

**CONFLICT-SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT,  
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE & PEACE-BUILDING:  
TOOLS FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**REPORT**

**Stakeholders Meeting  
27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003  
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA**

## 1. GENERAL ISSUES ON CONFLICT SENSITIVE APPROACHES

A number of issues in relation to Conflict Sensitive Approaches (CSA) were raised throughout the two-day consultative meeting in Sri Lanka, attended by representatives from the government, donors, local and international civil society. Namely:

- Most organisations are conflict *aware* and apply some form of CSA within the framework of their interventions, however only some organisations are conflict *sensitive* – i.e. participants were aware of the potential for unintended impacts of projects on conflicts (many conduct conflict analysis) however few had embedded conflict sensitivity throughout their project cycle.
- The use of the ‘Do No Harm’ is widespread in Sri Lanka. Conflict sensitive programming is thus not a new concept.
- There is a regional variation in heightened conflict awareness, with some communities engaging in broad discussions on conflict but failing to link this to a project intervention & thus unable to assess the impacts of a project on a context.
- Furthermore some organisations employ an ad hoc and ‘intuitive’ approach, thus the application of conflict sensitivity remains unsystematic and uneven.
- The multiplicity of organisations working in conflict afflicted/threatened areas and the lack of understanding and co-ordination between these agencies means that some organisations may unintentionally undermine the work of others, thus there is conflict ‘insensitivity’ between agencies.
- Participants were anxious to relate the issues covered in the Resource Pack to the Sri Lankan context, and related the notion of conflict sensitivity to the peace processes underway between the Government and the LTTE.
- There was particular interest in assistance with how to manage negative impacts, and the creation of processes within institutions to do so. The development of formal indicators was also identified as a key area where assistance is required, as was the need for more tools.

## 2. SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE CSA PROGRAMME

### 2.1 Target Groups

The need to bridge the gap between those in the field and those based in Colombo was highlighted, with an emphasis on bringing in operational staff into the process as a key means to address this. Additionally comment was made on the need for greater representation from organisations linked to the LTTE.

### 2.2 Language

Language is a highly sensitive issue, and the term ‘conflict’ itself presents problems on a variety of fronts:

- It can be *confusing* as there is a lack of clarity over the nexus with violence.
- In *translation* the term ‘conflict’ is considered only in negative terms.
- The term ‘conflict’ cannot be used in certain areas in Sri Lanka.
- In *history* it has a positive connotation as it relates to the anti-colonial struggle.

- It has different *phases* which again can cause confusion

### **2.3 Methodology**

Participants were keen to read the Resource Pack, and know when it would next be updated. They also wished to know how the countries had been selected and what would happen in Sri Lanka beyond the immediate timeline to September.

Views on the relevance of the processes in Uganda and Kenya to Sri Lanka were mixed. On the one hand the desire for a cross-fertilisation of feedback between Sri Lanka and both Kenya & Uganda was expressed, while on the other the differing context appeared irrelevant to Sri Lanka.

Questions were raised on indigenous approaches in Kenya and Uganda, and whether the sophistication of the NGOs related to the content of what they were doing and how they related to the PCIA Resource Pack project processes. Participants were interested to know if all peacebuilding projects encountered by the CSA team had been conflict sensitive.

### **2.4 National Applications & Field Testing**

The need to field test the Resource Pack was widely agreed as a crucial step, and several participants discussed taking the pack to their local partners to trial.

### **2.5 Awareness Raising and Capacity Building**

Participants welcomed this strand, and requested training modules specific to the Sri Lanka context. Processes at grassroots levels were emphasised, some participants were already using conflict sensitive approaches with their local partners/grassroots leaders in a bid to roll out conflict sensitivity more broadly in the districts.

Additionally awareness raising among the *donor* community was prioritised. Flexibility in programming is a key part of being conflict sensitive, which *donors* in particular have not yet recognised. It was hoped that the resource pack would help with advocating on this, particularly that it could provide some evidence that could be used for such discussions with donors. However understanding the current practice of donors was felt to be lacking, both by participants at the event, and by the Resource Pack in its current form.

### **2.6 Dissemination Strategy**

Participants agreed that conflict sensitivity ought to be mainstreamed in development, humanitarian and peacebuilding work, much as gender issues had been. Further there was a suggestion to mobilise heads of organisations on conflict sensitivity as a means to further promote dissemination.

## **3. SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE RESOURCE PACK DRAFT**

### **3.1 Chapter 1**

At the start of chapter 1 conflict should be clearly defined, in both its positive and negative forms. Clarity is needed over whether there is a difference between understanding conflict, and 'conflict sensitivity'. Furthermore different types of conflict should be noted, as currently the example cites only a pastoralist conflict that was considered irrelevant to the Sri Lanka context.

A rights-based approach was posited as automatically leading to conflict sensitivity, while addressing needs without addressing rights would not get at the real issues. Further the difference between being conflict sensitive to *affect* the conflict, or being conflict sensitive to *avoid* having a negative impact was noted as a defining issue.

### 3.2 Chapter 2

Participants described their approaches to conflict analysis and conflict sensitive planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Experience varied, some organisations having a more systematic and explicit approach than others. Many related experiences with the Do No Harm approach of the 'Local Capacities for Peace Project', and their examination of their impacts on dividers and connectors in communities. One organisation described the rights based approach they have used incorporating the Do No Harm approach, which had been successfully embedded in staff practice. Some organisations were in the process of developing their own tools, while others had augmented existing frameworks for their work. Some participants stated that there was a great need for more tools, while others framed this need within the changing operational context.

The appropriateness of different tools and indicators for different circumstances was noted. Particularly whether certain tools might be more appropriate for humanitarian intervention, while others more suited to an advocacy or research institutions. However the range of different approaches and mandates was noted as causing one agency to undermine the work of another, suggesting the need for better co-ordination.

Time pressure was preventing some organisations doing what they considered to be an adequate needs assessment although many participants relayed participatory planning processes as a means to prevent violent conflict. However the concern of the majority controlling the minority was flagged in the context of participatory processes. Further the dilemma of targeting for efficiency, versus non-targeting as a conflict sensitive approach (i.e. the use of wider beneficiary groups as a means to diffuse violent conflict) was also debated.

A possible gap between micro and macro approaches was raised as a point of concern. Context should be understood at all levels: policy level, national level and regional level. Participants noted the need for bridging the different levels, with a particular emphasis on understanding the impacts of policy.

The planning process at both the project level and the national level (such as the PRSP process) was noted as a good example of bringing people together and embedding a conflict sensitive approach. However it was recognised that you have to bring something to a community, you cannot simply come in with a peacebuilding project if you don't address basic needs.

In the Sri Lanka context it was noted that Community Based Organisations (CBOs) can be a major source of conflict, via their political &/or conflict actor affiliations, and thus this needs to be reflected in the funding of CBOs. This was flagged as an issue to raise awareness on among donors.

While the working groups identified the need for on-going assessment that feeds into project design and for flexibility, there was a word of caution that not all things can be continuously revised, as this would create chaos. This further relates to the comments noted above (2.5) on engaging with donors on recognising that conflict sensitive project *implementation* requires flexibility not found amongst donors. Additionally the divergence between what was committed to at head office and what happened in the field was a further obstacle to sensitive approaches.

While most agencies were using SPHERE indicators, the need for conflict sensitive indicators was repeatedly expressed, particularly that they could act as an early warning device if used at each stage of a project. Qualitative over quantitative indicators of change were being sought to understand changes in power and relationships. Some organisations are actively working to develop such indicators, and the beneficiaries were recognised as a source on the devising of indicators. However participants thought that the fear of getting bad evaluation reports inhibits people from moving forward in this area.

### 3.3 Chapter 3

In the Sri Lanka context there is a discernable shift from project basis to sectoral approaches, particularly in the development of SIHRN (Sub Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs). However the concept of sectoral approaches was not immediately apparent to all.

### 3.4 Chapter 4

Institutional Capacity Building activities on conflict sensitivity among participants organisations ranged from training for staff and partners, through to a lack of prioritisation or mechanisms. Some organisations had peace educators or resource persons, while others were working on language or creating a multi-ethnic working environment. The shift from technological or engineering expertise to a sociological perspective in staff skills was commented on.

The need to for capacity building in developing indicators and monitoring and evaluation tools was specifically noted, as was the training of trainers who would develop capacity in the field so that implementers can devise their *own* solutions to problems. Pre-packaged training that is simply translated without any attempt to link it to the experiences of those in the field in Sri Lanka was singled out as a problem that had occurred previously and should be avoided. Space for experimentation and practice of new concepts needs to be created, with patience to allow people to witness their impacts.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Participants were enthusiastic about the Resource Pack and saw the relevance of tools and approaches for conflict sensitivity. There was particular interest shown in taking it to the field and sharing it with partners. Much training has already been undertaken at the grassroots level, handing the tools over to the grassroots leaders who could then operate better informed.

Specific interest was expressed in the development of indicators for conflict sensitive monitoring and evaluation. Further interest was expressed in the means to manage negative impacts of programming.

There is a widespread application of the dividers & connectors approach of 'Do No Harm', with many organisations having undertaken, at some time, an assessment of their activities using such an approach. However it was not apparent that such a self-critical reflection was always applied throughout the project lifecycle, although a few organisations had taken great strides in embedding conflict sensitivity throughout their programming. Several participants relayed a systematic approach to conflict *analysis* using a mixture of tools to analyse situations, while another noted that conflict sensitivity was more of an implicit rather than explicit aim in their work, and were in the process of setting up some kind of conflict analysis process. Many organisations noted using at least mapping tools.

Some organisations had specific programming to work on conflict, while others were integrating peacebuilding approaches into their humanitarian assistance delivery. Various programmes at the government level were identified that start from a conflict sensitive perspective, although not all could be so acclaimed.

Participants were keen to see the Resource Pack made more specific to the Sri Lankan context, and hear about Sri Lanka specific examples in future consultations.

**PEACE AND CONFLICT IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
STAKEHOLDERS MEETING  
27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

**GALADARI HOTEL  
SRI LANKA**

**AGENDA**

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Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2003

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| <b>8.30 - 9.00</b>   | <b>Registration</b>  |
| <b>9:00 - 9.15</b>   | <b>Welcome Address</b>   |
| <b>9.15 - 9.30</b>   | <b>Objectives of the Meeting &amp; Proposed Agenda for the Day</b>   |
| <b>9.30 - 11:00</b>  | <b>Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace-building: A Conceptual Background</b><br><br>This session will provide an introduction to the field of conflict sensitive practice and explore the need to integrate conflict sensitive approaches in order to create conducive environments for development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building. |
| <b>11:00 - 11.30</b> | <b>Coffee Break</b>  |
| <b>11.30 - 13.00</b> | <b>Roundtable Discussion: “Mapping the Field”</b><br><br>On the basis of their experiences, participants will be invited to relate to the project approach on conflict sensitivity and to further discuss how the programme can complement specific needs and issues in Sri Lanka, in relation to conflict sensitive practice.   |
| <b>13.00 - 14.00</b> | <b>Lunch</b>   |
| <b>14.00 - 15.00</b> | <b>Overview of the Project: An Introduction to Its Rationale and Main Components</b><br><br>This session will introduce the project: its objectives, rationale, main components, target groups and work undertaken to date.  |
| <b>15.00 - 15.30</b> | <b>Coffee Break</b>  |
| <b>15.30 - 17.00</b> | <b>Overview of the project activities in Kenya and Uganda</b><br><br>This session will explain the consultative process (past, present and future) in Kenya and Uganda, in relation to the project. It will describe the relevance of the project to both Kenya and Uganda, and how the project has been initiated in these two countries and received by different sectors.                 |
| <b>17.00 - 17.15</b> | <b>Conclusions and Close</b>   |

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Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003

- 9:00 - 9.15 Two**                      **Recap of Key Issues of Day One & Proposed Programme for Day Two**
- 9.15 - 10.15**                      **Introduction to the Resource Pack and Chapter 1**
- This session will provide a general introduction the resource pack, in terms of its overall aims, proposed structure, current stage of development and envisaged format. It will introduce the content of Chapter 1 and invite feedback.
- 10.15 - 10.45**                      **Coffee Break**
- 10.45 - 13.00**                      **Presentation of Chapter 2**
- This session will introduce the content of the 4 Modules of Chapter 2 of the Resource Manual and invite feedback.
- 13.00 - 14.00**                      **Lunch**
- 14.00 - 15.30**                      **Presentation of Chapters 3 and 4**
- This session will introduce the content of Chapters 3 and 4 of the Resource Manual and invite feedback
- 15.30 - 15.50**                      **Coffee Break**
- 15.50 - 17.30**                      **Roundtable Discussion: Next Steps**
- The next steps of the project will be presented in order to further discuss how the above should proceed in Sri Lanka, addressing particularly the mapping on current practice in terms of conflict sensitivity, the 'testing' of the Manual's applicability and planned capacity-building in conflict sensitivity. Advice will be sought on how to reach out to the districts and on the next workshop event.
- 17.30 - 17.45**                      **Conclusions and Next Steps**

**CONFLICT SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE  
AND PEACEBUILDING  
STAKEHOLDERS MEETING  
27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

**COLOMBO, SRI LANKA  
GALADARI HOTEL**

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