

Conflict Sensitivity

Topic Guide

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Suggested citation: Haider, H., (2014). *Conflict Sensitivity: Topic Guide*. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

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Executive summary

Reflection among aid actors after the devastating genocide in Rwanda led to the realisation that humanitarian and development actors contributed to increasing tensions and exacerbating the conflict. Aid interventions have since been understood to become a part of the context – and in conflict settings, to become part of the conflict. This acknowledgement that aid is not neutral also led to the recognition that donors need to consider the inadvertent side effects of programming on conflict. Conflict sensitivity emerged as a concept and tool to help aid actors to understand the unintended consequences of aid and to act to minimise harm and achieve positive outcomes. Although conflict sensitivity originated in the humanitarian field, it has since been applied in a wide range of development, peacebuilding and statebuilding contexts.

In order for conflict sensitivity to be effective and to maximise impact, it should be mainstreamed within an organisation. This requires institutional capacity, commitment and the right incentives. Conflict sensitivity also needs to be applied consistently at the different levels of intervention (project, programme, sector, policy and inter-agency); and holistically throughout the programme cycle (design and planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation). Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of conflict sensitivity should be included early in the design of interventions. There must be flexibility to adapt and modify the original project design during implementation in response to M&E findings. Conflict sensitivity also needs to coincide with gender sensitivity – paying attention to the possible unintentional impacts of interventions on the lives of men and women, girls and boys.

This topic guide discusses the origin, evolution and applicability of conflict sensitivity. It highlights three key conflict sensitive approaches and tools: Do No Harm, Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) and Aid for Peace. All three approaches and tools examine how aid interventions can impact on the context. At the core of Do No Harm is analysis of dividing and connecting issues and actors. PCIA adds an additional layer of assessment – looking not only at how aid impacts on context but also at how the context can affect aid interventions. Aid for Peace differs from PCIA by focusing first on the peacebuilding needs in a specific context and tailoring interventions to meet those needs. The guide outlines briefly the methods, advantages and disadvantages of these approaches and tools. It also provides links to a range of additional NGO and donor conflict sensitivity approaches and toolkits.

The guide also discusses and points to literature on applying conflict sensitivity to particular sectors: humanitarian programming, stabilisation programming, security sector reform, services, infrastructure development, economic recovery, private sector, and natural resources, climate change and land governance. In addition to sector approaches and tools, there are now overarching policy frameworks, such as the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, which emphasise the importance of conflict sensitivity.

Challenges to achieving conflict sensitivity include: inconsistent application of conflict sensitivity at the inter-agency and policy levels, and throughout the project life cycle; analytical issues; insufficient attention to Southern perspectives; funding and timing constraints; lack of accountability for failure to incorporate conflict sensitivity; faulty assumptions that mandates to build peace automatically result in contributions to peace; capacity issues; and political pressures that can undermine conflict sensitivity processes. Where available, the guide outlines suggestions from the literature on how to address these challenges.

Key definitions

Conflict is parties disagreeing and acting on the basis of perceived incompatibilities (How to guide¹).

Conflict (violent) is resort to psychological or physical force to resolve a disagreement (How to guide).

Direct violence — war, murder, rape, assault, verbal attacks — is physically experienced violence, but has its roots in cultural and structural violence (Galtung, 1969²).

Structural violence is injustice and exploitation derived from a social system that privileges some classes, ethnicities, genders, and nationalities over others, and institutionalises unequal opportunities for education, resources, and respect (Galtung, 1969).

Fragile states are characterised as ‘unable to meet [their] population’s expectations or manage changes in expectations and capacity through the political process’ (OECD, see [GSDRC fragile states topic guide](#)).

Context refers to the operating environment, which ranges from the micro to the macro level – e.g., community, district / province, region(s), country, neighbouring countries (Resource pack³).

Conflict analysis is a structured process of analysis to better understand a conflict (its background / history, the groups involved, each group’s perspective, causes of conflict etc.) (How to guide).

Conflict sensitivity means the ability to:

- understand the context in which you operate;
- understand the interaction between your intervention and the context (how the context affects the intervention and how the intervention affects the context); and
- act upon the understanding of this interaction, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts (Resource pack)

Do no harm is an approach that recognises the presence of ‘dividers’ and ‘connectors’ in conflict. It seeks to analyse how an intervention may be implemented in a way that supports local communities to address the underlying causes of conflict rather than exacerbating conflict (How to guide).

Horizontal inequalities are inequalities between culturally formed groups (Stewart, 2004⁴, see [GSDRC social exclusion topic guide](#)).

Peacebuilding involves ‘a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, to strengthen national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development’ (UN, see [GSDRC statebuilding and peacebuilding topic guide](#)).

Statebuilding is ‘an endogenous process to enhance capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state driven by state-society relations’ (OECD, see [GSDRC statebuilding and peacebuilding topic guide](#)).

¹ Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. (2012). *How to guide to conflict sensitivity*. London: The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/1/6602_HowToGuide_CSF_WEB_3.pdf

² Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422690>

³ APFO, CECORE, CHA, FEWER, International Alert, Saferworld. (2004). *Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: Resource pack*. London. <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/148-conflict-sensitive-approaches-to-development-humanitarian-assistance-and-peacebuilding>

⁴ Stewart, F., (2004). *Horizontal Inequalities: A Neglected Dimension of Development*, Working Paper No. 1, Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security, and Ethnicity (CRISE) http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/publications/wps/wpdetail?jor_id=356

Stabilisation is one of the approaches used in situations of violent conflict which is designed to protect and promote legitimate political authority, using a combination of integrated civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security and prepare for longer-term recovery by building an enabling environment for structural stability⁵ (Stabilisation Unit, 2014).

Risk management or, more specifically, risk reduction is about the attempt to manage the future by taking action now to eliminate or mitigate known risk factors. Categories of risk:

- *Contextual (or country, situational or external)*: the range of potential adverse outcomes that could arise in a certain context, e.g., risk of political destabilisation, a return to violent conflict.
- *Programmatic (or intervention)*: the potential for interventions not to achieve their objectives or to exacerbate contextual risk.
- *Institutional (or internal)*: range of potential adverse consequences of intervention for the implementing organisation and its staff (OECD, 2011⁶).

⁵ Structural stability refers to 'political systems which are representative and legitimate, capable of managing conflict and change peacefully, and societies in which human rights and rule of law are respected, basic needs are met, security established and opportunities for social and economic development are open to all' (UK Government's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*, p.5: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32960/bsos-july-11.pdf).

⁶ OECD. (2011). *Managing risks in fragile and transitional contexts: the price of success?* Paris: OECD <http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/48634348.pdf>

1 Concepts: what is conflict sensitivity and why is it important?

1.1 The origin of conflict sensitivity

The first principle for aid policy makers, identified in the OECD-DAC Guidelines on 'Helping Prevent Violent Conflict' (2001, p. 23), is 'to do no harm and to guard against unwittingly aggravating existing or potential conflicts', in addition to 'maximising good' and strengthening incentives for peace. Now well accepted in the development community, this principle rose to prominence after the devastating genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Genocidaires exploited humanitarian relief to refugee camps in order to consolidate their own power and to launch attacks within the camps and against Rwanda (Brown et al., 2009). Uvin (1998) argues that development agencies were also responsible for exacerbating structural violence in the lead up to the genocide through various actions that exacerbated conflict dynamics. This included recruiting predominantly Tutsi local staff, heightening tensions between Tutsi and Hutu groups. The increasing complexity of environments in which aid workers were operating post-Cold War – and growing examples of aid unwittingly feeding into conflict and undermining peaceful recovery – resulted in deep reflection among aid workers on their role and involvement in these contexts.

Aid interventions have since been understood to become a part of the context – and in conflict settings, to become a part of the conflict. Although interveners may strive to follow humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, local populations do not perceive interventions as neutral or experience them as having neutral impacts (Wallace, 2014, reference in section 2.1: **Do No Harm**⁷). Rather, the mere presence of aid workers and aid flows can affect local dynamics and power balances. Aid can also alter political settlements. Depending on the context, donor support for electoral competition, for example, can lead to a more or a less inclusive political settlement. Donors risk doing harm by promoting elections in which key political organisations, elite factions or oppressed groups are excluded or face incentives to boycott elections and engage in violence (OECD, 2010, reference in following section). Aid can thus have both positive and negative impacts. Negative unintended consequences of aid can derive from:

- **Resource transfers**, including the diversion of resources to fund armies and weaponry; reinforcement of war economies; uneven distribution of resources that fuels inter-group tensions; substitution of government resources required to meet civilian needs toward financing the conflict; and legitimisation of conflict actors (Anderson, 1999).
- **Implicit ethical messages**, such as hiring armed guards, conveying the message that it is legitimate for arms to decide access to humanitarian aid; and placing different values on different lives, reinforcing inequality (Anderson, 1999). In the latter situation, aid can contribute to gender-based violence or other human rights abuses.
- **Political impacts**, for example altering the political settlement; adopting a position of neutrality in asymmetric conflict that has the effect of endorsing the strongest party; or focusing on direct, physical violence while neglecting other forms of violence (e.g. structural violence) (Reychler, 2006), resulting in the persistence or worsening of societal tensions.
- **Exacerbating 'dividers'** (negative factors that increase tensions between people or groups, reduce their ability to resolve conflicts non-violently and may lead to violent conflict) **and** **weakening 'connectors'** (positive factors that reduce tensions between people or groups, improve cohesion and promote constructive collaboration). Factors may include systems and institutions, values, symbols, attitudes and actions (OECD DAC & CDA, 2007).

⁷ Resources have been placed in the most relevant section of the guide. If they are referred to in other sections, it will be noted where the reference can be found.

This acknowledgement that aid is not neutral but becomes a part of the context also led to the recognition that donors need to be accountable for the inadvertent side effects of programming on conflict. Conflict sensitivity emerged as an important concept and tool to help aid actors to understand these implications and to minimise harm and achieve positive outcomes. The Do No Harm project was launched in late 1994 to answer the question: how can assistance be provided in conflict settings in ways that, rather than feeding into and exacerbating the conflict, help local people disengage from the violence that surrounds them and begin to develop alternative systems for addressing the problems that underlie the conflict?⁸ Learning from various case studies and responses from humanitarian and development practitioners, the project developed a framework for programme analysis, design and planning in conflict contexts.

Conflict sensitivity serves not only to decrease the potential for violence but also to increase the effectiveness of assistance. Adapting aid policies and programming to the context and better assessing the risks of operating in the environment can improve the sustainability of interventions and minimise risks to projects, partners and beneficiaries. When working in a conflict setting, one needs to take into consideration various issues relating to asymmetric power relations, cultural diversity, and the values and beliefs of the local populations. Development interventions also have the capacity to contribute to peace, such as through fostering common interests among stakeholders, neutral spaces for interaction, positive communication outlets and mechanisms for cooperation. By providing non-violent means to work together and to address contentious issues, they can demonstrate alternatives to conflict (Bush, 2009, reference in section 2.2: PCIA).

Conflict insensitive aid fuelling conflict in Sri Lanka and Nepal

Pressure to spend large amounts of aid rapidly in tsunami-affected Sri Lanka favoured government-controlled areas that had the absorption capacities, which contributed to uneven regional distribution of resources – one of the root causes of the conflict. The influx of aid also shifted the power balance towards the government, which undermined the need to compromise with the other conflict party, the LTTE – exacerbating political tensions and violence (Paffenholz, 2005).

In Nepal, aid was also allocated to more accessible areas, which limited benefits to the most conflict-affected regions and to the poorest. In addition, aid programmes that focused on capacity building and awareness raising benefited mainly elite groups with little benefit to the most excluded. Programmes that called for community contributions placed an undue burden on women and the most poor – and were resented by them. All of this had the effect of exacerbating patterns of exclusion – a key driver of the conflict (Vaux 2002).

Contributing to peacebuilding in Indonesia through inclusive processes of aid distribution

Development work in Indonesia has shown that projects with explicit and accessible processes for managing disputes arising out of development activities are less likely to result in violent outcomes than project without such mechanisms. The government's (World Bank-financed) Kecamatan Development Project aimed to deliver resources to rural communities through inclusive, transparent and accountable decision-making mechanisms, designed based on extensive country research. The project helped to improve inter-group relations and to democratise village life. Although it was not an effective mechanism for working directly on wider, non-project conflict, it is possible that modifying the programme would allow for effective local conflict management (Barron, Diprose, & Woolcock 2007).

⁸ See Do No Harm Project: Trainer's Manual – Background and History of the DNH Project, updated 2004: <http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52479/DNH-Training-Manual-History-of-the-DNH-Project.pdf>

Key texts

Anderson, M. (1999). *Do no harm: how aid can support peace – or war*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
https://www.rienner.com/title/Do_No_Harm_How_Aid_Can_Support_Peace_or_War

Brown, S., Goldwyn, R., Groenewald, H., & McGregor, J. (2009). *Conflict sensitivity consortium benchmarking paper*. Conflict Sensitivity Consortium.

<http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/CSA%20Benchmarking%20paper-full.pdf>

Why is conflict sensitivity important, and what does it mean? This paper, prepared by a consortium of ten UK NGOs, traces the emergence of conflict sensitivity to the realisation that aid can be used as a weapon of war, as in Rwanda, Somalia and elsewhere in the mid-1990s. Conflict sensitivity is important for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors as it can help them recognise and address the unintended consequences of their interventions.

Paffenholz, T. (2005). *Peace and conflict sensitivity in international cooperation: An introductory overview*. *International Politics and Society*, 4, 63-82.

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2798>

Peace and conflict sensitivity has successfully entered the mainstreaming agenda of development agencies, with much institutionalisation and conceptualisation. In practical terms however, a co-ordinated system for peace and conflict sensitive aid implementation is absent. This article explores the gap between rhetoric and practice and identifies key challenges.

Reychler, L. (2006). *Humanitarian aid for sustainable peace building*. In P. Gibbons & B. Piquard (Eds.), *Working in conflict – Working on conflict: Humanitarian dilemmas and challenges* (pp. 135-154). Bilbao: University of Deusto.

http://www.humanitariannet.deusto.es/publica/PUBLICACIONES_PDF/Working%20in%20conflict.pdf

How can humanitarian aid contribute to sustainable peacebuilding? This paper notes multiple examples of unintended negative effects of humanitarian interventions, including the failure of blue helmet peacekeepers to protect civilians in Bosnia and Rwanda, the control of refugee camps by belligerents in Thailand, Pakistan and Congo, and the worsening of ethnic, religious and caste tensions by NGO staff recruitment policies in Sri Lanka and Nepal. All actors in conflict zones should establish peace and conflict impact assessment systems to help them recognise, analyse and manage impacts of their interventions.

Case studies

Barron, P., Diprose, R., and Woolcock, M. (2007). *Local conflict and development projects in Indonesia: Part of the problem or part of a solution?* (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4212).

Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-4212>

Are local conflict and development projects in Indonesia part of the problem or part of the solution? This World Bank working paper argues that development projects are capable of stimulating as well as reducing conflicts. Those projects that have explicit and accessible procedures for managing disputes arising from the development process are much less likely to cause conflict.

Frieden, J. (2012). A donor's perspective on aid and conflict. In S. von Einsiedel, D.M. Malone, & S. Pradhan (Eds.), *Nepal in transition: From people's war to fragile peace* (pp. 100-113). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://tinyurl.com/qeu7b3f>

How have donors helped or hindered the peace process in Nepal? This chapter draws on the author's personal experience to explore the role of donors during and after the 1996-2006 war. Aid agencies struggled to recognise, understand and internalise three key conflict dimensions: its political (rather than economic) roots, elite capture of aid, and the extent of insurgent control in the countryside. However, aid programmes helped minimise displacement and ensured basic services during the war; and donor re-assessment and re-engagement following the 2005 coup helped protect human rights and supported conflict resolution. Donors still need to improve co-ordination of peace and development activities.

Vaux, T. (2002). *Nepal: Strategic conflict assessment*. Consultant's report for the Department for International Development, UK. <http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/Vaux2002.pdf>

Uvin, P. (1998). *Aiding violence: The development enterprise in Rwanda*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press. http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Aiding_Violence.html?id=co01kZctL5sC&redir_esc=y

Additional resources

OECD DAC and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. (2007). Encouraging effective evaluation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities: Towards DAC guidance. *OECD Journal on Development*, 8(3). <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dcdndep/39660852.pdf>

1.2 The evolution of conflict sensitivity and the spectrum of ambition

Beginning in the mid-1990s, Anderson's research and the Do No Harm project led the way for the field of conflict sensitivity (see [section 2.1](#) for discussion of the do no harm approach). In 1998, Kenneth Bush developed the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) methodology, comparable to environmental or gender impact assessment (see [section 2.2](#) for discussion of the PCIA approach). Both do no harm and PCIA were originally focused on the project level and targeted at NGOs, however they were soon adopted and adapted by donor agencies and other organisations.

By the mid to late 2000s, the term 'conflict sensitivity' was used extensively in the development field and agencies increasingly aimed to mainstream conflict sensitivity. While concerted efforts among donors to engage in joint evaluations and develop principled conflict sensitive engagement have increased from the late 2000s onwards, challenges to operationalising conflict sensitivity remain (Brown et al., 2009; Paffenholz, 2005) (see [section 4: challenges](#)).

Although the field of conflict sensitivity originated in the humanitarian field, it has subsequently been championed by the peacebuilding community, with some challenges remaining for humanitarian actors and ongoing debate within the humanitarian community about its advantages and disadvantages. More recently, conflict sensitivity has been applied to statebuilding. The OECD (2010) emphasises that do no harm is as applicable to statebuilding as it is to peacebuilding. Donors need to understand the fragile contexts in which they operate and avoid inadvertently undermining statebuilding. The method of aid delivery, for example, can act as a disincentive for states to consolidate their own revenue base, undermining the development of state capacity (OECD, 2010).

Conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and statebuilding are distinct concepts. While peacebuilding and statebuilding are particular fields or types of intervention, conflict sensitivity is an approach that applies to *all* interventions (Goldwyn & Chigas, 2013). In addition, while a conflict sensitive intervention must avoid causing harm and should contribute to peace where possible, it is generally perceived to differ from peacebuilding in that it does not need to address causes or drivers of conflict (Goldwyn & Chigas, 2013, reference in [section 2.5: M&E of conflict sensitivity](#)). There is, however, a spectrum of ambition that exists in conflict sensitive approaches and interventions, which is often unrecognised. Conflict sensitivity can be understood beyond this minimalist sense. A maximalist position also aims to address the root causes of conflict and to contribute to broader societal-levels of peace (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009). At the other end of the spectrum is a 'conflict blind' approach, whereby donors avoid the issue of conflict and treat it as an externality. Goodhand (2006) categorises these positions as:

- Working around war: actors seek to avoid the negative impacts of conflict on programming by choosing to focus their efforts in areas of peace; or engage in 'one-size-fits-all' interventions in environments that are vulnerable to conflict. This is seen as counter-productive in effectively addressing chronic poverty.

- Working in war (minimalist): actors are aware that development can influence conflict and try to mitigate war-related risks and minimise the potential for programmes to exacerbate violence. This may involve codes of conduct, operating standards and robust coordination mechanisms (e.g. the [Basic Operating Guidelines](#) in Nepal).
- Working on war (maximalist): actors are also aware that interventions can contribute to peacebuilding and aim to deliver programmes that address conflict prevention, management or resolution.

As levels of ambition increase and aid actors incorporate peacebuilding goals in their interventions, it is necessary to continue to incorporate and monitor ‘working in war’ aspects as a minimum standard.

Key texts

Barbolet, A., Goldwyn, R., Groenewald, H., & Sherriff, A. (2005). *The utility and dilemmas of conflict sensitivity*. Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management.

http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue4_barbolet_etal.pdf

This paper explores the relevance and growth of conflict sensitivity beyond traditional humanitarian and development sectors, to government, the private sector and peacebuilding. Conflict sensitivity is an investment in learning about the conflict context and a responsibility to act on that learning. Whilst operational guidance is important, it should not come in the form of a ‘one-size-fits all’ approach. A more encompassing approach that goes beyond tools and methodologies is needed.

Goodhand, J. (2006). Working ‘in’ and ‘on’ war. In H. Yanacopulos, and J. Hanlon (Eds.), *Civil war, civil peace*. Milton Keynes: Open University.

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1947>

Individuals working ‘in’ or ‘on’ war cannot be considered as neutral actors because their decisions have an impact on war itself. This chapter argues that those who intervene in conflict situations need to think of themselves less as project managers and more as change agents who understand and influence the conflict. Interveners need to look beyond the traditional project-based approaches and engender a strategic shift from ‘development as delivery’ to ‘development as leverage’.

OECD DAC. (2010). *Do no harm: international support for statebuilding*. Paris: OECD.

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/44409926.pdf>

How can donor interventions hinder or assist statebuilding processes? This report from the OECD DAC draws on country case-studies to examine how interventions affect key areas of statebuilding. Donors operating in fragile states need to analyse where their own countries’ strategic objectives contradict statebuilding objectives and where statebuilding objectives are themselves at odds.

Woodrow, P. & Chigas, D. (2009). *A distinction with a difference: Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding* (Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects). Cambridge, MA: CDA

<http://cdacollaborative.org/media/53164/A-Distinction-with-a-Difference-Conflict-Sensitivity-and-Peacebuilding.pdf>

How are peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity distinct? Although the two concepts overlap, confusing them leads to flawed programme design. This paper uses examples to challenge common myths and misconceptions, demonstrating that: conflict sensitive humanitarian assistance does not necessarily help bring peace; peacebuilding does not equal conflict sensitive development; there is only a very weak connection between ‘normal’ development work and conflict prevention; and peacebuilding is not automatically conflict sensitive.

1.3 Where and when to apply conflict sensitivity: context and levels of intervention

Conflict sensitivity applies to a broad range of conflict-prone contexts, ranging from areas of severe violence to situations where underlying tensions have not recently resulted in violence (Brown et al, 2009, reference in section 1.1: [origin of conflict sensitivity](#)). Bush (2009, reference in section 2.2: [PCIA](#)) notes that while PCIA was originally developed in the context of militarised conflict, it has since been applied to less or non-militarized contexts, such as to indigenous communities in Canada. Ahmed (2011, reference in [PCIA](#)) emphasises that PCIA involves being sensitive not only to traditional forms of conflict and violence but also insecurities associated with socio-economic disparities, gender inequalities and other forms of inequality with the potential to develop into violent conflict. Similarly, Baradun and Joos (2004, p. 1, reference in section 2.4: [gender and conflict sensitivity](#)) extend the prevention of violence to include ‘influencing all people, structures and symbols that employ, encourage, propagate or legitimise violence in any form against women, men, girls and boys’. It may, however, be particularly challenging to engage policy makers and practitioners on issues of conflict sensitivity in seemingly peaceful contexts.

In order for conflict sensitivity to be effective and maximise impact, it should be mainstreamed within an organisation, rather than treated as a separate project component. Without organisational mainstreaming, there may be no incentive or supporting structures to engage in conflict sensitivity (see section 4: [Challenges](#) for further discussion). Another requirement for effective conflict sensitivity is the need for systematic links between context analysis and design and implementation of interventions (Paffenholz & Reyhler, 2007, reference in section 2.3: [Aid for Peace](#)). This requires consideration of risks and opportunities linked to the conflict setting that are not necessarily linked to project objectives.⁹

Conflict sensitivity needs to be applied consistently at the different levels of intervention (project, programme, sector, policy and inter-agency). Even if conflict sensitivity is applied at the programme level, for example, there could still be negative consequences if the policy level is neglected. Policy changes, such as aid flow disruptions and programme cuts, can be extremely destabilising in fragile contexts. They can contribute to the outbreak of violence if governments are unable to provide promised resources and services; and citizens see less benefit in participating in national institutions (McKechnie & Davies, 2013). Conflict sensitivity also needs to be applied holistically throughout the programme cycle (design and planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation). Programmes need to be adaptable based on changing situations and M&E findings. Conflict sensitivity also needs to be conducted by different actors, ranging from donors to non-governmental actors to private sector actors (see section 3.8: [private sector](#)) – all of whom have the potential to produce inadvertent affects in the environments in which they operate.

Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity requires institutional capacity, commitment and the right incentives (see [Challenges](#)). This entails a change to organisational culture, thinking and practice. Lange (2006, p. 164, reference in [Challenges](#)) states that ‘sensitivity to conflict is less about making fundamental changes to existing programmes than describing and thinking about programmes differently’. The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium notes that institutional commitment can be fostered through buy-in at leadership and senior management levels, commitment across the organisation, conflict sensitivity ‘champions’, an organisational policy on conflict sensitivity, and integration of conflict sensitivity into strategic plans (‘How to guide’, 2012, see section 2.6: [NGO guidance and toolkits](#)).

⁹ For guidance on how to link conflict analysis to project design, see Chapter 2 of the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium’s how to guide to conflict sensitivity, reference in [section 2.6: NGO guidance and toolkits](#).

Conflict insensitivity at various levels of international assistance to refugees from Syria in Lebanon

Lebanon has experienced an immense influx of refugees escaping the conflict in Syria since 2011. At the policy level, international aid actors have operated in large part independently of the Lebanese government in favour of local non-state actors as service providers, undermining the already weak legitimacy of the government. This has strengthened patterns of clientelism and patronage, elements of past system failures. Despite dissemination of conflict sensitive best practice at the institutional level, urgency on the ground has resulted in a gap in their operationalisation at the programme and project level. Health services, for example, provided for free to refugees from Syria but at a cost to Lebanese hosts are perceived as unequal treatment and have contributed to escalation of tensions. While needs-based assistance is important, decisions about project location and the diversity of recipients, staff and suppliers need to take into consideration the existing political fault-lines in order to ensure impartiality in aid delivery (Stamm, 2013).

Key texts

McKechnie, A. & Davies, F. (2013). *Localising aid: is it worth the risk?* London: Overseas Development Institute

<http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8456.pdf>

Is locally-managed aid more prone to failure? Not necessarily. This study proposes a method for assessing risk and choosing between aid instruments, and applies it to the case of Afghanistan. While fiduciary risks are greater with localised aid, they diminish substantially with mitigation measures. Other risks – programmatic, contextual and institutional – are significantly smaller, meaning that localising aid may be less risky overall than other options. Donors seeking to localise aid might improve their approach to risk management by tailoring the choice of aid instrument to the country context, and implementing special risk mitigation measures in high-risk environments.

Case studies

Stamm, S. (2013). *Conflict dimensions of international assistance to refugees from Syria in Lebanon*. Bern: KOFF/swisspeace

http://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Publications/ConflictDimensions_SyrianRefugeesLebanon_swisspeace2013.pdf

The massive influx of Syrian refugees to Lebanon and accompanying humanitarian aid programmes have increased tensions in an already highly fragile context. This paper, based on primary research, highlights conflict sensitivity concerns at policy, institutional, operational/programming, and individual/personal levels. Potential measures to ensure that aid instruments are conflict sensitive include increasing dialogue with Lebanese politicians and ‘non-like-minded’ actors; carefully selecting areas of operation, staff, and suppliers; and designing programmes to strengthen local community capacities to cope with future refugee needs.

Paffenholz, T. (2006). *Nepal: Staying engaged in conflict. Experiences and lessons learnt from Conflict Sensitive Programme Management (CSPM) in fragile context with armed conflict*. Brief for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/nepal/ressources/resource_en_100755.pdf

2 Approaches and tools: how to engage in conflict sensitivity

Reychler (2006) highlights the following ways for organisations to improve their conflict sensitivity:

- **Reflective measures**, whereby organisations at the headquarters level and individual staff make explicit their theories and thinking about conflict, violence and peacebuilding. This allows for external actors to understand the assumptions and attitudes that they and others have that will feed into all aspects of interventions and interactions with people in operating contexts.
- **Political measures**, which require acknowledgement that providing aid is a political activity with political consequences; alongside the assumption of political responsibility. This is the starting point for the adoption of conflict sensitivity – the understanding that aid actors and aid interventions are not neutral; and that donors have a duty to understand the contexts in which they operate and to ensure at a minimum that their interventions do not cause harm.
- **Analytic measures**, which involve familiarity with research, approaches and tools to understand conflict, conflict transformation and peacebuilding and achieve conflict sensitivity. This allows for the actual operationalisation of conflict sensitivity, by improving awareness of the potential or actual impacts of interventions on conflict dynamics and peacebuilding and helping to design more effective, coherent interventions.

There are various approaches and toolkits to guide thinking on conflict sensitivity and its operationalisation. Conflict sensitivity should inform all levels of interventions and all stages of a programming cycle (see How to guide, Chapter 2). A common central component of conflict sensitivity approaches and tools is conflict or political economy analysis, which provides an understanding of the interaction between the intervention and the context and informs conflict sensitive programming (Resource pack, 2004). Paffenholz (2005, reference in section 1.1: [origin of conflict sensitivity](#)) emphasises attention to the actual implementation of programmes and involvement of aid agency staff in the assessment or planning of conflict sensitive cooperation. She identifies three approaches that encompass these considerations: Do no harm (Anderson and CDA), PCIA (Bush) and Aid for Peace (Paffenholz and Reychler).

Construction of water wells increasing conflict in rural Kenya: lack of conflict analysis

An international organisation decided to build water wells closer to remote villages, such that women no longer had to travel long distances. An unexpected outcome of the wells was an increase in family conflicts and inter-village conflicts. A subsequent study revealed that women would discuss, negotiate and resolve many community problems on their travels to and from the water wells. The organisation had not conducted a conflict analysis or analysis of the local capacities of peace prior to the intervention that would have revealed this issue. To compensate for this lost mechanism for conflict resolution, the organisation decided to work with the women and elders of the concerned villages to establish a network for conflict resolution.

Marthaler, E. & Gabriel, S. (2013) *Manual: 3 steps for working in fragile and conflict-affected situations*. Bern and Zurich: Helvetas https://assets.helvetas.ch/downloads/2013_hsi_manual_3_steps_wfcs.pdf

For more information on conflict and political economy analyses, see the [conflict analysis](#) section in GSDRC conflict topic guide and the section on [fragile and conflict-affected states](#) in the political economy analysis topic guide.

2.1 Do no harm

Do no harm (DNH) helps aid workers to identify conflict-exacerbating impacts of assistance, in particular how decisions and actions can affect inter-group relations. At its core is analysis of dividing and connecting issues and actors, which should be done with local partners and regularly updated during project implementation. It is important to understand how divisions are actually created. For example, 'religion' is often called a divider, but religion itself is not necessarily a source of tension. The question is how people use religion to cause divisions. Connecting elements should also not be overgeneralised. Infrastructure, for example, may be seen as a physical connector, but may be used in other ways that cause tension (Marthaler & Gabriel, 2013, see box above).

Primarily seen as a project level tool, the DNH framework has seven steps (see CDA, 2004):

- Identify which conflicts are dangerous in terms of their destructiveness, requiring DNH.
- Analyse 'dividers' (what divides groups) and identify sources of tension.
- Analyse 'connectors' – how people remain connected across sub-group lines despite divisions created through the conflict – and understand local capacities for peace (LCPs).
- Conduct a thorough review of all aspects of the assistance programme.
- Analyse the interactions of each aspect of the assistance programme with the existing dividers/tensions and connectors/LCPs. For example, who gains and who loses from assistance?
- Examine steps one to four: if assistance exacerbates inter-group dividers, rethink how to provide the programme in a way that eliminates its negative, conflict-worsening aspects.
- Once a better programming option has been selected, re-evaluate the impacts of the new approach on the dividers and connectors.

Benefits derived from adopting do no harm include (Engelstad et al., 2008):

- Enabling communities and agencies to learn, and to speak, a common language, in particular the language of connectors and dividers. This should be tailored to local vernacular.
- Supporting careful and well-designed, non-divisive resource transfers (in terms of amount, type, method of distribution and who makes the allocation decisions).
- Encouraging ongoing monitoring and corrections of various aspects of the project, which also makes it easier to engage in post-project evaluation.
- Strengthening legitimate local groups and institutions (e.g., markets) identified as connectors.

Barriers to the implementation of do no harm are similar to those of engaging in conflict sensitivity generally (see section 4: [Challenges](#)). They include (Engelstad et al., 2008):

- Incomplete organisational commitment and incorporation of DNH in an organisation's policies and operational agenda, resulting in inconsistent impacts.
- The tendency of agencies to marginalise DNH in relation to general peacemaking activities.
- Lack of collaboration among agencies to promote DNH and to provide training.

Goddard (2009) also finds that, based on experience, initiatives that have attempted to create new or externally determined connectors between groups have not been effective and risk exacerbating tensions. Rather, actors should focus on strengthening existing connectors that bring people together.

The do no harm framework can be combined with other tools. An example is the Safe and Effective Development in Conflict (SEDC) approach, developed by DFID and GIZ Risk Management Office. It combines do no harm, risk management (Van Brabant's Operational Security Management tool) and good development practice with the aim of helping aid workers to conduct programmes safely and effectively in conflict environments, without exacerbating conflict. A key component of the approach is

understanding perceptions – those of aid workers themselves and of others (references in 2.6 NGO guidance and 2.7 Donor approaches).

Do No Harm and Gender Analysis

DNH must include consideration of gender interactions, for example in its dividers and connectors analysis and in efforts to avoid reinforcing divisions and to strengthen connections. Women's groups and activities, for example, may represent dividers when they represent only one side of the conflict. They could also serve as connectors through collaborations and joint enterprises, such as a hostel initiated by Tutsi and Hutu widows in Rwanda. Attention to programmes focused on young males (who were often former soldiers or likely targets for mobilisation) can also mitigate divisions and tensions (CDA, 2010).

Key texts

CDA. (2004). *The do no harm handbook* (The framework for analyzing the impact of assistance on conflict). Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

http://www.pacificdisaster.net/pdnadmin/data/original/PPT_CDA_2005_DoNoHarm_handbook.pdf

Wallace, M. (2014). *From principle to practice: A user's guide to do no harm*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/217467179/From-Principle-to-Practice-A-Users-Guide-to-Do-No-Harm>

Case studies

Dittli, R. (2011). *International assistance in Gaza: Aiding fragmentation or unity? – A view from inside Gaza. Conflict sensitivity assessment*. cfd – the feminist Peace Organisation; HEKS – Swiss Interchurch Aid; KOFF/swisspeace; PalThink for Strategic Studies, Gaza.

http://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/KOFF/Analysis___Impact/Gaza_Conflict_Sensitivity_Assessment.pdf

How does aid interact with conflict dynamics in Gaza? This report, based on interviews and focus group discussions, uses the 'do no harm' analytical framework of 'dividers' and 'connectors'. It finds that international aid contributes to fragmentation along four key faultlines: the Fatah/Hamas factional split, the dividing effects of the Gaza blockade, the increasing differences between Gaza and the West Bank, and the general population's alienation from their leadership and institutions. However, this fragmentation is reversible: joint values are still strong, and civil society is an important connector. A checklist of questions is proposed to help aid organizations intervening in Gaza ensure that their policies, programming, and partnerships are conflict sensitive.

Engelstad, S., Otieno, M., & Owino, D. (2008). *Do no harm in Somalia*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52436/Do-No-Harm-in-Somalia.pdf>

Why has the DNH framework not taken hold among aid organisations in Somalia? This reflective case study, based on fieldwork, concludes that Somalia faces unique circumstances that have limited the spread of DNH, including clan-based fragmentation and logistical challenges arising from extreme insecurity. From 2002, DNH trainings were held in and outside Somalia, but follow-up was limited and interest declined. However, the need for DNH is great as there is a long history of aid reinforcing conflict dynamics. The top management of international agencies must adopt DNH with enthusiasm and ensure consistent implementation. More Somali trainers and Somali-language training materials are needed.

Additional DNH case studies are available at:

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/publications/search/?as=2&bs=&publisher=&pubTypes=1203&program=s=1149&country=0&tags=1151&author=&pubYear=&sort=date#.U2OSopwtbIY>

Additional resources

Anderson, M. B. (Ed.) (2000). *Options for aid in conflict: Lessons from field experience*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52469/Options-for-Aid-in-Conflict.pdf>

CDA. (2013). *Human rights and do no harm: guidance note*. Cambridge, MA: CDA

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52557/Guidance-Note-Human-Rights-and-Do-No-Harm.pdf>

CDA. (2010). *Do no harm: Additional model of the framework*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52533/Additional-Model-of-the-DNH-Framework.pdf>

Goddard, N. (2009). *Do no harm and peacebuilding: five lessons*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<http://cdacollaborative.org/media/150036/DNH-and-Peacebuilding-Five-Lessons-English.pdf>

2.2 Peace and conflict impact assessment

Peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA), first formulated by Kenneth Bush, is a means of anticipating and evaluating the impacts of development projects on structures and processes that (1.) strengthen prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of violence; and (2.) increase the likelihood that conflict will become violent (Bush 1998). While similar to DNH in its focus of how aid impacts conflict, PCIA differs from DNH in various ways, including (Garred and Goddard 2010):

- It assesses the risk of how contextual factors could impact on a project in addition to how the project might impact on the context.
- It places more emphasis on mutual learning, grassroots empowerment and community development.
- It places more emphasis on indicators.
- It places less emphasis on the breadth of field-based learning and testing.

There are three key steps to conducting PCIA (see Bush, 2009):

- **Mapping exercise:** to better understand the complexity and dynamics of peace and conflict environments and the interests, objectives and actions of stakeholders.
- **Risk and opportunity assessment:** to identify the negative and positive ways in which the peace and conflict environment could impact on the initiative.
- **Peace and conflict impact assessment:** to identify the ways in which the initiative could create or worsen conflicts or contribute to peacebuilding. This assessment should be engaged in pre-initiative, during the initiative, and post-initiative – contributing to planning, monitoring and evaluation. Hoffman (2003) argues, however, that the phases are poorly linked: factors identified in the pre-project phase are not clearly correlated with areas identified toward the end.

Benefits of PCIA include: two-way assessment, looking not only at how an intervention may affect the context but also how the context can affect an intervention; and an explicit focus on involvement of local actors (although whether this occurs in practice has been questioned – see [Aid for Peace](#) section below).

Potential barriers to the operationalisation of PCIA include: political challenges to integrating PCIA findings into programme design and implementation; and nondescript indicators. Much of the debate on PCIA centres on the extent to which indicators and evaluative steps should be specified. Bush emphasises that indicators should be user-driven. Bornstein (2010) finds that such a flexible approach, which can incorporate input of local residents, provides a rich body of information helpful to the development of indicators. Others find, however, that the lack of specificity hinders the ability of actors to effectively operationalise the framework; and that PCIA is more often used post-intervention rather than

throughout the project cycle. As such, there is less opportunity to adapt and improve the effectiveness of programming mid-cycle.

Using peace and conflict indicators vs. stated project indicators

PCIA does not evaluate the effectiveness of a development project against its stated objectives, outcomes or outputs, but rather against indicators related to peace and conflict. It is possible for a project to achieve stated criteria but perform poorly according to peacebuilding criteria. Conversely, a project could fail according to stated criteria but succeed in terms of peace and conflict impacts (Bornstein, 2010). An education project, for example, may fail to increase the number of students able to pass state-wide exams, but may succeed in increasing and improving inter-group relationships by creating a safe, neutral environment for interaction and countering stereotypes (Bush, 1998).

Key texts

Bush, K. (1998). *A Measure of peace: peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA) of development projects in conflict zones (Working Paper 1)*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/Measure_of_Peace.pdf

How can we assess whether a development project fosters peace or increases the likelihood of conflict? This working paper proposes a systematic mechanism, PCIA, to anticipate and assess peace and conflict impacts of development work in violence-prone regions. Five areas of potential impact are identified: institutional capacity to resolve violent conflict and build peace, military and human security, political structures and processes, economic structures and processes, and social reconstruction and empowerment. In each area, possible peace and conflict impacts and sample questions are outlined.

Bush, K. (2009). *Aid for peace: A handbook for applying peace & conflict impact assessment (PCIA) to Peace III projects*. INCORE, University of Ulster, and United Nations University

http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/pdfs/Handbook-Aid_for_Peace-2009_Dec.pdf

This handbook, prepared for an EC-funded peace programme in Northern Ireland, outlines how to operationalise PCIA. Worksheets are provided for the three steps: 1) mapping, 2) risk and opportunity assessment, and 3) 'PCIA proper'. Completing the worksheets to produce a paper PCIA is only the first step; integrating its findings into programme design and implementation is a political challenge. Progress depends on getting commitment from decision-makers and building a network of PCIA champions.

Hoffman, M (2003). PCIA methodology: Evolving art form or practical dead end? In A. Austin, O. Wils, & M. Fischer (Eds.) *Peace and conflict impact assessment: Critical views on theory and practice*. Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management.

http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue1_hoffman.pdf

How can PCIA be shaped into a practical tool rather than just a list of general questions? This paper provides an overview of three approaches to PCIA: those that use standard donor evaluation criteria; those that assess the peace and conflict impact of development and humanitarian programming by multi-mandate organisations; and those that focus explicitly on peacebuilding interventions. A key issue is over-emphasising context at the expense of broader lessons. A sector-wide initiative is required to develop workable common indicators for PCIA, along with stronger links between PCIA at policy, country and project levels.

Case studies

Ahmed, Z. S. (2011). Peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA): Lessons from Pakistan. *Peace and Conflict Review*, 5(2), 12-27. <http://www.review.upeace.org/images/pcr5.2.pdf>

How has PCIA been applied in Pakistan? This paper provides a critical analysis of PCIA as adapted by international development agencies in Pakistan. It finds that there is little understanding of PCIA at the grass-roots level and that few agencies work in collaboration with one another. It recommends that

agencies develop a common platform to pool resources for PCIA related exercises and that a broad range of stakeholders are consulted and involved in the process.

Bornstein, L. (2010). Peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA) in community development: A case study from Mozambique. *Evaluation*, 16(2), 165-176. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1356389009360471>
How useful is PCIA in practice? This article presents findings from a study that used PCIA to structure exploratory research on conflict and peace in Mozambique. PCIA functioned well as a tool for situational analysis, richly documenting sources of conflicts, competing claims over resources and rights, and problematic policies on the part of development organisations, government and private actors. Difficulties gathering information stemmed from systemic power differentials between researchers and respondents, and intensive demands on time and resources. The study shows that PCIA, if used flexibly and in dialogue with local people, can yield valuable insights.

Journal of Peacebuilding and Development. (2014). Special Issue on PCIA, 9(1).
<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjpd20/9/1#.U5hmdpwtblY>

This special edition explores how PCIA is used today, in various sectors, in local and international contexts. Although it is implemented in different ways, commonalities include the need for deep attention to factors and capacities that drive conflict and peace; and for ownership of analysis and priority-setting.

Additional resources

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. (2007). *Peace and conflict impact assessment: methodical guidelines*. Bonn and Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/05594-guidelines.pdf>

Peacebuild, web page with list of PCIA resources:
<http://www.peacebuild.ca/en/pcia-assessing-impacts/pcia-bibliography>

2.3 Aid for Peace

Many PCIA approaches and tools have since been developed by different organisations. While the objectives have remained largely the same, the approaches differ and are not necessarily based on the original concept. The 'Aid for Peace' approach comprises a set of unified and inclusive methodologies and a sequence of steps that are flexible and can be used by a broad range of actors for varying peacebuilding and development interventions at different levels (project, programme and policy).

There are four key steps to the approach (Paffenholz, 2005):

- Analysis of the peacebuilding needs of a given country or area
- Defining/Assessing/Evaluating the peacebuilding relevance of an intervention
- Assessing the conflict risks for an interventions (effects of the conflict on the intervention)
- Anticipating/Assessing/Evaluating the conflict and peacebuilding effects of an intervention (elaborating or assessing result-chains and indicators).

The basic model differs from the PCIA of Bush (1998) by focusing on the peacebuilding needs in a specific context and tailoring planned or existing policy, programme or project objectives to those needs. The model builds on PCIA in terms of developing conflict and peace result-chains and indicators for impact assessment of a particular intervention on conflict and peace environments (Paffenholz, 2005).

Benefits of Aid for Peace include: examining the needs of the local context as a starting point; a two-way assessment (similar to PCIA) of how conflict affects an intervention and how an intervention impacts on the environment; and flexibility.

Potential barriers to the successful implementation of Aid for Peace include issues with local resonance. Ahmed (2011) argues that the PCIA and Aid for Peace approaches propose procedures that cater more to the needs of international development agencies, without explicit mention of developing peace and conflict sensitive implementation plans in consultation with local partner organisations.

Key texts

Paffenholz, T. (2005). *Third-generation PCIA: introducing the Aid for Peace approach*. Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management.

http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue4_paffenholz.pdf

The Aid for Peace approach is a multi-purpose and multi-level process that facilitates the planning, assessment and evaluation of peace as well as aid interventions in conflict situations. By breaking down the either/or decisions that dominated previous phases of the PCIA debate, the approach is useful to interventions with different purposes and on different levels.

Paffenholz, T. & Reyhner, L. (2007). Planning and evaluating development and humanitarian interventions in conflict zones, Part 3 in *Aid for Peace: A Guide to Planning and Evaluation for Conflict Zones* (pp 71-127). Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos.

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3432>

This study provides a guide to planning development and humanitarian interventions in conflict zones. It suggests that while peace and conflict sensitivity has been mainstreamed as a topic of discussion, the international community has not yet arrived at an automatic, systematic peace and conflict sensitive aid policy and operational implementation. There needs to be a systematic link between the analysis of the conflict and peacebuilding environment and the implementation of interventions. The theory of conflict transformation should combine with professional operational requirements for programme planning.

2.4 Gender and conflict sensitivity

Development, humanitarian, peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions should not only be conflict sensitive but also gender sensitive. This requires context-specific analysis of gender relations, looking for example at: how men, women, girls and boys are affected differently by conflict and how they may seek to resolve conflict differently; how gender inequalities may exacerbate tensions; and how gender intersects with other social divisions (e.g. ethnicity, religion, class, age, geographic location) (Barandun & Joos, 2004).

Gender analysis is a key component of do no harm approaches to peacebuilding and statebuilding, as it can help donors to understand the possible direct and unintentional impacts of their interventions on the lives of men and women, girls and boys (OECD, 2013) (see also section 2.1: [DNH](#)). In Haiti, for example, the design and implementation of programmes specifically targeted at women resulted in a rise in tensions between men and women. This may have been due to the perceived challenge to men's traditional control over household resources, exacerbated by the lack of complementary programmes to provide men with economic opportunities (Zicherman, 2011, reference in section 3.2: [Humanitarian response](#)).

Gender and conflict sensitive programming can contribute to the prevention of violence and promotion of peace by promoting dispute resolution mechanisms, fostering new attitudes in gender and social relations, and empowering female connectors. Barandun and Joos (2004) caution that aid workers must be aware, however, that the empowerment of a specific group can result in conflict with other groups.

For more discussion and resources, see [gender in fragile and conflict-affected environments in the GSDRC gender topic guide](#).

Key texts

Barandun, P. & Joos, Y. (2004). *Gender- and conflict-sensitive program management*. Bern: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

http://www.cfd-ch.org/pdf/publikationen/focus_engl/newsletter2_04_egl.pdf

CDA. (2010). *DNH guidance note: Gender and DNH*. Cambridge, MA: CDA

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52545/DNH-Guidance-Note-Gender-and-DNH.pdf>

UNDP. (2006) *Can conflict analysis processes support gendered visions of peace building? Reflections from the peace and stability development analysis in Fiji*. New York: UNDP.

http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/BCPR_Report_Gender_Paper.pdf

This paper focuses on an analysis of the lessons learned from applications of the Peace and Stability Development Analysis (PSDA) that was initiated in 2005 by UNDP and the Government of Fiji. It argues that conflict and development analysis processes such as PSDA, which reveal issues of socio-economic development, security, democracy and peace, are inextricably linked to notions of gender equality.

Additional resources

OECD. (2013). *Gender and statebuilding in fragile and conflict affected states*. Paris: OECD

http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/development/gender-and-statebuilding-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states_9789264202061-en?utm_source=social-media&utm_medium=twfbgppin&utm_campaign=OECDtw#page2

Reimann, C. (2013). *Trainer manual: mainstreaming gender into peacebuilding trainings*. Centre for International Peace Operations and GIZ

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Trainer_Manual_Gender.pdf

SDC. (2006). *Gender, conflict transformation and the psychosocial approach: toolkit*. Bern: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/sudan/ressources/resource_en_91135.pdf

2.5 Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is important in determining how accurately initial conflict analysis has been reflected in programming and provides the space for updating analysis and adapting interventions such that they comply with conflict sensitive principles (UNDG-ECHA, 2013, reference in section 3.9: [Natural resources](#)). Provisions for M&E should be included early on in the design of interventions. There must be flexibility to adapt and modify the original project design during implementation in response to M&E findings (How to guide, reference in section 2.6: [NGO guidance](#)).

The Conflict Sensitivity Resource Pack ([NGO guidance](#)) recommends the use of perception-based indicators (e.g. if a respondent feels more or less safe) alongside objective indicators (e.g. incidents of violence) to capture intangible impacts. Disaggregation of data on indicators by group can also help to detect conflict sensitivity concerns.

Goldwyn and Chigas (2013) emphasise that M&E of conflict sensitivity differs from that of peacebuilding in focus, purpose and contribution to peace. Peacebuilding M&E is concerned primarily with achievement of peacebuilding goals, whether positive changes can be attributed to a specific intervention, and whether an intervention affects key conflict drivers. Peacebuilding initiatives thus need to be both conflict sensitive and accountable to peacebuilding evaluation criteria. In contrast, conflict sensitivity is concerned with any contribution to peace – whether related to drivers of conflict or not,

intended or unintended, significant or not. It is also concerned with negative impacts on conflict. If a programme aimed primarily at improving literacy, for example, also incorporates messages of peaceful coexistence, the M&E process would entail examining the extent to which these messages are understood and adopted by participants and how the intervention may have contributed to an increase or decrease in tensions. If the programme was designed instead as an explicit peacebuilding intervention, the M&E process would involve looking at the degree to which the messages changed participant attitudes and the effect of these changes on the key drivers of conflict (Goldwyn & Chigas, 2013).

M&E processes must themselves be conflict sensitive (OECD, 2012; How to guide). Transparency and the creation of safe spaces can reduce tension and suspicion, encourage open dialogue and the sharing of potentially sensitive information. It is important to consider who is conducting M&E and how they are perceived by respondents and whether respondents are drawn from diverse groups. It is also important to ensure that M&E outcomes are communicated back to relevant communities.

Key texts

Goldwyn, R. & Chigas, D. (2013). *Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity: methodological challenges and practical solutions* (CCVRI Practice Product). Cambridge, MA: CDA

http://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/Monitoring_and_evaluating_conflict_sensitivity_challenges_and_solutions_vfinal.pdf

OECD. (2012). *Evaluating peacebuilding activities in settings of conflict and fragility: Improving learning for results*. Paris: OECD

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264106802-en>

Villanueva, S. D. (2009). *Managing performance in peacebuilding: Framework for conflict sensitive monitoring and evaluation*. GoP-UN ACT for Peace Programme.

<http://www.ph.undp.org/content/dam/philippines/docs/CPRU/Managing%20Performance%20in%20Peacebuilding.pdf>

Additional resources

Bush, K. & Duggan, C. (2013). Evaluation in conflict zones: methodological and ethical challenges. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 8(2), 5-25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2013.812891>

The learning portal for design, monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding:

<http://www.dmeforpeace.org/>

2.6 NGO guidance and toolkits

Comprehensive guides

The following two resources offer a holistic look at the principles of conflict sensitivity, frameworks, and practical guidance on conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity planning and implementation.

Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. (2012). *How to guide to conflict sensitivity*. London: The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium.

http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/1/6602_HowToGuide_CSF_WEB_3.pdf

Drawing on the consortium of NGOs' experience in applying conflict sensitivity, this how to guide aims to provide practical, user-friendly information for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, focusing at project or organisation-wide level. It provides guidance on how to:

- conduct conflict analysis (chapter 1);

- link conflict analysis to project design and integrate conflict sensitivity throughout the project cycle (needs assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) (chapter 2);
- engage in conflict sensitive programming (chapter 3);
- assess and build institutional capacity for conflict sensitivity (chapters 5 and 6); and
- apply conflict sensitivity in emergency settings (chapter 4).

APFO, CECORE, CHA, FEWER, International Alert, Saferworld. (2004). *Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: Resource pack*. London.

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/148-conflict-sensitive-approaches-to-development-humanitarian-assistance-and-peacebuilding>

This pack covers theory, principles, debates, frameworks and lessons learned related to conflict sensitivity. It includes modules on how to:

- conduct conflict analysis (chapter 2);
- engage in conflict sensitive planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (chapter 3);
- integrate conflict sensitivity into sectoral approaches (chapter 4); and
- build institutional capacity for conflict sensitivity (chapter 5).

Additional resources

Abozaglo, P. (2011) *Conflict sensitivity toolkit*. ROI and Northern Ireland: Trócaire

http://www.trocaire.org/sites/trocaire/files/pdfs/policy/Conflict_Sensitivity_Toolkit_Oct_2011.pdf

CARE Nepal. (2008). *Care Nepal's strategy on conflict sensitivity & peacebuilding (2008-2012)*.

Kathmandu: Care Nepal http://www.carenepal.org/publication/_WYPS%20Report.pdf

Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. (2012). *Promoting conflict sensitivity amongst donor agencies: Policy Brief*. London: The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium.

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/11548/90754/file/POLICY%20BRIEF.pdf>

Gaigals, C. & Leonhardt, M. (2001). *Conflict-sensitive approaches to development: A review of practice*. International Alert, Saferworld, IDRC

<http://web.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/10596649641conflict-sensitive-develop.pdf>

Marthaler, E. & Gabriel, S. (2013) *Manual: 3 steps for working in fragile and conflict-affected situations*.

Bern and Zurich: Helvetas https://assets.helvetas.ch/downloads/2013_hsi_manual_3_steps_wfcs.pdf

Sloten, J., Wyeth, V., & Romita, P. (2010). *Power, politics and change: How international actors assess local context*. New York: International Peace Academy.

<http://www.ipinst.org/publication/policy-papers/detail/294-power-politics-and-change-how-international-actors-assess-local-context.html>

Covers conflict assessment, governance assessments, assessing state fragility, and whole-of-government approaches and their relationship to assessments.

van Brabant, K. (2000). *Operational security management in violent environments: A field manual for aid agencies*. London: Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN), Overseas Development Institute.

http://www.cihc.org/members/resource_library_pdfs/3_Humanitarian_Workers/3_3_Security/HPN_Operational_Security_Management_in_Violent_Environments.pdf

A systematic approach to security management starting from context analysis and threat and risk assessment, to security strategy choice and security planning.

World Vision's 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (MSTC)' tool, which seeks to help with translating conflict analysis into tangible priorities for humanitarian and development actors in fragile contexts.

<http://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding-and-conflict-sensitivity/publication/what-mstc>

2.7 Donor approaches and resources

Multilateral donor approaches and tools

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB. (2012). *A peacebuilding tool for a conflict-sensitive approach to development: A pilot initiative in Nepal*. Manila: Asian Development Bank (ADB).

<http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2012/nepal-pbt.pdf>

Department for International Development (DFID) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Huntington, D. (2005). *A guidebook to safe and effective development in conflict: A tool for analyses*. Risk Management Office (RMO).

http://securitymanagementinitiative.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=7&Itemid=33&lang=fr

United Nations organisations

UNDG. (2005). *Integrating conflict sensitivity into UN planning and programming*. Workshop report.

United Nations Development Group (UNDG).

http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/7313-Report_of_the_Workshop_-_Lessons_Learned_on_Conflict_Analysis.doc

UNHCR. (2007). *Framework for conflict-sensitive programming in Iraq*. Amman: UNHCR Iraq Operation

<http://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/framework-conflict-sensitive-programming-iraq>

UNICEF. (2012). *Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding in UNICEF* (Technical Note). UNICEF

<http://www.unicefinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/conflict%20sensitivity/UNICEF%20Technical%20Note%20on%20Conflict%20Sensitivity%20and%20Peacebuilding%5B1%5D.pdf>

Bilateral donor approaches and tools

Department for International Development (DFID)

DFID. (nd). *A toolkit for conflict sensitivity review*. London: DFID

http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/CS_TG.pdf

DFID. (2012). *Conflict sensitivity screening tool*. London: DFID Conflict helpdesk

http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/ST_DFID.pdf

DFID. (2010). *Working effectively in conflict-affected and fragile situations. Briefing paper B: Do no harm*. London: DFID.

<http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/CON77.pdf>

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

GIZ. (2007). *Practitioner's guide: Conflict sensitivity and risk management strategy*. GTZ (now GIZ) Food Security and Rehabilitation Project.

http://www.methodfinder.net/download_all.html?file=files/documents/methods_examples/0085%20-%20Conflict%20Sensitivity%20and%20Risk%20Management%20Strategy%20-%20Method.pdf

GIZ. (nd). *Practitioner's guide: PCIA, participatory and conflict sensitive impact monitoring in Nepal*.

GTZ (now GIZ) Food Security and Rehabilitation Project.

<http://www.methodfinder.net/download60.html>

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

SDC. (2006). *Conflict sensitive programme management*. Bern: COPRET Team, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

<http://www.sdc.admin.ch/index.php?navID=92682&langID=1>

SDC. (2010). *From 'do no harm' to 'acción sin daño' Colombia's experience of adopting the 'do no harm' approach* (SDC report). Bern: SDC.

http://www.cooperacion-suiza.admin.ch/colombia/ressources/resource_en_197823.pdf

SDC. (2008). *Context-sensitive engagement: Lessons learned from Swiss experiences in South Asia for aid effectiveness in fragile scenarios*. Bern: SDC.

http://www.deza.admin.ch/ressources/resource_en_169827.pdf

USAID

USAID. (2004). *Conflict-sensitive programming through monitoring and evaluation* (Conflict-Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation workshop report). Washington, DC: Capable Partners Program (CAP), USAID.

<http://www.ngoconnect.net/documents/592341/749044/Conflict-Sensitive+Programming+through+Monitoring+and+Evaluation>

USAID. (2013). *Checklist for conflict sensitivity in education programs*. Washington, DC: USAID

http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USAID_Checklist_Conflict_Sensitivity_14FEB27_cm.pdf

World Bank

World Bank. (2005). *Conflict sensitive development assistance: The case of Burundi* (Social development papers, No. 27). Washington, DC: World Bank

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCPR/Resources/WP27_Web.pdf

3 Sectoral interventions: applying conflict sensitivity to humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and statebuilding sectors

Conflict sensitivity applies to all types of work, across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors. Experience indicates that no intervention is neutral in a conflict context (Goldwyn, 2013). Nonetheless, agencies operating in various relevant sectors have failed to consistently apply a conflict sensitive approach to their interventions. This has been the case, for example, in security and justice sector reform (Goldwyn, 2013), economic recovery (International Alert, 2008), and natural resource and land management (Goddard & Lemke, 2013) (see sectoral sections below). This may be due to the assumption that interventions, which aim to address conflict dynamics and promote statebuilding and peacebuilding, are automatically conflict sensitive and pro-peace. This, however, cannot be assumed (see section 4: [Challenges](#) – faulty assumptions). Achieving intended impacts is particularly challenging in conflict-affected and fragile contexts – given the complexities of understanding such environments, difficulties with access, and rapidly shifting dynamics – let alone attributing causality to specific projects.

While each sector has distinct issues and questions to address in context analyses and in conducting conflict sensitivity, a consistent aspect of conflict sensitive approaches and peacebuilding found across sectors is the need to understand societal fault-lines and tensions (dividers) and to seek opportunities to build bridges (connectors) that contribute to strengthening social cohesion. In addition, Hoffman (2003, reference in section 2.2: [PCIA](#)) emphasises that while it is important to identify and analyse dynamics within difference sectors, it is equally important to understand how various sectors inter-relate and the implications of such dynamic interaction. This will improve the ability to assess and evaluate the positive or negative impact of particular interventions and the cumulative and spill-over effects of projects.

For discussion on social cohesion and rebuilding relationships in conflict contexts, see GSDRC topic guides on state-society relations and citizenship in situations of conflict and fragility ([intra-society relations](#) and [civic trust and citizenship](#)); and conflict ([social renewal](#)).

For further discussion on aspects of statebuilding and peacebuilding, see GSDRC topic guide on [statebuilding and peacebuilding in situations of conflict and fragility](#).

3.1 Infusing conflict sensitivity into policy frameworks and strategic programming

The various needs of conflict-affected and fragile states extend beyond the reach of any one project or programme. The range of interventions should be coordinated within a multi-tiered framework that is consistent in terms of analysis, aims and methods to achieve them (Izzi & Kurz, 2009, reference in [Challenges](#)). Efforts to infuse conflict sensitivity into strategic and policy frameworks have been growing over the last 10 years. Recognising that poverty and conflict are closely interrelated, the World Bank implemented a 4 year programme in the mid-2000s aimed at improving the conflict sensitivity of country poverty reduction strategy frameworks. Key aspects include the need for good contextual analysis and the flexibility to respond quickly to changing situations and to produce alternative options. The United Nations too began exploring how to integrate conflict sensitivity into UN planning and programming, including using formal planning processes such as UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) as a strategic entry point for conflict sensitivity in post-conflict settings.

There are now various overarching policy frameworks that address conflict sensitivity, such as the '[New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States](#)', developed through the forum of the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. The New Deal aims to mitigate risks from providing aid in conflict-affected and fragile contexts and emphasises the need for periodic country-led fragility assessments. The OECD's 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations' also include the importance of context analysis and do no harm.

Strategies for conflict sensitive interventions should build on and integrate with overarching policy guidelines along with strategic programming and policy frameworks across various sectors. Translating policy guidelines into national policies and strategies, and implementing related organisational changes within donor governments, remains a challenge. In addition, Manning and Trzeciak-Duval (2010) emphasise that a key gap in coverage of the OECD Principles concerns the role of the private sector and economic growth. They stress the importance of improved coherence across various policy domains.

Through an examination of four cases (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Afghanistan), McCandless and Tschirgi (2010) suggest that four criteria, each with their own challenges, are required for strategic frameworks to contribute to peacebuilding: 1) context analysis and context/conflict sensitivity; 2) enhanced capacity of national actors; 3) coherence, coordination and integration among actors and activities; and 4) mutual accountability amongst actors.

Key texts

Manning, R. & Trzeciak-Duval, A. (2010). **Situations of fragility and conflict: aid policies and beyond.** *Conflict, Security and Development*, 10(1), 103-131.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14678800903553928>

McCandless, E. & Tschirgi, N. (2010). **Strategic Frameworks that Embrace Mutual Accountability for Peacebuilding: Emerging Lessons in PBC and non-PBC Countries.** *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 5(2), 20-46.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2010.598777554033>

Additional resources

Cordaid. (2012). *Integrating gender into the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*. The Hague: Cordaid. https://www.cordaid.org/media/publications/Cordaid-7247-02-PP-Gender_into_the_New_Deal-DEFHR-web.pdf

Journal of Peacebuilding and Development. (2010). Special Issue on Advancing Coherence and Integrating Peacebuilding in Strategic Policy Frameworks 5(2).
http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjpd20/5/2#.VABR3_IdUnk

OECD. (2011). *International engagement in fragile states: Can't we do better?* Paris: OECD.
<http://www.oecd.org/development/incaf/48697077.pdf>

World Bank. (2007). *Toward a conflict-sensitive poverty reduction strategy. A retrospective analysis: 2nd edition*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1164107274725/3182370-1164110717447/TOWARD_A_CONFLICT_SENSITIVE_PRS.pdf

United Nations. (2005). *Lessons learned workshop: integrating conflict sensitivity into UN planning and programming*. 23-24 May, Turin, Italy. http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/7313-Report_of_the_Workshop_-_Lessons_Learned_on_Conflict_Analysis.doc

3.2 Humanitarian/emergency response programming

There has been growing recognition of the interconnected nature of risks associated with natural disasters, conflict and insecurity, and extreme poverty. Donors engaging in humanitarian and development work increasingly emphasise the need to enhance the resilience of communities and livelihoods in order to address fragility, poverty and vulnerability to conflict and disaster.¹⁰ This underscores the importance of conflict sensitivity in the humanitarian sector. At the same time, however, some argue that the maximalist approach to conflict sensitivity, which aims to address root causes of conflict, is inconsistent with humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

Most humanitarian agencies adhere to humanitarian codes and guidelines, the most influential being the [Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Standards](#). Although the term 'conflict sensitive' does not appear in Sphere, it recognises that 'attempts to provide humanitarian assistance may sometimes have unintended adverse effects', and that organisations following the Charter must 'aim to minimise any negative effects of humanitarian action on the local community or on the environment'. In addition, Wingender (2013) finds that the indicators incorporated in Sphere are largely conflict sensitive. Zicherman et al. (2011) outline six minimum standards to help improve the conflict sensitivity of humanitarian interventions:

- Long-term emergency preparedness plans incorporate regularly updated conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity staff training.
- The rapid emergency phase includes a 'good enough' conflict analysis.¹¹
- The identification and selection of partners are analysed in relation to potential conflict risk.
- All new staff are briefed on the conflict context.
- Participatory methods are used to foster community engagement in developing targeting criteria, managing distributions and conducting monitoring and evaluation.
- Conflict benchmarks are included in evaluations and reviews.

Designing conflict sensitive interventions in Pakistan's flood-affected communities

Interaction between the impacts of the 2010 floods in Pakistan and pre-existing social conflicts resulted in the risk of violence. In order to foster conflict sensitive relief and reconstruction interventions and promote conflict prevention, Arai (2012) recommends: prioritising the most vulnerable; establishing strategic partnerships between local and international relief organisations that monitor and prevent the political exploitation of aid; developing cooperatives to facilitate inclusive and equitable processes; promoting employment and other means of supplementary income; understanding resilience in tribal societies and fostering culturally appropriate and participatory ways to restore honour and dignity; and facilitating a gender-sensitive process of psycho-social healing that builds on local capacities.

Key texts

Wingender, L. M. (2013). *Humanitarian response in violent conflict: A toolbox of conflict sensitive indicators*. Baltimore, MD: Catholic Relief Services

<http://www.crsprogramquality.org/storage/pubs/peacebuilding/humanitarian-response-in-violent-conflict.pdf>

Zicherman, N., Khan, A., Street, A., Heyer, H., & Chevreau, O. (2011). *Applying conflict sensitivity in emergency response: Current practice and ways forward* (HPN Paper 70). London: ODI

<http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/ODI%20HPN%20Paper%20English%20Version.pdf>

¹⁰ See: Development Initiatives, Global Humanitarian Assistance. (2013). Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013. Global Humanitarian Assistance. <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/report/gha-report-2013>

¹¹ Short and easy to integrate with multi-sectoral emergency assessment – see Annex 1 of Zicherman et al. (2011).

Case studies

Arai, T. (2012). Rebuilding Pakistan in the aftermath of the floods: Disaster relief as conflict prevention. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(1), 51-65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2012.719331>

Garred, M. (2007). *Conflict sensitivity in emergencies: Learning from the Asia tsunami response*. Monrovia, CA: World Vision International
<http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/Conflict%20sensitivity%20in%20Emergencies.pdf>

3.3 Stabilisation programming

An understanding of context is essential to stabilisation interventions: what is required to stabilise one area depends on what existed before the conflict and also the degree of damage inflicted by the conflict (Dennys, 2011). While the aim of stabilisation interventions should be to provide a foundation for longer-term social, economic and political evolution, Dennys (2011) asserts that this does not need to be geared toward a free-market economy and democratic institutions as these processes are themselves destabilising. Forming states through stabilisation is not necessarily a benign process but one that can involve the violent imposition of a particular political order, based on frameworks developed by the international community. In such instances, the mere presence of the international community can be destabilising (Dennys & Fitz-Gerald, 2011). It can be particularly challenging to achieve conflict sensitivity and implement the principles of the New Deal for Engagement Fragile States in stabilisation contexts where aid actors can themselves be conflict actors.

Donors should acknowledge that aid can be instrumentalised in stabilisation contexts for political purposes (eg to 'win the hearts and minds' of local populations, to build state legitimacy and to set the stage for a particular political order) and that they themselves can be seen as a political and/or conflict actor. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam et al. (2008) find in their study of Afghani perceptions of civil-military relations that many Afghans see the development-security nexus as political and contrived – and favour multi-year long term sustainable development projects over quick impact projects.

Fishstein and Wilder (2012) find that international stabilisation projects can have negative outcomes and destabilising effects. In Afghanistan, this includes charges of extensive corruption and uneven geographic distribution that have delegitimised the government; competition over aid resources; and perverse incentives to maintain an insecure environment as the bulk of assistance funds have been spent in insurgency-affected provinces. In addition, most interventions are focused on socio-economic issues, failing to address the drivers of conflict which are related to governance.

Key texts

Dennys, C. (2013). **For stabilization.** *Stability* 2(1), 1-14.
<http://www.stabilityjournal.org/article/view/sta.an/32>

Fishstein, P. & Wilder, A. (2012). **Winning hearts and minds? Examining the relationship between aid and security in Afghanistan.** Somerville, MA: Tufts, Feinstein International Centre
<https://afg.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/WinningHearts-Final.pdf>

Additional resources

Azarbaijani-Moghaddam S., Wardak, M., & Zaman, I. (2008). *Afghan hearts, Afghan minds: Exploring Afghan perceptions of civil-military relations* (Research conducted for the European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan (ENNA) and the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG)). EISF.
<http://www.eisf.eu/resources/item/?d=1546>

Dennys, C. & Fitz-Gerald, A. M. (2011). *Intervention hangovers in stabilisation operations. Case studies from Afghanistan and Iraq*. København: Danish Institute for International Studies
http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/6806~v~Intervention_hangovers_in_stabilisation_operations__Case_studies_from_Afghanistan_and_Iraq.pdf

3.4 Security sector reform

Safety, security and justice are priorities for citizens and are associated with development outcomes, including the prevention of violent conflict, accountable and effective states, economic growth and service delivery. However, support to security and justice sectors can inadvertently contribute to tensions by exacerbating drivers of conflict, reinforcing patterns of exclusion through unrepresentative reforms, introducing competition over aid resources, challenging vested interests, and building the capacity of security institutions that may prey on communities (Goldwyn, 2013). In order to avoid this, Goldwyn (2013) advocates conflict sensitivity, in particular the need to determine the potential effects of interventions on command and control and accountability; civilian oversight; and exclusion – and how these could contribute to tensions.

Unintended consequences of police reform in Guatemala

A police development project in Guatemala sought to strengthen recruitment by developing standards for selection. Police authorities chose criteria of minimum height and Spanish literacy, which were not questioned by the designers and implementers of the programme. These standards had the unintended consequences, however, of excluding almost all Mayans, which resulted in an unrepresentative police force, a decline in Mayan access to justice, safety and security, reinforcement of Mayan marginalisation, and increased tensions between communities (Goldwyn, 2013).

For further discussion on security sector reform, see the GSDRC topic guide on [safety, security and justice](#).

Key texts

Goldwyn, R. (2013). *Making the case for conflict sensitivity in security and justice sector reform programming*. Care International
<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/M-files/CCRV/CCVRI-making-the-case-for-conflict-sensitivity-in-SJSR.pdf>

3.5 Services

Equity in service delivery is essential in conflict contexts and perceptions of distributive bias can contribute to tensions (Slater et al., 2012). McCandless (2012, p. 9) emphasises that 'if administrative and social services are not administered and delivered in a conflict sensitive manner, they can do more harm than good by reinforcing the horizontal inequalities that triggered conflict in the first place'. Conflict insensitive education policies, for example, can create or exacerbate inter-group tensions through unequal education (and associated employment) opportunities and divisive curriculum content (Sigsgaard, 2012). At a minimum, actors involved in education policy and programming should be aware of how their interventions may affect social tensions and ensure, for example, that new programmes do not favour one side of the conflict. Conflict sensitive programming that also aims to transform conflict and contribute to peacebuilding could include provision of civic education.

Inclusive, conflict sensitive water delivery in Uganda

Adopting a conflict sensitive approach in the design and implementation of two water projects in Kasese and Arua districts prevented the potential for violence. The process involved collaboration between civil society organisations and government authorities; and capacity building on conflict sensitivity and dialogue. This allowed for greater transparency and proactive identification and resolution of problems. Beneficiaries were also able to discuss issues dividing them and agree on ways in which the water projects could benefit everybody. In Kasese, the scheme was enlarged in order to ensure a larger number of residents were included (CECORE, REDROC, Saferworld, & YODEO, 2008).

See also the section on [service delivery in conflict and fragile contexts](#) in the GSDRC topic guide on service delivery.

Key texts

McCandless, E. (2012). *Peace dividends: contributions of administrative and social services to peacebuilding*. New York: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/peace_dividends.pdf

Slater, R., Mallett, R., & Carpenter, S. (2012). *Social protection and basic services in fragile and conflict-affected situations*. Secure livelihoods research consortium. London: ODI
http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?resourceid=145&Page=2

Sector resources and case studies

International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO). (2013). *INEE guidance note on conflict sensitive education*. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO
<http://www.ineesite.org/en/resources/inee-guidance-note-on-conflict-sensitive-education>

Sigsgaard, Morten. (2012). *Conflict-sensitive education policy: a preliminary review*. Doha: EAA.
http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1150/1_Sigsgaard_M%282012%29Conflict-Sensitive.pdf

CECORE, REDROC, Saferworld, & YODEO . (2008). *Water and conflict: making water delivery conflict-sensitive in Uganda*. London: Saferworld.
<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/355-water-and-conflict>

Rodriguez-Garcia, R., Macinko, J., Solórzano, X., & Schlessner, M. (2001). *How can health serve as a bridge for peace?* Linking Complex Emergency Response and Transition Initiative (CERTI).
<http://www.certi.org/publications/policy/gwc-12-a.htm>

Skinner, H. A. and Sriharan, A. (2007). Building cooperation through health initiatives: and Arab and Israeli case study. *Conflict and Health*, 1(8). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1752-1505-1-8>

WHO. Health as bridge for peace. Geneva: World Health Organisation (WHO).
<http://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/hbp/en/index.html>

3.6 Infrastructure development

Infrastructure projects are generally approached from an engineering perspective. While engineering concerns such as efficiency are important, they should be secondary considerations in a conflict sensitive approach (USIP 2008). Development actors should be aware of potentially divisive actions such as the risk of elite capture of infrastructure projects (e.g. selecting road alignments or water supply points that

benefit certain groups), inequitable resource distribution and substitution effects. Jones and Howarth (2012) advocate for community-driven development (CDD) and reliance on strong traditional arrangements to mitigate such risks. They emphasise, however, that proper attention should be given to the design and implementation of CDD programmes. In Sierra Leone, for example, the formation of local committees was insufficient to ensure a conflict sensitive approach. It had to be supplemented with procedures and mechanisms for community monitoring and accountability. CDD may not be an effective solution in all contexts, however, and may not be appropriate to handle large infrastructure projects.

Key texts

Jones, S. & Howarth, S. (2012). *Supporting infrastructure development in fragile and conflict-affected states: Learning from experience*. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management
<http://www.opml.co.uk/sites/opml/files/FCAS%20infrastructure%20final%20report.pdf>

USIP. (2008). *Conflict-sensitive approach to infrastructure development*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace (USIP).
<http://www.usip.org/publications/conflict-sensitive-approachinfrastructure-development>

Additional resources

International Alert. (2006). *Conflict-sensitive business practice: engineering contractors and their clients*. London: International Alert
<http://www.engineersagainstopoverty.org/documentdownload.axd?documentresourceid=24>

3.7 Economic recovery

Wealth creation is not sufficient on its own to resolve conflict. Moreover, it can exacerbate tensions and lead to the renewal of conflict if the benefits of economic recovery are perceived to be unevenly distributed (Bray, 2009, reference in section 3.8: [private sector](#)). Country growth policies and strategies can result in inclusive growth or in benefits that reach only a small segment of the population. In Angola, for example, post-conflict economic growth has been driven by the capital-intensive oil sector and foreign investors, with insubstantial improvements in local employment. In contrast, a key driver of growth in Mozambique has been the agricultural sector, which engages a large segment of the population, broadens the tax base and provides revenue for services. Such forms of recovery can decrease the likelihood of conflict as people perceive that they have more to lose now from engaging in combat (UNDP, 2008).

According to International Alert (2008), conflict sensitive approaches should be combined with political economy analysis to identify and address underlying power disparities and vulnerabilities; and tailor interventions to contribute to successful economic recovery. They note, however, that few agencies consistently apply a conflict sensitive approach to economic recovery. The UNDP (2008) emphasises that low incomes, slow growth, high levels of inequality and mass unemployment in post-conflict settings increase the risks of a return to violent conflict. As such, conflict sensitive policies for economic recovery should include the three critical goals of restoring economic growth, generating productive work and countering horizontal inequalities.

The potential for economic activity to facilitate inter-group connections and build trust and social cohesion is discussed in the literature addressing post-conflict reconstruction. It may be beneficial in certain circumstances to make peacebuilding an explicit part of the economic recovery process. In Rwanda, for example, the Government fostered daily contact between Hutus and Tutsis through joint work on coffee plantations. The aim alongside economic gains is relationship and community-building (UNDP, 2008). In order for such initiatives to be effective, however, these societal relationships should

have existed prior to the conflict such that those intervening are not attempting to create new connections (Goddard, 2009, reference in section 2.1: [do no harm](#)). Such initiatives also risk being counter-productive if participants feel coerced into engaging in inter-group contact in order to receive benefits from development assistance.

Unintended positive effects of building social capital in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The primary aim of the Srebrenica Milk Road Project, financed by the Dutch government through UNDP, is to increase commercial dairy production and improve the economic situation of families in the region involved with the project. Farmers have organised themselves into producer groups composed of Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) returnees and Serb residents, with each producer group linked to a local milk collection centre. The main outcome of the project has been increased efficiency and profitability of local milk production. An unexpected consequence was the building of networks of reciprocity and trust across the two ethnic groups as they began to share equipment and information, and help each other out. This has contributed to better conditions for the reintegration of returnees. Such social ties, in turn, are considered to be a solid basis for future economic development of the area (UNDP, 2009).

Key texts

Mallett, R. & Slater, R. (2012). *Growth and livelihoods in conflict-affected situations: What do we know?* London: ODI

http://securelivelihoods.org/resources_download.aspx?resourceid=153&documentid=151

UNDP. (2008). *Post-conflict economic recovery: enabling local ingenuity* (Crisis Prevention and Recovery Report 2008). New York: Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP.

<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/undp-cpr-post-conflict-economic-recovery-enable-local-ingenuity-report-2008.pdf>

Case studies

International Alert. (2008). *Building a peace economy in Northern Uganda: Conflict-sensitive approaches to recovery and growth* (Investing in Peace, Issue No. 1). London: International Alert.

http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/building_a_peace_economy_in_northern_uganda.pdf

UNDP BiH. (2009). *The ties that bind: social capital in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. (National Human Development Report). Sarajevo: UNDP BiH

http://www.ba.undp.org/content/dam/bosnia_and_herzegovina/docs/Research&Publications/NHDR/BiH_NHDR_2009_The_Ties_that_Bind_En.pdf

Additional resources

McCandless, E. & McDougal, T. (2009). *Economic Recovery*. Peacebuilding Initiative, Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research (HPCR), Harvard University & HPCR International.

<http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index7604.html?pageId=1769>

Raven-Roberts, A. (2013). Women and the political economy of war. In C. Cohn (Ed.) *Women and wars: contested histories uncertain futures* (pp. 36-53). Cambridge: Polity Press.

<http://www.polity.co.uk/book.asp?ref=9780745642451>

USAID. (2005). *Livelihoods and conflict: a toolkit for intervention*. Washington, DC: USAID.

http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnade291.pdf

3.8 Private sector

Recognising that private sector companies are not neutral when operating in conflict contexts, Anderson and her colleagues adapted many of the do no harm principles to the private sector. Companies can have unintended negative effects on conflicts by altering the distribution of economic benefits, upsetting existing cultural and societal relations and/or generating negative externalities, such as environmental pollution (Ballentine, 2009).

In the case of the extractive industry, the main beneficiaries are usually the company and national governments with limited employment opportunities or other benefits to local communities that suffer the most from the environmental impacts (Bray, 2009). Companies and aid agencies need to be cognisant of these effects when developing policies and strategies.

Private sector – conflict scenarios

- Company investment can cause conflict through displacement of local communities to clear land (eg for a mine) that creates tensions between host and relocated communities.
- Company operations can exacerbate pre-existing tensions either among communities, or between communities and regional/national authorities, triggering violence, for example through a hiring policy that selects staff from one ethnic group, increasing resentment from others.
- At a higher geographical scale, revenue payments to government could have a destabilising influence on already poor governance structures, increasing the likelihood of conflict in the long-term. Further, revenue could be used to purchase arms, sustaining or escalating conflict.

International Alert, (2007). *Conflict-sensitive business practice: guidance for extractive industries*:

<http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/publications/conflict-sensitive-business-practice-guidance-extractive-industries>

In addition to assessing dividers, it is important to identify possible connectors – programming and projects that will bring people together (Bray, 2009) (see economic recovery section above). Case evidence from literature on business and peacebuilding demonstrates that business can address drivers of armed violence by, for example, building bridges between different communities and between state and society; providing good offices and information; acting as a pro-peace constituency; strengthening local economies; and limiting access to conflict financing (Wennmann, 2012).

Development actors and government policy-makers need to include private sector actors in their context analyses to ascertain how they may influence the context. Bray (2009) asserts that it is essential that they focus on the development of an equitable regulatory environment for the private sector at an early stage of economic recovery.

They should also encourage the implementation of ongoing private sector initiatives, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, the Kimberley Process for the Certification of Rough Diamonds, and the UN Global Compact.¹² In addition, efforts should be made to extend conflict sensitive business initiatives beyond the extractive industry to sectors that receive less attention, such as local, small and medium enterprises.

In order to provide incentives for business to support such initiatives, donor governments could review and revise aid, trade and investment support policies in a way that alters company's cost-benefit calculations (Ballentine & Haufler, 2009). Other incentives for business to engage in conflict sensitivity include the need for a stable environment in which to operate and concern for reputation.

For further discussion and resources, see the section on the private sector in [Peacebuilding: socioeconomic recovery of the GSDRC conflict topic guide](#).

¹² For discussion of these initiatives see Ballentine and Haufler (2009), reference on next page.

Key texts

Ballentine, K. & Haufler, V. (2009). *Public policy for conflict-sensitive business*. UN Global Compact Office <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/resources/283>

Bray, J. (2009). The role of private sector actors in post-conflict recovery. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 9(1), 1-26.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14678800802704895>

Forrer, J. Fort, T. & Gilpin, R. (2012). *How business can foster peace*. Washington, DC: USIP
<http://www.usip.org/publications/how-business-can-foster-peace>

Wennmann, A. (2012). The role of business in armed violence reduction and prevention. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 95(886).
<http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/review/2012/irrc-887-wennmann.pdf>

Zandvliet, L. (2011). *Conflict transformation and the corporate agenda—opportunities for synergy*. In Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, Section IV.
http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/zandvliet_handbookII.pdf

Extractive industries

International Alert. (2007). *Conflict-sensitive business practice: guidance for extractive industries*. London: International Alert. <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/publications/conflict-sensitive-business-practice-guidance-extractive-industries>

Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, World Vision Canada, & CDA. (2013). *Preventing conflict in exploration: a toolkit for explorers and developers*. Toronto. <http://www.pdac.ca/docs/default-source/e3-plus---common/2012-news-toolkit-english.pdf?sfvrsn=6>

Eftimi, A., Heller, K., & Strongman, J. (2009). *Gender dimensions of the extractive industries: mining for equity*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTOGMC/Resources/eifd8_gender_equity.pdf

Additional resources

UN Global Compact. (2010). *Guidance on Responsible Business in Conflict-Affected & High-Risk Areas: A Resource for Companies and Investors*: www.unglobalcompact.org.

3.9 Natural resources, climate change and land governance

Natural resource and land management programmes and interventions are becoming increasingly common and are often implemented in situations of open or latent violence. Goddard and Lemke (2013) find, however, that most fail to explicitly incorporate conflict sensitivity. Natural resources can be conflict drivers on their own and can also interact with other conflict drivers (UNDG-ECHA, 2013). In such situations, natural resource and land management need to be treated as peacebuilding interventions.

Well-intentioned interventions can have negative effects. A biodiversity conservation initiative, for example, may be seen as contributing to sustainable development but could result in violence if the government appropriates land and forcibly moves an indigenous group reliant on the land for its livelihood (Goddard and Lemke 2013). The UNDP (2012, p. 7) outlines four key steps for conflict sensitive natural resource management. At every stage, processes should be inclusive and participatory.

- Develop shared understandings of the resource and conflict context.
- Design natural resource policies and projects based on this analysis.
- Build inclusive, transparent and accountable natural resource management systems.
- Monitor and evaluate environmental trends and results, allowing for continual determinations of whether conflicts are being addressed, if new conflicts are emerging and if progress is being made toward environmental sustainability.

Understanding gender dynamics of land tenure and natural resource management

Despite growing recognition of the importance of land to women and girls, their ability to access land and to enjoy secure tenure has declined. Even when programmes have been implemented to benefit women and girls, they have in some cases been ineffective due to lack of understanding of the different ways in which women and men use land. In addition, seemingly neutral approaches to land can impact negatively on women. For example, men may use a forest area for timber harvesting, whereas women use the area to produce non-wood forest products and gather food and herbs for medicines. A programme aimed at preserving forest area may provide alternative livelihoods for harvesters only, resulting in a disproportionate impact on women (Goddard & Lemke, 2013).

While links between climate change and conflict have received prominence in the literature, links between climate change adaptation and conflict have received much less attention. Responses to climate change also have the potential to threaten natural resources, livelihoods and human security (Babicky, 2013). Vivekananda (2011) argues that if climate change policymakers and practitioners treat climate change adaptation as purely a technical intervention, responding solely to environmental risks (e.g. switching to drought resistant crops), they risk contributing to violence. It is also necessary to address the social consequences of climate change – such as conflicts between displaced flood victims and host communities and disputes over access to increasingly scarce resources – and to build community resilience to the impacts of climate change. At the same time, climate change adaptation has the potential to be a driver of peace, for example through the establishment of international agreements that outline collaboration.

See also *climate change, conflict, migration and fragility* in the GSDRC climate change adaptation guide.

Key texts

Goddard, N. & Lempke, M. (2013). *Do no harm in land tenure and property rights: Designing and implementing conflict sensitive land programs*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/92483/dnh-in-land-tenure-and-property-rights-final.pdf>

UNDG-ECHA. (2013). *Natural resource management in post-conflict transitional settings* (UNDG-ECHA Guidance Note). United Nations Development Group (UNDG).

http://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/UNDG-ECHA_NRM_guidance_Jan2013.pdf

UNDP. (2012). *Strengthening capacity for conflict-sensitive natural resource management*. Toolkit and guidance for preventing and managing land and natural resources conflict. UNDP.

http://www.un.org/en/events/environmentconflictday/pdf/GN_Capacity_Consultation.pdf

Climate change

Babicky, P. (2013). A conflict-sensitive approach to climate change adaptation. *Peace Review*, 25(4), 480-488. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2013.846131>

Vivekananda, J. (2011). *Conflict-sensitive responses to climate change in South Asia*. London: International Alert / IfP-EW. <http://www.ifp-ew.eu/pdf/1111sasia.pdf>

4 Challenges: identifying and overcoming key barriers to achieving conflict sensitivity

There is widespread agreement among humanitarian, development, statebuilding and peacebuilding actors about the importance of conflict sensitivity. However, there are still various factors that have undermined the successful operationalisation of conflict sensitivity. These include:

Inconsistent application of conflict sensitivity...

...at the policy and organisational level

The majority of learning about conflict sensitive practice has been at the programme level, with little attention given to the policy level (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009, reference in section 1.2: [evolution of conflict sensitivity](#)). Although aid agencies have adopted policies in support of the principle of conflict sensitivity, there are few developed methods to assess the implications and actual impacts – and to ensure the conflict sensitivity – of donor’s policy decisions. These include decisions to start or stop whole areas of programming or to shift to greater reliance on budgetary support (see section 1.3: [where and when to apply conflict sensitivity](#) for further discussion). It is also difficult to engage in conflict sensitivity at the policy level if donors themselves are conflict actors in certain contexts.

In order for conflict sensitivity to be applied consistently, it should be embedded in an agency’s policies and operational agenda. Effective dissemination of conflict sensitivity requires an organisational commitment from top to bottom (Engelstad et al., 2008) (see [section 1.3](#)).

The OECD (2011, reference in section 3.1: [infusing conflict sensitivity](#)) finds that development partners have failed to systematically ensure that their statebuilding interventions are conflict sensitive and to monitor for unintended consequences. In Mindanao, a key barrier to the adoption of conflict sensitivity at various organisations was the management view that conflict sensitivity is an add-on and merely a box to check (Garred & Goddard, 2010).

‘Champions’ – individuals who learn the DNH approach, for example, and motivate people and/or provide incentives for others to learn and adopt the approach – could be relied on to encourage the uptake of conflict sensitivity within an organisation (CDA, 2009). Goddard and Brady (2010) found in their study on DNH in Cambodia that a recurring theme was the need for champions.

...throughout the project life cycle

Conflict sensitive approaches are most effective when applied consistently and holistically throughout the project life cycle – from analysis and design to evaluation. The widespread focus on developing conflict analysis frameworks has resulted in a relative neglect of practical guidance on how to operationalise the findings (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009). The do no harm project finds that where agencies conduct analysis, this is often relied on solely for initial programme design, with no monitoring of impacts and unintended consequences of the programme once implemented and follow-on programme adjustments (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009).

...at the inter-agency level

Even if organisations adopt conflict sensitivity in their internal processes, policies, funds and structures, the lack of an enabling external environment can adversely affect its operationalisation (Lange, 2006). Lack of coordination among actors operating in the same space, including national governments, donors, local partners and NGOs, can result in unintentionally undermining the work of others. In Nepal, the donor community commissioned numerous conflict analysis reports and assessment missions, but failed to come up with a joint assessment necessary to develop a joint response to the conflicting parties. Without a clear strategy, donors were initially unable to constructively influence the conflict situation (Paffenholz, 2005, reference in section 1.1: *origin of conflict sensitivity*). There can also be inadequate links between departments and agencies that form part of the same country government, such as between the military and the development department. Lange (2006) emphasises that consultation and coordination among agencies – sharing of information and joint context analysis – is integral to strengthened conflict sensitivity.

Analytical issues and integrating findings into programming

Difficulties in gathering information, due to complex conflict environments, access issues, systemic power differentials between researchers and respondents, and intensive demands on time and resources, can undermine the ability to conduct effective conflict analysis and assessments (Bornstein 2010, reference in section 2.2: *PCIA*). Further, a key challenge for agencies, generally and in relation to conflict sensitivity, is how to ensure that all information gathered and analyses conducted are made useable, presented in a ‘user-friendly’ way, and disseminated rapidly to those who can act on it to inform, design and monitor programming. Lange (2006) recommends experimenting more with web-based information management systems. Progress in integrating findings into programme design, implementation and monitoring also depends on commitment from decision-makers and formal mechanisms that link analysis and assessments to an overarching planning cycle (Bush, 2009, *PCIA*).

Insufficient attention to Southern perspectives and endogenous models

Conflict sensitivity approaches and tools have been criticised for being Northern-led, with limited attention to domestic models or collaboration with Southern actors to develop locally adapted approaches. Bush (2003) argues that the original intent of PCIA to create the space for actors in the South to develop organic, appropriate and user-friendly tools did not materialise. Instead, emphasis shifted to more mechanistic Northern-led tools and frameworks.

Such emphasis on particular methodologies has in certain instances resulted in little resonance with Southern organisations and alienated and marginalised local communities from peace and conflict assessment processes (Abitbol, 2013; Barbolet et al., 2005, *evolution of conflict sensitivity*). In Pakistan, for example, the majority of staff at various local NGOs consider PCIA and conflict sensitivity as ‘alien concepts’ and have little interest in learning the tools and methodologies (Ahmed, 2011, *PCIA*). In other environments, local communities have been receptive to the concepts and tools. Regardless, there is a need to focus on local capacities and perspectives. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States is an attempt to place national partners of the centre of statebuilding and peacebuilding and could be relied on as a framework to counter perceptions of neglect of Southern perspectives.

Incentives / disincentives

Funding and timing

Pressures faced by implementing organisations to spend large amounts of donor money quickly can result in failure to adopt time-consuming conflict sensitivity approaches (CDA 2009). In his research on PCIA in Pakistan, Ahmed (2011) finds that in most cases, agencies opted for a hurried approach (based on

decisions at headquarters). Development projects were implemented without a prior conflict analysis and the PCIA exercise was then partially performed after the fact to determine the projects' impacts on local peace and conflict dynamics. He argues, however, that once a project is implemented without a conflict analysis, the benefits of the PCIA approach are significantly undermined.

Lack of accountability

If organisations are not held to account for failure to incorporate conflict sensitivity approaches or for the negative impacts their programming may have, they may have little or no motivation to engage in conflict sensitivity. CDA (2009) finds that donors rarely monitor for the use of do no harm by implementing agencies beyond the funding phase and thus have little knowledge of whether it is actually adopted. Further, donor policies rarely provide any consequences for failing to engage in conflict sensitive programming or penalize activities that actually caused harm (Woodrow & Chigas, 2009). Goddard and Brady (2010) find in their case study of Cambodia that donor logframes for implementing organisations did not include any indicators for DNH. At the community level, there are also no mechanisms for recipients of international assistance to hold organisations accountable for the negative impacts of projects on local people (CDA, 2009).

Faulty assumptions

Peacebuilding organisations may find it difficult to acknowledge the need for conflict sensitivity due to the faulty assumption that their mandate to build peace automatically results in activities that contribute to peace (Resource pack). Similarly, organisations and actors engaged in particular sectoral work, such as security and justice sector reform, may assume that since such reforms are intended to transform a key driver of conflict, they inherently contribute to peace. Goldwyn (2013, reference in section 3.4: **Security sector reform**) cites this as a possible reason why conflict sensitivity has not been widely taken up in the sector. Such assumptions can result in lack of systematic conflict analyses, inadequate planning, uncoordinated approaches to peacebuilding and tenuous claims of success (Resource pack).

Insufficient capacity

Although conflict sensitivity training exists, mainly on do no harm, more training, mentoring and capacity building is required – particularly in the South (Paffenholz & Reychler, 2007). In Mindanao, DNH training amounted to one workshop, without any monitoring or follow-up, which was insufficient to understand the tool or for regular and sustained use (Garred & Goddard, 2010). Lack of capacity undermines the ability of organisations to mainstream conflict sensitivity (Paffenholz, 2005). Systematic conflict sensitivity training could contribute to the development of institutional memory and human resource capacity. Such training should include links with other training on issues such as gender, child protection and social protection.

In addition to developing conflict sensitivity capacity, Burke (2013) finds that it is important to encourage skills and ways of working that enable country office staff to accrue political acumen and knowledge to operate effectively in contexts where conflict sensitivity is not adopted. In the far south of Thailand, some agencies without explicit conflict sensitive programming still addressed conflict issues due to internal attributes and institutional concerns over inequalities and political marginalisation. Goldwyn (2013) cautions that training itself can have conflict sensitive repercussions in terms of who selects and who is chosen, and whether those who are trained gain additional power.

Political dimensions

Conflict analyses are political exercises that reflect often contentious determinations of the causes of conflict and interpretation of history (Izzi & Kurz, 2009). Ongoing assessments and evaluation in conflict sensitivity processes are also political exercises. There may be pressure to minimise or exclude

controversial issues in order to make findings acceptable to a larger set of actors and thus useable. Izzi and Kurz (2009) argue that if the quality of analysis is compromised to a large extent, it may not be better than no analysis at all. Burke (2013) finds that aid agencies found it challenging to address causes of conflict in the far south of Thailand due to internal operational deficiencies and the need to negotiate with the recipient government that did not want these issues addressed. In many cases, government resistance constituted a complete barrier for organisations to engage in the promotion of peace.

Deciding which conflict sensitive approach and methodology to adopt also represents a political choice. Neufeldt (2007) identifies two distinct groups in development interventions: 'frameworkers' who use methods or processes that are scientific, linear and logical; and 'circlers' who are interested in the uniqueness of interventions and communities and immeasurable aspects.

How conflict sensitivity approaches are selected, interpreted and perceived can affect whether they are successfully implemented or face resistance. Barbolet et al. (2005) find that the application of PCIA in Sri Lanka emphasised complex tools, tables and methodologies that did not resonate with many Southern organisations. Many PCIA frameworks have been developed in the North with little Southern input (Gaigals & Leonhardt, 2001, reference in section 2.6: [NGO guidance and toolkits](#)).

Bornstein (2010) finds, however, in her use of PCIA in Mozambique that it can be used flexibly. She opted against rigid evaluation with pre-established indicators in favour of a dialogue between researchers and local residents, which contributed to effective identification of conflict issues, information on key actors, and development of indicators.

Key texts

CDA. (2009). *Barriers and supports for do no harm* (Issues Paper). Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52560/Issue-Paper-Barriers-and-Supports-for-Do-No-Harm.pdf>

This paper summarises lessons from case studies on barriers to, and supports for, implementation of do no harm. Staff turnover is both a barrier and a support, as the movement of trained personnel weakens capacity in one organisation but can increase it in another. Disincentives to use DNH include pressure to spend funds quickly, the fact that aid agencies are not held accountable for harm done, and confusion arising from the absence of a clear definition of what it means to use DNH. Ensuring free access to DNH materials has helped it spread, but there remains a need for translation into more languages.

Lange, M. (2006). *Conflict-sensitive humanitarian assistance: building capacity for mainstreaming*. In P. Gibbons & B. Piquard (Eds.), *Working in conflict - Working on conflict: Humanitarian dilemmas and challenges* (pp. 155-170). Bilbao: University of Deusto

http://www.humanitariannet.deusto.es/publica/PUBLICACIONES_PDF/Working%20in%20conflict.pdf

This paper, based on research with staff in international NGOs, highlights key challenges to mainstreaming conflict sensitivity, including information overload, inconsistent application of lessons learned, and staff recruitment, retention and development. Conflict sensitivity analysis should be integrated into existing planning and operational frameworks, rather than conducted through separate processes which put extra pressure on already over-burdened staff. Agencies also need to critically analyse the nature and dynamics of their relationships with local partner organisations as these are an important factor in the conflict sensitivity of the wider response.

Neufeldt, R. C. (2007). *'Frameworkers' and 'Circlers': Exploring assumptions in peace and conflict impact assessment*. In: *Berghof handbook for conflict transformation*. Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management.

http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/neufeldt_handbook.pdf

Case studies

Burke, A. (2013). How do international development agencies approach peacebuilding in a sub-national conflict? *Development in Practice*, 23(7), 840-856.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2013.811221>

This fieldwork-based study examines international organisations' responses to conflict in Thailand's far south between 2007 and 2012. While many agencies demonstrated little interest in addressing the conflict, some tried to support peacebuilding, although Thai government resistance and practical barriers generated obstacles. Conflict guidelines and toolkits were rarely used; instead, political awareness was important in negotiating space for peacebuilding. Findings suggest that for aid agencies to engage effectively in highly politicised subnational conflict environments, they need to demonstrate local understanding and flexibility rather than adherence to technical peacebuilding toolkits.

Garred, M. & Goddard, N. (2010). *Do no harm in Mindanao: Ingenuity in action*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52424/Do-No-Harm-in-Mindanao-Ingenuity-in-Action.pdf>

Goddard, N. & Brady, E. (2010). *Do no harm in Cambodia*. Cambridge, CA: CDA

<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52421/Do-No-Harm-in-Cambodia.pdf>

Izzi, V. & Kurz, C. (2009). *Potential and pitfalls of conflict-sensitive approaches to development in conflict zones: reflections on the case of North Kivu*. (Paper presented at ISA Annual Convention, New York, 15-18 February).

http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/3/1/2/8/1/p312813_index.html?phpsessid=ok050981rkr0783dsop6h6hnn2

Additional resources

Abitbol, E. (2014). Assessing the power and practices of peace and conflict impact assessment. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 9(1), 3-9.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2014.899305>

Bush, K. (2003). *PCIA five years on: the commodification of an idea*. Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management.

http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue1_bush.pdf