which was created to provide further practical information as well as to share the information in the most efficient way.

WHAT TO EXPECT?

In this toolkit, we have integrated short activities to assess participants in their understanding as well as consolidating the learning process.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RUNNING A TRAINING

PARTICIPANTS

- **Numbers:** Training is usually ideal with 4-16 people. With more than 16 participants it becomes hard to manage group conversations.
- **Selecting people:** If you know you are likely to have more than 16 people interested then you will either have to decide to run more than one training, or decide on fair criteria for how you will choose the participants. You might decide in advance that you want to prioritize certain types of participants, depending on your group's needs – e.g. women, or young people. You might also decide to target people with the same level of knowledge or to mix up beginners with more experienced people. Be prepared to explain to people why they were not chosen, and why that was a fair decision. When you have decided on criteria, you will then need to work out how people will apply (e.g. online form, or by email). You will need to work out a timeline for when you will ask people to apply by, and then a deadline to let people know if they have been selected or not.
- **Preparation:** Decide if you want to ask your participants to do any reading or thinking before they attend the training, and let them know in advance so they have time to do this.

VENUE

- **Size:** Find a venue that will comfortably fit your training group, including trainer/s. Make sure that there is space to move around (even if that means you have to push tables and chairs around), and to break up into small groups.
- **Availability:** Venues often get booked up, so make sure you have it confirmed before you notify participants.
- **Catering:** It is important to have tea/coffee breaks and a lunch break on the day. These also help participants bond and discuss what they have learned.

TIMING

Hold your training at a time and day when most people will be able to attend. This may be on a weekend, or over a series of evenings.

SAFESPACE

A safe space for learning is an environment where participants feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, asking questions, and sharing personal experiences without fear of judgment or reprisal. It supports open dialogue, encourages vulnerability, and fosters mutual respect among participants, creating a foundation for authentic engagement and deep learning. In such a space, adults can critically reflect on their experiences and explore new ideas, knowing that their contributions are valued and that they are free to take risks in their learning journey. This environment is essential for facilitating growth and self-awareness in a collaborative setting. This safe space metaphor complements the idea of a 'community of learning'. A community of learning is a group of individuals who come together with a shared commitment to collective inquiry, learning, and mutual support. Members of this

community actively engage in dialogue, share experiences, and reflect on their insights, contributing to each other's growth and understanding. This collaborative environment fosters a sense of belonging and accountability, encouraging participants to learn not only from their own reflections but also from the diverse perspectives of others.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT



Say: Information that we suggest you say aloud to the group to guide them through the session



Ask: Information that we suggest you ask aloud to the group to guide them through the session



Show: The PowerPoint slide that should be presented. If you have access to a laptop and a projector, you can show it. If you don't, you can print out handouts for participants.



Activity: Activities to help participants engage and practice what they are learning
Definition: Definitions to help participants understand the concepts explained



Definition: These are definitions to help participants understand the concepts explained.

RESOURCES

Look through this training pack and see what resources you will need for each session (these are indicated at the top of each session). Print out any documents that you need for sessions. If you are going to use the slideshow, make sure the venue has a projector that you can use, or arrange to hire one. Arrive early to the venue to set the projector up with your computer (remember to bring an adaptor) – this always takes more time than you think it should!

EVALUATION SESSION:

When you have finished your training – even if you only did one of the four days – it is important to find out from the participants what they found useful about it, what they found was not so useful, and any suggestions they have for improving the training. This lets you know what people have learned, and how you can do it even better next time. There are many ways of getting this sort of feedback. What is really important is doing it as soon as possible after the end of the training, otherwise, people get back into their busy lives and will not have time. You could hand out paper forms, ask the group and write their answers on the board, or ask them by email. Ask them to think about both the content of the training and the logistics. We suggest that you ask these questions: What did you find useful about the training? What was not so useful? What did you want more information on? What would your suggestions be for making this training even better? It is also worth asking what participants thought about each session, as some sessions may have been more successful than others.

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

- Welcome people to the training, and thank them for coming.
- Explain the purpose of the training and what topics will be covered.
- Explain how long the day will be and practical issues (tea/coffee and lunch breaks etc)

“ Say: This training will give an introduction to Nonviolence Social Action and it will help you understand how to better react and respond without the use of violence. Why is this training important?

- It can help you to anticipate and prepare yourself to resolve conflicts and problems without resorting to violence
- It will empower you to stand up and advocate for causes without the use of violence and at the same time pushing for social change and justice
- You will learn different nonviolent tactics which will help you express dissent without causing harm
- It will give you time to think, plan and learn how to react.



Activity: Ice Breaker (20 MINS)

Split the group into pairs and ask one member of each pair to ‘interview’ the other for 2 minutes. They should find out three things about their partner – (1) their name, (2) how their journey to the workshop was, and (3) something not many people know about them. After two minutes, they swap and the other person becomes the interviewer. After the second round of 2 minutes is finished, ask people to sit back in a circle. Ask people to take turns around the circle to introduce their partners to the group, using the information that they have just learned. Finish the activity by pointing out that listening and giving precise messages are useful skills for advocacy work.

SESSION 1 - UNDERSTANDING NONVIOLENCE

“ Say: Across the world, more and more indigenous groups, minorities, and non-self-governing nations are standing up for their right to self-determination, a principle enshrined in the United Nations Charter and various international human rights covenants. These groups seek different goals, from gaining independence and autonomy to advocating for cultural, religious, and economic rights, often employing a variety of methods to make their voices heard.

Despite the recognition of self-determination in key international documents, there are no universally accepted legal processes to handle these claims. As a result, the responsibility for validating these claims, and deciding how to respond, falls primarily on the states involved, which cannot be truly impartial. Governments and international organizations often hesitate to intervene, citing the need to protect the territorial integrity of states. This reluctance leads to ongoing conflicts rooted in complex issues that seem unlikely to fade away anytime soon. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization seeks to provide effective nonviolent options for its member groups in their pursuit of justice.



Show:

WHAT IS NONVIOLENCE?

The term nonviolence is complex and has varied meanings, among which it is important to draw distinctions.

- Principled nonviolence is often rooted in traditional or religious beliefs and customs, or in moral principles alone. It is based on a moral stand, an ethical code which disallows the practice of violence, often throughout all actions of life.
- Pragmatic non violence is based upon the use of proactive, positive nonviolent strategies and actions. It seeks to change the status quo, ranging in individual cases from specific policies which affect a specific group to the overall dynamics of power in a society.

“**Say:** The term "nonviolence" is complex and holds varied meanings, so it's essential to draw clear distinctions. Generally, people interpret nonviolence as simply the absence of violence. However, we should view it as a positive force, an active and powerful approach to achieving meaningful goals. There are two Key Categories of Nonviolence.



Definitions:

- **Principled Nonviolence:** This approach is often rooted in traditional or religious beliefs and moral principles. It reflects a deep ethical commitment that disallows the use of violence in all aspects of life. Practitioners may not always employ nonviolent strategies, but their focus remains on moral integrity. For true nonviolent activists, there are no enemies; the aim is to make wrongdoers recognize their actions and seek to right their wrongs. A crucial question for those embracing principled nonviolence is whether the means used align with the ends sought. This concept emphasizes that methods should reflect ideals of equality, justice, and peace.
- **Pragmatic Nonviolence:** This perspective focuses on practical strategic considerations rather than a fundamental commitment to nonviolence in every situation. It's about making choices based on what is most effective for the circumstances at hand. Pragmatic nonviolence employs proactive strategies aimed at changing the status quo, addressing specific policies or broader power dynamics within society.



Ask: What do we achieve with Nonviolent Actions?



Say: With Nonviolent actions, we emphasize that politics are in the hands of the people. People are pushed to fully understand their own principles and freedom and they take a stance against oppression. Using nonviolent actions doesn't only mean having the intentions but also taking the risks which include retaliation, imprisonment, criticism, disapproval, harm, and death.



Show:

Nonviolent social action is often organized or conceptualized for a specific level of social activism, and usually conceived on a 'bottom-up' spectrum, for example 'at the village level', 'at the ethnic/identity group level', at the 'region level', and so on.



Say: Social change, especially when driven by peaceful means, is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It's important to understand that nonviolent movements are often shaped according to the specific social, cultural, or political context in which they operate. Many of these movements are conceived from the ground up. This means that at the **village level**, for instance, nonviolent actions may focus on local needs and challenges, like advocating for clean water, education, or land rights. These actions are often more personal, with a strong sense of community and shared identity driving the change.

At the **ethnic or identity group level**, nonviolent action might focus on larger societal issues like civil rights, minority protection, or cultural preservation. Here, activism is often shaped by the unique struggles and history of the group, and it seeks to address systemic inequalities that affect their position in society.

At the **regional level**, the scope broadens even more. This can involve collective actions to confront broader political, economic, or environmental concerns. For example, regional protests against a harmful policy or industrial project can unite multiple communities and social groups.

Nonviolent social movements can also grow to influence national and even global levels. However, what remains constant is that these movements often begin by addressing specific, local concerns. From there, they scale up, gaining momentum and uniting people across different layers of society.

Ultimately, nonviolent action is most effective when it is grounded in the experiences and needs of the people it seeks to represent. Whether it's at the village, identity group, or regional level, these movements demonstrate the power of collective, peaceful action in transforming society from the bottom up.

Conflictual and non-conflictual actions



Show:

NONVIOLENT ACTION CATEGORIES:

Conflictual Actions:

- Public mobilizations (e.g. strikes, demonstrations)
- Economic/political non-cooperation
- Civil disobedience (e.g. hungerstrikes)
- Grassroots campaigns (e.g. letter writing, awareness)

Non-Conflictual Actions:

- Negotiations and conciliation after power dynamics shift
- Engagement based on newly gained legitimacy

“**Say:** When a group decides to avoid violence, nonviolent action becomes the way they make that decision a reality. No matter why they choose nonviolence, their actions can usually be grouped into two categories: conflictual and non-conflictual.



Definition:

- **Conflictual actions** are those where a group actively confronts an issue head-on. This might include large public mobilizations like strikes, protests, and demonstrations, or economic and political non-cooperation, such as boycotts. It can also involve civil disobedience, hunger strikes, or grassroots efforts like letter-writing campaigns and initiatives aimed at raising political awareness. These actions aren't just defensive; they can also be used offensively to challenge the existing power structures.
- Then there's **non-conflictual actions**, which come into play once the group has gained enough legitimacy or shifted the power dynamics in their favor. This might involve negotiations and efforts at conciliation. These actions focus on resolving the conflict through dialogue once the group is in a stronger position to bargain. The combination of both conflictual and non-conflictual strategies is often what makes nonviolent movements successful. It's about knowing when to push and when to talk, and finding the right balance between the two.

Principles of Kingian nonviolence



Say: Any study of nonviolent social action will reference in one way or another the social movements of Indian leader Mahatma (Mohandas) Gandhi and the American civil rights leader Rev Martin Luther King Jr. King wrote about 'six principles (as) a guide for the nonviolence practitioner's behavior and an approach to engaging in conflict. The six universal principles are:

“ Say and Show:

Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people. The beloved community is the framework for the future. Attack forces of evil, not the people doing evil.

Accept suffering, without retaliation, for the sake of the cause, to achieve the goal. Avoid internal violence of the spirit in addition to external physical violence. The universe is on the side of justice.

Gene Sharp

Show:

Slide with Gene Sharp Say: There are many, many nonviolent strategies and tactics. Every new social movement will invent new ones. It is possible to categorize them in terms of these broad types:

- Protest and Persuasion
- Non-cooperation
- Intervention

Dr. Gene Sharp was an American political scientist, who won many awards for his work promoting nonviolence, including the 'Right Livelihood Award' for 'developing and articulating the core principles and strategies of nonviolent resistance and supporting their practical implementation in conflict areas around the world'. He famously developed a list of 198 possible nonviolent actions, and wrote a famous study of three volumes, 'The Politics of Nonviolent Action'. In 2012, he was a recipient of the Right Livelihood Award for "developing and articulating the core principles and strategies of nonviolent resistance and supporting their practical implementation in conflict areas around the world".

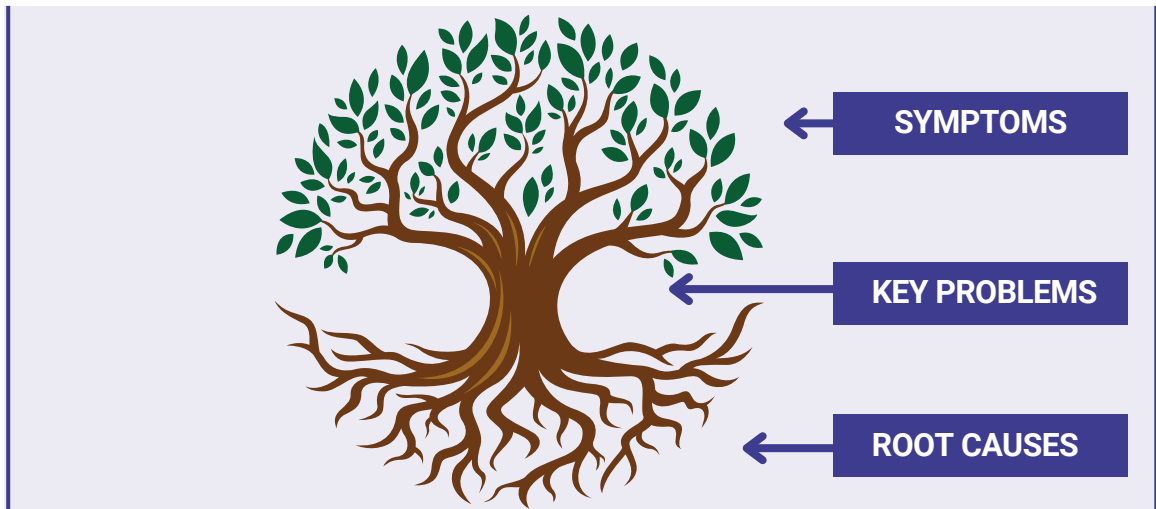
SESSION 2 - UNDERSTANDING YOUR CASE

“ **Say:** Let's dive into different methods of nonviolent action. Any and every effort to address deep-rooted social and political conflict, either through nonviolent social action, or various methods of peacemaking, will depend on conflict analysis. Developing competency and capacity for using various analytical conflict analysis frameworks is crucial for developing meaningful and successful social change strategies. What follows are several basic analysis 'tools' or frameworks that are well developed and widely used by peacebuilding practitioners.

Tree Analysis



Show:



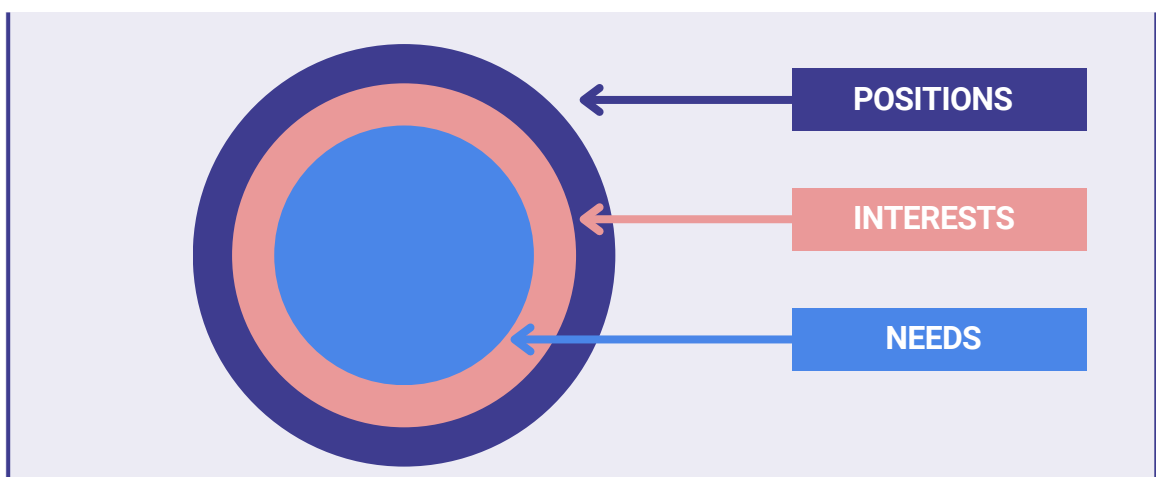
“ **Say:** The problem or conflict tree is a way to visualize a specific conflict, or ‘problem to solve’, and to break it down into different elements. The first step is to identify the specific conflict or problem to solve. The ‘trunk’ of the tree represents the problem. The ‘roots’ of the tree represent the root causes of the conflict, and the branches and leaves of the tree represent the impacts, effects, or symptoms of the problem.

“ **Say:** Having identified the problem, most practitioners will then discuss or identify ‘root causes’, but there are sometimes reasons to start first with the impacts and effects of the problem and then examine or identify the root causes. Nonviolent social action can be designed and implemented to address either impacts and effects, or root causes. Fundamental structural social change, as the definition of conflict transformation will always involve addressing the root causes of a conflict or deep-rooted social problem.

Onion Analysis



Show:



The Onion Analysis is used to examine deeper, and sometimes more difficult levels of how people see and respond to conflict. At the 'outer' level of the metaphorical onion, people express their positions, often formulated as demands, with respect to what changes they want.

At a deeper level – peeling away some of the onion, analysis reveals the interests that underlie the public demands of parties to the conflict. At a third level, the human needs of people are central to resolving the problem to solve, and determining the nature of fundamental social change. These needs can be usefully discussed using the Human Scale Development framework below – for example subsistence, security, and identity/recognition needs.

Stakeholder Mapping



Show:

What is it?

- A tool to identify and analyze parties in a conflict, focusing on interests, power and relationships.

Purpose:

- Understand roles and influences
- Develop strategies for resolution
- Engage key actors effectively

Steps:

- Identify stakeholders
- Analyze interests/influence
- Visualize relationships (diagram)


Benefits:

- Anticipate challenges, find allies, and create inclusive approaches.

“**Say:** Stakeholder mapping in conflict analysis is a tool used to identify and understand the various parties involved in or affected by a conflict, as well as their interests, power dynamics, and relationships. The purpose is to gain insights into the roles, influences, and concerns of each stakeholder, which helps in developing strategies for conflict resolution and engaging key actors effectively. Stakeholder mapping involves listing all relevant parties, analyzing their interests and influence, and visually organizing them (often in a diagram) to clarify their positions and connections. This process helps conflict analysts anticipate potential challenges, identify allies and adversaries, and create more informed and inclusive approaches to address the conflict.

What is Power?

“ **Say:** ‘Power’ is a big word, with so many meanings and uses that it can be difficult to usefully use it in complex discussions about social conflict, social change, and nonviolent social action. And yet, it is also impossible to ignore or avoid the word in any of the same discussions. The United States Institute of Peace offers a simple definition that provides at least a useful starting point:

 *‘Power is the capacity to accomplish purpose’.*⁽¹⁾

Taking that definition in mind, there are at least these different types and concepts of power:

 **Show:**

- Soft power
- Hard power
- Smart power
- Collective power
- Economic power
- Structural power
- Power politics
- Coercive power
- Discursive power
- Cultural power
- Social power
- What else?

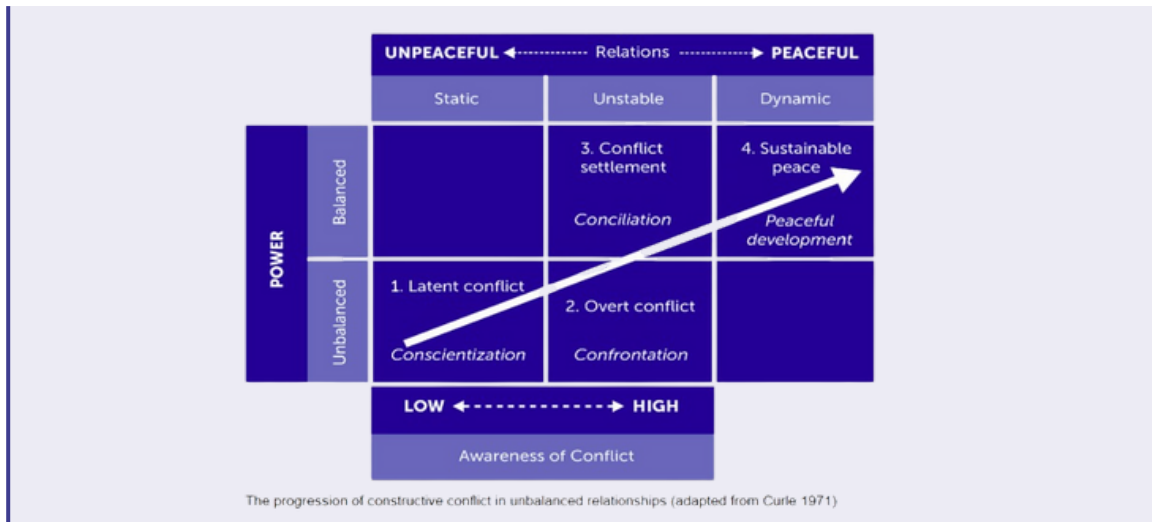
“ **Say:** One way to conceptualize long term positive social change, along with conflict dynamics – meaning how conflicts change and evolve through time, is that early in a conflict, perhaps even in a ‘latent’ phase, relationships between conflicted groups are relatively unpeaceful, and power is ‘unbalanced’. This means that one group has power over the other(s), and probably uses it in a coercive way (or worse). If a constructive conflict transformation process – which may include the use of nonviolent social action in early phases – proceeds through time in the right direction, then relationships become more peaceful through time, and power becomes more balanced through time. This idea is illustrated by the ‘Curle curve’, proposed by Adam Curle in 1971, and widely used since.

¹ USIP, 2018, https://youtu.be/NwzC_1nylCc



Show:

Long term strategies for conflict transformation



Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding



Definition:

Peacemaking: Peacemaking involves efforts to bring conflicting parties to a negotiated agreement, typically through diplomacy, mediation, or other forms of direct intervention to end active conflict. The goal is to address the immediate causes of violence and reach a ceasefire or peace agreement.



Show:

Two examples of peacemaking would be 1978 'Camp David Accords' that resulted in peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, brokered by American President Jimmy Carter; and the 'Good Friday Agreement, (1998) between nationalist and unionist groups in Northern Ireland.





Definition:

Peacekeeping: Peacekeeping is the deployment of international forces or personnel to maintain peace and security in post-conflict areas. Peacekeepers monitor and support the implementation of peace agreements, prevent the resurgence of violence, and protect civilians, often under the auspices of organizations like the United Nations.



Show:

Two examples of United Nations Peacekeeping are the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL, 1999-2005); and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL, 1978-present). Obviously, recent events in Lebanon and the wider Middle East make it challenging to evaluate the 'success' of some peacekeeping efforts.



Definition:

Peacebuilding: Peacebuilding focuses on addressing the root causes of conflict and building sustainable peace by strengthening institutions, promoting social justice, and supporting



Show:

Two examples of extensive peacebuilding efforts include Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation and development efforts since 1994 until the present; and peacebuilding activities in Northern Ireland since 1998.



SESSION 3 - EXAMPLES OF NONVIOLENT MOVEMENTS

? **Ask:** Do you know any examples of nonviolent movement?

Write up their answers on a white board

Mahatma Gandhi

“ **Say:** Let's look at an example. The most famous nonviolent non-cooperation movement was the one led by Mahatma Gandhi. This movement was crucial for India's struggle for independence from the British.



Show:

Mahatma Gandhi was born in 1869 in Porbandar, India. He was educated as a lawyer in London and he practiced law in South Africa.

After returning to India, Gandhi became an important figure for the struggle of India's independence from British colonial rule.

“ **Say:** Gandhi especially used the Satyagraha or truth-force as a form of resistance. It involved using truth and moral courage to resist injustice without resorting to violence, appealing to the conscience of the oppressors.



Definition:

Satyagrahis—practitioners of satyagraha—achieve correct insight into the real nature of an evil situation by observing a nonviolence of the mind, by seeking truth in a spirit of peace and love, and by undergoing a rigorous process of self-scrutiny (2).

“ **Say:** Gandhi led various movements and campaigns advocating for India's independence using nonviolent resistance.

One of the most known was the Salt March in 1930, where Gandhi and his followers protested the British salt monopoly by marching to the sea to make salt, symbolizing civil disobedience against unfair taxation.

“ **Say:** Gandhi and over 60,000 were arrested for their act of civil disobedience. Although the movement kept going and more people joined the Salt March. After his release Gandhi was able to negotiate a role at the London conference for India's future. The conference didn't have a good outcome

² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/satyagraha-philosophy>

but the British recognized that the Gandhi movement was something that they could not ignore. India finally obtained its independence in 1947 (3).



Show:

Gandhi followed the philosophy of Ahimsa, or nonviolence which was the base of his beliefs. It was centered in stopping from causing harm to any living being, advocating for compassion, empathy and respect. His philosophy and methods inspired countless followers, earning him the title “Mahatma” meaning ‘Great soul’.



Say: Gandhi’s principles of nonviolence and civil disobedience have had a profound impact worldwide, inspiring civil rights movements and leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and others.



Definition:

The word Ahimsa (Sanskrit:ahiṃsā, Pāli: avihimsā) means 'not to injure' and 'compassion'. The word is derived from the Sanskrit root hiṃs – to strike; hiṃsā is injury or harm; a-hiṃsā is the opposite of this, i.e. cause no injury, do no harm. Ahimsa is also referred to as nonviolence, and it applies to all living beings—including all animals—in ancient Indian religions (4).



Activity:

Divide the participants into equal groups and ask them the following question:

Looking at Gandhi’s movement, what are the advantages and disadvantages of nonviolent resistance compared to violent means of protest or resistance?

Give them 20 minutes to prepare their answer and then they can share their answer and start a discussion with their different takeaways.

³ <https://www.history.com/topics/asian-history/salt-march>

⁴ <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ahmisa-non-violence-gandhi-and-global-citizenship-education-gced>

Dalai Lama

“ **Say:** Another well known case is the Tibetan Case and the struggle for independence from China.



Show:

Tibet known as the “Roof of the World” has maintained a distinct cultural and religious identity. In 1950s, China’s People’s Liberation Army occupied Tibet, leading to the Dalai Lama to seek refugee in India in 1959 (5). **Say:** Despite facing immense oppression, the Dalai Lama consistently advocated for a peaceful approach in resolving the conflict. The Tibetan people, influenced by his teachings, have demonstrated remarkable commitment to nonviolence resistance. They have engaged in various forms of peaceful protests, preserved their cultural heritage and persistently advocated for human rights.

“ **Say:** The Tibetans have been engaging in many different nonviolent resistance movements.



Show (6):

- 1987 Monks circumambulated during the demonstrations around the Jokhang temple and the surrounding Barkhor area in Lhasa which became protest sites
- 1989 - Large number of Tibetans at *khorra*, burned incense, lit butter lamps, released *windhorses* (prayers written on small squares of paper designed to float in the wind) and threw *tsampa* (roasted barley flour, Tibetans' staple food) to celebrate Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize award.
- 1991 Posters carrying several slogans for the freedom of Tibet were put up in Tibetan zones.

The poster campaigns were so prevalent in Lhasa that the Chinese authorities established special night squads to capture Tibetans writing them. 1993 - Farmers of Snuggling village blocked the traffic on the main road, greatly upsetting the Chinese waiting for supplies in a nearby village.

“ **Say:** These are just some examples. Tibetans engaged in nonviolent resistance but have encountered several challenges like human rights abuses, including cultural suppression, restriction on religious practices.

⁵ <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICNC-Monograph-The-Tibetan-Nonviolent-Struggle.pdf>

⁶ <https://wri-irg.org/en/nonviolence/nvse22-en.htm>

UNPO Examples

“**Say:** Many UNPO members and organizations have had experiences of engaging in nonviolent social action. This is, of course, a reflection on the commitment all UNPO members have made to nonviolent methods and strategies.



Show:

UNPO MEMBERS USING NONVIOLENT SOCIAL ACTION

- Tibet: Leadership of the Dalai lama; resisting Chinese occupation; peaceful protests, including “Self-immolation” (Discuss).
- Ogoni: Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP); resisting environmental degradation by Shell Oil; the “Ogoni Nine” were executed by the Nigerian Government.
- Oromo: The Oromo Protests (2014-2018). Peaceful demonstrations against land grants and political marginalization. Student protests and strikes.
- Catalonia: An independence movement. Including the Catalan independence referendum (2017).
- Khmer-Krom: Peaceful protest for religious freedom and land rights. Protecting Buddhist heritage and resisting assimilation in Vietnam.
- Ahwazi: Civil disobedience demanding political representation and cultural rights in the face of systemic discrimination.

SESSION 4 - CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE NONVIOLENT SOCIAL ACTION

“**Say:** Measuring the effectiveness of nonviolent movements can be a real challenge. One way to evaluate success is by looking at how well a movement has sustained itself over time. If we use that measure, movements like Tibet and Kosova could be considered effective. Another way is to assess how well a movement has brought attention to its cause. The Ogoni people of Nigeria certainly succeeded in making their issue known to the world. But even with these achievements, it’s still debatable how much they actually lead to real change on the ground.

The truth is, there’s no universally accepted way to measure the effectiveness of nonviolence.

It's often a subjective judgment. Some suggest that we need a comprehensive study of nonviolent movements to develop a clearer framework for measuring success. But, as some have pointed out, maybe success shouldn't just be about the end result. Simply engaging in the struggle, gaining dignity, showing courage, and building solidarity with others, should also be seen as part of the movement's success.

Internal Conditions



Show:

- Strong and responsible leadership;
- Dedicated, educated and disciplined populace;
- Cohesive organizational structure;
- Resources; and
- Strategies.



Say: Let's talk about the role of leadership and strategy in nonviolent movements. The most successful nonviolent movements, like the Indian Independence Movement and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, had strong, charismatic, and committed leaders. It's hard to imagine their success without the influence of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., who not only inspired their people but also captured the attention of the world. Their discipline and ability to stick to nonviolent methods were key. In more recent times, leaders like the Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Nelson Mandela have also played similar roles in their respective movements.

But leadership can be a double-edged sword. When leaders are corrupt or when there's internal power struggle, it can damage the credibility and survival of the movement. Moreover, over-reliance on a single leader can be risky, if they're imprisoned, exiled, or worse, assassinated.

The qualities of a strong nonviolent leader are dedication, strategic thinking, honesty, patience, and courage. Those who are trained in nonviolent tactics usually have more tools to address conflict. Importantly, leaders must lead by example, embodying the principles of nonviolence. This inspires both the movement and external supporters.

But leadership alone isn't enough. The strength of a nonviolent movement lies in its people. For a movement to be truly effective, the people must share common values and moral principles, and they must agree on how they will achieve their goals. For example, democracy is a powerful principle that can unite people within a movement, and it can also attract support from outside groups, including governments. To build internal solidarity, education and training within the movement are crucial.

Practical preparation is also essential. Movements must be ready to handle logistics like communication, medical care, and other necessities for supporters during times of struggle. And since one violent or contradictory act can discredit an entire nonviolent movement, cohesion is critical. Democratic structures within the movement can help resolve conflicts and prevent leaders from monopolizing power.

A movement's success also depends on its resources, financial, material, technical, and human. It's important to plan strategically around what's available, but it can be challenging to identify reliable sources of support.

Strategy

“**Say:** Now, let's talk about strategy. Some argue that the idea of 'strategy' contradicts the spirit of nonviolence because strategies imply battles to win. But most agree that if nonviolent campaigns are to succeed, they must be well-planned, just like violent campaigns. Strategies should be developed on both macro and micro levels, with clear long-term and short-term goals based on a thorough analysis of the situation. This includes understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the movement itself, the opponent, and external conditions.

Finally, strategies need to evolve as the conflict changes. While planning is essential, so is flexibility. Sometimes, unscripted actions can be just as impactful. Remember, each situation is unique, so strategies can't simply be copied from one movement to another. That said, there have been cases where even unplanned, improvised nonviolent actions have led to success.”

External Conditions

“**Say:** All conflicts are part of a bigger picture, involving regional and global factors, even if some seem more isolated politically or geographically. The parties directly involved in a conflict are rarely the only ones impacted—there are often outside actors with economic, political, social, or cultural interests who play a role. For example, former colonial powers often have deep connections to conflicts in their former colonies or areas of influence, like France in Rwanda or Portugal in East Timor.

Importantly, the responsibility for maintaining nonviolence doesn't rest solely with the people or movements directly engaged in the struggle. It's a shared responsibility that extends to all those with a stake in the conflict. Whether they are global powers, regional actors, or communities with interests in the outcome, everyone has a role to play in promoting peaceful solutions and preventing violence. This shared commitment is crucial for fostering sustainable peace.



Show:

The roles and responsibilities of several international agents can influence, including:

- Governments;
- Multilateral organizations such as the United Nations;
- Transnational corporations;
- The media, and
- NGOs

“**Say:** International attention can be a powerful asset for nonviolent movements. When a movement knows that the world is watching, it gains confidence. The exposure of injustices and repression can motivate people to stay committed to nonviolence, knowing that their cause is being acknowledged. This kind of attention can also help ease the frustration of those who may be growing impatient with the slow pace of change. When leaders can demonstrate that their voices are being heard beyond the conflict, and that others are concerned and perhaps working to assist them, it helps keep the movement unified and nonviolent.

However, the international community doesn't always give nonviolent movements the attention they deserve. Violent conflicts tend to grab more headlines and concern. In internal conflicts, governments are often reluctant to intervene diplomatically, especially if they see the movement as a threat to another state's territorial integrity. There's also a common, but dangerous, assumption that as long as a movement is nonviolent, it's not something to worry about. Governments often believe that intervention is only needed once violence breaks out. This narrow view not only discourages nonviolence, but can also push frustrated groups toward violence, contributing to greater instability. **In reality, supporting nonviolent movements early on is key to preventing conflict and promoting lasting peace.**

**Show:**

Promoting dialogue between the parties would help to deter the outbreak of violence. Governments need to be convinced to clearly and openly recognize leaders of nonviolent movements, and show support for the nonviolent approach to issues, and by doing so, foster respect, both internally and externally, for a responsible leader and the movement. A cohesive movement is a better partner for dialogue and problem-solving than a fragmented and uncontrolled one, thus it is in governments' best interest to promote cohesiveness within movements.

**Show:**

Transnational corporations play a significant role in the occurrence, escalation, and continuation of conflicts, and they must be held accountable for their actions.



Say: When a corporation's economic interests conflict with or harm indigenous peoples or local communities, it's essential to ensure they are responsible for the consequences. Too often, corporations work hand-in-hand with governments to oppress these communities, especially when the corporation seeks to extract resources from traditional lands, benefiting both the company and government elites.

Examples of corporate activities fueling conflict include Shell and other oil companies in Nigeria, particularly concerning the Ogoni people, Freeport's mining operations in West Papua, and UNOCAL in Burma. These cases highlight how corporate interests can directly lead to or exacerbate conflict.

In addition, the role of arms manufacturers and dealers cannot be overlooked. They are directly responsible for the widespread availability of weapons, particularly small arms, that fuel violent conflicts around the world. To reduce conflict and violence, it's critical to address the corporate responsibilities of both resource-extracting companies and the arms industry, ensuring accountability and stricter regulation.



Show:

The international media plays a powerful role in shaping perceptions of conflict. By choosing what stories to cover, the media influences which movements, whether violent or nonviolent, gain attention. This can have a huge impact on how nonviolent struggles are perceived and supported globally.



Say: Many nonviolent movements, like those of the Baltic States, Ogoni people, and Tibetans, rely heavily on media coverage to raise awareness and gain international support. When the media shines a light on these movements, it can motivate their supporters and encourage the continued use of nonviolence. However, good press coverage doesn't guarantee success, but it is a crucial part of keeping nonviolence visible as a viable strategy.

Unfortunately, media outlets often prioritize stories based on what will sell or what is easier to cover. Violent conflicts, which grab attention more quickly, can overshadow nonviolent efforts that require more in-depth reporting. As one journalist noted, the real issues like human rights and repression often get lost when violence becomes the main story. When media focuses on violence, it unintentionally contributes to its perpetuation.

To shift this narrative, the media needs to expand its coverage of nonviolent struggles and show that they are a real alternative to violence. It's also essential for movements to build strong media relations and tell their own stories, ensuring that they aren't misrepresented or ignored. The media can play a critical role in promoting nonviolence, but only if it chooses to do so.



Show:

Building alliances with other movements can be a powerful strategy for nonviolent campaigns. This includes connecting with groups within a state that are also seeking nonviolent change, as well as friendly governments and NGOs that share similar goals.



Say: Take Estonia, for example. They formed alliances with countries that had never recognized their annexation by the Soviet Union, as well as with other Baltic nations striving for independence. Similarly, the East Timorese movement has successfully built relationships with international organizations and governments. They've also engaged with citizen groups in Indonesia who are pushing for democratic reforms and established solidarity with Tibetan activists. These alliances not only provide support but also help to sustain the momentum of nonviolent movements.

However, it's important to recognize that building these alliances can be challenging, especially under oppressive regimes where communication and collaboration are severely restricted. Nonetheless, fostering these connections can amplify our voices and strengthen our movements, reminding us that we're not alone in our struggles for change.

SESSION 5 - THE OUTCOMES OF NONVIOLENT ACTIONS

“ **Say:** Now that we have an introduction to Nonviolent Social Action, and its different steps...

? **Ask:** what can we expect?

Take a few minutes and collect answers from the participants.

“ **Say:** It is important to understand that only because you choose to engage in nonviolent actions will they be necessarily met with the same treatment.

“ **Say:** Unfortunately there can be disastrous consequences when challenging issues and injustice. Some of the negative consequences are:



Show:

- Repression and violence (authorities or opposing groups might engage in violence to dismantle those peaceful moments which can cause injuries, arrests, fatalities among the protestors)
- They can increase the social or political division
- If the moment is not carefully planned or have unclear goals, it might result in a failure and can weaken the causes
- Misinformation and negative propaganda can spread which can stigmatize the movements and public can lose interest.

“ **Say:** This is why it is important to follow all the previous steps and build a strong base for the nonviolent movements so as to decrease the chances of negative outcomes.

“ **Say:** Now let's look at what we can actually end up achieving:



Show:

- Shift in the public opinion: It raises awareness on specific issues and it consequently generates support and empathy from the public.
- Empowerment of marginalized groups: It provides a way to make their voices be heard and give visibility to their struggles.
- Policy changes: Implementation of new laws that address social injustice.
- Overturn of oppressive governments.
- Build democratic society.
- Conflict resolution.

“ **Say:** Nonviolent actions hold the voices standing up against injustice, oppression and inequality. The goal is to achieve respect and fairness. In doing so these movements can dismantle oppressive systems and challenge root problems in society. Most importantly those changes show that they can be obtained through peaceful means.

“ **Say:** Keep in mind that nonviolent actions are the stepping stone to peacebuilding and a sustaining peace. Nonviolent movements are designed to address root issues and empower individuals and communities to fight for their rights in a peaceful manner.

“ **Say:** Nonviolent movements are not fast and immediate but they show commitment for justice and they require continuous efforts but the result is also a long term result for a more harmonious and equitable world for future generations.



Activity:

Lead a discussion on these points above and final reflections: concerns, conclusions and commitments.

Carry out an evaluation of the training (evaluation format can be digital or written feedback or a discussion).

NOTES



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