

CONFLICT SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE & PEACE-BUILDING

Tools for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment

Volume 1, Issue 3

June 2003

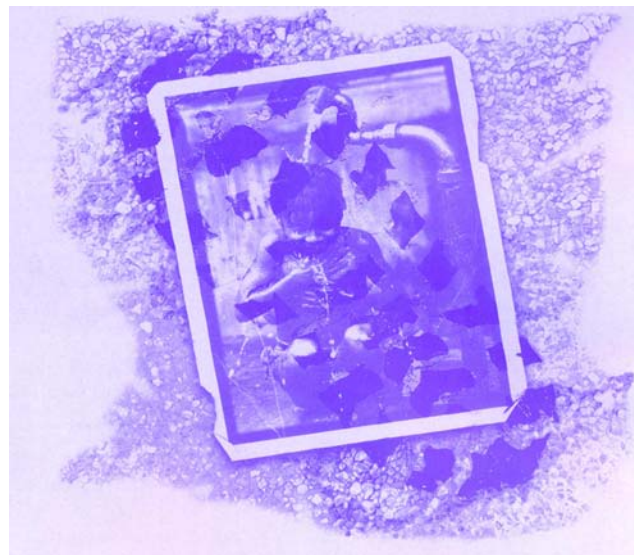
Conceptual background

The move away from PCIA ...

It is increasingly acknowledged that development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building can effectively contribute to conflict prevention in conflict-affected settings worldwide. However, ineffective, harmful or even counter-productive programming on the part of organisations (e.g. donor agencies, national governments, civil society) operating in these situations is still very common and generally results from a poor initial analysis of the conflict dynamics in which their operations are situated. In particular, this “conflict blindness” is often present at the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of activities undertaken in these settings, as well as within humanitarian, development and peace-building organisations.

In order to address the above challenges, various scholars, such as Ken Bush and Luc Reyckler¹, have since the mid-90’s advocated for the need to further reflect on the potential impacts of activities in conflict-affected areas. This new initiative was captured by the term ‘peace and conflict impact assessments’ (PCIA), where the purpose of such exercises was to identify the positive and negative impacts of a particular interventions. In other words, on the basis of an adequate understanding of the situation in which organisations operate, the idea is to assess the impact of interventions (e.g. policies, programmes, projects, etc) on the conflict dynamics and vice-versa.

In particular, the PCIA concept was further embraced by the donor community and, among other things, led to the launching of the joint FEWER/International Alert/Saferworld current programme, originally labelled ‘Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment’ whose



objective was to collect and document practical applications and experiences in relation to PCIA, in Kenya, Uganda and, recently, in Sri Lanka.

... To Conflict Sensitivity

At the design stage of the project, introductory workshops were organised in Kenya and Uganda, where the programme rationale and proposed components were presented to key stakeholders (e.g. national governments, donor agencies, and local/international civil society). Throughout these consultations, the most important feedback related to the notion of PCIA, in the sense that:

- ❑ The term PCIA proved confusing, especially from the perspective of juxtaposing peace and conflict. It was felt that ‘peace’ and ‘conflict’ indeed are not opposites, as conflicts are not necessarily negative and the presence of conflict does not exclude peace.
- ❑ Other practitioners felt that PCIA was not necessarily relevant to their work as their programming was not directly addressing conflict or peace.
- ❑ The resources that the joint programme aimed to offer practitioners were much more encompassing than mere PCIA tools.
- ❑ In order to respond to critical comments from the field, the programme operated a shift from the notion of PCIA to the concept of ‘*conflict sensitivity*’ which was hoped to better reflect the understanding and experiences of development, humanitarian and peace-building practitioners.

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Defining Conflict Sensitivity

Within the framework of the joint FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld programme, conflict sensitivity has been defined as follows:

This is the need for organisations, in particular national governments, donors and civil society, to be sensitive to the (conflict) environments in which they operate, in order to reduce the negative impacts of their activities - and to increase their positive impacts - on the situation and its dynamics. In this sense, conflict sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace building need to be adopted in situations of violent conflict, as well as of unstable peace.

In other words, our definition of conflict sensitive approaches is articulated around the following components:

- Conflict sensitive approaches apply to the fields of *development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building*. Experiences in Kenya, Uganda and Sri Lanka showed that the assumption remains that, because peace building activities are peace/conflict oriented, they will necessarily have a positive impact on the conflict dynamics in which they are situated. As a result, the project has been extended to encompass the field of peace building, in addition to development and humanitarian assistance.
- Conflict sensitive approaches are relevant to development, humanitarian and peace-building programming that is undertaken not only *in situations of violent conflict but also in situations of unstable peace*. Experiences in Kenya, Uganda and Sri Lanka to date prove that awareness for conflict sensitive approaches tends to be higher in situations of violent conflict and post-conflict recovery, as compared to situations of pre-latent conflict.
- Conflict sensitive approaches are also not limited to interventions specifically *working on conflict*. In this sense, conflict sensitive approaches are relevant to interventions that aim to directly address causes of violent conflict, as well as to interventions which do not necessarily focus on conflict issues. Conflict sensitivity can thus assist organisations with both increasing the positive impact of their intervention on the situation in which they operate, as well as to reducing possible negative effects.
- Conflict sensitive approaches require *thinking innovatively* about development, humanitarian and peace-building programming throughout the management cycle (by and large its planning, implementation and evaluation) and, in particular, to move away *from* the immediately defined objective and *beyond* immediate results of the intervention. In this sense, conflict sensitivity can assist organisations to identify, plan, design and implement their interventions, on the basis of their merits in relation to the conflict dynamics in which such programmes will be situated.

- Conflict sensitivity is regarded as a *comprehensive and integrated approach*, in the sense that it aims at incorporating conflict sensitive perspective into development, humanitarian and peace-building programming *throughout the whole management cycle*. In this sense, conflict sensitive approaches do not simply refer to specific conflict analysis and impact assessment tools, but seek to systematically link the understanding of a specific setting (through the above analyses and assessments) with the proposed interventions throughout their life cycle. Conflict sensitivity is thus about both integrating a conflict sensitive perspective within existing programming frameworks and creating enabling institutional environments for the above processes.

Linking Conflict Sensitivity with PCIA and Conflict Prevention

Within the framework of the joint FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld programme, conflict sensitivity represents a wider approach to 'peace and conflict impact assessment' which, within the scope of the Resource Pack, primarily refers to one of the specific methodologies to assess the peace and conflict impact.

Conflict sensitivity is also understood as complementing conflict prevention strategies. Indeed, the integration of conflict prevention into the objectives of development or humanitarian interventions will not automatically guarantee that they will effectively contribute to conflict prevention. Through a process of conflict analysis, such interventions may be identified with a view to addressing root-causes of violent conflict but will still need to be planned, implemented and monitored in a conflict sensitive manner, in order to effectively contribute to conflict prevention in the settings they are situated.

¹ Ken Bush A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of Development Projects in Conflict Zones. The Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Programme Initiative and The Evaluation Unit, IDRC; 1998; Luc Reyckler CIAS in Peter Cross and Guenola Rasamoelina (eds) Conflict Prevention Policy of the European Union, Yearbook 1998, Nomos

A Perspective from Uganda

Since the inception of the Conflict Sensitive Approach (CSA) project initially known as PCIA in 2002, CECORE has carried out a number of activities with different stakeholders, which aimed to document ongoing experiences and existing practice in relation to conflict sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building. These include consultative workshops, mapping exercise/research and the testing of the applicability of the current draft Resource Pack.

During these various activities, it was established that members from the civil society, government and the donor community have immense interests in the project. To them,



conflict sensitivity means using a participatory approach to the project design, planning and implementation, so that, when projects are implemented, they do not create more conflicts.

According to the various people interviewed within the project framework, it was pointed out that CSA are vital, because it helps to ensure that development, humanitarian and peace-building projects do not escalate conflicts but rather positively impact on the beneficiaries and the environment in which they are located (e.g. communities, districts, etc). There have been cases where projects have been implemented to help people but instead have fuelled conflicts.

In Uganda, some initiatives geared towards conflict sensitive approaches are under way. A proposed conflict analysis study on the conflict in Northern Uganda, spearheaded by World Vision – Uganda is in the pipeline. The main objective of the study is to examine and understand the political, economic and social dynamics of the conflict in Acholi sub-region. This process is seen as a critical basis for effective and strategic programme design in the region. World Vision – Uganda will implement this project together with Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR), CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Oxfam GB, Save the Children Norway, Save the Children Denmark and Save the Children United Kingdom.

In particular, we hope that the knowledge and experiences to date gained within the framework of this joint programme will greatly enrich the Northern Uganda case study.

With such schemes on the ground, it is clear that organisations/institutions in Uganda appreciate the need for conflict sensitive approaches. Stakeholders are willing to use them in their Planning and Implementation of various projects.

Focus on Building Institutional Capacity for Conflict Sensitivity

The stakes are higher in conflict prone and affected areas. Chaos looms, people's livelihood is uncertain, personal security is far from being assured and conflict-management structures are often fractured. In this unstable environment, well-planned programmes that create short and long-term stability can have a significant positive impact, while poorly conceived and executed programmes can be deadly. Institutions implementing or supporting these programmes carry a heavy responsibility.

How can institutions implementing programmes in conflict environments build their capacity to take on this responsibility? How do NGOs, governments and multilateral and bilateral institutions develop programmes

that are sensitive to the conflict environment? How do they integrate conflict-sensitive tools, methodologies and approaches into their institutional frameworks? How do they overcome barriers to organisational change and learning?

Not all organisations need to specialise in conflict prevention; but all humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations need to be able to do “good programming” in conflict prone or affected areas. These are some of the key issues covered by Chapter 4 of the Resource Pack, with a view to providing guidance on how to build internal and external institutional capacity-building for conflict sensitivity.

Conflict Sensitivity: What we do, or the way we do it?

Conflict-sensitivity is primarily concerned with the *way* that programmes/activities are developed, implemented and evaluated. A variety of programmes are necessary in conflict environment programmes. Conflict environments necessitate a variety of programmes – humanitarian, development, reconciliation, political, governance and governance – to both satisfy the immediate needs and create a foundation for future progress and stability. Conflict-sensitivity is more concerned with the qualitative aspects of these various programmes than the quantitative components of each specific output. It looks at the interaction between the different activities/programmes and their combined qualitative and quantitative impact on the conflict environment.

The starting point: Figuring out what you already have.

Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations have a foundation on which to build a conflict-sensitive capacity that the questions below will help to reveal:

Why are we here?

It is important to understand an organisation's institutional justification for becoming more conflict-sensitive.

- ❑ Poverty reduction strategies, human rights-based approaches, partnership agreements between donor and recipient countries (ACP-EU Partnership), international law and conventions, international commitments (Millennium Development Goals) and national agreements (peace agreements) all justify a responsible and sensitive approach in a conflict environment. Examination of how these international agreements apply to an institution's founding principles and mandate is important in understanding and justifying increased conflict sensitivity.
- ❑ Staff's experiences from conflict affected areas around the world also provides a basis and reason for reflection on past, current and future practice. It is important to integrate staff's knowledge of conflict-sensitive or insensitive-practices into programme development and implementation in conflict areas.



- The staff and the institution as a whole need to consider and agree on the intended impact. Is the organisation working in conflict (i.e. traditional, but sensitive programming in conflict areas), is it working on conflict (i.e. programmes that aim to build peace), or is it trying to maintain some balance between the two? It is important to maintain a conceptual distinction between *working in* and *working on* conflict as well as to consider the inter-linkages between the two types of programming.

What is the conflict environment?

Before developing any programme/activity, it is standard practice to assess beneficiaries' needs and one's own capacity to meet the needs. In order to do this, all institutions have to gather information, analyse this information, set their criteria for intervention, evaluate their capacity to intervene, decide who else they need to work with in this intervention and specify how the end result will meet the expressed need. Conflict-sensitive programming simply includes the programme's/activity's *impact* on the relationships between people, groups, institutions and structures a component of the needs assessment and a key variable in decision-making and programme development.

How do I implement my programme/activity differently?

Conflict-sensitive intervention is comprised of what is already seen as "good practice" in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming. A few key questions that can help determine the conflict-sensitivity of a programme:

Was the programme/activity developed on the basis of an on-going analysis of conflict and power dynamics in the area (at local, national, regional and global levels)?

Do all of the stakeholders participate in the development of the project?

Are the project's objectives and indicators both qualitative and quantitative to reflect the analysis of the overall environment?

Is the time frame realistic for the desired objectives?

Is the process of implementing the project a component of the output that is being delivered?

Does the monitoring and reporting system involve regular feedback and information exchange on the project implementation and the situation surrounding the project?

Is information regularly communicated to the decision-makers in your institution so that changes can be made to the original programme design and

Kenya and Uganda: Progress and Next Steps

Following the stakeholders meetings organised in August 2002 and the mapping of conflict sensitive practice (among development, humanitarian and peace-building practitioners), the programme consultative processes in Kenya and Uganda were further deepened through the introduction of the first draft of the Resource Pack.

In particular, a regional consultative, attended by representatives from governments, donors and civil society, was organised in Entebbe at the end of February 2003, in order to "test" the draft Resource Pack and to further share experiences and lessons learnt in relation to conflict sensitive practice. More specifically, discussions at the Entebbe workshop focused on issues related to the concept of conflict sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building, as well as a more practical and interactive introduction to conflict sensitive management cycles at both the project and sectoral levels. Issues of institutional capacity-building were also discussed, both internally as well as from the perspective of partner organisations.

Participants present at the 3-day workshop positively welcomed the first draft of the resource pack and, on the basis of their experiences and expertise, provided invaluable comments and further suggestions on the current content of the Resource Pack, as well as remaining gaps.

On the basis of the Entebbe consultation, a process of testing the usability and relevance of the Resource Pack has been undertaken in Kenya and Uganda, in collaboration with organisations (e.g. donors, national governments and civil society) involved in this meeting as well as other consultative processes (e.g. mapping of conflict sensitive practice; stakeholders meetings, etc). This process is steered by the programme's national partners in Kenya and Uganda, APFO and CECORE, and is currently following several tracks, namely:

- Support to in-depth applications of some of the resources (e.g. concepts; tools and processes, etc) documented in the Resource Pack within the framework of activities/programmes currently undertaken by organisations in Kenya and Uganda;
- Collection of detailed comments and suggestions on the Resource Pack, at three main levels: usefulness of the information collected in the Resource Pack, identification of remaining gaps and further best practices and usability of the current format (e.g. language, structure, etc);
- Further awareness-raising on the programme and the issue of conflict sensitivity, building on ongoing/planned activities (e.g. donor co-ordination meetings; NGO fora, etc).

The above processes, together with the Entebbe consultation, will form the basis for further revision of the Resource Pack, which is also being tested within the context of Sri Lanka.



Update on Sri Lanka

To deepen and broaden the research and development of the Resource Pack, a third national process was launched in Sri Lanka. Designed to operate synergistically with work undertaken by our local partner, the Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies, initial awareness-raising events in January were complemented by a CSA programme launch event in March. A wide range of participants from governments, the donor community, and local and national NGOs attended. It emerged that most organisations are conflict *aware*, applying some form of conflict sensitive approaches within the framework of their interventions, particularly the use of the 'Do No Harm' methodology is extensive. However, not all organisations were conflict *sensitive*, i.e. while the use of conflict analysis was widespread, few inculcate conflict sensitivity throughout the entire project/programming cycle. Application of conflict sensitive tools were described as being ad hoc and intuitive, unevenly spread geographically. Notable was the paucity of techniques for conflict sensitive monitoring and evaluation (i.e. the impact the intervention has had on the conflict dynamics) and this will specifically be addressed in subsequent work of the programme. Several organisations did, however, have pre-eminent tools and techniques they had developed in-house, and were undergoing continual learning and re-development in their own conflict sensitive approaches.

Simultaneously a mapping process was launched, a crucial means to incorporate the experiences of those working in Sri Lanka into the Resource Pack itself. As with Kenya and Uganda, interview reports are fed back to the authors to be incorporated in the conceptual development of their respective chapters. Mapping to date has taken place in Colombo and Jaffna covering a range of agents; government, donor and NGOs, and will shortly extend to a second district case study.

In response to the outcomes of the March launch event, the project team decided to revise the Resource Pack prior to the second Sri Lankan event (forthcoming in June) in order to better reflect indigenous experiences as well as capture the developments in Kenya and Uganda subsequent to the first draft. This second event is designed to generate both learning for the Resource Pack, and to develop skills of the participants in conflict sensitive approaches; both in applying such approaches in their work, and in building an enabling context to do the same.

Following the June event, testing in Colombo will commence, examining the usability of the Resource Pack through the eyes of the target users – do people find its contents of use and relevant to their work? Do they understand the concepts and the language? Could the tools and concepts be applied within their organisation? While such field testing would *not* involve the testing of individual tools within the Resource Pack, it would encompass providing support to organisations seeking to incorporate conflict sensitive approaches within their organisations,

the impact on the overall environment can be monitored?

How are the implementing partners chosen? Is an assessment of the implementing partner's capacity and needs carried out?

Does this project complement other activities (your own, your partners and other organisations present)?

Is there regular co-ordination/information sharing with other intervening institutions? Are joint interpretations of and solutions to problems developed?

Is the activity taken on (appropriated) by those that it is supposed to be helping?

How to understand the impact on the conflict environment?

It is also good practice to carry out an assessment of the impact of a given programme or activity. Impact assessments justify the resources allocated to the activity, increase the transparency of programming (to beneficiaries) and assist the organisation in learning lessons for future programmes. Conflict-sensitive assessments are often more thorough since they examine the qualitative impact of the activity on the surrounding environment, the activity's impact on the larger country environment and the activity's contribution to the attainment of the organisations' goals and objectives (international agreements, international law, poverty reduction or human rights strategies, etc).

How to hold my organisation and other organisations responsible?:

The conflict analysis and an assessment of one organisation's and other institutions' impact on that environment provides the basis for institutional accountability. This information can be used to advocate for institutional change or specific conflict-sensitive actions. Accountability can also be promoted within an organisation through the inclusion of conflict-sensitive principles in staff reward, incentive and evaluation structures.

Bringing in the experts: Conflict units, advisors and experts

The establishment of conflict units, appointment of conflict advisors or temporary hiring of conflict experts help to jump start the process of internal change, and can show an important institutional commitment to increased conflict sensitivity. Nonetheless, conflict units and conflict advisors alone will not make an institution conflict sensitive and can sometimes isolate conflict sensitivity, keeping it from being adopted by all staff.

Conflict units and advisors can support the integration of conflict sensitivity into the institution by working with the staff to develop mechanisms and frameworks for:



Mandate/policy development and revision

Conflict and capacity analysis

Procedural changes

Staff training programmes

Revised or additional staff qualifications

Staff/office accountability mechanisms

Revised programme and indicator development guidelines

Revised monitoring and evaluation guidelines

Partnership assessment and capacity building guidelines

Conflict advisors, units and experts can also provide technical support on specific conflict-related questions or conduct a skilled conflict analysis or impact assessment. Yet, this expertise will have a minimal impact on institutional change if other organisational structures and programming processes remain conflict insensitive. In many organisations, territorial issues can also develop around each individual's (or unit's) responsibility, which can be extremely detrimental to any effort in mainstreaming.

Giving away the expertise: Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity

To be effective, conflict sensitivity has to be mainstreamed within and throughout the organisation. As mentioned above, a conflict unit or advisor can jumpstart and support the mainstreaming process by developing frameworks and mechanisms and providing targeted expertise, but the process of mainstreaming requires an organisation-wide commitment and the integration of a conflict sensitive focus into all levels of the organisation. Successful mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity requires a strong link between the existing organisational procedures and approaches and has to build on the collective experiences and skills of partners and staff at all levels.

Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity does not aim to add responsibilities, but rather to change the way that staff think about their responsibility in a conflict environment. Development humanitarian and peacebuilding programming

Implementing Agencies

Africa Peace Forum (APFO) in Kenya aims to encourage and engage non-state actors within the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa regions to explore collaborative approaches to the pursuit of peace and security.

Centre for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) in Uganda is a non-governmental organisation working to seek alternative and creative means of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts.

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) is an association of agencies working in and supporting areas affected by conflict in Sri Lanka.

Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) is an independent global network committed to preventing conflict through the dissemination of early warning analyses and the promotion of co-ordinated, early responses to violent conflict.

International Alert (IA) is an independent NGO, which analyses the causes of conflict, enables mediation and dialogue to take place, helps to develop the skills necessary to resolve conflict non-violently, and advocates policy changes to promote sustainable peace.

Saferworld is an independent foreign affairs think tank working to identify, develop and publicise effective approaches to addressing and preventing armed conflicts.

should such opportunities arise.

Outside of Colombo a further track of 'field testing' will simultaneously be undertaken, through the use of Focus Groups – one-day intensive skills development workshops with project/programme implementers in the field. These will focus on specific elements of the Resource Pack (such as conflict sensitive monitoring and evaluation) and will develop knowledge and skills of participants in one such specific area through discussion and practical applications. Again, the learning will be two-way, with indigenous understandings feeding back into the Resource Pack and into the design of contingent training modules for the final draft of the first edition Resource Pack.

The experiences captured through interview and discussion in Sri Lanka reveal a markedly different understanding of conflict sensitivity to that in Kenya and Uganda. The Resource Pack aims to incorporate the variety of experiences, reflecting and enhancing indigenous practices and approaches.

For more information contact:

ELIZABETH MUTUNGA

Africa Peace Forum

P.O. Box 76621, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254.2574096/92 Fax: +254.256.1357

Email: emutunga@amaniafrika.org

ROSE OTHIENO / STELLA SABITI

Centre for Conflict Resolution

P.O. Box 5211, Kampala, Uganda

Tel: +256.41.255033/255982/234405

Fax: +256-41-255033/251922

Email: cecocre@africaonline.co.ug

JEEVAN THIAGARAJAH

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies

10, Kynsey Terrace, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka

Tel/Fax: + 94 74-610943 / 4

E-mail: jeevant@sri.lanka.net

LEYLA-CLAUDE WERLEIGH

Forum on Early Warning and Early Response

FEWER Secretariat

91-95 Brick Lane, London E1 6QN, UK

Tel+44.20.7247.7022 Fax +44.20.7247.5290

E-mail lwerleigh@fewer.org

RACHEL GOLDWYN

International Alert

346 Clapham Road, London, SW9 9AP, UK

Tel+44.20.7627.6800 Fax+44.20.7627.6900

E-mail rgoldwyn@international-alert.org

CELINE MOYROUD

Saferworld

46 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0EB, UK

Tel+44.20.7881.9290 Fax+44.20.7881.9291

E-mail: cmoyroud@saferworld.org.uk

