

# GUIDANCE ON RESEARCHING CONFLICT

Conflict Research is an integral part of the work of our organization, and is therefore embedded within our core principles and overall theory of change. The research that we undertake reinforces these principles with the aim of improving the quality, relevance, and impact of our peacebuilding programs implemented worldwide.

[Use our interactive online tool to decide which type of research best suits your goals and needs.](#)

We have guides for:

- [Conflict Analysis](#)
- [Conflict Assessment](#)
- [Conflict Scans](#)
- [Conflict Snapshots](#)
- [Youth-Led Research](#)
- [Youth Mapping](#)

## OUR RESEARCH APPROACH

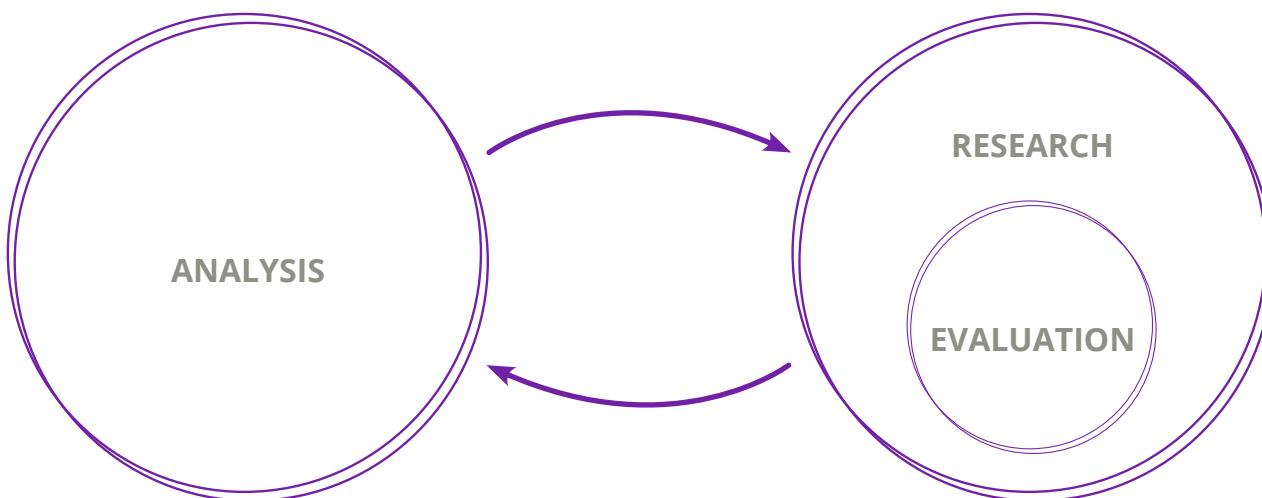
Donors and partners have many definitions for the different types of research products and expectations that exist. Whether you use their definitions or ours, of our main research approaches should align in terms of the expectations being set for your team.



### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RESEARCH, EVALUATION, and ANALYSIS?

**Analysis** is the detailed examination of the elements or structure of something. **Research** is the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. **Evaluation** is the making of a judgement about the amount, number, or value of something.

We can conduct analysis without doing rigorous research, by using the information we have available and reaching out to people who have knowledge about a topic. Once we know what information we are missing, we conduct research to give us concrete and reliable information to deepen or update our understanding of that topic. That research can then feedback into our analysis of a specific context or conflict. Evaluation is a specific type of research that makes a judgement about the value of our work, measuring our ability to transform conflict.



# DESIGNING RESEARCH

**Ask the right questions.** Your research questions should always relate to the Program or Strategy Theory of Change, so that your research can inform your overall analysis of a conflict and strategy setting.

**Avoid over collecting data.** Avoid fatiguing communities and trapping ourselves into producing too many research products. All of these research approaches can be combined with baseline, evaluation and monitoring systems so that we collect data and produce reports efficiently.

**Use technology thoughtfully.** There are many ways to collect, store and analyze data, and at Search we should be leading on the ways to harness this effectively for research:

- Use methods that help you see how technology (like social media or internet access) may be influencing conflict dynamics.
- Pick a method that allows you to collect data consistently, in a timely manner, and represent the population you need to target for the decisions the team needs to make.

**Keep your primary audience in mind to generate reflection and use lessons learned.**

Use Search's reporting guidelines and templates when publishing, and create extra documents for other audiences you want to engage in the research. You may need visuals, diagrams, or other ways to communicate findings.



## WHAT DO WE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO IN ALL RESEARCH DESIGN?

Some considerations remain constant across all of our research. Our Guiding Principles remain constant for analysis, research and evaluations. **Ensure our research is grounded in ethical and conflict-sensitive approaches.** We follow [ethical guidelines of the OECD](#) in our research.

# RESEARCH TIMELINE

Timing is important to developing the right approach. We include five steps in our guidance.

**Preparation & planning:** This includes development of the Terms of Reference, final budgeting, recruitment of consultants and data collectors, and an inception meeting. The research lead will also develop the methodology and tools for data collection, and can begin the literature review.

**Data Collection & Validation:** This includes the training of anyone involved in data collection and analysis for the study, the data collection, the transcription and cleaning of the data. It also includes validation with stakeholders, which should always take place in our research.

**Analysis & Reporting:** This stage is focused on systematic analysis of data, identification of important patterns or trends, and development of actionable recommendations for the target audience of the report. A draft should be submitted for review by the end of this stage.

**Peer Review:** Best practice across all major research institutions incorporates a peer review process, and Search also maintains this standard. Peer review will always include internal program staff, ILT staff and potentially other peers within Search. For some studies, peer review may also include external groups, such as research partners, peer organizations, or donors.

**Dissemination and Communication:** Once the final report is approved, the program team implements their communication strategy to disseminate the study according to its purpose and target audience.

