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GOOD PRACTICE NOTE

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY, PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

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Executive Summary

This Good Practice Note provides practical guidance and concrete tools for UN entities to integrate conflict sensitivity into their programming – with a view to contribute to building and sustaining peace, and with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as the ultimate objective.

Conflict sensitivity is about bringing awareness of conflict dynamics to UN entities that deliver development and humanitarian assistance, and support to political processes, with the goal to minimize the risk that those activities worsen conflict dynamics and bring countries further off track on their path to achieve the SDGs. It is a minimum requirement for the UN, aligned with the principle of “Do No harm”, and that lays the foundations for activities that sustain peace and further sustainable development, with the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights at their core.

The Note is articulated around three main areas:

1. A conflict-sensitive approach to sustainable development along 4 key steps:
 - i. Understand the peace and conflict context, through a conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding analysis that helps shape, prioritize and adjust activities to address or mitigate drivers of conflict, notably as part of the development of the Common Country Analysis (CCA), as necessary supplemented by additional local level conflict analysis of specific sub-regions.
 - ii. Analyse how activities interact with peace and conflict: as peace and conflict evolves, UN entities need to regularly consider whether some activities may exacerbate conflict dynamics and cause tensions or whether some have the potential to create opportunities for building and sustaining peace.
 - iii. Adapt activities and manage interactions: UN entities need to adapt accordingly – minimizing new risks identified, adjusting responses and scale up activities as and when conditions allow.
 - iv. Leverage opportunities for building and sustaining peace: United Nations

activities can be designed to have a direct impact on conflict and peace dynamics by positively contributing to ease tensions, increase trust between the state and the population and among population groups and lower the risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of conflict – including by organizing inclusive participatory approaches and engaging various groups that might be at odds with each other (e.g., farmer-herders, host-displaced). To assess if, and how, United Nations activities can contribute to building and sustaining peace, entities should formulate a theory of change and develop a monitoring framework with specific indicators to measure the effects of UN activities on conflict dynamics.

2. Guidance and tools to embed conflict sensitivity and, where possible and appropriate, peacebuilding into organizational values and processes, building capacity of staff around conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive approaches and ensure UN activities are conflict sensitive.
3. Monitoring and evaluation tools to measure and inform conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding:
 - *Ongoing context and conflict analysis* to provide a detailed understanding of the peace and conflict context, a primary tool for understanding impact and interactions between UN activities and the context and for identifying relevant indicators;
 - *Peacebuilding and Conflict sensitivity* markers to measure the extent to which peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity have been incorporated into UN activities; and
 - *Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding* indicators that help measure interactions between UN activities and the peace and conflict context, including the potential positive or negative impact that activities have had.

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List of Acronyms and Terms

CCA	Common Country Analysis
CDA	Conflict and Development Analysis
EIM	Ethical Implied Messages
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UN entities	The Departments, Offices, Agencies, Funds and Programmes of the UN family of organizations
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group

Introduction

This guidance note is about how the agencies, funds, programmes, offices and departments that make up the United Nations (UN) system can contribute to sustaining peace, by leveraging a conflict-sensitive approach in their work.

To save “succeeding generations from the scourge of war” was the very reason for the establishment of the United Nations, as the opening lines of the Charter state. It continues to be at the heart of the system’s mandate. Peace and conflict affect what work the UN does and how it does it.

In turn, the work of the UN also affects peace and conflict and can do so both positively and negatively. This happens directly through political good offices and peacebuilding interventions, which are specifically designed to address the causes of conflict and promote sustaining peace. Yet even when UN activities are not primarily designed to promote peace, such as in humanitarian assistance and much development work, these activities are still carried out in the peace and conflict environment. They may strengthen or mitigate drivers of conflict and strengthen capacities for peace and may transform relationships among stakeholders.

Conflict sensitivity aims at promoting awareness of the interactions between UN activities and the peace and conflict context in which they are delivered. It aims, at a minimum, to “do no harm” and minimize the risk that activities could contribute to furthering tensions. It also helps leverage opportunities for activities to contribute to sustaining peace. But this guidance note goes beyond doing no harm. It also discusses entry points for peacebuilding, i.e. going beyond the avoidance the “do no harm” towards aspiring to “explicitly do good” in terms of generating peacebuilding outcomes.

Guidance note purpose

This guidance note has three primary objectives:

1. Highlight the importance of conflict sensitivity within policies, programmes and activities in the UN system;

2. Present a common framework through which the United Nations system can understand the interactions of its work on peace and conflict within a broader context of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus, and can approach conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace; and
3. Provide practical advice on how UN entities can integrate conflict sensitivity into the range of UN activities that contribute to building and sustaining peace.

On the strategic level, this guidance note is complementary to the instructions for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) process, with its guidance and the Companion pieces, including on Common Country Analysis (CCA). It should also inform the implementation of the integrated assessment and planning policy and Integrated Strategic Frameworks. For implementation of UN activities this guidance serves as a direct support and/or can be complementary to UN agencies, funds and programme’s own guidance for conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding.

Who will use this guidance note?

This guidance note is intended to support and assist:

- *Senior management of UN entities* to analyse how conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding is relevant for their organizations’ mandates, and how it can be incorporated into their activities;
- *UN staff working on developing policy related to conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace* to identify guiding principles, priorities and good practices that can inform organizational policy;
- *Programme and project officers designing and implementing activities* of UN entities across the UN system to identify guiding principles, good practices and practical considerations that can inform how to adopt conflict sensitive, peacebuilding and sustaining peace approaches within their activities in accordance with their mandates; and

- *Non-UN partners* to draw on the UN approach to conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding to inform their own work, policies and processes.
- The guidance note is divided into two parts. The first part provides an overview of the concepts and practices of conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. It is intended as a primer on why and how conflict sensitivity and

Structure of the guidance note

The Secretary-General’s vision on preventing violent conflict and the Sustainable Development Goals

Secretary-General António Guterres has made preventing conflict, crisis and human suffering the most important priority of the UN that permeates everything it does together.² Prevention works, saves lives and resources and is cost-effective. The Secretary-General has sought to forge a **coherent vision of prevention and building and sustaining peace**, offering new tools and approaches to help the UN better support Member States in building more inclusive, just and peaceful societies. In this vision, prevention is a shared responsibility that cuts across all pillars of the UN system and a collective effort to act early to address conflict risks before they escalate. Notably, the new job description of the Resident Coordinator includes among the duties and responsibilities coordinating “UN system-wide support to Government, taking a preventive approach and identifying and mitigating risks to the achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals] and their benefit to all.” In his Call to Action on Human Rights, the Secretary-General emphasized that human rights provide a critical foundation for prevention of violent conflict.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the framework through which the UN system provides support to national authorities in their efforts to achieve the vision embodied in the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs are also important entry points to address drivers of conflict, from inequalities to natural resource management and from corruption to access to justice. As the Secretary-General states: “Inclusive and sustainable development not only is an end in itself but also happens to be the best defence against the risks of violent conflict.”³

The Member States have also expressed their support for a focus on prevention. In 2016, the **General Assembly and Security Council** simultaneously adopted resolutions on the 2015 Review of UN Peacebuilding Architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)). The twin resolutions introduced the concept of “sustaining peace,” emphasizing the imperative to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict in response to worrying global trends and the **increasingly complex and protracted nature of contemporary violent conflicts**. The twin resolutions also recognized that development was a central goal in itself, and the important contributions of the UN development system to peacebuilding, in particular through economic development and poverty eradication, were acknowledged.

peacebuilding should be incorporated into UN activities to contribute to sustaining peace. It is relevant for all readers of the guidance note.

- Chapter one provides a definition for conflict sensitivity. It places it within the context of the concepts of peacebuilding and highlights how it contributes to sustaining peace.
- Chapter two outlines a summary overview of the practical steps to adopting conflict sensitive and peacebuilding approaches aimed at contributing to sustaining peace, including analysing the context; understanding interactions between peace and conflict and UN activities; and adapting programming.

The second part of the guidance note provides practical details about each of the steps identified in the first half. It is relevant for readers who are looking to incorporate a conflict sensitive and sustaining peace approach into their activities or into the policies and processes of UN entities.

- Chapter three outlines the importance of understanding the peace and conflict context to conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, including identifying what information is required for activities to be conflict sensitive and how they can contribute to peace.
- Chapter four describes the ways in which peace and conflict may affect UN activities and ways in which UN activities may affect peace and conflict.
- Chapter five details how to identify and managing conflict risks — the potential harms that may be caused by UN activities.
- Chapter six outlines how UN entities can leverage opportunities for UN activities to contribute to building and sustaining peace through conflict sensitivity.
- Chapter seven outlines approaches to monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.



² See, e.g. Secretary-General’s remarks to the Security Council on 10 January 2017; and the Vision of the Secretary-General on Prevention, 3 May 2017.


³ Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43, para. 5). The UN defines peacebuilding as: “A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development ... [These] comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.” See Decision 2007/28 of the Secretary-General, 22 May 2007.

PART

1

Concepts and Practice





1

Defining conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace

What is conflict sensitivity?

The concept of "conflict sensitivity" starts from the recognition that humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities cannot be separated from the peace and conflict context in which they are implemented.

In addition to their stated objectives, UN activities may impact stakeholders, conflict drivers and capacities for peace in ways that are unintended or indirect. Such impacts can be positive or negative.

Conflict sensitivity involves developing understanding of the context in which UN activities are delivered; analysing the relationship between those activities and the context; and adapting the way UN activities are delivered accordingly.

In essence, adopting a conflict sensitivity approach is to deliver development, humanitarian and political assistance activities in a way that aims to minimize the risk that those activities could cause more harm than good and increase the risk of violence. As such, it is laying the foundation for maximizing the positive impact of activities on sustaining peace and is therefore a minimum responsibility for the whole of the UN system.

What is conflict?

Conflict occurs when two or more groups (or people) struggle over competing values or claims to resources, power or status. Conflict represents a need for change by one or all parties. Conflict is inherent to all human interaction and societies and can be an important factor in progress.

Conflict is most visible when it leads to violence. However, not all conflict manifests as physical violence.

Political and judicial institutions provide space for political, economic and social conflict to occur in a non-violent manner in accordance with established laws and rules and in adherence of human rights treaties, norms and value, contributing to the conditions for sustaining peace.

When such institutions, laws and rules are weak, divisive socio-political dynamics, non-inclusive governance structures, lack of access to justice, and horizontal and vertical inequalities – all facets of conflict in their own right – may undermine social cohesion and could lead to grievances. These may not necessarily appear as violence at a particular point in time, but left unchecked, such dynamics could be used by some actors to mobilize groups, e.g. around a particular identity, to use violence.

Why is conflict sensitivity important?

Conflict sensitivity increases the likelihood of sustaining peace – By limiting harm that may be inadvertently caused by UN activities and identifying areas where activities can contribute to peace, conflict sensitivity contributes to conflict prevention and conflict mitigation and may contribute to the reduction and resolution of ongoing violent conflict, and reduces the risk that contexts that have experienced violent conflict will relapse.

- *Conflict sensitivity helps to manage the challenges of working in conflict* – By better understanding the context and analysing how United Nations activities may interact with it, UN entities are better equipped to enhance the impact of their activities as well as manage reputational, security, compliance and other operational risks.
- *Conflict sensitivity enhances the sustainability of UN activities* – By reducing the possibility that conflict undermines activities, creates new challenges/tensions/conflicts or reverses outcomes, and by ensuring that UN activities are adapted to the context, the long-term

impacts of activities are better protected.

- *Conflict sensitivity strengthens work on gender, children and young people, inclusivity and resilience* – Conflict-sensitivity promotes inclusive and responsive approaches to delivering UN activities that can in turn serve to strengthen communities' resilience to conflict and promote gender and youth-positive outcomes.

What is peacebuilding and how is it different from conflict sensitivity?

Peacebuilding comprises a range of activities or approaches expressly designed and intended to strengthen national capacities at different levels for conflict management, address the causes of conflict and to promote peace.⁴ Peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary, build on each other and are closely linked approaches that respond in different ways to peace and conflict dynamics in a given context.

Peacebuilding aims to address the underlying drivers of conflict, strengthen capacities to promote peace and reduce the risks of

violent conflicts in a given context. While it may encompass a wide range of activities and approaches, from political to development activities, tackling for example, specific inequalities that may be at the root of conflicts, the success of peacebuilding is explicitly connected to these overarching aims.

Conflict sensitivity is fundamentally about how *all interventions* operate in a context – based on a sound analysis, an awareness of peace and conflict dynamics and with attention to unintended consequences. It asks: “*what is needed to ensure that activities being implemented are responsive and well-adapted to the conflict context, and at minimum do not worsen conflict dynamics?*” All UN activities must be conflict-sensitive to ensure that potential indirect or unintended consequences are systematically considered and addressed. A thorough integration of conflict sensitivity in a programme may result in explicit peacebuilding objectives being identified and included either as primary or secondary goals of planned interventions. A peacebuilding approach would ask: “*what is needed to ensure that activities being implemented, given the conflict context, generate peace-related outcomes and reduce the risk of violent conflicts.*”

What is the connection between sustaining peace, peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity?

Sustaining Peace is a concept articulated by the twin resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) that augments the notion of peacebuilding.⁵ Sustaining peace emphasizes that peace must be built, strengthened and sustained across all contexts before, during and after conflict. It prompts actors to take a long-term, inclusive, comprehensive and collaborative

Helpful Tip: Peacebuilding and Conflict Sensitivity



Peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity are related but different concepts.

Peacebuilding activities are primarily motivated by the intention to reduce conflict and promote peace. Their focus is working on conflict, which can either focus on what or how activities are implemented.

Conflict sensitivity focuses on working in conflict and how activities are implemented, with the aim of managing potential harm and maximizing opportunities to contribute to peace.

Peacebuilding activities must be conflict sensitive, but so must other UN activities. Nevertheless, the mechanisms by which both peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity can promote sustaining peace are very similar.

orientation to working across the conflict cycle toward “preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict.”⁶ Sustaining peace refers therefore to both a goal and a process.

The sustaining peace concept recognizes two types of activities:⁷

- Activities that are designed and directly aimed at building and sustaining peace; and
- Activities that, while not explicitly designed to build and sustain peace as a primary objective, can contribute to peace-related outcomes, including as secondary outcomes.

Language and terminology related to conflict and peace

The meaning of “sensitivity” in “conflict sensitivity” is the sense of “being sensitive/alert/aware to” or “quick to respond to slight changes in” the dynamics of a conflict context.

However, sometimes the idea of conflict sensitivity or peacebuilding can also be politically “sensitive,” such as when partners, counterparts or interlocutors disagree with the idea that conflict is a risk, refuse to discuss out of fear of exacerbating tensions, or view international attention on conflict as political meddling.

In contexts where the UN faces dilemmas regarding framing, language and terminology related to “conflict” and “peace,” conflict sensitivity and sustaining peace still provide essential frameworks for thinking through the interactions between UN activities and the context.

In contexts where framing is politically charged, contested and therefore counterproductive for UN goals, being thoughtful about how to frame conflict analysis or a peacebuilding programme, based on realities of a specific context, is essential to managing a successful initiative. Some UN teams have used different language, such as “context or risk analysis,” “context sensitivity,” “risk-informed approach” or “context appropriate activities.” Rather than referencing potentially politically sensitive peacebuilding objectives, it can be useful to frame conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding within the context of resilience, risk mitigation, trust building, social cohesion or SDG 16.

⁴ The UN defines peacebuilding as: “A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development ... [These] comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.” See Decision 2007/28 of the Secretary-General, 22 May 2007.

⁵ See: General Assembly resolution 70/262, Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), A/72/707-S/2018/43.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ UN Peacebuilding, 2017, “What does ‘Sustaining Peace’ mean?”, United Nations, available online at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/guidance-on-sustaining-peace.170117.final_.pdf.

This orientation, one that includes long-term prevention, links sustaining peace to the broader vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 and other SDG targets related to peace, justice and inclusion. It does so by calling on actors to promote the necessary political, security, justice, social and economic conditions that are at the heart of “peaceful, just and inclusive societies.” While sustaining peace is the primary responsibility of national governments and actors, the agenda calls on the UN system to work inclusively and in a coherent, coordinated and complementary manner to advance this goal.⁸

Conflict sensitivity, which allows actors to integrate an enhanced awareness of context into their interventions and programmes, and peacebuilding, which deliberately aims to strengthen capacities for peace, can therefore be understood as building blocks for how actors can contribute to the process and goal of sustaining peace.

How does conflict sensitivity relate to humanitarian action and the humanitarian principles?

Humanitarians are required to adhere to the humanitarian principles enshrined in relevant

General Assembly resolutions most notably General Assembly Resolution 46/182. The goal of humanitarian action is to save lives and alleviate human suffering. Humanitarian action may contribute to peace, but it is not the primary goal. While humanitarian action can support peace efforts, its main purpose remains to address life-saving needs and alleviate suffering. Accordingly, most humanitarian interventions are likely to remain outside the scope of integration. However, depending on the context, certain activities may be included in the UN’s integrated strategic approach. The guidance on sustaining peace⁹ reflects this idea.

The humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence represent the foundation for humanitarian action. In practice, the principles help distinguish humanitarian action from other international aid activities and aims to protect humanitarian access while guarding against the risk that humanitarian actors will be accused of taking sides.

Humanitarian actors face many of the same challenges as other types of activities in terms of their interaction with conflict. Humanitarian actors regularly grapple with situations where assistance is instrumentalized by conflict

“Do No Harm” and Conflict Sensitivity

“Do No Harm” refers to an approach developed by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA) in the 1990s as a methodology to help those working in conflict-affected settings to understand and manage the impacts of international assistance on the peace and conflict context where they work. Conflict sensitivity emerged in the early 2000s as a concept that incorporated the Do-No-Harm approach (and other methodologies) and has been developed further. The Do-No-Harm approach, however, continues to be used to refer to conflict sensitivity by some practitioners.

Separately, Do No Harm (DNH) is also a concept within the humanitarian sector which aims to address the harms that assistance may cause. Most often, it starts from the perspective of what harm may be caused to individual beneficiaries (as with the Human Rights Based Approach to programming).

These two separate uses of Do No Harm can be confusing. They start from different perspectives and so ask different, though overlapping questions. Ultimately, they are complimentary, consistent with each other and both important.

actors or feeds into conflict drivers, even when agencies strictly adhere to humanitarian principles.

Humanitarian assistance can also play a role in reducing conflict drivers, such as by improving relations between groups through participatory assessment, design, planning, distribution and monitoring processes, access to services, or building trust through access negotiations. By changing the “how”, rather than the “what,” i.e. by striving for conflict sensitivity in their analysis and interventions, humanitarian actors can have a positive impact on conflict dynamics even if they are not directly or primarily contributing to peacebuilding or sustaining peace outcomes.

Conflict sensitivity is an approach that helps humanitarian actors navigate the challenges of providing assistance in conflict-affected settings. It does not call for humanitarian actors

to weaken the humanitarian principles, to adopt political objectives or to become peacebuilding actors. Rather, it encourages humanitarian actors to work in ways that take into account the context in order to minimise how activities might drive conflict and identify benefits for peace.

Human rights, conflict sensitivity and sustaining peace are mutually reinforcing

Conflict sensitivity aims to ensure that UN activities do not aggravate conflict dynamics, do no harm and contribute towards sustaining peace. Similarly, the UN human rights system was created to prevent future wars by setting standards to address many of the root causes of conflict and violence. Just as human rights violations drive conflict and violence, protecting

Myanmar Case study: Indirect support to sustaining peace

In Myanmar, a UN agency supported the improvement in quality of education, in line with Government’s Basic Education Development Plan (2001–2031). In the multilingual and multiethnic context of Myanmar, language status and language education are often a cause, sometimes a consequence, of tension.

The UN agency leveraged its role in education sector programming to strengthen social cohesion. It implemented a series of dialogue forums on the role of language in education, bringing together civil society and education stakeholders in Mon, Kayin and Kachin States and in the capital Nay Pyi Taw. During these conversations, issues of multilingual education was openly and freely discussed.

These dialogues eventually led to a new language policy in Mon State, opened dialogue and initiated cooperation between the government and ethnic-language providers. It resulted in an agreement on a set of principles for creating a broader language policy for Myanmar, for fostering peace.

Hence, in addition to the primary objective of improving quality of education, there was a secondary result to sustain peace.

⁸ UN Peacebuilding, 2017, “What does ‘Sustaining Peace’ mean?”, United Nations, available online at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/guidance-on-sustaining-peace.170117.final_.pdf accessed September 2019. Sustaining peace could be understood to also include peacekeeping, mediation and good offices, which in UN parlance, are not usually included in peacebuilding. The positive connotation of sustaining peace, compared to peacebuilding, also has contributed to its quick acceptance. In practical purpose, peacebuilding and sustaining peace are interchangeable.

⁹ UN Peacebuilding, 2017, “What does ‘Sustaining Peace’ mean?”, United Nations, available online at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/guidance-on-sustaining-peace.170117.final_.pdf, accessed September 2019.

human rights reduces the risk of violence and conflict and creates pathways for peace.¹⁰ The human rights-based approach (HRBA) aims to anchor UN activities in the rights and corresponding obligations of international human rights law. A HRBA requires human rights principles – universality, indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation and accountability – to guide UN development cooperation and focus on developing the capacities of both “duty-bearers” to meet their obligations and “rights-holders” to claim their rights.

From a conflict-sensitivity perspective, the notion of rights-holders and duty-bearers is important because it creates a dynamic of managed conflict within which individuals are empowered to demand state action to protect their rights and that state resources are directed away from doing harm and applied for the benefit of all. Where capacities and political will exist to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, the rights-holders and the duty-bearer are brought into a positive relationship designed to meet needs and address grievances through peaceful processes of dialogue, participation and accountability. Where this relationship breaks down, for whatever reason, the risk of conflict and violence increases. Unaddressed human rights violations indicate that the relationship is not functioning well; widespread and systematic violations of human rights indicate that the relationship is broken, and the chances of violent conflict rise exponentially. UN assistance that aims to strengthen the capacity of both duty-bearers and rights-holders is therefore an important conflict sensitive tool for reducing risk of conflict and sustaining peace.

Similarly, United Nations assistance formulated on the basis of the human rights principles further reinforces conflict sensitivity and the building of sustainable peace. The joint UN-World Bank report *Pathways for Peace* suggests that violent conflict is driven by

unaddressed grievances, inequalities and lack of participation and “exclusion from access to power, opportunity, and security creates fertile ground for mobilization to violence, particularly in areas of weak state capacity or legitimacy or in the context of human rights abuses.”¹¹ HRBA principles ensure that resources are devoted to addressing grievances (accountability) and reducing inequality (non-discrimination and equality) while empowering people to participate in seeking solutions to the problems that affect their lives (participation).

The understanding of the link between human rights violations and conflict, and the preventive effect of human rights, suggests that the HRBA complements and reinforces the conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding approach set out in this guidance, for example, because both address inequalities and increase participation. It suggests that human rights-based risk and opportunity analysis can strengthen conflict and context analysis, highlighting the impact of conflict on people, especially those most vulnerable or at risk of being left behind. Human rights-based analysis help unearth underlying causes of conflict, rooted in laws, policies, attitudes and institutions. It also helps identify social exclusion, vulnerable groups and sources of their vulnerability and helps to shift power imbalance in social, economic and political spheres towards advancing equality and human dignity.

Human rights norms apply in both times of violent conflict and of peace and provide a constant against which the impact of conflict can be measured over time to indicate whether UN assistance needs to be reprioritized. Solutions, including mitigation measures, can also be based on human rights, which are less likely to feed conflict and more likely to forge consensus by aiming to protect and promote universally accepted norms. HRBA promotes conflict sensitivity and national ownership by ensuring norm-based engagement with stake-

holders, and at times can insulate the UN from its focus on conflict being viewed as political interference and/or undermining sovereignty.

Rights-based approaches, as with peacebuilding, focus on process as much as outcomes. They advance inclusive, participatory and empowering approaches to programming. By placing people at the centre and advancing inclusive participatory decision-making, HRBA ensures programme design and implementation meets the interests of communities, builds trust and advances ownership and sustainability. Genuine inclusive and participatory decision-making also helps to take the local context into account and does not favour one group over another. It advances social cohesion among communities by advancing principles that are in the interest of people, including justice, equality, transparency and accountability.

Additional Resources

- General Assembly resolution 70/262 on the 2015 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (Sustaining Peace), available online at: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/262>
- Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) on the 2015 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (Sustaining Peace), available online at: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282(2016))
- Secretary General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. A/72/707-S/2018/43, available online at: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282(2016))
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- The Peace Promise, available online at: <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Conflict%20Prevention/THE%20PEACE%20PROMISE%20v%203%201.pdf>

¹⁰ See World Bank Group, “Conflict, Security and Development”, World Development Report 2011 p. 82, box 2.8, noting that “Countries with recent human rights abuses are far more likely to experience conflict than countries with a strong history of respect for human rights”.

¹¹ UN-World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Executive Summary, 2018, p. IV.respect for human rights”.

2

Steps for conflict sensitivity

This chapter provides an overview of the practical steps needed to incorporate conflict sensitivity into the policy and practice of UN entities with the objective of contributing to sustaining peace. Each step is elaborated further in subsequent chapters.

Overview: key steps of a conflict sensitive approach

A conflict-sensitive approach has five key steps:

1

Understand the peace and conflict context;

2

Analyse how UN activities interact with peace and conflict;

3

Adapt UN activities and manage risk interactions;

4

Leverage opportunities for building and sustaining peace; and

5

Monitoring and evaluation.

Each of these steps should be explicitly undertaken when designing UN activities, both at a strategic or programme level, and at the level of individual interventions and projects. For instance, the steps can be taken as part of the CCA and UNSDCF process. They should also be revisited at regular periods during implementation and if there is a sudden, significant change in the peace and conflict context.

What is the difference between applying a conflict-sensitive approach and designing a peacebuilding intervention?

Applying a conflict-sensitive approach to an intervention may result in the identification of new primary or secondary peacebuilding goals in a programme that was not originally designed to achieve peacebuilding outcomes.

However, when the main objective of an intervention is peacebuilding, an analysis of the peace and conflict context – and peacebuilding needs in that context – constitutes the very point of departure in the programme design. At this first stage the approach needs to be exploratory and open-ended with a view to identify how drivers of conflict and peace are best addressed. It is however important to emphasize that peacebuilding interventions are not automatically conflict sensitive by design and that they also need to go through conflict-sensitivity assessments. A peacebuilding intervention that has been very well designed to address a conflict dynamic/peacebuilding need/driver might unintentionally do harm to other drivers of peace. Figure 1 presents a flow-chart outlining the steps, key questions for each stage.

Gender and conflict sensitivity

Awareness of gender and gender sensitivity is a requirement when being conflict sensitive.

Conflict has different impacts on men and women and can play a transformative role regarding men and women's roles, identities and orientations. It may create conditions where men, women, boys, girls and those who identify as non-binary experience changing relationships, or even threats, as a result of their gender.

Gender roles, identities, orientations, relationships and power structures can also impact peace and conflict dynamics, representing conflict risks. For example, cultures of toxic masculinity may foster violent behaviour while sexual violence may be used as a weapon of war in order to undermine the social "honour" of a community.

Assistance activities that fail to link an understanding of gender dynamics to conflict risk may do harm by inadvertently feeding into, or failing to address, the relationship between gender and conflict.

On the other hand, when activities are both gender and conflict sensitive, assistance can positively influence gender dynamics in a way that contributes to peace, such as by addressing violent masculinities, supporting women's participation in peacebuilding and addressing aspects of social exclusion.

Step 1: Understand the peace and conflict context

To be conflict sensitive, UN activities must be informed by a nuanced understanding of the context in which they are implemented. This requires having access to a regularly updated conflict or context analysis, which is the basis for conflict sensitivity.

Analysis should be designed to answer questions relevant for decision makers involved in implementing activities. The types of analysis needed for conflict-sensitivity purposes aim to provide information on the following:

- What is the background/history of conflict in the area in which activities are implemented?
- What are the key peace and conflict factors, or issues, which influence peace and conflict?
- Who are the stakeholders involved, what are the relationships among them and how do these relate to the peace and conflict factors?

Who are the most vulnerable groups? What factors make them vulnerable?

- What are the key dynamics in the context – the main elements that could worsen or improve the peace and conflict context in the short to medium term?

Step 2: Analyse how UN activities interact with peace and conflict

Once an up-to-date and relevant understanding of the peace and conflict context is established, UN activities must be reviewed in terms of the potential ways in which they could interact within that context.

Two guiding questions are relevant:

- How does the peace and conflict context affect UN activities; and
- How do UN activities affect the peace and conflict context?

How does the peace and conflict context affect UN activities?

Conflict affects the relevance and appropriateness of UN activities, for example by increasing the need for humanitarian assistance or peacebuilding activities or by reducing the feasibility of some activities - being development or otherwise - because of security concerns. As peace and conflict evolves, it is essential to repeatedly question whether activities continue to be relevant, appropriate and timely and if new priorities have emerged which are not being addressed.

Conflict also affects activities by increasing uncertainty and risks. Increasingly, United Nations entities are accustomed to working in conflict-affected settings and have in place frameworks for understanding the risks caused by conflict within their risk management processes. Drawing on such understanding, it is important to consider how realistic it would be that planned activities can be delivered and have a meaningful impact given the operating challenges posed by the context.

How do United Nations activities affect the peace and conflict context?

United Nations entities need to consider two ways in which their activities may affect a peace and conflict context: risks that activities may contribute to conflict; and opportunities for activities to contribute to sustaining peace. Conflict risks are ways in which activities could exacerbate tensions, strengthen conflict drivers or undermine capacities for peace. Risks can take a number of forms, such as when activities worsen relationships between different stakeholders by being seen to favour one group over another; strengthen conflict actors by directly or indirectly giving those actors recognition or resources; or strengthen structural exclusion of some groups by engaging with non-representative authorities. There may also be conflict risks associated with not delivering an activity, such as by leaving an important conflict driver unaddressed.

If activities can exacerbate conflict, they can also present opportunities to contribute to sustaining peace. Activities may be able to

promote inclusive or participatory decision-making processes across social and political divisions and rebuild trust among stakeholders. Activities may also be able to address key factors affecting conflict and strengthen capacities for peace.

Step 3: Adapt activities and manage risk interactions

The third conflict sensitivity step is to adapt activities in order to:

- Ensure activities continue to be relevant, appropriate, timely and realistic;
- Manage conflict risks; and
- Leverage opportunities to contribute to building and sustaining peace.

Ongoing changes in the peace and conflict context may mean that activities become less relevant, appropriate or timely, or create barriers to implementation. In such circumstances, it is necessary to adapt the focus or approach of activities or, in extreme circumstances, to stop an activity altogether.

UN entities should also ensure that activities are adapted to manage identified risks of conflict. Plans should include both mitigations aimed at reducing the likelihood and the impact of the risks and the responses to be taken if the risk occurs.

Some element of risk is unavoidable and there are also risks associated with not undertaking activities or of stopping them if they are already being implemented. Situations where any course of action could do harm – including implementing activities and not implementing them – present conflict sensitivity dilemmas. Conflict sensitivity dilemmas have no easy solutions and require careful management to balance the benefits of implementing activities with the potential to instigate harm.

Activities should also aim to leverage opportunities to contribute to building and sustaining peace by identifying peacebuilding as a primary or secondary goal. This includes considering how to adapt approaches during implementation, which stakeholders are engaged and how, and where activities are delivered.

Identifying how to manage the identified risks of feeding conflict and leverage opportunities to contribute to building and sustaining peace should happen at the stage of activity design, through the formulation of a theory of change. Monitoring of implementation might reveal that assumptions made in the theory of change were wrong or that the context has shifted. Activities must be flexible and adaptable enough to allow UN entities to respond quickly and effectively as new, or previously unidentified, risks and opportunities emerge.

Providing an enabling environment for conflict sensitivity

Adopting a conflict sensitive approach within UN activities requires a suitable enabling environment within UN entities, in terms of policies, processes and organizational approach. In this regard, important processes are the development of the UNSDCF and, in mission settings, the integrated strategic framework, which need to be conflict sensitive.

The following considerations can help UN entities foster conflict sensitivity within their organizations:

Embed conflict sensitivity into organizational values and processes

To ensure that conflict sensitivity is consistently adopted, it is necessary to ensure that it is a

core part of the organizational way-of-working. Senior management need to prioritize and push for conflict sensitivity to be built into policies and processes; staff must be given a sense of, and accountability for, their own role and responsibility for being conflict sensitive and conflict sensitivity must be built into standard procedures within the organization.

Encourage a culture of critical reflection

Reviewing the conflict sensitivity of programming requires asking difficult questions about impact and potential harm that could be caused by UN activities. To do this effectively, UN entities need to encourage a culture of critical thinking in a way that allows people to discuss challenges and problems freely and openly and identify constructive solutions.

Build capacity of staff around conflict sensitivity

In order to build a culture of conflict sensitive thinking, UN entities should provide training and guidance on conflict sensitivity for all staff at all levels. Training should cover areas such as conflict analysis, monitoring the context, identifying and managing risks and opportunities and relevant policies and processes regarding the implementation of activities.

Ensure adequate resources are available for analysis

Sufficient resources should be made available, including time, staff and financial resources, to

develop a nuanced understanding of the context in which the organization works – either within projects or as part of a wider programme. This requires that analysis processes be embedded into workplans and activity management plans, including the need for continually updating the analysis as is required for the CCA.

Provide space for joint analysis of conflict sensitivity

Time and space for discussion of conflict sensitivity should be incorporated into joint mechanisms within the UN system and between the UN and its partners. Opportunities to discuss conflict sensitivity should occur within the UNCT framework, as part of coordination structures and during specific processes such as the development or review of CCAs and UNSDCF or humanitarian response planning.

Ensure UN activities are adaptable

To respond to a changing context, it is necessary for UN entities to be able to adapt their activities. Mitigating or responding to conflict risks or rapidly leveraging opportunities, as they emerge, will require adjusting activities, slowing them down or even stopping them. UN entities must be prepared to do this.

Internal policies and processes need to be flexible enough to allow for changes in workplans and budgets or other processes during implementation. Where donors support UN activities, it is important to have open discussions about how to build mechanisms for adaptive programming into projects from the beginning. Where UN activities are delivered through implementing partners, partnership agreements should allow for joint analysis of changing situations and allow for adaptation as needed.

Ensure leadership is supported

Strong leadership is required to conflict analysis is conducted and to translate such analysis into coherent strategies, programmes and activities that are conflict sensitive and contribute to peace where possible. This could require assistance, including in terms of guidance, training, surge capacities, peer-to-peer support and the delegated authority to take calculated

risks in support of national priorities. Senior leaders must have a diverse skillset, with strong leadership, team-building and communications skills, including in analysis and planning, risk management, gender issues and human rights, in order to be able to promote coherence in a collaborative manner.

Additional Resources

- European Commission, 2014, *Operating in situations of conflict and fragility: EU staff handbook*, Tools and Methods Series, Reference Document No 17, European Union.
- S Hands chin, E Abietol, R Alluri (eds), 2016, *Conflict Sensitivity: Taking it to the Next Level*, Working Paper 2/2016, Swisspeace.
- N Zicherman et al., 2011, *Applying conflict sensitivity in emergency response*, Network Paper, No 70, October, Humanitarian Practice Network.
- Sustaining peace online training UNSSC.
- Conflict sensitivity online training UNSSC.
- UNICEF, 2012, *Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding in UNICEF Technical Note*, available online at <http://www.unicefinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/KRR/UNICEF%20Technical%20Note%20on%20Conflict%20Sensitivity%20and%20Peacebuilding.pdf>, accessed September 2019.
- FAO, 2019, *The Programme Clinic: Designing conflict-sensitive interventions - Approaches to working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts*, available online at: <http://www.fao.org/resilience/resources/resources-detail/en/c/1206211/>.

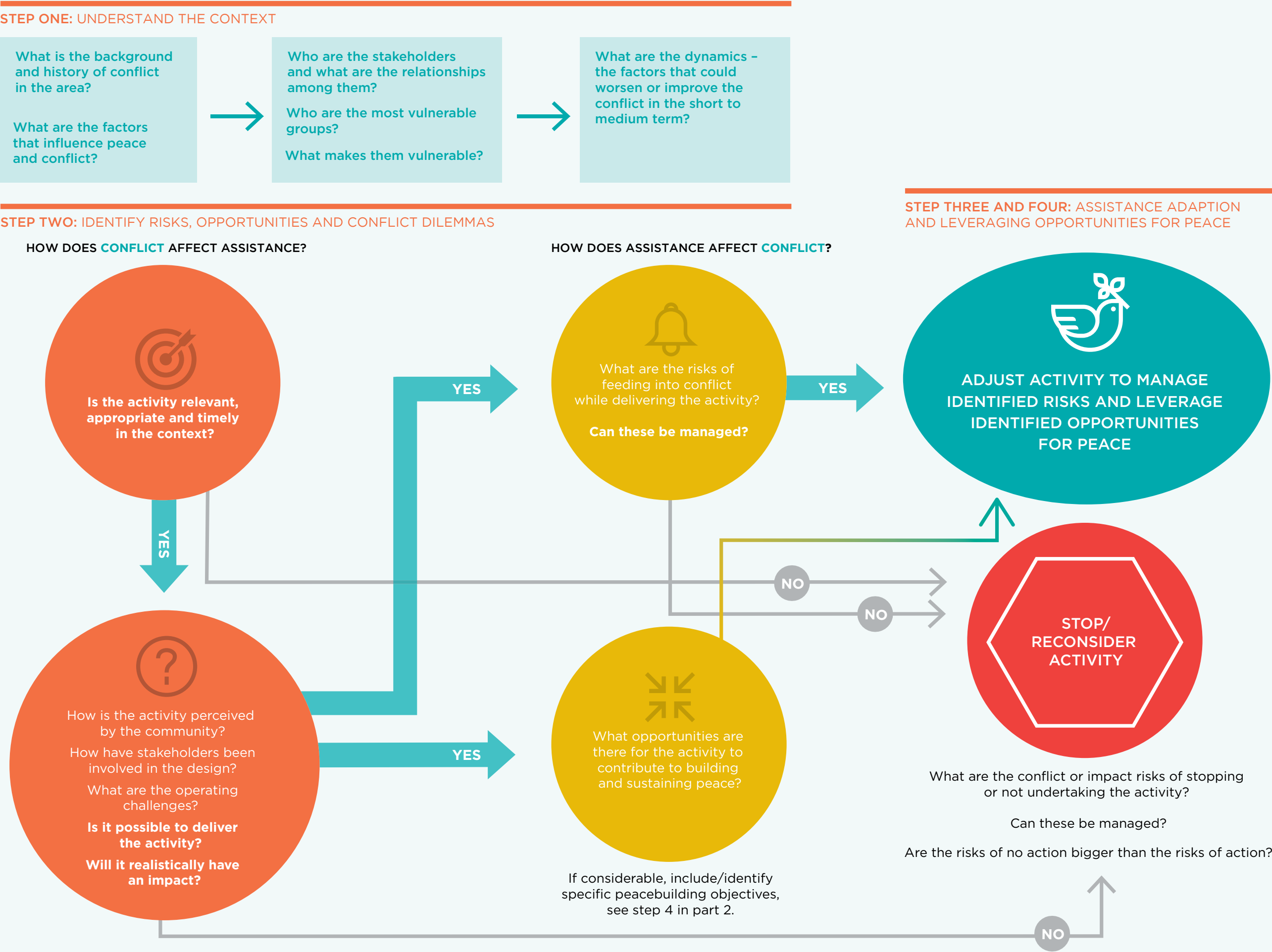
Case study: conflict sensitive redesign of a project

In the process of establishing a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme in Somalia, UN's efforts had to radically adapt its activities to incorporate a component for negotiations to resolve conflicts concerning water access. These extensive negotiations led to an agreement among local leaders on the construction of water systems and monitoring mechanisms. These negotiations, the subsequent agreement and the mechanism to address conflicts over water in a non-violent manner yielded peacebuilding outcomes.

(https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/peace_dividends.pdf).

Figure 1
CONFLICT SENSITIVITY:
A ROADMAP FOR
ASSISTANCE PLANNING

The following chart outlines the conflict sensitivity steps and the key questions that need to be asked within each step.



2

Operationalizing
Conflict Sensitivity,
Peacebuilding and
Sustaining Peace

PART





3

Step 1, Understanding the peace and conflict context

Being conflict sensitive depends on a nuanced and detailed understanding of the context in which UN activities are delivered. The first conflict sensitivity step calls for developing such an understanding by conducting a context or conflict analysis, when possible through an inclusive and participatory process. This understanding must then be kept up to date by refreshing the analysis periodically and incorporating peace and conflict indicators into monitoring frameworks for activities.

Developing understanding of peace and conflict through a context or conflict analysis

The type of context or conflict analysis needed to inform conflict sensitivity aims to provide understanding of the structural peace and conflict environment in which activities are being implemented. This analysis can be part of a multi-dimensional risk analysis, which for example, also looks at natural disasters and epidemic risks as part of the CCA (see UNSDCF guidance). While joint analysis is possible in all contexts, planning and programming, including through the Humanitarian Response Plan, may need to be kept separate in some conflict situations.

Considerations for context analysis

Several considerations should be kept in mind when developing an analysis aimed at informing conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding.

Various methodologies for context analysis have been developed and are used within the UN system.¹² UN entities can be flexible with the specific framework or methodology that is used, so long as the analysis answers the questions identified above.

- Context analyses must focus on a level appropriate for the activities they are intended to inform. Analysis such as the joint analysis for an integrated strategic framework, the Common Country Analysis (CCA) for an UNSDCF or a context assessment for a country programme will require a higher-level analysis of the country, for example. Local humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities will require more detailed analyses of the local communities in which they are being implemented. Quick conflict scans help understand a rapidly evolving contexts and informs immediate response.
- The context analysis must be relevant to decision makers responsible for implementing activities. Analysis needs to address

¹² Such as the Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) adopted by the UN Sustainable Development Group, which is directly compatible with the analysis questions identified in this guidance note. See: United Nations Development Group, 2016, *Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis Tool*, available online at <https://undg.org/document/conflict-and-development-analysis-tool/>, accessed September 2019.

Relevant questions for the analysis include:

Questions	What the analysis may include	Relevance for conflict sensitivity
What is the background/history of peace and conflict in the area?	A brief overview providing basic information about the area and its experience of conflict.	Provides an easily referenced outline of the key features of the area and its history.
What are the key factors affecting peace and conflict	<p>A list of the issues that contribute to peace or drive conflict. Factors that drive peace are not always the opposite of factors that drive conflict.</p> <p>The list of factors should identify and detail each factor as well as the mechanism by which it affects peace and conflict.</p> <p>A distinction can be made between structural and intermediate factors and triggers of violent conflict or peace (see box).</p>	<p>Factors represent the list of issues that need to be addressed to promote sustaining peace.</p> <p>Activities should be cross-referenced against the list of factors to understand which factors could be affected by UN activities, either positively or negatively.</p>
Who are the key stakeholders in the area?	A list of the different types of actors in the context, including those that drive peace and those that drive conflict.	Stakeholders are important in minimizing negative and maximizing positive outcomes.
Who are the most vulnerable stakeholders and what mitigation measures are required to respond to their vulnerability?	<p>Stakeholders may include governmental actors at different levels (national, regional, subnational, local), security or armed groups, economic actors, social or communal groups, identity groups and beneficiaries.</p> <p>These actors may have a role directly affecting the peace and conflict factors or may be affected by them. UN entities may also be considered a stakeholder, depending on their prior/current roles.</p> <p>The assessment of stakeholders also highlights their interests, needs and their capacities for achieving those.</p> <p>Analysis of vulnerability helps to highlight underlying deprivations and designing mitigation strategies.</p>	<p>Stakeholders represent the groups that may have an interest in how activities are delivered.</p> <p>These are the actors who must be engaged, or managed, in order to implement activities in a conflict sensitive manner.</p>

What are the relationships among stakeholders and which factors affect these?	A map of how different stakeholders interact with one another and which factors define those relationships.	Activities should be considered in terms of which relationships they may affect, either positively or negatively, and adjusted accordingly.
What are the key dynamics in the context?	Key threats or opportunities that could worsen or improve the peace and conflict context in the short to medium term.	<p>Dynamics represent the major changes that could affect UN activities and present new risks or opportunities.</p> <p>Targeting dynamics is where activities could have the most immediate impact in terms of addressing conflict and promoting sustaining peace.</p>
What are other actors doing in the area?	A map of other activities being implemented by UN entities and other members of the international community, cross-referenced against factors and stakeholders.	Assessing other interventions helps identify how peace and conflict factors and stakeholders are already being affected. This helps identify where UN activities may potentially contradict or complement those of other actors.

Helpful Tip:
Understanding peace and conflict factors



Peace and conflict factors are the key issues that drive conflict or promote peace in a context. Peace and conflict factors can be characterized as "proximate" and "structural" factors.

Proximate factors are visible manifestations of violent conflict or explicit attempts to promote peace. They often directly relate to the issues around which tensions occur.

Structural factors are deeply embedded, root causes of conflict or drivers of peace. They may not be directly visible as motivators for violence or peace, but they serve to create the enabling environment that allows for proximate factors to occur.

From a peacebuilding or conflict prevention perspective, managing proximate factors is important to contribute to a reduction in violence. Addressing structural factors is necessary to foster an environment of sustaining peace.

the overall context, for example, as part of a multi-dimensional risk analysis, and not just the thematic area of the activities to be implemented. It should be prepared with the end user in mind and an understanding of the scope of activities to ensure it asks and answers the questions that decision makers need to know.

- The analysis should allow for a prioritized and sequenced approach to UN system activities for the short-, medium- and long-term, i.e. who does what where and when (4Ws).
- Analysis must be updated regularly. As required for the CCA analysis, it should be revisited once a year and more often in highly dynamic contexts or in response to major events. Updating should be written into activity plans in a timely manner to inform important decisions made by the project.
- Analysis should be adequately resourced with suitable time allocated for it within workplans and activity management plans. Good analysis takes time and money, though


updating is much simpler and more cost effective than preparing new analyses.

- Wherever possible, analysis should build on existing information, such as publicly available data, staff knowledge or knowledge held by partners. Sharing analysis within the UN system can increase efficiency, reduce the risk that (particularly local) communities will face analysis "fatigue," and increase coordination and the complementarity of activities by providing a common perspective relating to the context.

Additional Resources

- United Nations Development Group, 2016, *Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis Tool*, available online at <https://undg.org/document/conflict-and-development-analysis-tool/>, accessed July 2019.
- United Nations, 2016, *United Nations Conflict Analysis Practice Note*, available online at <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-conflict-analysis-practice-note>, accessed July 2019.
- Saferworld, 2016, *Gender analysis of conflict toolkit*, available online at <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1076-gender-analysis-of-conflict>, accessed September 2019.
- Conciliation Resources, 2015, *Gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders*, available online at <https://www.c-r.org/resource/gender-and-conflict-analysis-toolkit-peacebuilders>, accessed September 2019.
- FAO, 2019, *Guide to context analysis informing FAO decision-making - Approaches to working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts*, available online at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5968en/CA5968EN.pdf>
- UN, 2018, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*, available at: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/news/missing-peace-independent-progress-study-youth-peace-and-security>

Helpful Tip: Gender, Youth and Conflict Analysis



It is essential when undertaking conflict analysis to also consider the context from a gender and youth perspective. For conflict sensitivity, this allows decision makers to consider how different conflict risks and opportunities may have different implications based on gender or age.

For each analysis question identified above, it is important to also ask about gender and youth. For example, when identifying factors, it is necessary to ask what gender or age/generational related issues might also contribute to conflict. When looking at relationships, it is important to ask how different genders or generations may relate differently. And could women and youth, or the organizations they lead, be agents of change?



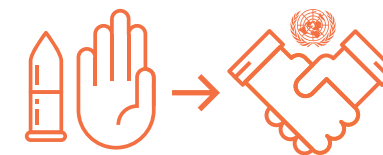
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Step 2, How do UN activities interact with peace and conflict?

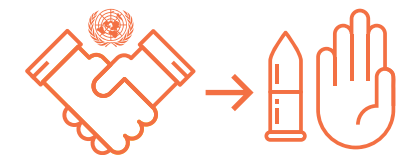
At the heart of conflict sensitivity is the recognition that UN activities cannot be separated from the peace and conflict context in which they are implemented. The second conflict sensitivity step seeks to identify the two-way interactions between the peace and conflict context and UN activities.

Two guiding questions are relevant:

1 How does the peace and conflict context affect UN activities?; and



2 How do UN activities affect the peace and conflict context?



Question 1: How does the peace and conflict context affect UN activities?

Being conflict sensitive requires a nuanced understanding of what is needed and achievable within the context to ensure that activities remain relevant, appropriate, timely and realistic. Conflict affects the ability to deliver UN activities by increasing uncertainty and risks. The table below describes some of the major types of risk to activities.

UN entities that already have established mechanisms for addressing the way conflict affects their programming embedded within their risk management processes, particularly within projects or interventions, can

regularly initiate an informed review as part of a conflict-sensitive approach.

Conflict sensitivity necessitates repeatedly asking several difficult questions as the peace and conflict context evolves:

- Are activities (still) relevant, appropriate and timely?
- Have new priorities emerged that are not being addressed?
- Is it (still) possible to implement the activities and what realistic impact will they have?
- What is the differentiated impact the activity could have on women vs. men, young people vs. adults, young women vs. young men, etc.?

Interaction risks

Changing priorities Conflict may affect the relevance, appropriateness and timeliness of existing UN activities, while new priorities may also emerge as a direct result of conflict, such as new humanitarian or peacebuilding needs.	Security risks Staff, partners and assets may be exposed to violence and increased security threats, restricting travel and engagement with interlocutors and beneficiaries and increasing the cost of working.	Access challenges Political, armed and other conflict actors may limit access to certain locations or insist on accompanying UN activities in order to control access.	Financial risks In conflict settings, the cost of goods and services may experience greater volatility and loss due to corruption and theft may also increase, with the result of higher delivery costs and financial uncertainty.
Sustainability The sustainability of UN activities may be affected by the violent destruction of assets, changing counterparts and partners or political or policy uncertainty.	Due diligence and compliance The prevalence of conflict actors, the emergence of a conflict economy and difficulties in finding information increase the difficulties in undertaking due diligence of counterparts, partners and beneficiaries.	Reputational risks The way UN entities manage these other risks may impact the reputation of the organization, affecting their ability to continue working with counterparts, partners and beneficiaries or to mobilize resources, and impacting future programmes.	

These questions can be difficult to ask as they could potentially result in a conclusion that it is not appropriate to continue activities. Nevertheless, they are important to consider in order to ensure that UN activities are being delivered efficiently and sustainably and are maximizing their contribution to sustaining peace.

Question 2: How do UN activities affect peace and conflict?

The second guiding question considers how UN activities may affect peace and conflict. Analysing this requires building on the understanding of the peace and conflict context established in Step 1. Fundamentally, UN activities may impact peace and conflict in two ways:

- *By changing peace and conflict factors* – Activities may affect the factors that influence peace and conflict; and

- *By affecting stakeholders* – Activities may empower or disempower actors, providing recognition, status or legitimacy, increasing trust, changing relationships among groups, or endangering partners.

These impacts may be:

- *Positive or negative* – Activities could contribute to sustaining peace or they could worsen conflict drivers and exacerbate tensions;
- *Direct or indirect* – Factors and stakeholders may be affected directly through engagement, or indirectly, as a side effect of activities; or
- *Intentional or unintentional* – The impact of activities on peace and conflict could be foreseen and intended by decision makers or accidental and unforeseen.

Types of Interactions

Interactions between UN activities and peace

and conflict fall into several types, presented in the table below.¹³

Types of interactions		
	Example impacts on factors	Example impacts on stakeholders
Distribution effect Groups in conflict may perceive that the benefits of an activity are reinforcing existing inequalities or are distributed in accordance with existing social, political or economic divisions or tensions.	Distribution effects can change the way perceived and actual inequalities affect peace and conflict and can increase those inequalities or reduce them. Distribution effects may feed into pre-existing identities and inter-communal relations, strengthening social tensions and political divisions.	Unequal distribution of the benefits of activities among groups can contribute to tensions among them, especially when a group feels marginalized or excluded. Distribution effects can reduce tensions among groups when activities are delivered across existing tensions or divisions in a collaborative manner, or where stakeholders that may be in conflict are encouraged to collaborate on common objectives.
Inclusion effect Creating or strengthening dialogue mechanisms that are accessible to all, irrespective of sex, age, ethnicity, etc. can signal inclusion and could reinforce dignity, trust and social cohesion among (groups of) people.	Including people, communities and groups that might be at odds with each other in the analysis, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation could enhance social cohesion.	Inclusive processes could reduce the sense of feeling excluded or marginalized.
Recognition effect Working with or alongside actors can give status, recognition and perceived legitimacy to those actors.	Working with or through authorities who are non-representative and non-inclusive can give the impression that UN entities support such approaches, exacerbating perceptions of marginalisation. Working with actors based on the degree to which they operate in accordance with defined political, administrative and legal processes can strengthen the idea of peaceful political processes and the rule of law.	Recognition effects can empower actors, increasing their influence and capacity and changing the power balance between them and others. This could strengthen conflict actors or could empower those who might not otherwise have a voice.

¹³ Typology of interactions in the table has been adapted from M Anderson, 1999, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support peace – or War*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Capacity effect The way activities are delivered may affect how state and non-state structures and institutions function.	<p>Weak state institutions may be made weaker when basic services are delivered by the UN rather than by those institutions.</p> <p>Assistance or services delivered through state institutions can strengthen their capacity to deliver services in a responsive and inclusive manner.</p>	<p>Replacement of state institutions can weaken confidence in governance authorities and strengthen the role of alternative political or conflict actors, and/or reliance on UN activities.</p>
Economic market effect UN activities may affect economic markets by changing economic fundamentals, affecting supply streams, creating new markets or undermining existing ones.	<p>Activities may overwhelm local markets with goods such as food aid, undermining the viability of licit economic activity and encouraging actors to engage in illicit activities, which may be linked to conflict.</p> <p>UN activities may strengthen the economic independence, or development, of certain groups or areas, contributing to inequalities.</p> <p>Alternatively, activities may build economic supply chains across conflict lines, encouraging positive economic inter-dependency.</p>	<p>Negative market effects may strengthen those conflict actors who are able control illicit economic activities or the benefits of corruption.</p> <p>Economic actors are more likely to support peace when there are economic incentives to do so.</p>
Theft/diversion Actors on the ground may steal or redirect assistance or the benefits of activities for distribution to their own constituencies or to pursue their own interests. Alternatively, they may use their influence or control to deny that assistance or benefit to others.	<p>Theft and diversion of resources may provide significant economic incentives for maintaining a state of conflict.</p>	<p>Actors with the ability to steal or divert assistance or benefits of activities will be empowered and have greater resources to pursue their interests.</p> <p>Diversion and/or denial of assistance or assets may be used as leverage by one conflict actor over others.</p>

Modelling behaviour Stakeholders may see the way UN entities and other assistance providers behave as a model for how to conduct themselves.	<p>UN activities delivered in a way that is unaccountable, non-inclusive, or focuses on delivery over process, legitimizes such approaches to partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Activities delivered in a way that encourages inclusive and participatory processes, following defined processes, may strengthen the place of such approaches as conflict management mechanisms.</p>	<p>Stakeholders may mirror lack of trust or lack of transparency demonstrated by UN entities in their own interactions.</p> <p>Stakeholders may mirror behaviour that promotes trust and accountability by UN entities.</p>
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Reviewing the impact of UN activities

In designing new activities, when context analyses are updated and when significant changes occur in the context, it is important to analyse how UN activities may affect the peace and conflict context.

These impacts could be positive or negative. Negative interactions constitute conflict risks that activities may contribute to conflict and do harm, while positive interactions represent opportunities through which UN activities may contribute to sustaining peace. Managing these risks and opportunities is described in the next chapters.

Case study: Risk of heightened tensions through agricultural support

In a conflict setting, a UN agency supported improved knowledge and agricultural inputs for local farmers to strengthen resilience. This resulted in increased vegetable crop production. Restrictions in access to local markets, however, meant that the crops were sold at lower than expected prices to opportunistic intermediaries linked with local elites. With negligible improvement in household resilience, due to the lower than expected income, the increased local production significantly increased profits for intermediaries linked to conflict actors.

Furthermore, the project focused on a specific geographical area, but the increased vegetable crop volume was sold into the main governorate-level market, which over time, due to newly constructed cold storage capacities, undermined the economic interests of producers from other districts in the governorate. This resulted in increased tensions, disputes and ultimately armed clashes.

These two adverse effects of an otherwise successful project exemplify the need to understand risks more broadly, and how UN activities might inadvertently affect peace and conflict at the local and sub-national level. Both negative effects were addressed, by providing additional training to farmers, supporting collective negotiating capacity, crop diversification and through better understanding of local market dynamics, thus reducing the risk of further tensions and violence.

Additional Resources

- M. Wallace, 2015, From Principle to Practice: A User’s Guide to Do No Harm, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.
- M. Anderson, 1999, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2011, *Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on UN support to non-UN security forces (HRDDP)*, available online at <http://dag.un.org/handle/11176/387416>, accessed September 2019

Case study: Need to redefine international assistance in Libya in 2014

As a result of the sudden escalation in violence after the 2014 Libyan elections, most existing international projects focusing on service delivery, institutional support and capacity building of government and civil society were paused, initially due to security and access and later also due to political and institutional uncertainty.

It took international actors including donors and the UN, six to nine months to determine that many of those projects were no longer relevant to the changed political and conflict context in the country and would either need to be redesigned or stopped.

If donors and the UN had more critically focused on reviewing the relevance of programming in response to their changing awareness of the situation, they might have been able to respond more quickly and efficiently.





5

Step 3, Managing the dilemmas and risks of feeding conflict

The third conflict sensitivity step looks to adapt UN activities to manage risks and leverage opportunities to build and sustain peace. This chapter focuses on managing the risks of feeding conflict highlighted in the conflict sensitivity analysis/assessment by identifying strategies to mitigate and respond to them. The next chapter will outline how to leverage opportunities to build and sustain peace.

Identifying and managing risks of feeding into conflict

A risk that feeds into conflict is a potential interaction between activities and the peace and conflict context, which could worsen conflict dynamics.

Managing risks requires identifying *mitigations* to reduce the likelihood and impact of risks and developing *responses* to minimize the consequences of risks when they occur.

Activities should be designed to incorporate these mitigations and responses. The table on pages 50-51 highlights some example risks, mitigations and responses in a matrix tool, which can be useful to catalogue risks faced by UN activities.¹⁴

Several considerations are worth bearing in mind when identifying risks, mitigations and responses:


- Some risks may seem obvious, particularly to those who have been involved in context analysis. Nevertheless, it is important to explicitly name and identify those risks and to think through mitigations and responses, even if they appear to be already built into activities. Explicitly dealing with risks ensures that what may be obvious to some should be described to everyone. It also provides

a reference point for reviewing risks in the event where the context may shift.

- Managing a risk feeding conflict by adopting mitigations and responses may in turn create new risks. When adapting UN activities in response to identified risks, it is important to further assess the potential impact of those adaptations.
- Addressing risks feeding conflict is not about risk avoidance. Often, harm may also be caused by not delivering UN activities, particularly when those activities may respond to urgent humanitarian needs or address long-term structural drivers of conflict. In such circumstances, the responsibility of implementers is to carefully weigh the potential benefits and harm of those activities and to minimize harm wherever possible.
- Mitigating risks that feed conflict may not require significant changes to activities. Rather, they may include subtle adaptations in terms of process, dialogue, consultations, communications and the stakeholders engagement during activities or locations where activities may be undertaken. These small changes can make a big difference in terms of preventing conflict and are much easier than responding when tensions escalate.

¹⁴ The risks identified in the table are examples only and, therefore, quite generic. Risks are activity and context specific and should be identified for each activity.

Helpful Tip:
When to review risks

 Risks, mitigations and responses are most easily considered during the planning and design of UN activities.

However, because peace and context change and new risks may be identified, a regular review of risks should also be included within activity monitoring. Time should also be allocated for reviewing updates to risks during governance processes like project board meetings, coordination mechanisms or in the UNCT.

- Where risks do require significant adaptations to activities, either during design or implementation, it is best to deal with these openly and proactively. This is easier when conflict sensitivity is embedded into the project design and when management and donors are on board and informed about the potential conflict sensitivity challenges the activities may face.
- On occasion, it may not be possible to deal with risks within one project or intervention, or even within the mandate or capacity of one organization. In such circumstances, it is worth considering whether other projects within the country programme, other UN entities or other partners could be engaged to help address the risks, such as through coordinated action or adding complementary dialogue, mediation or access negotiation activities.
- Particularly at the project level, it may appear impossible to deal with risks that are influenced by higher strategic level issues or by other actors. It is still necessary to identify such risks, to understand potential harm that could be caused and identify ways to minimize those. Identifying and detailing such risks can also be used to advocate for change with strategic decision makers or policy makers.

- Mitigations and responses to risks can be easily undermined if different assistance providers adopt different approaches. It is especially valuable to identify risks, mitigations and responses with other assistance providers working in the same context to develop common approaches and strategies. Providing a space for discussion of conflict sensitivity through coordination mechanisms or at the UNCT level provides an opportunity to jointly analyse risks, both at the operational and strategic levels.

Conflict sensitivity dilemmas

A conflict sensitivity dilemma is a situation where any course of action, including not delivering an activity, could cause harm to the peace and conflict context. Navigating conflict sensitivity dilemmas requires careful consideration of the risks and potential benefits of different courses of action and explicit recognition of the potential harms that could result from activities. After potential mitigations and responses are identified and different options weighed, it may be necessary to adopt a “least bad” option. When doing so, it is important to outline why a particular approach is adopted.

There is a temptation when dealing with a conflict sensitivity dilemma to try to ignore it, refuse to recognize it, or to downplay it. This is understandable. It is difficult for anyone to accept that harm may be caused by their work, while organizations also often fear reputational consequences if harm caused by their work is identified to partners, stakeholders or the media. It is invariably better in such circumstances to explicitly acknowledge conflict sensitivity dilemmas during planning and review. Doing so can help staff and organizations justify the reasons for adopting particular approaches and allow for more effective programming.

If necessary, the thinking behind decisions for navigating the conflict sensitivity dilemmas can also be used to manage reputational risk, by allowing decision makers to demonstrate how they have engaged in thorough efforts to navigate the challenges of working in such a challenging context.

South Sudan Case Study

A UN agency and local partners worked with semi-nomadic livestock-owning Dinka Ngok and the Missiriya communities in the Abyei Administrative Area (a contested zone on the border between South Sudan and the Sudan) to reduce the risk of resource-based conflicts and strengthen resilience. Though historically both communities had peacefully shared grazing land and water in the area, conflicts between the two communities over natural resources had become more frequent in recent years.

One concern both groups share is livestock health – a crucial source of livelihoods and the main asset of many families. Given the movement of animals in search of pasture and risk of disease transmission, provision of community-based veterinary services to both communities was identified as an entry point to allow wider natural resource access and use issues to be addressed.

This presented, however, a dilemma. Not exploiting this window of opportunity to build inter-community bridges could mean continued tensions and conflict between the groups, but engaging both groups separately through vaccination campaigns could have the unintended consequence of reinforcing their “separateness” on either side of the delimitation zone.

After careful analysis, lengthy discussions and negotiations with local authorities and traditional leaders, it was agreed that veterinarians working with the Dinka Ngok led Secretariat of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Fishery (SAARF) would be supported with technical training and inputs, and vaccinate Missiriya cattle. These actions, as well as improved resilience and livestock health, led over time to a positive impact on levels of trust and confidence between the two ethnic groups. Missiriya cattle herders were allowed to cross into Dinka Ngok controlled territory in search of water points and grazing, eventually resulting in a local level peace agreement on movement of livestock and access to natural resources.

Additional Resources

- CDA, 2004, *The Do No Harm Handbook (The Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict)*, Local Capacities for Peace Project, Collaborative Development Action and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

This table presents some examples of conflict risks at a generic level, including potential mitigations and responses.

Conflict risk	Description	Examples mitigation	Examples response
(Perceptions of) inequitable delivery of the benefits of activities exacerbates real or perceived inequalities among different community groups and worsens inter-communal relations. (Distribution effect)	<p>The need for assistance overlaps with communal groups, political affiliation, identity or other differences, such as displaced persons in a host community.</p> <p>When activities are delivered in such a context, groups that do not receive benefits feel marginalized or excluded, worsening relations among them.</p> <p>The resulting increase in tension may trigger violence among communities and against partners and implementers.</p>	<p>Establish delivery consultation mechanisms that are inclusive of different groups within the area and which meaningfully inform implementation of activities (may require slowing down of activities).</p> <p>Establish and communicate clear criteria for deciding beneficiaries of activities to leaders and members of different groups.</p> <p>Identify ways to include other groups within activities.</p> <p>Establish dialogue or grievance mechanisms.</p>	<p>Engage with groups to understand concerns and clearly communicate the basis for selection of beneficiaries.</p>
Delivery of assistance undermines ordinary economy and incentivizes conflict-related economic activity (Economic market effect)	<p>Humanitarian assistance may reduce the price of food and other products on the local market, reducing the sustainability of local businesses. Cash assistance, on the other hand, could drive up prices.</p> <p>Lower prices may drive local businesses and labour towards conflict-related economic activities, such as providing services and supplies to conflict actors, illicit activities or participation in armed and criminal groups. Higher prices could benefit a limited number of traders or local businesses.</p>	<p>Ensure humanitarian assistance is informed by an understanding of local markets.</p> <p>Humanitarian assistance should include purchases from local markets in a way that minimizes the inflationary impact of the price of goods and does not incentivize conflict actors to consolidate control of local markets.</p>	<p>Undertake a cost/benefit analysis of negative impact vs. urgent humanitarian needs.</p> <p>Reassess how goods and supplies are sourced.</p>
Engagement with competing authorities reinforces political polarization and perceptions of marginalization. (Recognition effect)	<p>Working with or through authorities who are non-representative and non-inclusive can give the impression that UN entities support such approaches, exacerbating perceptions of marginalisation.</p> <p>Working with actors based on the degree to which they operate in accordance with defined political, administrative and legal processes can strengthen the idea of peaceful political processes and the rule of law.</p>	<p>UN entities and other international actors should work towards defining a commonly agreed set of principles towards dealing with different authorities in the context.</p>	<p>Engage in clear and coherent messaging towards national and local counterparts, as well as the wider population, regarding the principles and basis for UN engagement with different political actors.</p>
Humanitarian assistance is stolen by armed groups (Theft/diversion effect)	<p>A portion of humanitarian assistance may be stolen by armed groups in command of checkpoints or areas of distribution.</p> <p>This assistance may be redirected to members of the armed group or its constituency or may be sold for profit, strengthening the capacity of the armed group to pursue its objectives.</p>	<p>Monitoring of extent to which humanitarian assistance is diverted.</p> <p>Ensure access is negotiated with groups, including clear communication of the purposes of humanitarian assistance and terms of access are agreed.</p>	<p>Look to alternative modalities for delivery when theft/diversion is identified, for example, through digital cash transfers directly to beneficiaries.</p> <p>Engage with political or diplomatic actors to apply pressure on armed groups.</p> <p>Undertake cost/benefit assessment of degree to which armed groups benefit from diversion/theft and humanitarian objectives are compromised.</p>



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Step 4, Leveraging opportunities for building and sustaining peace

Conflict sensitivity is not just about managing potential harm. If UN activities can contribute to conflict through negative interactions, they can also contribute to sustaining peace through positive interactions. Step 4 requires UN entities to consider how their activities can leverage opportunities to contribute to building and sustaining peace.

How to identify and leverage opportunities to build and sustain peace

Opportunities for UN activities to contribute to building and sustaining peace can be identified by reviewing the interactions identified in steps 2 and 3 and thinking through how those interactions could be used positively.

As opportunities are identified, it is necessary to consider how activities should be adapted in order to take advantage of them.

As with risks, peacebuilding opportunities are context and activity specific. In general, UN activities may contribute to building and sustaining peace in three broad ways:

1. By positively addressing peace and conflict factors;
2. By improving the relationships among stakeholders, for example, among groups or between the state and the population; and
3. By inducing positive attitudes and behaviour.

Positively addressing peace and conflict factors

UN activities are likely to interact with peace and conflict factors affecting the context in which they are undertaken. When seeking to identify opportunities, it is important to list which factors the activities could affect and how, i.e. a theory of change should be developed. Then, based on an understanding of how those factors affect peace and conflict, identify if and how activities could be adjusted to reduce the negative impacts of factors and/or promote the positive ones.

Peacebuilding interventions are typically designed with the express intention of addressing peace and conflict factors. This can include a range of activities from security sector reform, fostering political agreements or building local community conflict management mechanisms. Peacebuilding approaches can also be integrated into larger programmes with primary objectives in the areas of, for example, education, health, food security or water and sanitation.

Other conflict entry points might exist for responding to peace and conflict factors. For example, where a peace and conflict factor has been identified relating to inequalities in service provision among different communal

Helpful Tip: Thinking about opportunities



Identifying opportunities through which UN activities can contribute to building and sustaining peace may appear more difficult than identifying potential risks. It is relatively easy to identify problems compared with solutions, and the costs of doing harm are often easier to grasp than the opportunity costs associated with missed positive contributions.

To aid identification of positive contributions, explicit brainstorming processes for identifying opportunities to contribute to sustaining peace should be undertaken during the planning and design of assistance activities. When context analyses are updated, it is also important to ask if new opportunities have emerged as a result of changes in the context.

groups, UN activities aimed at rehabilitating local services can be designed in a way that directly reduces those inequalities, by ensuring that the benefits of activities are distributed across communal lines.

Improving relationships among stakeholders

The way in which United Nations activities are delivered can often be leveraged to improve relationships among stakeholders. Some ways this could be achieved include:

- Participatory design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes;
- Incorporating processes into activities that foster trust across conflict divides, such as collaborative needs assessments or participatory decision-making processes;
- Establishing dialogue and grievance mechanisms;
- Delivering assistance in a way that fosters interdependency across conflict divides;
- Enhancing trust among groups and between the population and the government; and

- Applying approaches that ensure that communities or social groups which may not otherwise have a voice, including women and youth, can be heard by other stakeholders and incorporated into needs assessments and decision making.

Again, peacebuilding activities may be designed with the intention of addressing these relationships directly, such as through dialogue or reconciliation mechanisms.

Other conflict-sensitive activities may also improve relationships among stakeholders. For example, activities aimed at building local governance capacity may include efforts to ensure that local authorities develop processes for public consultation that includes all communities and constituencies within the area.

Inducing positive attitudes and behaviour

The way UN entities act can have a significant influence on partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. It is important to ensure that UN activities are implemented in a way that bolsters principles of trust, inclusivity, due process and rule of law, strengthening good governance and building accountability.

Activities should be implemented:

- In consultation with all relevant stakeholders, beneficiaries and legitimate authorities, including women, youth, traditionally marginalized groups, etc.;
- In some cases, certain groups are better consulted separately, for example, if there are discussions related to conflict-related sexual violence as part of the conflict analysis;
- In a way that is relevant to the needs of beneficiaries and all segments of the population, inclusive of the various stakeholders involved and responsive to feedback;
- Transparently and openly, with clear communication of their purpose and the basis for certain decisions;
- Based on clear and open criteria informing participation and/or beneficiary selection;

Theory of Change

A theory of change describes the assumed or hoped causal relationship between an intervention and its (intended) peacebuilding outcome, result or impact. It explains *why* a certain result is expected.

In its simplest form it can be stated as:

“If we do X (action), then it will achieve Y (progress towards peace)”

A theory of change should include the results chain, pathway or sequence of change that lead to the long-term outcome that the interventions aim to achieve and the context and assumptions the pathway depends on.

The need to check assumptions (and prejudices, etc.) against evidence is critical. The process of defining a theory of change is an important tool for critical thinking and dialogue that makes assumptions explicit and contributes to better designed interventions and results.

Theories of change need to be flexible, precise, nuanced and contextually specific. It needs to be reviewed regularly in order to adapt activities if the context changes or assumptions turn out to be false based on, for example, monitoring and evaluation.

A theory of change for peacebuilding needs to be based on a conflict analysis, which would identify drivers of conflict that specific activities try to address. A few examples^[1] of theories of change are:

- *If* communities work together to identify common needs, and collectively respond to these needs, *then* relationships will be fostered across ethnic/sectarian/tribal/other divides.
- *If* communities strengthen conflict mediation mechanisms, and local livelihoods are improved through income generation strategies, *then* communities will be more resilient to violent conflict related to natural resource management, and intra- and inter-community trust will be strengthened.
- *If* natural resources are enhanced and equitable agreements are reached on their use, *then* conflict / tensions over natural resource access between competing user groups will reduce.
- *If* livelihoods are strengthened through an inclusive participatory process, *then* the community will work together, which signals a positive change in circumstances, reducing a sense of marginalization and strengthening resilience, and will provide purpose and meaningful employment to youth at risk of recruitment into armed groups.
- *If* the government develops responsive, inclusive and accountable institutions at the national and subnational levels and enhances service delivery accessible to all segments of the population, thereby addressing grievances around inequalities, *then* citizens will increasingly trust the state and reduce tensions among groups.
- *If* dialogue or grievance mechanisms to connect citizens to local authorities are strengthened and referrals are made to enhance access and the quality of service delivery, *then* this contributes to fostering state-citizen trust and legitimacy.
- *If* legal barriers for young people to political participation are removed through reforms of voting laws that address age, caste, religious and gender-based discrimination and exclusion *then* youth participation, and ultimately, their confidence in governing institutions will increase.
- *If* assistance is provided to both host and IDP communities, *then* this can prevent tensions over access to resources.
- *If* government enhances and maintains its performance in the provision of basic social services, including education and nutrition, *then* this signals the state's willingness and ability to respond to its population's needs and citizens will trust the state.

[1] See Caroline Delgado, Suyoun Jang, Gary Milante and Dan Smith, *The World Food Programme's contribution to improving the prospects for peace*, Preliminary Report, June 2019, available at: <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/other-publications/world-food-programmes-contribution-improving-prospects-peace>.

- With due sensitivity to historical, cultural and communal considerations; and
- Based on clear processes communicated to stakeholders and followed consistently.

It is essential that communication strategies and key messages are aligned with conflict sensitivity aims.

Leveraging opportunities for building and sustaining peace by integrating peacebuilding as a primary or secondary objective

When leveraging opportunities for building and sustaining peace, another important consideration is whether and how specific peacebuilding goals are incorporated into UN interventions and programmes – where peacebuilding goals might be the primary or secondary objective/intent of the action. This is especially true for UN development and humanitarian actors. This can be reflected in the theory of change.

When peacebuilding is a **primary objective**, the logic of the intervention is first and foremost deliberately focused on building and sustaining peace through the type of actions outlined above – with other humanitarian or development outcomes as secondary goals. For example, for a development programme, this could lead to formulating a specific result area (at the outcome or output level) around the peacebuilding objective, while other important development objectives (health, nutrition, education, etc.) become secondary in nature. Humanitarian action may contribute to peace, but it will not be a primary objective as its main purpose remains to address lifesaving needs and alleviate suffering.

When peacebuilding is a **secondary objective** of an intervention, programme seeks to primarily fulfil development or humanitarian goal, such as strengthening social service delivery, while secondarily fulfilling peacebuilding objectives. In these cases, the commitment to peacebuilding objectives might be reflected in secondary result areas, such as the integration of specific peacebuilding activities into the programme design, the type of indicators chosen and/or decisions

over “how” programmes are to be designed and carried out, for example, in relation to the choice over programming strategies, sequencing or partnerships.

Additional Resources

- K Bush, *A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects in Conflict Zones*, Working Paper No 1, The Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Programme Initiative & The Evaluation Unit,
- UN-World Bank, *Pathways for Peace*, available on-line at: <https://www.pathwaysforpeace.org/>
- Caroline Delgado, Suyoun Jang, Gary Milante and Dan Smith, *The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace, Preliminary Report, SIPRI and WFP*, June 2019, available at: <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/other-publications/world-food-programmes-contribution-improving-prospects-peace>
- WHO, *Health and Peace*, Thematic paper, December 2019, available at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/un_pb_review-who_health_peace_thematic_paper_final_O.pdf
- UNDP (2019): *Strengthening Social Cohesion- Conceptual framing and programming implication* <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/strengthening-social-cohesion--conceptual-framing-and-programmin.html>
- UNDP (2019): *Engaging with Insider Mediators - Sustaining peace in an age of turbulence* <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/engaging-with-insider-mediators---sustaining-peace-in-an-age-of-.html>
- United Nations and Folke Bernadotte Academy, *Youth, Peace and Security: A Programming Handbook (2021)* <https://www.youth4peace.info/YPShandbook>



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Building capacities for conflict prevention in Bolivia

The project “Building and Consolidating National Capacities for Conflict Prevention” is part of the second phase of an EU and UN collaboration to support national and local actors in internal conflict management processes and the development of skills for dialogue and constructive negotiation in nine conflict settings. In Bolivia, the project focused on capacity building on dialogue, mediation and constructive conflict management during a politically dynamic time, with a particular emphasis on the mining sector and on women. Activities aimed to increase insider mediation capacities of civil society stakeholders and the public sector as well as the country’s peace architecture. The project has enabled the building of networks between the civil society stakeholders in the mining sector and mining and metallurgy ministry officials. The civil society organizations participants have continued to apply the skills obtained through the project in all spaces of life: at personal, family, community and professional levels.

Source: “Strengthening capacities for dialogue and the constructive management of conflicts of the joint EU and UN on Bolivia,” mission report, final 2018

7

Step 5, Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding

Monitoring peace and conflict dynamics in the context of UN activities is key to ensure a programme remains conflict sensitive, does “no harm” and positively impacts peacebuilding outcomes throughout its lifecycle. Evaluating against conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding outcomes is essential to ensure accountability and document positive – and negative – impacts on peace from the programme intervention.

Monitoring peace and conflict issues

The objective of monitoring peace and conflict dynamics in the context of the activities is to ensure that activities are sensitive to the conflict; create awareness of the potential risks to peace as conflict risks evolve and as the programme unfolds; and adapt programme activities according to emerging or changing conflict risks. In this regard, a monitoring framework should seek to:

- Understand how peace and conflict affects delivery of activities;
- Identify how conflict risks are impacted by programmatic activities; and
- Identify when new opportunities for peace emerge and how ongoing activities can be leveraged.

Conflict-sensitive programmes should adequately resource such activities – or at least ensure that activities are informed by an ongoing evolving understanding of conflict

dynamics, beyond the design phase of the programme. This requires monitoring peace and conflict dynamics and that their relations to a programme is explicitly included as part of the design and planning of activities.

For programmes that seek an explicit positive impact on peacebuilding outcomes, involvement of local stakeholder is key and can be secured through either perception surveys, dialogue mechanisms or community-based monitoring. These approaches can:

- Improve understanding of project progress and impact during implementation, which is especially important and relevant with activities as sensitive, subjective and qualitative as peacebuilding;
- Provide access to project feedback in real time and directly from stakeholders so that adjustments can be made before the project has ended;
- Tailor current and future projects and policies to local needs, including ensuring respect of the Do-No-Harm principle; and
- Empower beneficiaries through greater involvement and participation in project implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as design and analysis.

Criteria	Application for Conflict Sensitivity	Application for Peacebuilding
Relevance	Is the intervention responsive and adjusting to the conflict context?	Do objectives and activities address key drivers of conflict and are responsive to conflict?
Effectiveness	Are conflict mitigation measures effective in managing conflict and generating peacebuilding outcomes?	Have intended objectives been met with respect to addressing key drivers of conflict?
Impact	What are the effects, intended or unintended, on the peace and conflict context?	What are the effects on the key drivers of peace and conflict in the context?
Sustainability	Will the programme be culturally accepted, and how does it link to local capacities, power structures? Or is it at odds with local dynamics?	Are the peacebuilding outcomes sustainable beyond the lifetime of the project?

Evaluating peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity outcomes

Programmes that seek to do no harm and have a positive impact on peace should include evaluation of peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity outcomes and impacts – with a view to reporting results of the activities and to identifying lessons that can inform relevance, effectiveness and impact on peacebuilding outcomes. The OECD DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance is a widely used and understood evaluation framework which measures relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Evaluation of programmes that seek to make a positive contribution to peacebuilding and sustaining peace should be considered already at the design stage of programming. Indicators related to the peacebuilding outcomes should be selected, informed by the theory of change, and programme design should be structured accordingly. Specific peacebuilding related indicators depend on the conflict analysis and

the intended (and unintended) impact of the intervention. Typical peace outcomes could relate to popular perceptions; levels of trust and confidence in governments; trust among groups; level of participation and buy-in from key stakeholders; non-recidivism of project beneficiaries; and social cohesion.

UN tools for ensuring conflict-sensitive programmes

While conflict-sensitive programmes require context and conflict analysis, monitoring peace and conflict dynamics and evaluating peacebuilding outcomes, there are a range of system-wide tools available to support the implementation of conflict sensitivity. These include:

- The Common Country Analysis (CCA) - which should offer an analytical foundation for context analysis and should include a multidimensional risk and conflict analysis relevant to most programmes;

¹⁵ Table adapted from R Goldwyn, D Chigas, 2013, ‘Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity: Methodological challenges and practical solutions’, Conflict, Crime and Violent Results Initiative (CCVRI), DFID.

- UN INFO, which has implemented a peacebuilding marker to help track the extent to which key activities under the SDCF are conflict sensitive and designed with the aim to achieve peacebuilding outcomes;
- Agency-specific conflict-sensitivity markers to track the extent to which individual programmes are indeed conflict sensitive; and
- Human Rights based approach, which is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights, seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of conflicts and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede peacebuilding.

The table on pages 61-63 describes a list of activities that help incorporate conflict sensitivity in the UN activities related to monitoring and evaluation across programming, planning, policy, coordination and procurement.

Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding indicators

Several considerations should be taken into account when deciding on peacebuilding indicators to inform monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding programmes and conflict-sensitive programmes:

Type/level of engagement		
Step 1: Understand context	Step 2: Analyse interaction with UN programmes	Step 3: Adapt UN monitoring and evaluation efforts
Developing and implementing an intervention or project		
Project staff have access to regularly updated conflict analysis, detailing factors, actors and dynamics relevant to the areas in which project activities are being delivered, including analyses of local areas where activities are implemented. RCOs and UNCTs can draw on expertise throughout UN system, including from non-resident entities.	Project activities are reviewed in terms of which conflict factors they may impact, which stakeholders are involved and which relationships they may affect. Conflict risks are identified within project risk matrices, outlining how project activities could harm conflict dynamics. Potential opportunities for contributing to building and sustaining peace are identified and listed.	Mitigations are identified and incorporated into project activities to reduce likelihood and impact of conflict risks. Response plan developed to respond to conflict risks when they occur. Project activities adjusted to take advantage of opportunities that contribute to building and sustaining peace – and peacebuilding indicators are adopted and implemented at the outcome level. Key conflict dynamics are effectively monitored and programmes are continually adapted. Project governance meetings reflect on the continued conflict sensitivity of activities, informed by updated analysis, and are open to making changes as necessary.

Developing a country strategy or programme – such as the UNSDCF

Overall and up-to-date country conflict analysis is part of CCA.	Relevance, appropriateness and timeliness of programme are reviewed in relation to peace and conflict context.	Peacebuilding outcomes and the do-no harm principle are made explicit topics for strategic reviews/mid-term evaluations, informed by updated analysis and M&E data.
Conflict drivers and risk factors are indicators and peacebuilding outcomes are considered part of the programme design and strategy.	Peace and conflict factors are reviewed in terms of how they could be affected by proposed programming –positively or negatively – and the effect of proposed programming on peace and conflict dynamics is assessed.	Programmatic priorities are linked to addressing conflict factors where relevant and possible, in order to reduce the risk of violent conflict.
In the case of the UNSDCF, UNCT members are consulted and take part in the conflict analysis. The government can be consulted, but should not sign-off on analysis in preparing UNSDCF.	Conflict risks are identified, including risks of not delivering assistance along certain lines.	Mitigation plans are developed to manage conflict risks – at the senior strategic level.

Coordination

Context and conflict analysis are conducted jointly, for example, as part of CCA.	Shared assessment of how coordinated activities may affect the peace and conflict context is conducted.	Coordination mechanisms are used to create coherence and synergies among UN system activities, including between peacekeeping or political mission and UNCT.
Coordination processes are informed by a shared, mutually understood conflict analysis.	Joint assessment of opportunities to contribute to peace is undertaken.	Coordination mechanisms are used to mutually agree on compatible conflict risk mitigations and responses.
Joint identification of conflict risks is undertaken.		

Procurement and grant management

Due diligence checks are undertaken for implementers, including their relation to conflict actors.	Assessment is undertaken regarding how the engagement of the contractor may affect the peace and conflict context, including affecting factors and relationships between stakeholders.	Implementers demonstrate understanding of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, and the procurement process does not inadvertently exacerbate grievances.
		Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding indicators are written into procurement documents.

Human resources

Staff have access to up-to-date conflict analysis and contextual understanding relevant to their work. All staff working in conflict settings should aim to take conflict analysis and peacebuilding training, for example, online at UNSSC.	Staff receive training on incorporating conflict and peacebuilding into their work.	Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding are incorporated into staff performance appraisals.
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Communications

Developed understanding is established of media usage, predominant narratives and political sensitivities within the peace and conflict context.	Periodic review is undertaken of how communication messages have been received, including if/ how they have fed into political narratives.	Communication materials are reviewed from a conflict sensitivity perspective before release.
		Communications plan is developed for responding to conflict risks when/if they occur.

- Indicators must be realistic given resources available and access to data – there is no use identifying indicators that cannot realistically be measured;
 - Wherever possible, peacebuilding indicators should be disaggregated according to relevant considerations within the context, such as by sex, age, geographic area or identity group and all other prohibited grounds of discrimination;
 - Ensure that monitoring enables interaction with local stakeholders and allows unforeseen complaints and feedback mechanisms to surface – beyond the set of indicators selected.

The table below provides a non-exhaustive list of some example, generic conflict-sensitivity indicators to aid the design. Specific indicators need to be developed in relation to the context.

Additional Resources

 - R Goldwyn, D Chigas, 2013, ‘Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity: Methodological challenges and practical solutions’, Conflict, Crime and Violent Results Initiative (CCVRI), DFID.
- OECD DAC, 2007, ‘Encouraging Effective Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities: Towards DAC Guidance’, *OECD Journal on Development*, Vol 8, No 3.
 - PBF, *Guidance Note on Perception Surveys and Community-based Monitoring*, available at: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/pbf-guidance-note-perception-surveys-and-community-based-monitoring>
 - UNDP (2019): *PVE risk management guidance note*: www.pvetoolkit.org/media/1178/josie-kaye-and-giordano-segnari-2019-risk-management-for-pve-programmes-guidance-for-practitioners.pdf
 - UNDP (2019): *PVE Monitoring and evaluation toolkit* <http://www.pvetoolkit.org/me-for-pve-resources/>
 - YPS Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation, Module 2: Youth-inclusive programming from start to finish

Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding indicators

Type of indicator	Example indicator	Means of verification
Overall level of conflict	# of casualties per month, disaggregated by geographic area, sex and age # violent deaths # of security incidents per month, disaggregated by geographic area, sex and age Homicides rates, disaggregated by geographic area, sex and age	UN Security data SDG 16.1 indicators Publicly available datasets ACLED UNODC
Intercommunal tension	% of community members reporting favourable views of other communities (disaggregated by community, sex and age)	Surveys
Community conflict management mechanisms	# of conflict incidents de-escalated by community conflict management mechanisms (disaggregated by geographic area)	Incident tracking
Competition over national economic resources	# of security incidents around key economic infrastructure	Incident tracking
Distribution effects	% of public with favourable perception of national, sub-national or local authorities or international assistance (disaggregated by sex, age, geographic area and by conflict-related group, such as communal identity, political affiliation etc.)	Surveys
Recognition effects	% of public which perceives that national or international support favours a particular conflict actor, disaggregated by conflict-related group	Surveys
Modelling behaviour	% of public showing trust in international assistance activities vs national processes disaggregated by conflict-related group.	Surveys
Indicators related programmatic risks		
Capacity effects	Proportion of basic services delivered through international assistance compared with national actors (over time)	Activity reporting
Theft/diversion effects	% and value of assistance stolen or redirected by armed groups	Activity reporting



References and Frameworks

Frameworks

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Libya Conflict Sensitive Approaches Forum facilitates joint conflict analysis and updates for donors, in order to inform their work. It is hosted by the Embassy of Switzerland and implemented by Peaceful Change Initiative (PCI). See: <https://peacefulchange.org/programmes/north-africa-libya/csa-forum/>

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