

Introduction to the Resource Pack

Over the last decade there has been a growing realisation that humanitarian assistance sometimes feeds conflict rather than alleviates it, and that development aid sometimes exacerbates tensions. This has led to the development of tools to understand the relationship between programming and conflict.

This Resource Pack seeks to document current practice, available frameworks and lessons learned. At its heart is the concept of “conflict sensitivity” – the notion of systematically taking into account both the positive and negative impact of interventions, in terms of conflict or peace dynamics, on the contexts in which they are undertaken, and, conversely, the impact of these contexts on the interventions (see **Chapter 1** for definitions).

The first edition of the Resource Pack is the result of extensive consultations on conflict sensitivity undertaken in Kenya, Uganda and Sri Lanka by a consortium of Southern and Northern NGOs, during 2002-2003. Input has been received in the form of:

- extensive mapping of conflict sensitive practice in these three countries among development, humanitarian and peace building actors
- discussions with representatives from government, civil society and donors both on the proposed structure and content of the Resource Pack
- further feedback on various drafts of the Pack.

Similar processes were undertaken beyond these three countries with the headquarters of development, humanitarian and peacebuilding organisations, and experts in the field of conflict prevention.

The project has made great efforts to reach out and raise awareness on conflict sensitivity, as well as to record indigenous and international practice. Through this work and the partnerships it has engendered, the project has provided a bridge between North and South, involving southern agencies not as mere recipients of conflict sensitive knowledge, but as shapers of the conflict sensitivity agenda.

The partner organisations are grateful for the feedback they have received, and invite further comments on the current edition. A subsequent edition is envisaged incorporating lessons learned and further applications of conflict-sensitive approaches. Additional resources such as a trainers guide to supplement this Resource Pack will also be produced. More information on the project progress and activities in Kenya, Uganda and Sri Lanka can be found at: www.pcia.fewer.org.

1. Understanding conflict

Central to this Resource Pack and the concept of conflict sensitivity is the definition of *conflict*.

Conflict is an ambiguous concept that takes on different meanings for different groups and in different contexts. In particular, conflict tends to be understood as a negative phenomenon, synonymous with violence. Within the framework of the Resource Pack, a broader and more positive approach to understanding conflict has been adopted: it regards conflict as a natural multidimensional phenomenon that is typically indicative of change within society. In this sense, the issue of prevention will focus primarily on the prevention of *violent conflict*, or the need to strengthen structures, processes and mechanisms within society that enable the peaceful and constructive management of differences.

Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests. It becomes violent when parties no longer seek to attain their goals peacefully, but resort instead to violence in one form or another.

Violent conflicts are thus not inevitable, nor do they happen overnight; conflict is a dynamic process, which may take differing forms and run through various stages of escalation and de-escalation, resulting from the complex combination and overlap of the various causes of conflict (see **Chapter 2**). The Resource Pack is concerned with the spectrum of conflict intensity from structural violence to violent conflict (see Box 1).

BOX 1

The spectrum of conflict intensity

Conflict is a complex term that is often used interchangeably with 'violence'. The Resource Pack approach understands conflict as a “multi-dimensional social phenomena¹” essential to social change, and transformation. Conflict may be *violent* or *latent*; the latter is often referred to as *structural violence*.

Violent conflict is used to describe acts of open hostility. In conflict theory it is but one stage of a dynamic conflict cycle, which may proceed from a situation of tensions, escalation, crisis phase (manifestations of violence), possibly resulting

in a stalemate or de-escalation. A de-escalation may lead to a settlement/resolution and reconstruction/reconciliation, or alternatively to an unstable peace.

Latent conflict is used to describe situations of tensions, which may escalate into violence. One form of latent conflict is *structural violence*, defined by Galtung to describe situations where unequal, unjust and unrepresentative structures prevent humans from realising their full potential, thus extending the definition of violence beyond direct physical harm to the organization of society².

Note: **Chapter 2** builds on this spectrum of conflict intensity and describes the various causes of conflict.

2. About the Resource Pack

The Resource Pack is designed for governments, donors and civil society (local and international) involved in development, humanitarian assistance and peace building. It does not assume that the reader has extensive knowledge of conflict transformation nor is it an academic discussion of conflict and related concepts.

Its primary concern is to provide an understanding of current practice, available frameworks and lessons learned in relation to conflict sensitivity. It is a broad umbrella capturing different approaches such as ‘Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment’ (PCIA) and ‘Do No Harm’, as well as less-known organic approaches developed by practitioners in the South. In this sense, it does not offer new tools but rather presents broad recommendations on conflict-sensitive practice that organisations will need to further adapt in the light of their operating context, their needs, and their operational structures.

The Resource Pack is organised in separate stand-alone units and does not need to be read from cover to cover. It is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: An Introduction to conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding provides an operational definition of conflict sensitivity and related principles. It situates conflict sensitivity within the current debates in the fields of development, humanitarian assistance and peace building.

Chapter 2: Conflict analysis describes what is in effect the central component of conflict sensitivity. Building on a compendium of tools and the lessons learned from their application, the chapter presents key elements of conflict analysis, and guidance on how to undertake it.

Chapter 3: Applying conflict sensitivity at project and programme level defines the project cycle, linking the conflict analysis to each constituent step of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It describes how to undertake each step in a conflict-sensitive fashion, and the major challenges faced in doing so.

Chapter 4: Integrating conflict sensitivity into sectoral approaches defines sector-wide approaches and presents a framework for integrating conflict sensitivity into the programming cycle.

Chapter 5: Institutional capacity building for conflict sensitivity recommends processes and strategies for mainstreaming conflict sensitivity in implementing organisations and their partners.

3. Acknowledgements

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4. Glossary

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| Actors | Individuals, groups and institutions who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to conflict; and / or • are affected by conflict (in a positive or negative manner); and/or • are engaged in dealing with conflict. |
| Advocacy | Third party entreaties to external decision makers and power brokers. |
| Advocacy campaigns | Campaigns that raise awareness about particular issues (eg landmines) or conditions, and aim to bring about policy changes ³ . |
| Beneficiaries | Participants in and recipients of interventions by the national or international community. (A controversial term that some practitioners find objectionable). |
| Capacities | Actors’ potential to affect the context, positively or negatively. Potential can be defined in terms of resources, access, social networks and constituencies, other support and alliances, etc. |
| Causes (3 types) | Factors which contribute to people’s grievances. Causes may be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Structural</i>: pervasive factors that have become built into the policies, structures and fabric of a society and which may create the pre-conditions for violent conflict • <i>Proximate</i>: factors contributing to a climate conducive to violent conflict or its further escalation • <i>Triggers</i>: single key acts, events, or their anticipation that will set off or escalate violent conflict. |
| Civil Society | A domain parallel to, but separate from the state and the market, in which citizens freely group together according to their own interests. It can include for example non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations, religious bodies, professional associations, trade unions, student groups, cultural societies, etc ⁴ . |
| Conflict | The result of parties disagreeing eg about the distribution of material or symbolic resources and acting on the basis of these perceived incompatibilities ⁵ . |
| Conflict (Violent) | Resort to psychological or physical force to resolve a disagreement. |
| Conflict Prevention | Actions, policies, procedures or institutions intended to avoid the threat or use of armed force and related forms of coercion by states or groups to settle political disputes, or to avoid the recurrence of violent conflict ⁶ . |
| Conflict sensitivity | This means the ability of your organisation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the context in which you operate; • understand the interaction between your intervention and the context; and • act upon the understanding of this interaction, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts. |

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| | <i>Note: the word 'context' is used rather than 'conflict' to make the point that all socio-economic and political tensions, root causes and structural factors are relevant to conflict sensitivity because they all have the potential to become violent. 'Conflict' is sometimes erroneously confused with macro-political violence between two warring parties (as with a civil war between a national government and a non-state actor).</i> |
| Context | The operating environment, which ranges from the micro to the macro level (eg community, district / province, region(s), country, neighbouring countries). For the purposes of this Resource Pack, context means a geographic or social environment where conflict exists (see the Introduction for a description of the various elements in the conflict spectrum) and is comprised of actors, causes, profile and dynamics. |
| Development | Long-term efforts aimed at bringing improvements in the economic, political and social status, environmental stability and the quality of life of all segments of the population ⁷ . |
| Donor | An institution that provides grants and other forms of financial contribution or assistance in kind to organisations such as governments, and civil society (local and international). A donor may be a bilateral agency (eg CIDA in Canada), a multilateral agency (e.g. the World Bank or the UN) or a philanthropic organisation (e.g. foundations) ⁸ . Some NGOs and INGOs periodically assume a donor-like role. |
| Dynamics | The interaction between the conflict profile, the actors, and causes. |
| Evaluation | A one-off assessment that typically takes place at the end of a project, although it can also be undertaken as a mid-project review. On the basis of systematically applied objective criteria, it seeks to assess an on-going or completed project, its design, implementation and overall results in relation to its stated goals and objectives. |
| Evaluation (conflict sensitive) | This incorporates a detailed understanding of the operating context in terms of historical, actual or potential conflict into traditional evaluation activities and processes. Conflict sensitive evaluations are used to understand the overall impact a given intervention has had on this context, and the context on the intervention. These evaluations can then be used to adjust subsequent phases of an ongoing initiative, or gain lessons for future initiatives. |
| Fungibility | Refers to the fact that donor funding of a project that government would have undertaken anyway (even if donor funding were not available) has the effect of freeing government resources to be used for other purposes (eg military) ⁹ . |
| Goals | Actors' long term objectives. |
| Government | The machinery or system of rules that exercises public authority over a given territory. Governments operate at various levels – eg national, regional, provincial, district. Governments seek to determine and implement public policy, to defend the country and maintain order, and to provide public services. They are responsible for raising revenue and managing public expenditure. <i>Note: Where the formal machinery of government has broken down, authority may be exercised by others (eg local warlords) who assume the role of the governing power.</i> |
| Humanitarian Assistance | Activities designed to rapidly reduce human suffering in emergency situations, especially when provided by outside agencies to supplement local efforts ¹⁰ . |
| Impacts – Negative / Positive | These describe an interaction in terms of its contribution to exacerbating or mitigating violence or the potential for violence. |
| Implementation | The process of realising objectives by enacting the activities designed in the planning process – the operationalisation of the proposal. Implementation involves regular progress reviews to enable plans to be adjusted if necessary. |
| Implementation (Conflict Sensitive) | Conflict-sensitive implementation involves close scrutiny of the operational context through regularly updating the conflict analysis, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on the context. |
| Indicators (conflict) | Specify what to measure in order to monitor and evaluate the evolution of conflict factors and dynamics that impact a given context. |
| Indicators (interaction) | Specify what to measure in order to monitor and evaluate the interaction between a project or intervention and conflict factors and dynamics. |

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| Indicators (project / intervention) | Specify what to measure in order to monitor and evaluate the performance of policies, projects and programmes ¹¹ . |
| Interaction | This refers to the two-way relationship between an intervention and the context in which it is situated, ie the impact of the intervention on the context and the impact of the context on the intervention. |
| Interests | The underlying motivations of the actors. |
| Intervention | This refers to a range of activities, falling within one or other of the categories listed in Chapter 1 Box 1 . An intervention can be very small (eg helping villagers build wells) or very large (eg a peace process or setting up a new government structure). It may be at project level (see Chapter 3) or at sectoral level (see Chapter 4). |
| Management (project / programme) | Management involves supervising the entire process of implementation and making operational decisions. Good management requires the ability to see the bigger picture: how all the elements of the intervention, its operational context and the interaction between the two, fit together. |
| Monitoring | The regular process of examining a project's actual outputs and impacts. Carried out during the implementation phase, monitoring seeks to provide the project team with current information that will allow them to assess progress in meeting project objectives, and to adjust implementation activities if necessary. Additionally, monitoring generates data that can be used for evaluation purposes. |
| Monitoring (conflict sensitive) | Conflict-sensitive monitoring incorporates an understanding of conflict actors, profile, causes and dynamics into traditional monitoring processes and activities, with the intention of better understanding the context and the intervention, as well as the interaction between the two. Conflict-sensitive monitoring is used to inform adjustments and changes to project or programme activities so that the intervention has the optimum impact on conflict dynamics. |
| Partnership environment | The relationships between different stakeholders who are working together. |
| Peacebuilding | Measures designed to consolidate peaceful relations and strengthen viable political, socio-economic and cultural institutions capable of mediating conflict, and to strengthen other mechanisms that will either create or support the necessary conditions for sustained peace ¹² . |
| Planning | The process through which certain problems are identified, their causal linkages analysed, and effective solutions developed. The result of this process is often embodied in a programme designed with predefined objectives, activities, implementation process and verifiable indicators of progress. |
| Planning – Conflict sensitive | Conflict-sensitive planning incorporates the conflict analysis (the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics of a conflict situation) into traditional planning. The intention is to have a constructive impact on the context to avoid further deterioration and promote more peaceful and effective solutions. |
| Positions | Refer to the actors' stances on key and emerging issues in a given context. |
| Profile | A brief characterisation of the context within which the intervention will be situated. |
| Programme | A proposed plan with a medium to long-term horizon and possibly without a defined end, often incorporating strategic objectives, multiple projects and activities ¹³ . |
| Project | A set of time-bound activities typically contributing to a larger programmatic objective, which are planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated in relation to issue(s) that they seek to address ¹⁴ . |
| Project Cycle | Provides a systematic framework for the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes ¹⁵ . |
| Region | A geo-politically defined area at the sub-national level (eg an area comprising several districts). Also used to refer to a collection of contiguous countries (eg the Eastern region of Africa). |
| Relationships | The interactions between actors at various levels, and their perception of these interactions. |
| Rights-based Approach | A conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. Essentially, it integrates the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the plans, policies and processes of development ¹⁶ . |

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| Scenarios | Provide an assessment of what will happen next in a given context according to a specific timeframe. |
| Sector | A part or division (eg of the national economy: private sector, public sector, education sector). In the context of Sectoral or Sector-wide approaches, a core government function, which is related to a particular ministry and spending programme (eg health, education and roads) ¹⁷ . |
| Spoilers | Individuals and organisations that believe peace threatens their power, worldview and interests, and who seek to undermine attempts to achieve it ¹⁸ . |
| Triangulation | The verification of each piece of information with at least two corroborative or complementary sources, to obtain data that eventually “matches up”. |

5. Abbreviations/Acronyms

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| ACP | Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries |
| APFO | Africa Peace Forum |
| ASEAN | Association of South East Asian Nations |
| AU | African Union |
| CECORE | Center for Conflict Resolution |
| CHA | Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| CCA | Common Country Assessment framework |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee |
| DFID | Department for International Development (UK) |
| EU | European Union |
| FEWER | Forum on Early Warning and Early Response |
| GTZ | Ministry of Technical Cooperation (Germany) |
| HIPC | Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre |
| IGAD | Intergovernmental Authority on Development (Horn of Africa countries) |
| INGO | International NGO |
| IPCR | Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (Nigeria) |
| LICUS | Low Income Countries Under Stress |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for African Development |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |

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| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| SCA | Strategic Conflict Assessment |
| SIDA | Swedish International Development Agency |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

6. Endnotes

¹International Alert, *Resource Pack for Conflict Transformation*, London: March 2003 section 2:3.

²International Alert, 2003: 5.

³Adapted from Alex P. Schmid, “Thesaurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms” (Abridged Version), Synthesis Foundation / FEWER, May 1998.

⁴Adapted from Stephen Jones and Gareth Williams, “A Common Language for Managing Official Development Assistance: A Glossary of ODA Terms”, Oxford Policy Management, 2002.

⁵International Alert, 2003: section 2:3.

⁶Schmid, 1998.

⁷Adapted from Payson Conflict Study Group, “A Glossary on Violent Conflict: Terms and concepts used in conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution in the context of disaster relief and sustainable development”, 4th Edition, Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer, Tulane University, May 2001: 24.

⁸Adapted from National Philanthropic Trust, “Glossary” www.nptrust.org/.

⁹Jones, 2002:9.

¹⁰Thomas G. Weiss and Cindy Collins, *Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention: World politics and the dilemmas of help*. Boulder, Co: Westview, 1996: 219. Alex P. Schmid, “Thesaurus And Glossary of Early Warning And Conflict Prevention Terms (Abridged Version), FEWER, May 1998: 15.

¹¹Jones, 2002.

¹²Adapted from International Alert, 2003.

¹³Adapted from Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, “Glossary of Terms” www.osi.hu.

¹⁴Adapted from www.osi.hu and Polaris Grant, “Glossary” www.polarisgrants.org.

¹⁵Jones, 2002:4.

¹⁶<http://www.unhcr.ch/development/approaches-04.html>

¹⁷Jones, 2002: 12.

¹⁸Adapted from Payson Conflict Study Group, 2001: 68.

