Guidance for Conflict Sensitivity

**Being conflict sensitive means:**

Systematically using a conflict analysis framework to inform the project planning process and monitor the impact of the project on the context and vice versa.

1) Understanding the context in which an intervention operates;
2) Understanding the interaction between an intervention and the context;
3) Acting upon the understanding of this interaction in order to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts between the intervention and the context.¹

Conflict sensitivity cannot be a separate section or activity of a project, it must a whole project effort. For example, if there is a strong communication and advocacy strategy but a divisive recruitment policy there will likely be an overall negative impact. Perhaps even more negative than doing nothing because the messages communicated will not be perceived as genuine and trust between the project and stakeholders may be damaged.

**Therefore, when planning and designing a project it is important to consider the following:**

Before identifying a project:

1. **Do we understand the context we plan to operate it? Is the project relevant in this context?** - As much as possible analyse the macro and local context and conflict. Consider the problems and needs and identify what projects could provide sustainable solutions to some problems. Ideally a full conflict analysis and needs assessment would be conducted but in some cases this will not be possible in advance. Either way, the project should be designed in relation to the context.
2. **Who can and is operating in the context?** Consider what sort of actors or individuals are most suitable to work within the context and what others are currently doing.

Once a project is identified

1. **Define the intervention objective and how it is related to the conflict and context.** What impact will it have? How will it be achieved without a negative impact?
2. **Define the intervention process – Who? Where? When?**
   a. **Who** - Project beneficiaries, project staff and operational partners. The identity of the persons or groups (political affiliation, gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic profile)

---

can have an impact on the conflict. The selection criteria should be considered carefully in relation to the conflict analysis and project objectives.

b. **Where** – Geographical area. The selection can have a direct impact on the conflict. Issues such as land rights, territorial control and economic influence can all be factors affected by area selection, as well as the population benefitted within those areas. Therefore, area selection should also be considered carefully in relation to the conflict analysis and project objectives.

c. **When** – Timing and length of the intervention. Certain activities may be more sensitive or more effective at certain times depending on conflict dynamics and their interaction with other events. Is the length defined by the context and the needs? If so, is there sufficient time for trust-building and is the project achievable in the timeframe?

3. **Develop Indicators for the conflict**, the project and the interaction between the project and the conflict. Rather than measuring the project in isolation, measuring the conflict, the project and how the two interact is important for measuring impact, conflict sensitivity and managing risk. These should be developed within the overall monitoring and evaluation plan and linked with the conflict analysis.

4. **Link the project to conflict scenarios and prepare contingency plans.** Develop scenarios for possible changes within the conflict dynamics and consider how the project will be affected and respond. This should link back to the conflict analysis. It may be helpful to set out a table of possible events, probabilities, responses and how their risk can be managed. Any plans should consider all beneficiaries, staff and partners.

5. **Design the project conclusion in advance considering conflict dynamics.** The exit of the project can be as impactful on conflict as the entry and is often less well managed or thought through, so it is important to consider in advance. Whether the project will be phased, stopped, followed up or extended the strategies should be flexible enough to address changes in conflict dynamics identified through the conflict analysis and monitoring throughout the project. It may be helpful to consider different exit strategies for different scenarios, relating to the conflict analysis and project objectives, which can be chosen/adapted nearer the end of the project. This will need to be well communicated throughout to make sure expectations are well managed. If the project ends leaving sustainable structures they should also be conflict sensitive. This may require extra training and support to be written into the project in advance.

**Overall**

Conflict sensitive planning is the first step. This needs to be followed by conflict sensitive implementation. The regularly updated conflict analysis and monitoring should inform all project areas from staffing to communications to relationships with all stakeholders. This requires flexibility and often a willingness to adapt and learn from mistakes. Ultimately understanding the context and how the project interacts with it should help the project to succeed and make a positive impact.

**Further Resources on Conflict Sensitivity:**

[http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/](http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/)
