Principles of Conflict Transformation

TransConflict has developed the following set of Principles which we hope will contribute to the conceptual debate about conflict transformation, whilst also helping guide individuals and organizations alike so that they too can make a positive contribution to the field of conflict transformation.

*TransConflict welcomes your recommendations for possible additions or amendments to the Principles. To share your ideas and suggestions, please either use the comment function provided below or contact us at **gcct@transconflict.com**.*

Principles of Conflict Transformation:

1. Conflict should not be regarded as an isolated event that can be resolved or managed, but as an integral part of society's on-going evolution and development;

2. Conflict should not be understood solely as an inherently negative and destructive occurrence, but rather as a potentially positive and productive force for change if harnessed constructively;

3. Conflict transformation goes beyond merely seeking to contain and manage conflict, instead seeking to transform the root causes themselves - or the perceptions of the root causes - of a particular conflict;

4. Conflict transformation is a long-term, gradual and complex process, requiring sustained engagement and interaction;

5. Conflict transformation is not just an approach and set of techniques, but a way of thinking about and understanding conflict itself;

6. Conflict transformation is particularly suited for intractable conflicts, where deep-rooted issues fuel protracted violence;

7. Conflict transformation adjusts to the ever changing nature of a conflict, particularly during pre- and post-violence phases and at any stage of the escalation cycle;

8. Conflict transformation is always a non-violent process, which is fundamentally opposed to violent expressions of conflict;

9. Conflict transformation addresses a range of dimensions - the micro-, meso- and macro-levels; local and global;

10. Conflict transformation is concerned with five specific types of transformation, focusing upon the structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects of conflict:

   a. *Actors* – modifying actors' goals and their approach to pursuing these goals, including by strengthening understanding as to the causes and consequences of their respective actions;

   b. *Contexts* – challenging the meaning and perceptions of conflict itself, particularly the respective attitudes and understandings of specific actors towards one another;

   c. *Issues* – redefining the issues that are central to the prevailing conflict, and reformulating the position of key actors on those very issues;

   d. *Rules* – changing the norms and rules governing decision-making at all levels in order to ensure that conflicts are dealt with constructively through institutional channels;

   e. *Structures* – adjusting the prevailing structure of relationships, power distributions and socio-economic conditions that are embedded in and inform the conflict, thereby affecting the very fabric of interaction between previously incompatible actors, issues and goals.

11. For conflict transformation to occur, tensions between parties to the conflict must be overcome – first, by ensuring all actors recognize that their respective interests are not served by resorting to violence; and second, by seeking consensus on what should be transformed and how;

12. Conflict transformation stresses the human dimension by reminding parties of the compatible nature of their needs, instead of emphasizing their opposing interests, and by rejecting unilateral decisions and action, particularly those representing a victory for one of the parties to the conflict;

13. Conflict transformation does not resort to a predetermined set of approaches and actions, but respects and adapts to the particularities of a given setting;

14. Conflict transformation looks beyond visible issues and is characterized by creative problem-solving, incorporating the perspectives a broad array of actors, including those typically marginalized from such considerations;

15. Conflict transformation invariably involves a third, impartial party, in order to help actors alter their cognitive and emotional views on the 'Other', thereby helping to break down divisions between 'Us' and 'Them';

16. Conflict transformation represents an ambitious and demanding task, which is better equipped to contend with the asymmetric, complex and protracted nature of contemporary conflicts than prevailing techniques and approaches.

GCCT — The Global Coalition for Conflict Transformation