



“There is no long-term security without development. There is no development without security.”

Kofi Annan, 2006

Conflict-sensitive development



BRIEFING

To a casual observer, it might appear that all development programmes make a positive impact. Unfortunately, peaceful aims do not always guarantee peaceful outcomes and some well-meaning development programmes actually end up fuelling conflict. This briefing highlights how a conflict-sensitive approach to development work can ensure a positive impact on peace.

Conflict undermines development

In 2007, Saferworld, Oxfam and IANSA released a report which showed that, since 1990, armed conflict has cost Africa almost \$300 billion – about the same amount as it received in aid during the same period. However, whilst conflict is particularly corrosive for Africa, it impacts on development the world over.

Beyond its immediate tragic consequences, violent conflict damages societies by eroding their political institutions, destroying vital infrastructure, discouraging investment, depleting resources and disrupting social and business networks. Clearly, if development is to successfully reduce poverty, it must also address the issue of violent conflict.

Traditionally, some donors have been reluctant to allocate resources to peace and security initiatives that they often

see as outside the remit of development work. But the lack of a peaceful and secure environment can make development programmes difficult or impossible to implement and widespread or protracted violence often undoes hard-won progress. Thus, tackling issues such as the proliferation of small arms or the reform of security services (such as the police forces) is essential if other areas of development are to take root and flourish.

Development must be conflict-sensitive

However, development is not only affected by conflict – it often has an effect on conflict too. In the best cases, this effect is positive, addressing the root causes of conflict and contributing to lasting peace. In some cases, however, ill thought through development initiatives

can actually exacerbate, or even cause, violence. This is true at all levels of development – from states providing money directly to the governments of developing countries (so called ‘direct budget support’) right through to individual programmes and projects on the ground.

Although direct budget support may be the most efficient way of spending aid money from an administrative perspective, in countries where resources are used to the benefit of particular favoured groups this practice may inadvertently lead to conflict by deepening and prolonging economic inequalities. It can also legitimise governments that are actively involved in violence or marginalisation against sections of its own population. Without clear criteria for deciding on when direct budget support is allocated, donors are also open to charges of favouritism in their choice of aid recipients. In regions where political tensions are high between neighbouring countries – as with many parts of the developing world – who gets money from who may in itself be a contributing factor to conflict.

What does being conflict-sensitive mean?

In essence, being conflict-sensitive is about organisations understanding the issues that divide the societies in which they work, and the power relations underpinning these divisions, so that they can target their work to promote peace. Specifically, conflict sensitivity means the ability of an organisation to:

- 1 Understand the context in which they operate.
- 2 Understand the interaction between themselves, their activities and this context.
- 3 Act upon their understanding of this interaction so as to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive ones.

Undertaking a 'conflict analysis' is key to this practice and provides a foundation for conflict-sensitive programming (see box on opposite page).

In 2005, the UK's Department for International Development undertook a 'Strategic Conflict Assessment' of Nepal (a conflict analysis). This provides a good example of how conflict analysis, when integrated into strategy and evaluation, can help an organisation be more effective. In this case, after undertaking the assessment, DfID realised that greater transparency in the programmes they supported would help reduce local tensions.

On the other hand, there was a widespread belief amongst donors in Kenya that the country was stable and conflict analysis was not needed. Subsequently, although some donors did eventually undertake conflict analyses they came too late to help prevent or reduce the violence that followed the elections in December 2007.

It should be remembered, though, that conflict analysis is not the *whole* story of conflict sensitivity, merely its starting point. Conflict sensitivity is an approach that runs through the entire cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating activities.

"The conflict analysis undertaken with Saferworld introduced a new dimension to our previous work and helped us better understand the concerns all communities in Prizren share."

Musa Vesgishi, Peace and Human Rights Council, Kosovo

"Peace is a primary prerequisite for development."

Yasuo Fukuda, Prime Minister of Japan (Davos 2008)

CASE STUDY Ethiopia

The Awash river basin in north-east Ethiopia is a hot and dry place. In the south of the basin, rainfall is particularly erratic and water scarce. Many of the ethnic groups living in the area rely on cattle to provide a livelihood. In order to find enough water for these vital livestock, communities are forced to migrate seasonally between areas that have water at different times of the year. These groups sometimes come into conflict over this water, particularly the Afar and Issa peoples.

In the 1980s, in a well-meaning attempt to bolster Ethiopia's economy, international donors provided support to the Amibara Irrigation Project – a venture designed to irrigate large tracts of land on which to grow cotton for the country's textile industry. However, the Afar people who lived in the area affected by the project were almost entirely excluded from its planning and, when displaced by the irrigation, the resettlement packages they received were inadequate.

By the late 1980s, the reduction in available grazing land caused by the irrigation project meant that violent clashes between the Afar and the Issa increased considerably – as did conflict between these pastoralist groups and the Ethiopian state who controlled the cotton fields.

Subsequently, it was necessary for the EU to launch a further development scheme focused on small-scale solutions to these problems. Although this project did aim to tackle some of the longstanding causes of conflict between the Afar and the Issa, it also had to address many of the negative effects that had resulted as a direct consequence of the earlier Amibara project.



CASE STUDY Western Uganda

Although not scarce, its distribution makes water a highly contested resource in the Kasese district of Western Uganda. This is especially true in some mountain areas where water can cause conflicts between up- and downstream communities such as the Mahango and Rukoki. Here, women from both communities have to get up early in the morning to walk the 5km to the nearest water points where they must wait for hours in long queues before filling their jerry cans and beginning the journey home.

In 2006, after years of campaigning on the issue by local communities, the local government approved funds to build new infrastructure which would make water more accessible. However, the designs meant that water taps would be placed in Rukoki only, inevitably generating anger and resentment in Mahango and leading to tensions between the two communities.

Saferworld, with local partners REDROC and CECORE, organised consultation meetings between the two communities and the district water officers. Issues relating to land ownership and the location of the taps, responsibility for maintenance of the water pipes and who would get to provide labour for the construction were all discussed.

People from both communities were enthusiastic about the dialogue as it helped reconcile the two communities and enabled them to better understand their water-related conflict. The process also helped the district water office to revise their proposals and improve the way in which they undertake project consultations with communities.



What is conflict analysis?

Conflict analysis is the systematic study of the profile, causes, actors and dynamics of conflict – they provide organisations with the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘when’ and ‘where’ of a conflict.

Conflicts are very fluid and changeable but, although they can only provide a ‘snap-shot’ of the situation, a good conflict analysis will always help develop a better understanding of the context in which organisations work.

Conducting a conflict analysis requires a great deal of care and sensitivity because they touch on issues such as power, ownership and neutrality. However, a participatory process can actually be transformative – helping participants define their own conflict and take an important step toward addressing it.

Profile A conflict profile provides a brief characterisation of the context of a conflict, looking at political, economic

and socio-cultural contexts, issues that emerge from these and the history of the conflict.

Causes Causes of conflict may be:

- **structural** pervasive factors built into the fabric of a society (for instance, if there is unequal access to natural resources or a discriminatory system in place like ‘apartheid’ in South Africa)
- **proximate** factors which contribute towards a climate of violence (for instance, a proliferation of illicit small arms)
- **triggers** single events that may set off or escalate violence (for example, elections, coups, sudden currency collapses, etc)

There will never be one single cause of a conflict and especially protracted conflicts tend to generate new causes as they continue.

Actors Thinking about people is central to conflict analysis. ‘Actors’ refers to all those individuals, groups and institutions contributing to or affected by a conflict.

Dynamics The interaction between a conflict’s profile, its causes and actors can be described as that conflict’s dynamics – how the conflict changes and develops over time. Understanding a conflict’s dynamics will help identify ‘windows of opportunity’ for peace-building and can help organisations plan future work.

For more information on conflict analysis (and how conflict sensitivity impacts on the whole programme cycle), see *Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: A resource pack*.

How is conflict sensitivity realised in practice?

- 1 To understand the context they operate in, organisations should carry out a conflict analysis and keep it regularly updated.
- 2 To understand the interaction between them, their actions and this context, organisations should link their conflict analysis to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their activities (collectively known as the ‘programme cycle’).
- 3 To avoid negative impacts and maximise positive ones, organisations should be willing to change their activities, the people they work with or the way they work so that they, at a minimum, don’t make the situation worse and, at best, actually help solve some of the issues causing conflict.

“9 out of the 10 lowest Human Development Index countries have experienced armed conflict at some point since 1990.”

UNDP Human Development Report 2005

The benefits of conflict sensitivity

Obviously, integrating conflict sensitivity into development means thinking somewhat differently about programming activities. At first, this may require greater human and financial resources. However, once the practice has had time to ‘bed in’, these additional resource requirements diminish considerably. Moreover, these costs pale in comparison to the potential costs of failing to take conflict into account:

- Resources wasted on ‘trouble shooting’ or ‘fighting fires’.
- Programmes that are unsustainable or unable to be properly implemented.
- Being forced to close projects or withdraw to safe areas.
- Increased danger to both staff and beneficiaries.
- Development successes that are undermined by violent conflict.

Ultimately, however, the benefits of being conflict-sensitive when doing development work go beyond these considerations. Fully integrating conflict sensitivity into all development programming will help create a ‘virtuous circle’, with development being less seriously undermined by violent conflict whilst at the same time having the most positive impact on the underlying causes of that violence.

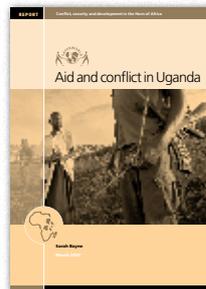


“If the peace talks succeed I think there will be business because we can be free to move without fear. There will be improvement in education for our children and in agriculture because people will be free to move and to cultivate their land.”

Member of Rwot Ber Women’s Association, Uganda

“Conflict sensitivity should not be a concept for the office, it should be embedded in our way of life so that before you do something you take a moment to reflect on whether you are being conflict-sensitive.”

Executive Secretary, Uganda Joint Christian Council



Find out more

- To find out more about Saferworld’s work on conflict-sensitive development, visit www.saferworld.org.uk/pages/conflict_sensitive_development_page.html
- www.conflictsensitivity.org has links to more information on a range of conflict sensitivity issues, including development.

- *Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: A resource pack* can be downloaded in full at www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/148/conflict_sensitive_approaches_to_development_humanitarian_assistance_and_peacebuilding
- Read about how poverty and under-development impact on peace and security in Uganda in *Aid and conflict in Uganda* available to download at: www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/257/aid_and_conflict_in_uganda
- Read the report of a conflict analysis Saferworld undertook with local partners in Kosovo at www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/296/kosovo_at_the_crossroads
- Read more about how conflict affects development in Africa; and what the international community needs to do to help prevent violent conflict if we are to meet the Millennium Development Goals in our briefing, *Peace and security in Africa*, available at www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/305/peace_and_security_in_africa

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