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Guidance notes on conflict sensitivity in development cooperation

An update and supplement to the EU staff handbook on 'Operating in situations of conflict and fragility'

October 2021

Directorate-General for International Partnership

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Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
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Abbreviations and acronyms

AfT	Aid for Trade
C3S	Copernicus Climate Change Service
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSPPS	Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
CSRF	Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN)
EBA	Everything But Arms
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EIP	External Investment Plan
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GSP	Generalised Scheme of Preferences
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
IDPS	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
ILO	International Labour Organization
INCAF	International Network on Conflict and Fragility
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INTPA	International Partnerships (EC)
JHDF	Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NIP	National Indicative Programme
NOAA	National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RAI	Responsible Investment in Agroculture and Food Systems
RIMA	Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis
ROM	Results-Oriented Monitoring
RPBA	Recovery and Peacebuilding Needs Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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Foreword

The European Union (EU) has developed a number of policies in response to the complexity of operating in situations of fragility and conflict. These policies are founded on the EU's commitment to 'preserve peace, prevent conflict and strengthen international security' enshrined in the Treaty on the European Union as part of its foreign policy (art. 21.2). This policy framework is based on the understanding that fragility and conflict are interlinked in relation to the consequences they yield, the causes they are rooted in and the complexity of the cycles of fragility, violence and conflict.

Both the EU's Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises – one of the pillars of the EU Global Strategy – and the EU Consensus on Development call for the EU's engagement in fragile contexts to be conflict sensitive. The EU and its Member States should therefore harmonise their understanding of such contexts by conducting joint conflict analyses and 'integrate conflict sensitivity in all their work, to maximise the positive impact on peace'.

Consequently, the recently adopted Neighbourhood, Development and International Instrument (NDICI) Global Europe regulation included the requirement to carry out conflict analyses for fragile and conflict-affected countries in order to ensure conflict sensitivity of development programming and other areas of external action, along all phases of the intervention cycle.

This set of Guidance Notes aims to support capacities for conflict sensitivity assessments in EU Delegations and Headquarters to follow up on specific recommendations stemming from conflict analyses and other conflict prevention tools, such as the EU conflict Early Warning System (EWS).

This suite of notes will also support internal quality assurance processes, monitoring and evaluation, in relation to conflict sensitivity, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as these are now part of mainstreaming and monitoring requirements for EU development cooperation, together with resilience.

By completing and disseminating this work, it is our hope and our ambition that these notes will be helpful for developing joint response programmes based on a conflict-sensitive understanding of fragile situations by our Member States, our partner countries and their institutions, and all other partner organisations.

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Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 1

The EU policy framework on fragility and conflict, resilience and peace

This guidance note updates Part 1 of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility* and addresses concepts, policies and the European Union approach to situations of conflict and fragility. Ideally, it should be read in conjunction with the other 11 guidance notes in this publication covering conflict sensitivity in the programme cycle; conflict prevention and peacebuilding; gender; democracy and human rights; working with national actors; working with international actors; economic development and employment; climate change, the environment and natural resources; sustainable agriculture, land issues and food security; COVID-19; education).

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Introduction

This note aims to provide guidance on European Union (EU) policy frameworks related to resilience as well as conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and on EU commitments taking conflict sensitivity into account in the EU programme cycle. It begins by defining situations of conflict and fragility, and moves on to describe the current EU approach, concluding with a set of lessons learned from applying this approach.

This information is intended as useful background for the more specific scenarios described in the other 11 conflict sensitivity guidance notes. Also see the glossary for definitions of terminology used throughout this and the subsequent notes.

Situations of conflict and fragility

What, where and who?

In 2019, there were 358 conflicts worldwide, 196 of which were violent, and including 15 wars and 23 limited wars (HIIK, 2020). In the following year, 2020, the number of wars and violent crises increased significantly, with the overall number of wars increasing from 15 to 21, and the number of limited wars decreasing by 2 (HIIK, 2021). In Europe, two conflicts escalated to full-scale wars; in Sub-Saharan Africa, six ongoing wars continued and another five violent conflicts escalated to the level of war, making it the region with the highest number of conflicts at a war level in 2020.

Conflicts are increasingly affecting civilians; they drive 80 percent of all humanitarian needs globally[1]. In 2019, the United Nations documented 2,838 cases

[1] It is estimated that close to 90 per cent of current war casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children, compared to a century ago when 90 per cent of those who lost their lives were military personnel. See Marc (2016).

of conflict-related sexual violence, of which 96 per cent targeted women and girls (UN, 2019). Armed conflict affects men and women in differentiated yet equally brutal ways:

> From a gender perspective, quantifying armed conflict on the basis of battle-related deaths is biased towards men's experiences of armed conflict to the detriment of those of women and girls. While more men tend to get killed on the battlefield, women and children are often disproportionately targeted with other forms of potentially lethal violence during conflict. (Bastick, Grimm and Kunz, 2007)

Armed conflicts affect both low- and middle-income countries. This fact challenges the long-standing assumption that peace is directly connected to economic growth. Over the decades, violent conflicts have become more complex and protracted, involving more non-state groups and regional and international actors.

Why?

There is no single cause of conflict. Rather, conflict is context-specific, multi-causal and multidimensional. It can stem from a combination of factors, not least those related to fragility.

Global challenges such as exploitation of natural resources and climate change impacts, organised crime, illicit economies, terrorism, societal violence, growing discrimination and inequalities, shrinking democratic spaces, mass displacements of people within and across borders, call for a **broadened understanding of conflict**. Beyond traditional armed conflicts, warfare and battle deaths, there is a need to increase our focus on multidimensional patterns of fragility and recurring or systemic violence.

The understanding of fragility has evolved considerably in recent years. The current Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) fragility framework, which is broadly utilised by the EU, is built on five dimensions of fragility: economic, environmental, political, societal and security. The framework analyses each dimension through the accumulation and combination of risks and coping capacities. Recent OECD *States of Fragility* reports (OECD, 2016, 2018, 2020) highlight the relationship between violence and other dimensions of fragility, notably finding that:

- Homicide rates and social violence are highest in the group of highly **economically** fragile contexts.
- Contexts with high **political** fragility have high levels of all types of violence and are often in conflict or have a recent history of conflict/violence.
- Conflict and terrorism are more prevalent in moderate to highly **environmentally** fragile contexts.
- In the **societal** dimension, grievances and discrimination among certain groups can erode trust and create conditions that elites can use to mobilise support for violence.
- Moreover, violence can force displacement, which often worsens the segregation between groups and contributes to polarisation.

Current EU approach in situations of conflict and fragility

The EU has developed a number of policies and tools in response to the complexity of operating in situations of fragility and conflict, with the objective of supporting resilience, conflict prevention and peace. These are closely aligned with other global policies and commitments, such as the OECD Fragile States Principles, the Paris Declaration-Accra-Busan package, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU's policies and policy frameworks in relation to conflict and fragility originated from its commitment to '**preserve peace, prevent conflict and strengthen international security**' as part of its foreign policy, as enshrined in the establishing Maastricht Treaty on the European Union (art. 21.2.c).

The 2016 EU Global Strategy acknowledges that fragile contexts increasingly break down in violent conflict and that '**once a conflict does erupt, it typically becomes ever more intractable over time**' (EU, 2016, p. 28). Moreover, the New European Consensus on Development (EC, 2017) recognises that '**poverty, conflict, fragility and forced displacement are deeply interlinked and must be addressed in a coherent and comprehensive way**' and that the

EU and its Member States should 'address their root causes at all levels', ranging, for example, from exclusion, inequality, human rights violations, absence of rule of law, to environmental degradation and climate change impacts (para. 64).

In January 2018, the Council of the European Union adopted the EU Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, stressing the need to **incorporate conflict sensitivity into the EU's external action, and in particular in fragile contexts**. The Council also emphasised the importance of rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the Responsibility to Protect; along with promoting local ownership, inclusiveness, and the resilience and sustainability of supported actors by engaging with national and local authorities, communities and civil society.

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding have been on the EU's foreign policy agenda since 2001, with the related Commission communication and the Gothenburg Programme for conflict prevention (Council of the European Union, 2001). The 2011 Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention reaffirmed that '**[p]reventing conflicts and relapses into conflict**' is a primary objective of EU external action and calls for the reinvigoration of efforts to prevent conflicts and their recurrence (Council of the European Union, 2011, para. 1).

The New European Consensus for Development (EC, 2017) sanctions the interlinkage between development and peace, the added value of work on the fragility-conflict spectrum, and the need for conflict-sensitive approaches to development. It considers that '**peacebuilding and state-building are essential for sustainable development** and should take place at all levels and at all stages of the conflict cycle' (para. 66). It emphasises that '**countries in situations of fragility or affected by conflict require special attention and sustained international engagement** in order to achieve sustainable development' (para. 68).

In this light, the EU and its Member States commit to use development cooperation 'as part of the full range of policies and instruments to prevent, manage and help resolve conflicts and crises, avert humanitarian needs and build lasting peace and good governance' (para. 65). This implies that the EU should 'pay particular attention to fragile and conflict-affected states and will support the most vulnerable' (para. 68).

Moreover, the EU Global Strategy sets objectives for the EU to engage in a practical and principled way in peacebuilding and foster human security, as well in all stages of the conflict cycle, by **acting promptly on prevention, responding responsibly and decisively to crises, investing in stabilisation and avoiding premature disengagement** (EU, 2016, pp. 9–10).

Fragility and state building

The EU considers situations of fragility to be 'a major challenge to sustainable development and peace', with implications going beyond national borders and affecting regional and international security – and EU stability and interests (Council of the European Union, 2007), as well as EU values.

Fragility 'refers to **weak or failing structures and to situations where the social contract is broken** due to the State's incapacity or unwillingness to deal with its basic functions, meet its obligations and responsibilities' (Council of the European Union, 2007) with regard to, among others, the rule of law, human rights, security and safety, service delivery and reduction of poverty, equitable management and access to power and resources, and gender inequality.

The EU aims at addressing fragility with a **whole-of-government approach**, interlinking state building and peacebuilding, by establishing functioning and accountable institutions, able to deliver effective services to the population (Council of the European Union, 2007).

In fragile contexts, **EU support is targeted towards enabling recovery, peace and resilience** through securing a degree of stability and meeting basic needs in the short term, while strengthening long-term governance, capacities for peace, resilience and reconciliation, economic growth, and state building (EC, 2011, 2017).

The EU Global Strategy expands the reach of this concept, by setting the objective to **support the efforts**

of any conflict-affected country to re-build its own 'social contract between the state and its citizen', by 'fostering inclusive governance at all levels', 'inclusive political settlement' and 'sustainable statehood rooted in local agency' (EU, 2016, pp. 30-31).

The 2017 Joint Communication on 'A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action' (Council of the European Union, 2017a; further discussed under 'Building resilience') aligns the EU approach to a **broader definition of resilience** and to the multidimensional fragility model developed by the OECD, which characterises fragility as:

> ... the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, systems and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility can lead to negative outcomes including violence, poverty, inequality, displacement, and environmental and political degradation. Fragility is measured on a spectrum of intensity and expressed in different ways across the economic, environmental, political, security and societal dimensions, with a sixth dimension (human capital) forthcoming in States of Fragility 2022. [...] In doing so, the OECD multidimensional fragility framework captures the intersection of fragility, risk and resilience to inform where and how international actors can help address the root causes of fragility in each dimension while bolstering sources of resilience against it. (OECD, 2016, p. 73)

Making the case for conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity

In 2018, the European Council adopted Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises (Council of the European Union, 2018a), which expand the scope and ambition of the previous Comprehensive Approach. The new Integrated Approach is key to the implementation of the EU Global Strategy as well as the European Consensus on Development.

The Global Strategy calls for an approach that fosters peace and human security, is conflict sensitive, and ensures that women's key role in peacebuilding and state building is fully acknowledged and supported. The Integrated Approach sees adherence to human rights and gender equality as crucial in assessing, preventing and resolving conflicts, as well as in conflict prevention and for sustaining peace.

The Integrated Approach is aligned with the **multidimensionality** of the EU's various policies and instruments (e.g. humanitarian aid, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), diplomacy, development cooperation, trade) and has to be:

- **multi-level:** applied at the local, national, regional and global levels as needed;
- **multi-phase:** consistent throughout all phases of the conflict, including protracted conflicts and crises, in conflict prevention, crisis response, stabilisation and longer-term peacebuilding, in order to contribute to sustainable peace;
- **multilateral:** aimed at bringing together Member States, relevant EU institutions and other international and regional partners as well as civil society organisations (Council of the European Union, 2018a).

A central element of the Integrated Approach is that '**joint conflict analyses**' should be regularly carried out and updated for countries that are at risk of or facing conflict or instability and where the EU has a 'significant engagement'. These analyses should inform EU processes of strategic engagement and priority setting including regional and joint programming (Council of the European Union, 2018a, para. 9). The aim is 'to attain a **culture of early action** to effectively address the risks of emerging, escalating violent conflicts'. The Integrated Approach also stresses 'the need for EU's engagement in fragile contexts to work in a conflict sensitive manner'.

The New European Consensus for Development similarly commits the EU and its Member States to ground strategic responses and pursue synergies in fragile and conflict-affected areas, through shared knowledge and joint analysis, including joint conflict analysis. The Consensus also urges that the EU and Member States '**integrate conflict sensitivity in all their work, to maximise the positive impact on peace**' (EC, 2017, para. 68 and 75). It is essential that conflict sensitivity be incorporated into development and crisis response – for example, that the response to COVID-19 is handled in a conflict sensitive but also rights-based manner, in coordination

with communities, according to their specific needs and to the specific risks they face.

The EU approach to conflict analysis, and to conflict sensitivity more broadly, recognises that any comprehensive understanding of conflict and of conflict risks must include **analysis of how gender roles and norms interact with conflict** in both positive and negative ways.

By consistently integrating a gender perspective, conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity assessments will contribute to a better understanding of gender-sensitive implications in addressing fragilities and supporting resilience; how these affect the security and participation of diverse groups of women, men, girls and boys; as well as how gender roles affect power dynamics and the possibilities for women and men, respectively, to influence peace processes, peacebuilding, recovery and reconstruction, and development trajectories. This analysis may focus on security forces' capacity and capability to respond to security needs with a greater respect for gender equality and human rights, and to recommend more gender-responsive policies and practice to be established.

As of this writing, the nearly final version (March 2021) of the new EU financing instrument for development cooperation and international partnerships, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), which integrates previously stand-alone external funding instruments, includes various provisions on conflict sensitivity and resilience, including a **mandatory requirement for conflict analysis for all fragile and conflict-affected countries**.

Gender mainstreaming and the EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security

A gender-responsive approach should inform EU external action in order to achieve a conflict-sensitive and inclusive response to challenges faced by the civilian population in relation to conflict and fragility, conflict risks and other threats. This is a key premise for effective conflict prevention, peacebuilding, stabilisation and post-conflict reconstruction, with a **leave no one behind focus**.

Furthermore, **women's initiatives and participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts are indispensable** for the development of peaceful and just societies. The EU has committed to promote the role of women in peacebuilding and to enhance implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in its external action (as well as all related resolutions); the EU Comprehensive Approach on WPS was initially developed to support this.

These commitments were brought forward in the most recent EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security and the related action plan (Council of the European Union, 2018b). The WPS action plan has in turn been fully incorporated in the new EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) as one of its thematic pillars. This approach aims at ensuring that EU **external action is shaped to protect women and girls** from violence; that they contribute to increased equality between women and men during and after armed conflicts and in situations of fragility; and that they ensure equal and increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making processes related to peacebuilding, relief and recovery.

The approach recognises the close links between the issues of peace, security, development and gender equality. This means that the EU should strive to consider long-term development and human security concerns related to different gender and age groups; gender- and age-responsive processes related to security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); access to services such as health, education, social protection and psycho-social support for survivors of conflict; access to justice and transitional justice; and ongoing protection from sexual and gender-based violence in the context of the EU's commitment to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) (Council of the European Union, 2018b).

Building resilience

Strengthening resilience has emerged as an EU priority to address the multifaceted and interlinked vulnerabilities and causes of fragility. As noted in the 2017 'A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action', the concept of resilience refers

to 'the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt and quickly recover from shocks and pressures in a manner that reduces vulnerabilities and risks' – a definition initially formulated in a 2012 communication on resilience (EC, 2012, p. 5) and now further expanded.

The EU's Strategic Approach to Resilience has broadened this definition by considering:

- the adaptability of states, societies, communities and individuals to political, economic, environmental, demographic or societal pressures, in order to sustain progress towards national development goals;
- the capacity of a state – in the face of significant pressures – to build, maintain or restore its core functions as well as basic social and political cohesion, in a manner that ensures respect for democracy, rule of law, human and fundamental rights and fosters inclusive long-term security and progress;
- the capacity of societies, communities and individuals to manage opportunities and risks in a peaceful and stable manner, and to build, maintain or restore livelihoods in the face of major pressures (EC, 2017, para. 2).

Moreover, the EU should **aim to address root causes and vulnerabilities** and thus reduce the risk of future crises and strengthen capacities to address them. Ultimately, this approach will build resilience and promote peace.

There are synergies between support aimed at preventing conflict and resilience. The Council specifically calls for the **integration of 'the resilience approach into EU programming** in order to contribute to the prevention of conflicts and crises and to address the root causes of external conflicts and crises' (Council of the European Union, 2018a, para. 14). This integration can be accomplished through two main entry points and can give traction to initiatives for peace and support local capacities for peace:

- analysis to better understand the factors, including shocks and pressures, that lead to violent conflict;
- identification of the endogenous capacities within a society that can allow communities to resist a drift towards violence (EEAS, 2017, p. 8).

A strategic approach to resilience calls for emphasising a more collaborative, targeted and flexible approach to address the multifaceted and interlinked vulnerabilities and causes of fragility. This requires:

- **moving away from crisis containment** to a more structural, long-term approach to vulnerabilities, with an emphasis on anticipation, prevention and preparedness;
- **integrating resilience analyses** into EU interventions, ensuring that they are risk informed and conflict sensitive;
- **addressing the identified risks and underlying drivers** of fragility by integrating risk reduction measures into interventions and building upon existing institutional and societal strengths;
- **building flexibility and adaptability into the interventions**, including crisis modifiers and contingency measures, so they can be modified and/or scaled up when and where needed;
- **underpinning development interventions with coherent political and policy dialogue**, encouraging partner governments to take more responsibility for chronic vulnerabilities;
- **implementing the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus** through closer cooperation and complementary action between development, humanitarian, security and political actors, building on a shared analysis of risks and vulnerabilities as well as strategic planning.

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus

The 'peace policy' championed by the EU Global Strategy includes ensuring 'a smoother transition from short-term crisis management to long-term peacebuilding to **avoid gaps along the conflict cycle**' and tie long-term work on pre-emptive peace, resilience and human rights to crisis management and response through humanitarian aid, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, a sanctions regime and diplomacy (EU, 2016, pp. 50–51).

The New European Consensus for Development similarly recognises that the 'nexus between sustainable development, humanitarian action, peace and security' should be **part of the comprehensive approach to conflict and crises** (EC, 2017, paras 64–65). And in its conclusions on operationalising the humanitarian-development nexus, the Council emphasises the **interlinkages between sustainable development, humanitarian action and conflict prevention and peacebuilding** (Council of the European Union, 2017b, para. 2).

Under an HDP nexus approach, **humanitarian, development and peace actors work hand in hand** to find and deliver collective outcomes in order to reduce overall vulnerability and unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict. Operationalising the HDP nexus requires fostering complementarity, synergies and cooperation between humanitarian, development and peace actors. This in turn entails operating across institutional boundaries and through the intervention process, capitalizing on the comparative advantages of each community of actors in a given context.

Operationalisation of the HDP nexus can take the form of joint analysis or assessments, joint planning, joint monitoring and evaluation exercises. For development actors moving beyond a phased approach to an effective HDP nexus, planning and implementation of joint interventions might imply, for instance, maintaining their presence during crises in order to support the transition to development from the early stages.

To avoid unintended negative consequences and maximise positive effects across the HDP nexus, all interventions should be conflict sensitive, follow the do no harm principle, and be designed and implemented taking local approaches and capacities into consideration.

Key lessons learned from engagement in situations of conflict and fragility

This section outlines some lessons learned in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of aid to fragile and conflict-affected contexts, based on both global and EU-specific experience.

Alignment with fragility and conflict dynamics and objectives

When development cooperation is aligned with a real understanding of fragility, conflict risks and conflict dynamics, it can be an important mechanism to support national and local capacities for peace and sources of resilience. This is especially true when **aid can be designed to address context-specific fragility dimensions**, including mitigation of early risks of violent conflict.

International development cooperation commitments, such as the Paris Declaration (2005), the Accra Action Agenda (2008), the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (2011) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) recognise the role of development cooperation in peacebuilding and inclusive state building. Nevertheless, these **policy commitments have not been matched with sufficient evidence-based investments in conflict prevention**; only 2 per cent of total gross official development assistance is explicitly spent for this purpose (Moreira and Rosand, 2019).

External evaluations of EU interventions in partner countries point to the **need for more regular investment in, and application, of specific contextual analysis** (e.g. conflict analysis and/or conflict sensitivity assessments) to inform targeted and relevant EU interventions. This means engaging at the interface between state and society to address grievances and to promote inclusive development and human security. In this manner, policies and programming are consistently grounded in an understanding of conflict risks and dynamics and therefore considerably strengthen the EU peacebuilding approach (ADE, 2011, 2015). Such an understanding should always be based on a **constant dialogue** with community-based organisations and their leaders, including minorities, without any discrimination based on gender, age, origin, religion, ethnicity, indigenous status, rural/urban location, power and influence, etc.

Alignment with international policy frameworks

In recent years, international policy frameworks aimed at supporting the effectiveness of official development assistance in fragile and conflict-affected contexts have emphasised the need to bring an end to 'business as usual' with regard to development efforts in fragile environments.

Using and championing New Deal principles, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS)[2] influenced the post-2015 development framework process and contributed to the inclusion of **SDG 16 on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies**.

In this context, in 2016 the IDPS members reaffirmed their collective commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict, fragility, and violence – and to creating clear pathways out of fragility and towards greater resilience – as a means of achieving the 2030 Agenda. The Stockholm Declaration on Addressing Fragility and Building Peace in a Changing World was adopted, with the ultimate aim of **leaving no one behind in fragile and conflict-affected settings**.

The 2018 comprehensive *Pathways for Peace* report by the UN and the World Bank re-confirmed the political nature of much of today's fragility and conflict situations. Such situations almost always influence political decision-making processes about the nature and use of public authority, as well as the allocation of public and natural resources.

A 2017 review commissioned by OECD and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility of donor support to inclusive and legitimate politics found that '... donors tend to continue to offer a standardised "political-support package" that focuses on the technical and procedural aspects of an idealised democracy' (OECD, 2017, p. 2).

[2] The IDPS is an inclusive tripartite partnership made up of three constituencies: donor members of the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF); the G7+ Group of 20 conflict-affected countries; and the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS). It was launched in 2008 with the aim of defining a new framework for engaging with countries affected by fragility and conflict, which puts country ownership and leadership first.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, which was adopted on 22 February 2019, and emphasises that:

> At the centre of strengthening the coherence between humanitarian, development and peace efforts, is the aim of effectively reducing people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities, supporting prevention efforts and thus, shifting from delivering humanitarian assistance to ending need. This will be critical in reducing the humanitarian caseload, and ensuring that we meet our collective pledge of 'leaving no-one behind'.

Partners and beneficiaries

As initiatives undertaken in fragile and conflict-affected situations become part of that context, **differential benefits from aid can reinforce inter-group tensions** and fuel divisive narratives of 'us' versus 'them' (Anderson, 1999).

Aid can reinforce grievances along identity lines when it lacks impartiality or is perceived as biased in favour of specific or influential groups, irrespective of their need for assistance (Carbonnier, 2015).

Particularly where the state is at the origin of (or is seen as encouraging) the exclusion of specific social groups and minorities, **donors may be required to pay specific attention to some of the principles of aid effectiveness** – especially of ownership and alignment – with a view to ensuring the more robust application of rights-based approaches, conflict sensitivity and gender responsiveness.

These challenges and lessons learned from recognised missteps in complex environments have led to an increased focus on the do no harm principle and adoption of conflict-sensitive approaches. This includes considering what humanitarian aid and development cooperation will provide for whom; who are the responsible actors and stakeholders; and who will have access to, and control of, the expected benefits; criteria for targeting; dividers and connectors; and the risks of entrenching or worsening existing inequalities (OECD, 2016).

Ensuring a gender perspective

All EU engagements must be informed by a gender mainstreaming approach. This entails analysing interventions through the lens of power relations implicit in gender norms, roles, relations and institutions that underpin violence and militarism.

Gender inequalities and social constructs of masculinity and femininity should be contextualised within the root causes and drivers of conflict. There is a strong evidence base that women's participation in peace and security processes contributes to reaching more sustainable peace agreements. However, 20 years after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, women remain greatly under-represented and under-recognised for their efforts and successes in peace and political processes at all levels[3].

The 2015 Global Study on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 – the most comprehensive review of implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda to date – yielded the following key messages (UN Women, 2015):

> The failure to allocate sufficient resources and funds has been the most serious and persistent obstacle to implementation of women, peace and security commitments over the past 15 years.
>
> Data shows that official development assistance to gender equality in fragile states and economies is on an upward trajectory, although only a tiny proportion of all aid to fragile states and economies addresses women's specific needs.
>
> Despite the crucial contribution of women's organisations to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, these organisations remain underfunded, receive primarily short-term project support and spend a disproportionate amount of their time on donor-related activities such as preparing funding proposals and reporting results.

Evaluations generally find EU support relevant to situations of conflict and fragility, while noting the importance of better defining objectives and time horizons jointly with local, national and international stakeholders. National ownership can be problematic to define in contexts characterised by weak state-society relations and inter-group tensions. Therefore, **objectives and time horizons are better understood in conjunction with the local stakeholders and communities** – and with other international actors.

Although regular gender-focused consultations between the EU, civil society organisations and other stakeholders at the country level do occur, little evidence exists that these consultations have informed policy dialogue and development cooperation strategies; donor coordination often stops at information sharing (COWI, Itad and ADE, 2015).

Evaluations of both EU support and that of other major actors engaged in these contexts usually find that **objectives are overly ambitious in too short time frames**. It is best to factor in from the start the constraints associated with conflict and fragility such as security, limited national capacities and political will (EC, 2015). Evaluations of EU programming have identified some positive impact on **post-conflict stabilisation**. However, the EU response has been much more **reactive**, while recent policies call for a more proactive and preventive approach (EC, 2014).

Effectiveness, impact and efficiency

By 2030, it has been projected that over 60 per cent of the global poor will be living in fragile and conflict-affected countries (OECD, 2016). Such countries were among those left furthest behind by the Millennium Development Agenda; they are now lagging behind in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although most development actors have a high concentration of budget and activities in fragile and conflict-affected countries, it has **proven to be difficult to achieve results in these settings** – and the risk of failure and diversion or misappropriation of aid is high (OECD, 2018).

Effectiveness in these contexts has often been hampered by **inadequate understanding** of socio-political realities, cultural aspects and internal power relationships of the conflict-affected countries. For development cooperation to become more effective, modes of engagement must be customised to the specific needs and local contexts, and **engagements**

[3] Source: UN Women, 'Women's Meaningful Participation Builds Peace' infographic.

need to be locally owned in reality – not just on paper.

For decades, the approach to peace and security has been dominated by crisis management, and it has been **difficult to persuade decision-makers to invest in prevention**. Beyond the moral value associated with saving human lives and preventing atrocities, prevention minimises the costs of destruction generated by cycles of violence. Nevertheless, conflict prevention remains critically under-prioritised and under-financed.

In 2016, the global policy agenda entered a new phase of renewed commitment to prevent and resolve armed conflict, marked by the adoption of the UN's twin resolutions on sustaining peace: General Assembly Resolution 70/262 and Security Resolution 2282. These resolutions define prevention as the avoidance of 'the outbreak, escalation, recurrence, or continuation of violent conflicts'. Through the adoption of the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crisis in 2018, the EU endorsed this agenda and institutionalised a Prevention and Early Action approach[4].

While early warning and early action systems have improved in recent years, actors are faced with institutional barriers and political difficulties and sensitivities in realigning development cooperation with conflict and fragility risks and drivers in pre-crisis contexts. Moreover, measuring the results and impact of conflict prevention is extremely challenging, as averted conflicts are simply invisible.

Specifically, indicators derived from indexes on conflict risks and fragilities that may contribute to increasing conflict risk or exacerbate root causes of conflict, can be related or adapted to **measure capacities and mechanisms for conflict prevention** – developed through EU support or otherwise. This approach would define prevention as being successful, for example, when the country has acquired the capacity to manage most of its conflict(s) in non-violent ways (Hoffman, 2014).

[4] For further details on the Integrated Approach, see the glossary and the discussion on 'Making the case for conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity' in the previous section.

EU-specific lessons

EU support is most effective when it is tailored to the specific context. Pathways to recovery are rarely obvious, especially when the context is fast changing; thus analysis of root causes of conflict and fragility and continued monitoring of conflict sensitivity are necessary. There are often trade-offs between the need to manage the effects of an ongoing crisis and the need to address root causes of conflict. Doing both can prove difficult when security, capacity and trust are in short supply.

There are cases, however, where the EU has managed to do both. **Where the EU has been able to monitor escalating fragility or crisis, it has been able to undertake analysis in advance.** In this way, when the time came for action, it was ready – as, for example, in Niger in 2012, when fighters from Libya threatened to de-stabilise large parts of the country (EC, 2015).

Measuring the impact of aid in fragile and conflict-affected contexts remains a challenge for the EU. Evaluations have found that the results and long-term impact of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions were not sufficiently or appropriately documented, causing a lack of evaluative evidence on outcomes and impact levels (ADE, 2015; ECORYS, 2014).

Between 2002 and 2012, the EU financed 154 interventions through its national or multi-annual indicative programmes and 140 interventions through thematic instruments and programmes; very limited documentation on the results and impacts of these interventions is available. For example, the Kenya evaluation (ECORYS, 2014) reveals a focus on inputs and – to some extent – outputs, but ascertains little information on results at the outcome or impact level. The Yemen evaluation (ADE, 2015) concludes that 'the lack of evaluative evidence relating to EU programming is itself a key finding of this macro-level evaluation'. Similarly, the Kenya evaluation states 'Information on outcome and impact levels was hardly available'.

EU support is most efficient when it is proactive, creative and coordinated. Evaluations generally rate the efficiency of EU support in situations of conflict and fragility as low, with much room for improvement.

Improving support efficiency requires, first, recognition that each situation is different.

The following actions are recommended to **gather stronger evidence on the effectiveness and long-term impact of EU interventions**:

- The EU needs to look beyond strengthening state institutions to ensure that the focus is ultimately on people and peaceful societies. This may mean working through the state, but can also mean working at the society level.
- Update and strengthen the evidence base of EU impact on conflict prevention and peacebuilding to promote learning about what works and how to improve effective performance.
- Improve monitoring of better-defined outcomes and impact measures of conflict prevention and peacebuilding work.

EU support is most efficient when it leverages the EU's recognised comparative advantages. The EU can add considerable value by emphasising these strengths, notably by playing a greater role than is currently the case as a **convener or co-convener** in liaising with Member States and other national or international development cooperation agencies to engage with one voice in political and policy dialogue with government, helping towards setting the policy agenda and/or coordinating priority sectors.

To do so, the EU should draw on:

- its credibility as an intergovernmental entity, with a low political profile and no tie to national interests;
- its reliability, in terms of its continued presence and capacity to establish long-term partnerships;
- its representation of a critical mass of financial support;
- a wide array of policies and instruments, including as a major trading partner with many fragile states;
- in-depth thematic experience in a range of fields that are pertinent to fragility and conflict-related issues.

The EU is committed to further strengthening its approach to situations of conflict and fragility. The following key principles and approaches should be emphasised:

- Strengthening political, economic and social inclusion and addressing the needs and preferences of people should be central to our approach.
- Building state capacity is important for legitimacy and effective functioning of states, but we should avoid an exclusive focus on state building.
- Creating peaceful societies is the end goal.
- Increasingly engage and work with local communities.
- Think beyond national boundaries to address dimensions of fragility at a regional level.
- Greater focus on a whole-of-EU approach on upstream prevention, anticipating crises.
- A systematic conflict-sensitive and do no harm approach.

In 2020, the EU published the findings of the External Evaluation of EU's Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (2013–2018)[5]. The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an independent, evidence-based assessment of the extent to which the EU has achieved its conflict prevention and peacebuilding objectives and the impact of EU support in this area on the ground between 2011 and 2018.

This global evaluation examined spending and non-spending activities of the various European Commission directorate-generals, including those involved with security and defence missions/operations and EU Member States from the perspective of coordination and complementarity. While some positive advancements were documented, the evaluation still found inadequate mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity, human rights and gender in conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions, as well as varying effectiveness in different contexts and situations. The EU, in spite of many challenges, continues to be seen and perceived in most parts of the world as a key international actor in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, with a significant added value with regard to its different tools and approaches.

[5] International Partnerships, 'External Evaluation of EU's Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (2013-2018)' (webpage).

Further resources

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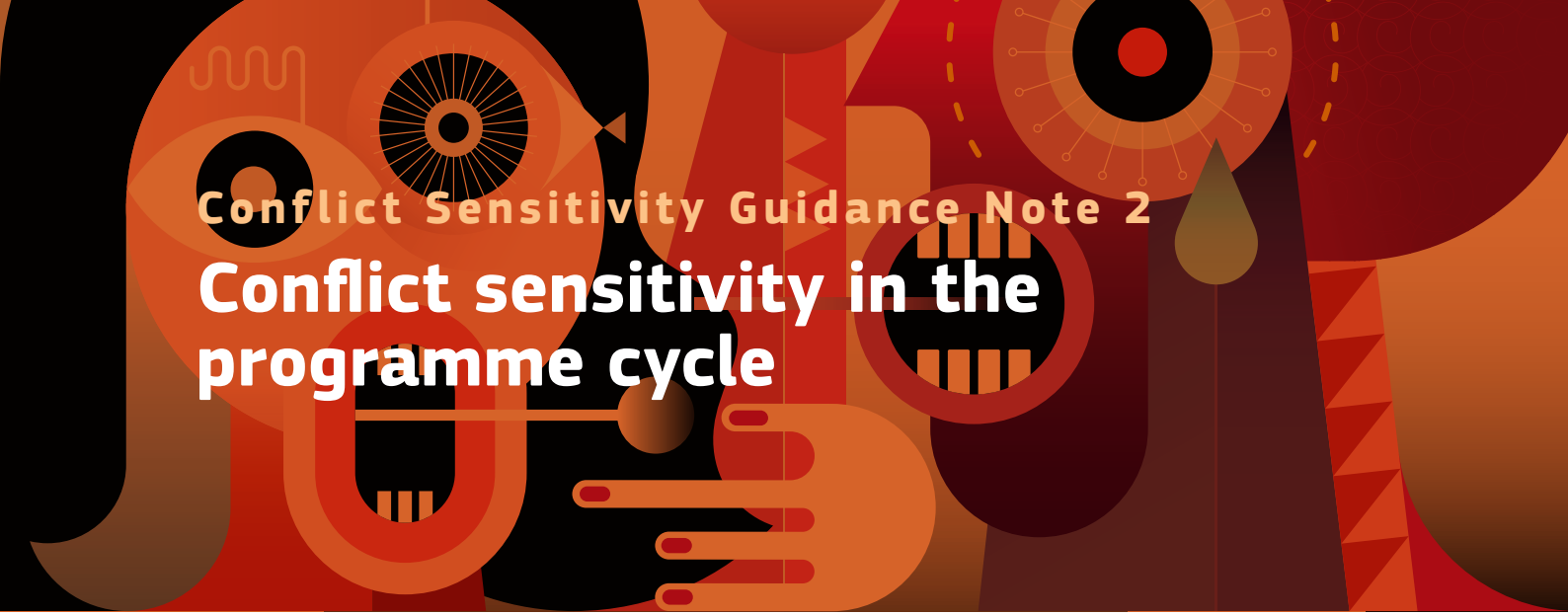

Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 2

Conflict sensitivity in the programme cycle

This note provides practical tools and guidance on taking conflict sensitivity into account in each phase of the programme cycle. It updates Note 1 of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility* and complements the '2020 Guidance Note on the Use of Conflict Analysis in Support of EU External Action' and the 'Conflict Analysis Screening Technical User's Note 2020' as part of the 2020 Programming Guidelines. It should be read in conjunction with these guidance documents, as well as with the other conflict sensitivity thematic and sectoral guidance notes in this publication updating other sections of the 2015 EU staff handbook.

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Introduction

Conflict-sensitive programming is a deliberate and systematic practice that aims at minimising or reducing any negative impacts of interventions on peace and conflict dynamics in areas of intervention.

Conflict sensitivity considerations and assessments are relevant for actions at all stages of the programme cycle, in every sector and in all environments. Failing to be conflict sensitive – especially in places that are already fragile or affected by violence – may lead to development programmes doing harm, exacerbating tensions and violence, and triggering conflict.

Conflict sensitivity is generally defined as follows (EEAS and EC, 2020):

- Apply the **do no harm** principle and approach in all contexts.
- Understand the complexities, risks and opportunities in the given context.
- Understand the possible **interactions between the (proposed) interventions and the context (and vice versa)**, in terms of potential to worsen conflict or conflict risks by exacerbating tensions and divisions or heightening risks of increasing fragility and likelihood to do harm.
- This understanding should accordingly inform the design, implementation, monitoring and (where possible) adaptation of such actions.
- **Minimise negative effects and maximise the contributions** of development interventions towards positive peace, conflict prevention and resilience.

Note that interpretation of the do no harm principle may vary based on the different mandates of humanitarian or development actors.

Conflict sensitivity is potentially applicable in any context, whether affected by or at risk of conflict[1], or affected by multiple dimensions of fragility, even when considered stable. In each context, the goal of conflict sensitivity is to improve the effectiveness and coherence of international assistance, whether humanitarian, development or peacebuilding-related.

When working specifically in conflict-affected contexts, including those at high risk of violence/conflict, it is important to bear in mind that conflict-blind intervention can inadvertently exacerbate existing tensions and conflicts, or can even create new ones. For example, providing budget support to a government can help build the capacity and resilience of the state and improve service delivery. However, if the benefits of those improved services are concentrated only in one part of the country, or benefit mainly one social or ethnic group in one community, they could reinforce patterns of marginalisation and pre-existing grievances within that country and key drivers of conflict.

Conflict sensitivity does apply to all interventions – regardless of the mandate and main objectives of the organisation – in order to promote conflict prevention and peace, and minimise risks of doing harm or having unintended negative impacts (see Box 2.1).

Conflict sensitivity approaches build on a set of underlying principles (see Table 2.1) intended to strengthen the overall relevance, effectiveness, responsiveness and coherence of external interventions in their specific environments.

In general, three different donor approaches have historically been followed when donors and implementers are working in conflict-affected contexts; working **around** conflict is not really aligned with conflict sensitivity approaches, while working **in** and **on** conflict reflect conflict sensitive and peacebuilding approaches, respectively.

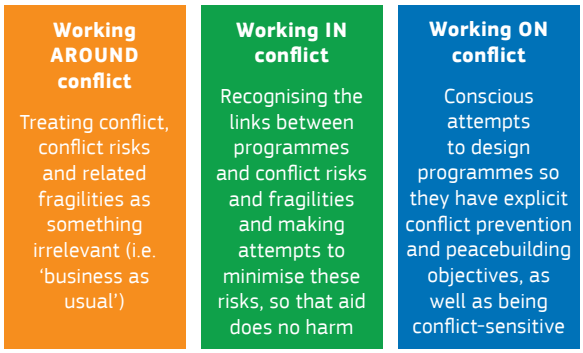
[1] Conflict-affected contexts are those along the conflict continuum or countries with a high risk of conflict or its emergence, re-emergence or escalation of violence (O'Bannon, 2009).

BOX 2.1 Conflict sensitivity as a whole-of-society perspective

A conflict sensitivity approach encourages donors to take a **whole-of-society approach** to fragility by considering what aid will do for whom, who are the responsible actors and stakeholders, and who has access to aid.

- Better results will come from **working with multiple types and levels of actors** – individual, community, municipal, provincial and national – and taking a multidimensional, multi-sector approach, in order to increase resilience at all levels;
- **Put people at the centre** and leave no one behind by recognising that a stable state and strong institutions do not automatically lead to a reduction in violence.

FIGURE 2.1 Three approaches to working in conflict-affected contexts



Source: Goodhand, 2006.

In European Union (EU) interventions, the first step towards conflict sensitivity is conducting a **conflict analysis**. Such analysis looks at the context in which operations take place and its risks and opportunities for resilience and peace, while proactively considering the role and impacts of the EU in such context. **Conflict sensitivity assessments** delve deeper into future or ongoing interactions between EU actions and a fast-changing context affected by fragility and conflict, as well as the other way around, examining how such contexts affect programmes and

TABLE 2.1 Underlying principles of conflict sensitivity

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
Responsibility	All projects/programmes in fragile and conflict-affected contexts are a part of the conflict dynamics/drivers – whether they are 'about' conflict or not. Conflict-sensitive organisations are those that accept the responsibility that comes with working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts and place themselves in this interaction.
Participation	People most affected by an intervention should be involved in the planning, managing and monitoring of that intervention. This will make the intervention more sensitive to local realities, flexible and sustainable.
Accountability	Accountability means including all actors, especially those affected by the intervention, e.g. direct beneficiaries and the wider community. The needs and concerns of all those who may be affected by the project/programme should be taken into account. When monitoring and evaluating projects, this means sharing lessons learned with them and taking their feedback into account.
Gender sensitivity	Incorporating gender analysis means that the project/programme accounts for the gender dimension of conflict and/or fragility and takes into consideration underlying values, biases and attitudes relating to gender.
Impartiality	Projects/programmes in all sectors should be working in support of the best possible outcome in terms of fragile contexts and inclusive peace, rather than in support of any personal, political, religious or ethnic agenda.
Transparency	Generally speaking, the project/programme should ensure that information is freely available and accessible, as this is critical for building trust with affected communities and tackling corruption.
Respect for people's ownership of the conflict and their suffering	Peace and resilience, fragility and conflict issues must be worked through with the people directly affected. This means engaging all actors in working towards fair, just and peaceful human security and development objectives, especially those who are marginalised, so that they are able to develop solutions that they can sustain themselves through empowerment and civic engagement.
Partnership	Donors and international organisations should support each other as partners, working towards a vision that they all understand and share. All partners should analyse the situation jointly, respect the value of local knowledge in determining the best approach, and support each other in remaining flexible as things change.
Coordination, complementarity and coherence	Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations should view each other as pursuing the shared goal of human development and peace in accordance with their specific mandates. Organisations should share information with others, coordinate their activities, and try to learn from their successes and mistakes.
Timeliness	It is important not only to do the right things in the right way, but also to do them at the right time. Projects/programmes should be ready to change their approach if the timing of activities is wrong or if another approach is available that will have a more positive impact on peace and conflict dynamics.

Sources: Adapted from Sida, 2017; INTPA Academy, online course on Conflict Sensitivity (internal link).

approaches to development, international cooperation and partnerships.

Conflict analysis can enable the design of interventions to maximise their potential contribution to peace, resilience and stability, and to reduce the risks of doing harm. Irrespective of the type of intervention, it is important that those involved at the EU level understand the potential impact of their work. Conflict analyses should be **conducted jointly between EU actors** to support different country or regional programmes, themes and sectors, and at the inception stages of programming. Ideally, this work should inform subsequent stages in the programme cycle (programming, identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and/or enable and support more detailed conflict sensitivity assessments on programmes or projects.

To this end, the EU requires conflict analyses under its new Neighbourhood, Development and International Instrument (NDICI) to ensure conflict sensitivity. Conflict sensitivity and resilience need to be integrated further by internal quality review processes. Specific pointers have been included in internal documents such as the International Partnerships (INTPA) Companion (including an action document template and mainstreaming annex), the Intervention Cycle Management Guide, the ROM (Results-Oriented Monitoring) Handbook, etc. Additionally, the INTPA Academy has an interactive online course on Conflict Sensitivity available for all staff, introducing core concepts, tools and approaches underpinning the EU's approach to conflict sensitivity in the programme cycle.

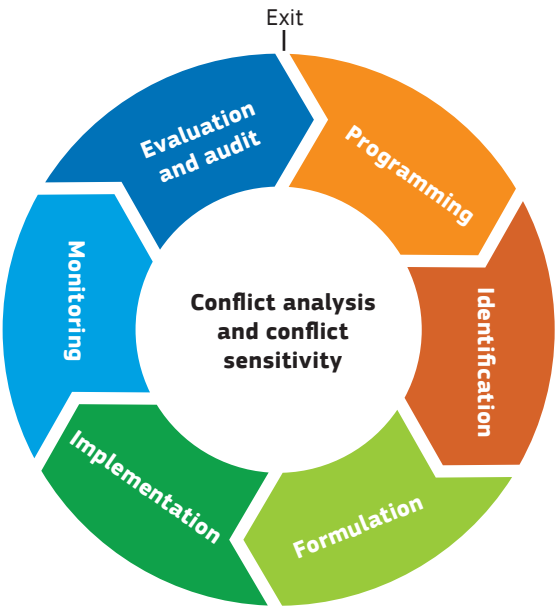
Relevance of conflict sensitivity in the EU programme cycle

The minimum requirement in conflict-sensitive practice is to identify and mitigate risks of doing harm throughout the cycle of operations. Therefore, a **conflict sensitivity assessment** considers how the planned or ongoing intervention may cause harm in the given context by causing or exacerbating existing tensions, divisions and conflict risks and/or conflict dynamics. It is supported by conflict analysis in relation to the context, and by other conflict sensitivity tools and concepts – interaction analysis, dividers and connectors, etc.

Conflict sensitivity will also bring a different perspective on **risk management** by identifying how conflict dynamics may negatively affect the intervention (e.g. limiting the ability to achieve development objectives, potential misuse of funds, impossibility of spending the committed funds). Conflict-sensitive programming should also seek to maximise opportunities for a positive impact on identified peace and conflict dynamics as well as resilience.

Conflict sensitivity is relevant to all phases of the EU cycle of operations – programming, identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 2.2). Conflict sensitivity in practice can be applied as a three-step approach that includes conflict analysis as a first step and then makes use of more specific tools that move beyond context towards interaction and monitoring (see Table 2.2).

FIGURE 2.2 Conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity at the heart of the programme cycle



Effective conflict sensitivity requires continuous thinking about the context, and about the impact of programmes on the context, with the inclusion of EU actors in the overall context dynamics. Consequently, it also requires the ability to be flexible and adaptable to change. This might mean being ready to amend, expand or suspend certain activities, or take up new ones if doing so is likely to contribute to more contextually aware programming. Flexibility is essential in these volatile environments if the EU is to contribute to peace and stability while pursuing development objectives.

Conflict analyses and conflict sensitivity assessments must be regularly updated throughout the project and programme cycle, as well as at mid-term reviews, to ensure that:

- interventions are designed, implemented and evaluated in a conflict-sensitive way;
- fast-changing dynamics are taken into account, including related tensions, divisions and root causes of conflict and/or fragility.

Being aware at all times of the implications and impacts of the EU's interaction with the context and vice versa is key to conflict-sensitive approaches to external action and development cooperation. Ideally, a holistic organisational approach should be considered, as outlined in Box 2.2.

TABLE 2.2 Overview of three-step approach to conflict sensitivity

STEP	WHAT TO DO?	HOW TO DO IT?
1	Understand the context in which the intervention is operating	Carry out a joint conflict analysis, and update it regularly – e.g. at crucial moments of the programme cycle; use it to design programmes and to implement them, and to inform risk management tools.
2	Understand the interaction between the intervention and the context, and the context on the intervention	Ensure how to link the conflict analysis with each step of the programme cycle of the intervention; specific conflict sensitivity assessments (e.g. risk and do no harm assessments; dividers and connectors analysis) on specific sectors, objectives, programmes or projects, or require implementing partners to do so.
3	Use this understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts, and do no harm	Plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and adapt the intervention in a conflict-sensitive fashion and with relevant indicators, based on findings from conflict sensitivity assessments and/or conflict analyses.

Source: APFO et al., 2004.

Another tool to start reflecting on conflict sensitivity implications may be applied at the very beginning of the programming cycle, be it multi-annual or annual. An adapted version of a SWOT – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – analysis has been created to reflect on conflict sensitivity implications at the strategic level (see Figure 2.3). An initial conflict-sensitive SWOT analysis can be an effective tool for strategic-level assessment (at the country strategy and national or multi-annual indicative programme levels), while conflict sensitivity assessments and conflict analyses can be conducted at the action/project level.

FIGURE 2.3 Template for SWOT analysis for conflict-sensitive programming

Source: Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012.

BOX 2.2 An organisational approach to conflict sensitivity at the EU Delegation level

1. Identify key sources of information (other EU actors, United Nations agencies, civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations, local authorities, etc.) to monitor conflict sensitivity, including through maintaining a specific focus on social conflicts/conflict risks/tensions/conflict-affected areas/emergence or escalation of violence, etc.
2. Ensure clear roles and responsibilities regarding compiling information obtained from different sources.
3. Consider nominating a conflict sensitivity and conflict analysis liaison/focal point to coordinate the above.
4. Consider conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity assessments during key planning points, along the programming cycle, in relation to mid-term reviews, annual action planning, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, joint programming, etc.
5. Ensure a joint review and update of existing conflict analyses and their implications for programming among senior management at regular intervals.
6. Document conflict sensitivity outcomes in relation to programmes, as well as in relation to what goes wrong and what can be realistically adapted and changed.
7. Consider specific reporting on conflict sensitivity issues during periodic reporting mechanisms and institutional forums and meetings.
8. Key policy dialogue moments should be informed by conflict sensitivity testing (such as discussing possible conflict sensitivity issues and how to address them, e.g. in more 'technical' discussions).
9. Request support from Headquarters when needed, including conflict sensitivity screening of existing or proposed programmes from dedicated thematic units.
10. Ensure conflict sensitivity of implementing partner operations through specific contractual clauses.
11. Facilitate common positions on conflict sensitivity, conflict prevention and peacebuilding through political work, work with Member States (e.g. joint positions with Member States), and work with implementing partners, civil society organisations, other donors, trust funds, etc.
12. Design context-specific and conflict-sensitive indicators, bearing in mind mitigating measures and the do no harm principle.
13. Monitor the effectiveness of risk-mitigating measures.
14. Mainstream conflict sensitivity at the policy, strategic and project levels by looking at whether conflict sensitivity is explicitly mentioned and considered as a cross-cutting issue in steering documents such as annual plans, procurement policies, staff trainings, etc.
15. Have periodic conflict sensitivity updates across different staff teams and/or have a permanent conflict sensitivity item on the agenda of team meetings and senior management meetings, as well as on the periodic meetings with Member States, the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and implementing partners (and in multi-donor trust fund settings).
16. Continue to support the capacity building of all staff, including senior management through targeted training.
17. Conflict sensitivity expertise could be included in criteria for recruitment and performance of staff and external experts alike, as well as gender expertise.

Source: Adapted from Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012.

Conflict sensitivity considerations in programme cycle phases

Most countries with which the EU engages are affected by dimensions of fragility, albeit to varying degrees. It is common to operate in areas with significant levels of violence (armed conflict, structural violence, sexual and gender-based violence, human rights abuses, gang violence, illicit economies, etc.), or where there are tensions in society that make violence more likely in the future. Although the country as a whole may not be classified as conflict-affected, most EU partner countries are experiencing pockets of fragility, tension or violence at the regional, national or local level, as well as transnational.

In the **consultation processes leading to the development of the country strategy paper and subsequent national indicative programme**, it is important to develop a deeper understanding of how the key issues/driving factors of conflict and fragility play out in selected or proposed sectors of engagement and for different target groups. Programme designers should be aware of social norms and cultural perceptions in focus communities (including at the local level). Consultations should be as extensive as possible and include civil society, women, youth and the most marginalised groups in society.

It is critical to conduct **joint conflict analysis** – not just across EU institutions but, where possible and appropriate, with relevant stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels, including civil society, women, youth and the most marginalised groups in society. At a minimum, specific conflict sensitivity issues can be included in already ongoing EU consultations. For example, in the **education sector**, international cooperation actors and donors are typically seen as positive actors for change, and the education sector is generally seen as neutral and not conflict sensitive. This view may not take into account, however, issues of curricula conveying negative stereotypes of certain social/ethnic/religious groups, or issues related to gender inequality. Similarly, the potential negative impacts of inequitable allocation of resources that favour certain social or ethnic groups or sub-regions over others should be clearly analysed in relation to education services. International donors and development actors could choose to support the adoption of education policies and strategies that are designed to redress historical inequalities in access and quality of education and promote social inclusion and cohesion. Equally, they could promote conflict prevention by supporting the integration of peace education in curricula reforms, along with human rights and gender equality, and by encouraging mother tongue–based education for ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, etc. (UNESCO, 2015). Education is often a specific topic of peace agreements and peace processes.

In **joint programming** processes, the initial steps for developing a joint strategy/vision or joined-up approach for strengthening synergies and coherence can be supported by a joint conflict analysis. This could help inform the identification of shared strategic objectives on the basis of key challenges and political priorities – and by balancing them against operational limitations and constraints, and opportunities for conflict-sensitive and conflict-preventative approaches. More detailed guidelines and recommendations on joint programming can be found in the report 'Joint Programming in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States' (Koenig and Brusset, 2019).

Even before actions are identified and formulated, conflict sensitivity considerations should be taken into account and discussed among relevant staff at a more macrolevel to understand the implications of EU programming overall and the possibility of unintended negative impacts; and to take stock of lessons learned, institutional memory of previous programmes and existing knowledge of conflict dynamics and risks, as well as different sets of stakeholders. Sample guiding questions are included in Table 2.3.

Identification phase

After conducting consultations with a wide range of partners and (ideally) after having reached a shared understanding of the drivers of fragility, factors of vulnerability and root causes and/or risks of conflicts, the identification phase will allocate funding to specific sectors or areas of intervention, define funding instruments and modalities, and identify implementing partners. The questions indicated in Table 2.4 will be particularly relevant during this phase. While some of the issues raised here might also apply to the next

TABLE 2.3 Conflict sensitivity considerations in the programming phase: Guiding questions

General context
• Does the action address specific dimensions of fragility: societal, political, economic, environmental, security (OECD, 2018)? • Has the country developed a national development strategy addressing risks and opportunities related to peace and conflict? Would complementary analyses be necessary? • What is the commitment of the partner country's government to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 16, in relation to just, peaceful and inclusive societies? • Are conflict analyses available on the context that could provide the basis for a conflict sensitivity assessment?
Geographical/sub-national focus
• If programming is taking place in the context of an ongoing violent conflict, is the conflict particularly intense and present in certain regions of the country? If so, how have these dynamics influenced strategic decision-making? • What are the implications of the selected geographical focus? Who selected the area(s) of intervention, and on what criteria? Did they take into account conflict dynamics and conflict risks? What implicit messages might this selection send to key stakeholders in the context in relation to inclusion, fairness and transparency? • Are there local or traditional structures, authorities or institutions that perform decision-making or conflict management roles? How will the proposed strategy account for interactions with these entities? • Are interventions designed keeping in mind potential conflict triggers such as key events or periods of heightened tension (elections, commemorations of historical events, 'fighting seasons', transhumance, etc.)?
What?
• Could the priorities and objectives of the country strategy paper and/or national development plan(s) usefully include mitigation of conflict risks or action for conflict prevention and peacebuilding? • What is the risk of doing harm? • How have lessons learned from previous programmes, particularly in terms of possible unintended consequences on local tensions or violence, been taken into account? • How might the proposed action affect existing divisions and/or competition for resources within regions / with adjoining regions / between rural and urban areas / with international neighbours? • What mechanisms will allow affected communities to give feedback to the EU about the impact activities are having?
How?
• What mediation, conflict management, conflict resolution mechanisms and/or peace structures, formal and informal, are currently operating in the area? How will the action interact with these? • Can proposed intervention activities support connectors between conflicting groups and strengthen peaceful relations, e.g. through more equitable power sharing? • Is flexibility built into the programme design to enable response to rapid changes in the context, e.g. violence or natural disasters?
Who? / With whom?
• Which key stakeholders have been consulted or involved from the strategic design phase? What is their assessment of the context and/or conflict situation? • How is the strategy likely to support or undermine the legitimacy of such actors and influence power relations? • What is the potential for unintended groups to capture power, benefits or inputs from the proposed sectors of interventions (e.g. conflict economy, local elites, business interests, political parties, armed groups)? • Which groups are likely to lose out or be harmed? What impact is this likely to have on divisions or inequalities between groups? • Are there local or traditional structures, authorities or institutions that perform decision-making or conflict management roles? How will the proposed strategy encourage or discourage interactions with these entities?
When?
• If the strategy is developed in a violent conflict context, is the context mature for targeted peacebuilding initiatives such as national dialogues, mediation and/or reconciliation? If not, what type of activities could be undertaken to prepare the ground? • Is any flexibility built in the strategic plan and national indicative programme design to enable response to rapid changes in case of conflicts or emergence, re-emergence or escalation of violence? • Has the possible interaction between conflict risks and/or conflict issues and other types of fragility such as natural disasters been considered?

TABLE 2.4 Conflict sensitivity considerations in the identification phase: Guiding questions

Where will the intervention operate?
• To what extent will the planned national indicative programme (NIP) target national, regional and/or local levels? • What are the implications of the selection of the geographical focus? Which criteria were used to select the area(s) of intervention? • What implicit message might this geographical focus send to key stakeholders in the context? • Have heightened risks of conflict and violence been taken into account?
What is the contribution of the proposed interventions to the NIP?
• Are the proposed actions expected to have an impact on structural causes of conflict(s) or on conflict risks, and how? • Could these risks become potential 'killing assumptions' affecting the planning and implementation of proposed actions? Could they bring into question the overall justification of the action(s)? • How could the proposed actions support conflict prevention and peacebuilding more broadly?
How will they be implemented (i.e. instruments and modalities of engagement)?
• Have possible negative unintended impacts of the proposed action(s) been considered and considered for mitigation? • In what ways might the selection of instruments and funding modalities influence the conflict dynamics or exacerbate/reduce conflict risks? • In selecting implementing partners, has the way they are perceived in the local context been considered? What capacities do these partners have in terms of understanding and analysing do no harm implications and/or working in a conflict-sensitive way? Can they demonstrate knowledge/experience of conflict sensitivity? • Have suitable impacts, outcomes, outputs and indicators been identified in relation to conflict sensitivity and resilience?(1) • Have policy dialogue criteria and/or budget support indicators been informed by conflict sensitivity considerations and assessments?
With whom?
• Which actors will be strengthened or weakened? How will resources be channelled? Is the action supporting actors that might do significant harm to other segments of the population? How will power relations be affected, as well as in relation to gender? • What steps will be taken to ensure that the selection of direct or indirect beneficiaries is regarded as transparent and equitable, and that the action will not worsen social inequalities, conflict risks or dynamics? • In case of a violent conflict context, is there a risk that selected partners may be associated with one side of a conflict which would make them seem biased? • In what ways have men, women, boys and girls been affected by conflict and violence? How will interventions address these impacts? What is the role of women, men, girls and boys in peacebuilding? How can it be made more equitable and inclusive?
When will stakeholders act on identified opportunities and respond to new triggers and events?
• What could be done if there is an intensification of conflict? How can as much warning as possible be ensured? How can the safety of staff, partners and local people be ensured?

(1) For example, a 'normal' economic development indicator may measure general economic or small and medium enterprise (SME) growth. Nevertheless, it may be more conflict-sensitive to track reduced socioeconomic inequality between population groups/ geographic regions.

TABLE 2.5 Conflict sensitivity considerations in the formulation phase: Guiding questions

Context analysis
• To what extent does the context analysis of the action consider mitigation of conflict risks and support options for positive peace, such as focus on social cohesion, levels of trust, existing conflict resolution mechanisms, equal and fair access to justice and rule of law, prevention of violence and tensions, ways of redressing grievances, etc.? • Is the context analysis based on conflict analyses, and does it consider the potential negative impacts on different identity groups related to gender, ethnicity, age and/or between geographic locations? • Is the country in a post-conflict setting or undergoing a peace process? Has it experienced widespread violence, mass atrocities, genocide, etc.? • Does the action contribute explicitly to conflict prevention and peacebuilding coherently with EU policy frameworks? • What are the main national/regional policy frameworks relevant for the promotion of resilience and prevention or mitigation of conflict(s) and violence – e.g. is the action linked to any national-level peace and reconciliation agenda such as national sustainable development plans, peace agreements, national action plans on women, peace and security, etc., and how do these policies relate to Sustainable Development Goal 16? • Are issues of governance, democratisation, rule of law and human rights taken into account in relation to apparently neutral macroeconomic and trade measures, in order to prevent doing harm and possible social conflict?
Stakeholder analysis
• Are processes of participation and consultation already in place? If not, are they being considered for implementation at the very beginning of the intervention to promote inclusivity and mitigate unfair advantages by more influential groups? • Are different groups and communities targeted as much as possible in a fair manner to avoid conflict risks? • How will the intervention address these impacts and ensure men, women, boys and girls have equal access to development assistance and peacebuilding resources? • How is the action likely to be viewed by different groups with an influence over the conflict or in the peacebuilding context? • Could powerful vested interests be threatened by the action? How? • Is the security of women, children, internally displaced persons and/or minorities an issue that should be explicitly considered and addressed by the action during and after its implementation (e.g. sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, forced labour, basic access to food and water)? • Will the action engage stakeholders with potential to influence positive peace dynamics? What key capacities and resources do they have?
Problem analysis/priority sectors for support
• Does the action address natural resource management (e.g. water, land, energy, forests, livestock, pastures, fisheries, protected areas)? • Is the action considering specific measures for inclusion, consultations and consent of marginalised and vulnerable groups, e.g. indigenous people and women? • Does the action consider potential negative effects of climate change on targeted natural resources? Are dimensions of fragility related to environmental risks and climate change taken into consideration (disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction, disaster risk management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, etc.)? • Is there any risk that the objective and activities of the action could do harm or trigger tensions? • What is the human rights situation in the country and could it be affected positively or negatively by the proposed action?

Gender
• What are the gender norms and roles that could be sustaining/ fuelling conflict and violence? How could gender equality, gender roles and norms be affected by this action? • Could women from specific ethnicities, social groups or religions be at risk of being harmed by the action? • How will the participation and inclusion of women be supported in peace structures and dialogues? • How will the action ensure consultation, participation and involvement of women in recovery and reconstruction? Will recovery and reconstruction present opportunities for greater gender equality (e.g. greater access to land, livelihoods, services, education, decision-making, political representation)? • Where relevant, what would constitute a gender-sensitive approach to demobilisation and reintegration? • How will gender-specific measures be taken into account in transitional justice and justice sector reforms? • What are the security, safety and trust issues in relation to women and security sector forces? • What specific support will be provided to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (including psychosocial support, sexual and reproductive health rights, social protection, livelihoods, etc.)? • What specific measures could be taken for protecting and empowering women and children in refugee and internally displaced persons' camps? • What specific support could be needed by women human rights defenders?
Lessons learned
• Have available studies and evaluations of EU external action been used to inform the design of the action, from the perspective of doing no harm / conflict prevention and peacebuilding? • Is conflict sensitivity a requirement for other donors and implementers, including United Nations agencies? Are there any lessons learned that could be applied to the proposed action?
Complementarity, synergy and donor coordination
• Is there a humanitarian-development-peace nexus roadmap set up in coordination with other EU actors and/or multilateral partners? • Is there coordination and complementarity with EU Member States' actions? • Is the action focusing on a geographical area that is not targeted by other programmes? • Is the action targeting social groups that are not specifically targeted by other actions in the region?

phase (formulation), they should nevertheless, as far as possible, be reviewed upstream of the detailed formulation of action plans and action documents.

Formulation phase

The guiding questions outlined in Table 2.5 are intended to support the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding in the drafting of the action documents by the leading and/or responsible service.

Conflict-sensitive risk management: risks and assumptions

Risk management is an important area for conflict-sensitive approaches and mitigation of risks of doing harm or having potential negative impacts on the conflict and violence risks is at the basis of conflict sensitivity. Existing conflict analyses or conflict sensitivity assessments in the EU context or from other international and national organisations should be taken into account.

Specific issues such as governance systems, social and economic grievances, land and natural resource management and human rights should be carefully considered, as well as the interface between conflict risks and other dimensions of fragility (environmental, risk of natural disasters, impacts on gender equality and human rights, inclusivity, barriers to key services and to key functions of the state such as justice and police, etc.).

Following are further **questions to guide risk and assumption analysis**:

- Could the action inadvertently exacerbate conflict or conflict risks, risks of violence, tensions or divisions among interest groups / social groups / ethnic or religious groups?
- What other type of risks might interact with conflict risks – natural disasters, climate change, epidemics, human-made disasters, etc.?
- Does the action favour, or is it perceived to favour, one group over another? If so, could this cause divisions or tensions, and how can a better balance be achieved?
- Could the action have unintended negative impacts on women, girls or children?
- What systems are in place for ongoing (real-time) monitoring and for beneficiary feedback? Can men, women and children all access these mechanisms? Can minorities and marginalised groups?
- Could choices about where to work, with whom to work, and how affect sources of tension or opportunities for peace in the intervention area?
- How might the current security situation help or hinder action implementation?
- Is the area targeted in a post-disaster phase or at risk of natural disasters and climate change impacts?
- Are different groups and communities targeted as much as possible in a fair manner to avoid conflict risks and/or doing harm?

One of the more widely used conflict sensitivity tools, the Do No Harm Framework (Anderson, 1999), draws attention to the unintended consequences of aid planning and practice. Although originally developed for humanitarian aid, the tool is regularly applied to development and peacebuilding interventions. The framework looks, for example, at particular risks in external interventions such as patterns of resource transfers and their implications, as every donor or development actor is part of the context and brings resources into this context.

Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity and resilience in the intervention logic

A **theory of change** is the explicit hypothesis of how one or more programmes/projects are thought to contribute to addressing key fragility and conflict dimensions in relation to a sector, an area of intervention, a specific geographic area, etc. Theories of change force us to articulate the reasons why we make the choices we do; they reveal the overall logic of the programme and the rationale for programme design. It is very important that a clear and shared understanding of the transformation we want to support is developed, and that all actors involved operate with the same theory of change.

Conflict sensitivity and resilience are applicable across the whole range of sectors and to all types of donor-funded interventions. This is the reason why the action document template considers conflict sensitivity and resilience as cross-cutting issues for all projects and programmes. Following are some **key questions relevant to the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and resilience**:

- Which indicators are relevant to the proposed action for monitoring conflict sensitivity and/or resilience?
- Do these indicators consider disaggregation by gender and age? Should they also reflect inter-ethnic and intra-group diversity in relation to conflict mitigation and/or resilience-building?
- Which sets of baseline data can underpin measuring such indicators?
- Will there be regular monitoring of the interaction between the intervention and conflict dynamics/risks, and/or the monitoring of other fragility issues relevant to the action? If not, what measures can be built into the action to ensure that?
- Is conflict sensitivity a requirement for implementing partners, including international non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies?
- Have key stakeholders, staff and/or implementing partners received training on conflict sensitivity, conflict prevention and resilience? If not, could this be included as a specific output?
- Have any unintended negative impacts for local staff (and/or risk assessment and mitigation) and/or for implementing partners been considered?
- Is there a need for more in-depth risk assessment, conflict sensitivity assessment or conflict analysis, etc.?

BOX 2.3 The Results Chain on Peace, Resilience and Conflict Sensitivity

A useful tool in developing the logframe and indicators for programme documents is the recently published 'Resilience, Peace and Conflict Sensitivity Results Chain', which builds on key EU policy framework and includes impacts, outcomes, and outputs and related indicators within the five dimensions of resilience: people and societal resilience, peace and political resilience, economic resilience, environmental resilience and security. The indicators included in this results chain draw on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators as well as other relevant external frameworks such as the Global Peace Index and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) states of fragility framework, and other results chains from other thematic units.

- What steps will be taken to ensure that the targeting of key stakeholders and beneficiaries is regarded as transparent and equitable, and that the action will not worsen conflict dynamics/risks or structural inequalities?

Table 2.6 presents the example of a peacebuilding outcome and relevant outcome indicators focused on inclusion and conflict prevention.

Implementation and monitoring

Conflict sensitivity should be applied in all strategic and operational decisions and actions taken during the implementation phase. As noted in the original do no harm framework developed by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, an intervention consists of both actions and behaviours.

Actions correspond to the resource transfer being brought into a context, while behaviours reflect the conduct of the actor bringing in the resources. Every aspect of programme/project implementation – such as financial management, staffing, procurement, distribution of resources, choice of funding modalities and implementing partners, training of partners and beneficiaries, etc. – needs to be considered from a conflict-sensitive perspective.

Moreover, financial mismanagement can contribute to conflicts and violence by reinforcing patterns of corruption, injustice and exclusion and can undermine the EU's standing in the eyes of local people. The EU's regular audits are therefore also important from a conflict sensitivity perspective. In doing so, we regularly need to update our knowledge and understanding of the conflict context, and of the conflict risks, as well as to monitor whether identified and applied risk mitigation measures are adequate for minimising the risks of doing harm and maximising the positive effects on peace and conflict prevention.

TABLE 2.6 Example: outcome indicators

OUTCOME	Strengthened capacity of communities and civil society, including women, youth and those living in marginalised/vulnerable situations, to participate and engage in political, social, cultural and economic development processes and in inclusive peacebuilding, recovery and reconstruction
OUTCOME INDICATORS	• Number of participants in socioeconomic, peacebuilding, recovery or reconstruction activities organised/supported by the EU-funded intervention, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity and disability status, administrative sub-region, location – urban/peri-urban/rural – and type of activity attended • Number of civil society organisation representatives trained by the EU-funded intervention on climate change / forced displacement / mitigating conflict risks / youth and gender inclusion / conflict and other early warning systems – disaggregated by gender, ethnicity • Number and type of local governance structures set up or strengthened with support of the EU-funded intervention (e.g. village development committees, land committees, local natural resource management groups) inclusive of women, minorities and other marginalised groups

Source: EU, 'Results and Indicators for Development: Resilience, Conflict Sensitivity and Peace Results Chain'.

Change in fragile and conflict-affected contexts is certain, and conflict sensitivity in its fullest sense is about understanding and shaping those changes as positively as possible. Being conflict sensitive requires ongoing monitoring and flexibility. We must know enough about our own work and the changing context within which it operates to ensure the possibility of making constant adaptations while implementing the programme activities.

Proper consideration of the following **guiding questions**, as well as following up on recommendations stemming from conflict analysis, could ensure that the baseline of the preparatory work is reasonably conflict sensitive as implementing activities begin.

- What impact is the intervention having on conflict risks and/or conflict drivers?
- How can staff (EU and implementing partners) be encouraged to seek out and share information about any unintended negative consequences of the interventions (conflict sensitivity monitoring)?
- How is the intervention being perceived by beneficiaries and target groups and/or by the wider public? What systems are in place for ongoing (real-time) monitoring and for beneficiary feedback?
- How easy is it for local people to communicate with EU and partner staff responsible for implementing the intervention? Are there mechanisms for accessing programme-related information and reporting grievances – e.g. can local people report abuse, corruption or other types of malpractice and concerns to EU staff or partners?
- Can men, women, children and all vulnerable groups all access these mechanisms?
- If issues are reported to implementing partners or EU staff, are these concerns taken seriously and corrective action taken? Is this action clearly communicated to local people? If corrective action is not taken, why not? What impact has this had on relations between the EU or its partners and local stakeholders?
- What are the reputational, political and operational risks for the EU?
- Is there regular reflection and reporting on interactions between the intervention and conflict dynamics, using the indicators designed during the formulation phase? Are these regularly measured and reported on? What do they show?
- How responsive is the intervention or project to changes in the context? Has the intervention adapted to these changes? How? If not, why not? What have been the barriers to adaptation? How can these be overcome?

Specific questions on conflict sensitivity and resilience mainstreaming are included in the ROM Handbook (EC, 2020), particularly in the annexes.

Evaluation, audit and exit phases

Evaluating for conflict sensitivity takes place either at the mid-term or at the end of an intervention. Evaluation can be challenging in fragile or conflict-affected situations, but it is vital to assess the quality and repercussions of our work[2]. **Evaluations should pave the way to accountability and ensure interventions contribute to peace and stability.** It is also important to remember that evaluation processes must themselves be conflict sensitive. Some considerations in this respect are listed below.

- Transparency and the **creation of safe spaces** can reduce tension and suspicion among communities, and encourage open dialogue and the sharing of potentially sensitive information with evaluators.
- It is important to consider **whom to partner with** to conduct the evaluation, and how this partner is perceived by respondents. Respondents should be drawn from diverse groups and with a gender balance.
- It is also important to ensure that **evaluation outcomes are communicated back** to relevant communities, in a language that is understood and in an accessible manner.
- Understanding intersectionality is a core component of a conflict-sensitive approach. Different

[2] On 17 May 2019, the EU Evaluation Support Service held a lunch seminar on 'Evaluation in Hard-to-Reach Areas'. The EU webpage contains links to presentations and a video recording, as well as reference documents, literature and position papers on the topic.

people see conflict and conflict risks differently. Gender, nationality, sexuality, disability, age, ethnicity etc., identities are intersectional. Nobody is 'one thing'.

- **Conflicts affect people differently** at different levels – for example, at the local and national levels as well as within institutions and implementing partners.
- **Protection issues** – certain potential interlocutors and actors have the right, and may choose, not to participate if their engagement can lead to risks for their safety and security.

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for evaluating development assistance are widely used; these consist of criteria related to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact. These criteria have also been adapted for interventions related to conflict and fragility, as well as peacebuilding, as presented in 'Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility' (OECD, 2012). All of the OECD DAC evaluation criteria are of primary importance in conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding; following is how four of the criteria are interpreted in these specific contexts:

- **Relevance.** The relevance criterion is used to assess the extent to which the objectives and activities of the intervention(s) respond to the needs of beneficiaries and the peacebuilding process – i.e. whether they address the key driving factors of conflict revealed through a conflict analysis. Relevance links the outcomes of the conflict analysis with the intervention's objectives, although the relevance of the intervention might change over time as circumstances change.
- **Effectiveness.** A programme or policy may do good or do well and still not change the underlying dynamics or key driving factors of conflict and fragility identified by the conflict analysis. Also, external factors, unrelated to and beyond the control of the activity in question, may be more significant factors of peace and conflict – in which case, effectiveness will be understood relative to these broader dynamics and trends. Conflict sensitivity is part of the DAC's definition of effectiveness, insofar as it suggests consideration of what efforts were made to manage conflict-specific risks.
- **Impact.** The impact criterion assesses the wider outcomes of the programme, including positive and negative, direct and indirect, intended and unintended. An assessment of unintended outcomes, even without proof of causality, can provide valuable information on whether the intervention has contributed to negative effects – for example, by exacerbating tensions over resources or inequalities.
- **Sustainability.** It is essential to consider the potential impact that the withdrawal or exit from a context or programme may have on conflict dynamics and conflict risks in the area. All interventions therefore need to be planned and implemented with a realistic strategy and time frame to enable the positive impacts from EU actions to continue beyond the life of the specific project. Sustainability is defined as the continuation of benefits on end of assistance. In an environment of conflict and fragility, sustainability includes the probability of continued long-term benefits and resilience to risk over time, as well as lasting benefits in the economy, institutions, human resource management, etc. As in other fields, sustainability also includes 'ownership' of the peace and development processes.

Finally, it is essential to **document and learn** from the EU's programmatic engagements in conflict-affected contexts in order to inform future action and approaches. Thinking beyond an individual programme evaluation, conflict sensitivity needs to be institutionalised for it to take hold within an organisation (Handschin, Abitbol and Alluri, 2016).

- Does the evaluation methodology explicitly seek to assess the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the intervention from a conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding perspective?
- Does the evaluation methodology seek to capture both positive and potentially negative, intended and unintended, effects of the intervention on peace and conflict dynamics, fragility and resilience?
- Does the evaluation assess whether and how planned interventions were responsive to changes in the specific context, including to conflict dynamics and conflict risks?
- Does the evaluation or lessons learned approach allow for contributions from civil society,

beneficiaries and conflict-affected groups? Does it seek contributions from women and men, and from different social/demographic groups as identified in earlier analysis?

- Do the evaluation questions consider sustainability of any potential positive conflict and peace impacts of the action?
- How will the lessons learned from this intervention be made easily accessible and communicated to relevant teams working in this context and in other places that may be facing similar challenges?
- Has the perception of the EU and implementing partners changed over time? If so, in what way, and why?
- What is the exit strategy for this intervention? How can it be ensured that benefits are sustainable beyond its presence in the context?

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Appendix: A three-step approach to conflict sensitivity assessments – key tools

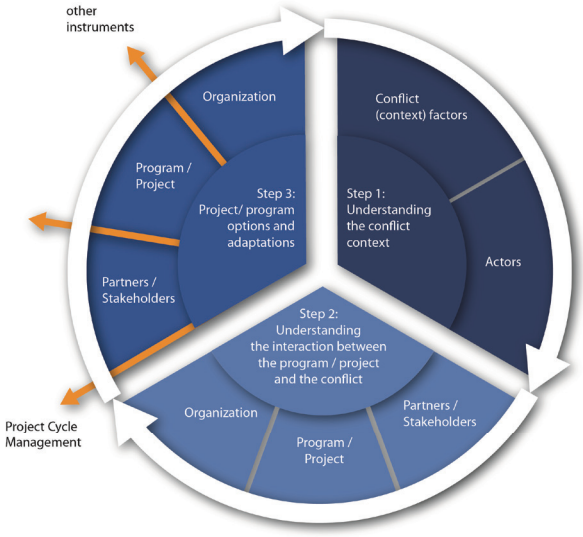
As shown in Table 2.2 and Figure 2A.1, conflict sensitivity assessment is mainly based on a three-step reflective and analytical process:

1. understand the context where the intervention is planned (conflict analysis);
2. understand the interaction between the intervention and the context;
3. act upon the understanding of this interaction, in order to do no harm, minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts.

This appendix provides examples of a number of **tools and features** based on conflict sensitivity concepts that can be utilised to conduct more in-depth conflict sensitivity assessment processes. These can be used in different combinations and for different analytical purposes. The material presented here is not intended to be exhaustive.

Many of the tools discussed here were developed by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and subsequently adapted by other organisations in different contexts and in different languages.

FIGURE 2A.1 Three-step conflict sensitivity assessment



Source: Swisspeace, n.d.

Step 1: Understanding the context through conflict analysis

The key features of a conflict analysis are based on a joint, shared analysis of the following dimensions:

- **Conflict dynamics**, consisting of a brief overview of the historical and current conflict environment, highlighting the main contested areas, the scope and nature of ongoing violence (e.g. insurgency, election-related violence, gender-based violence, conflicts related to natural resources), and its overall impact (e.g. migration, humanitarian toll, economic consequences, human rights abuses). Particular attention should be given to a gender analysis of these dynamics.
- **Causes/drivers of conflict**, including the structural causes of the conflict that are resistant to immediate change and triggers that may tip a high-risk situation over the threshold of violence, but also patterns of resilience or local capacities for peace that allow stable high-risk areas (or bright spots) to withstand the risk of violence. Specific attention should be given to gender norms and roles underlying conflict causes/drivers.
- **Stakeholder mapping**, including parties to the conflict, people affected by the conflict and those with interests and stakes in the conflict.
- **Scenarios** of possible future trajectories, including worst case and best case in terms of conflict scope or impact, indicating the likelihood of each scenario, possible impacts on political stability, etc.
- **Ongoing engagement**, including a mapping of past and present prevention, peacebuilding and stabilisation activities by the EU as well as other international organisations, civil society or national and local authorities.
- **Actionable recommendations** for the EU to undertake alone or in partnership, including both short- and long-term initiatives.

Countries selected for mandatory conflict analysis under the NDICI, in accord with Article 12.2(b) (a bis), should refer to the Conflict Analysis Screening

Technical Users' Note included as part of the most recent programming guidelines. For further information on conducting this step, also see the revised 2020 EU guidance note (EEAS and EC, 2020a)

Step 2 and Step 3: Understand the interaction between context and intervention and act upon this understanding

Several tools can be used to achieve this understanding, as delineated in the following tables and figure.

Conflict sensitivity risk analysis. The risk analysis table (Table A2.1) is best used in conjunction with guiding questions related to the programming cycle phases (as set out in the preceding text of this guidance note). These questions can relate to different phases of the programme cycle and can be adapted to specific contexts or thematic or sectoral approaches.

Force field analysis. The force-field analysis tool (Figure A2.2) can be used in facilitated discussions to define or review the objectives for a programme or a project. Specifically, it can be used to:

- identify different forces influencing the conflict or conflict risks, which are either supporting (positive/driving factors) or hindering (negative/restraining factors) the implementing organization in its work to achieve a desired change;
- identify the factors, dynamics and common objectives that bring people together or divide them;
- find the strengths and weaknesses of these factors, dynamics and common objectives;
- find ways of influencing these factors, dynamics and common objectives.

Patterns of resource transfers. Interventions bring, or transfer, resources into a context. These can be money, food, medicine, personnel, vehicles, jobs, buildings, teachers, training, etc. These resources

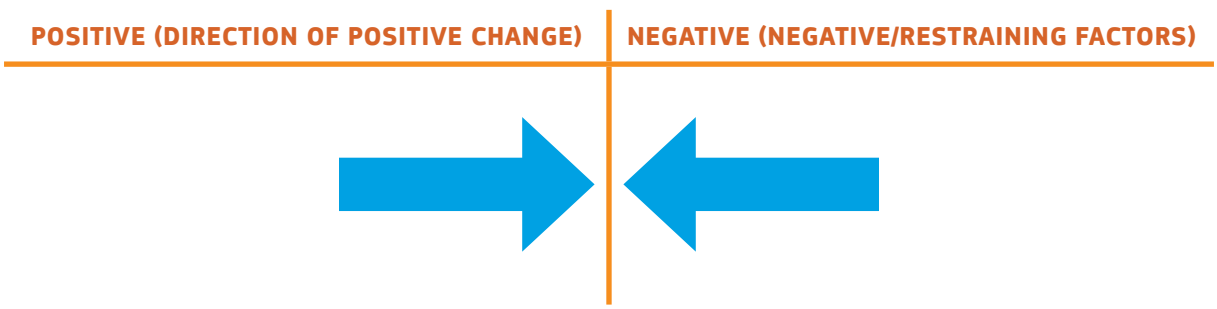
TABLE A2.1 Risk analysis table for conflict sensitivity

(Proposed) actions and implementation modalities / programme and/ or risk area	Do no harm risks / potential negative impacts	Entry points and/ or opportunities for conflict prevention and peacebuilding	Mitigating measures	Monitoring and indicators

Note: Another version of this table with related guiding questions is included in the conflict analysis screening processes referred to in Step 1, in order to ensure conflict sensitivity recommendations in multi-annual indicative programmes and annual action plans. This table is more relevant at the single programme/project level.

FIGURE A2.2 Force field analysis

Objective of the intervention: _____



Source: Swisspeace Conflict Sensitivity Course, June 2020.

are the programmatic tools we use to attempt to make change. Resources always have impacts; this is their point, and organisations do not bring resources into a context to avoid impact. Organisations often track the impacts of their resource transfers on people's physical conditions or well-being. However, it is impossible to transfer resources into any context without affecting social dynamics. Understanding and shaping these social impacts is critical for improving the effectiveness of any intervention: this is the point of do no harm.

There are five common patterns of resource transfer, which could be used in analysing any unintended negative impacts of our resource transfers as a donor. Table A2.2 provides an example of resource transfer implications; these should be taken into account in a conflict sensitivity assessment, as shown in Table A2.3.

Analysis of dividers and connectors[(1)]**.** All contexts are characterised by two driving forces of social dynamics: dividers and connectors. There are issues, factors and elements in societies that divide people from each other and serve as sources of tension. Similarly, there are issues, factors and elements that connect people and can serve as local capacities for peace. Outside interventions will always interact with both dividers and connectors. Components of an intervention can have a negative impact, exacerbating and worsening dividers or undermining or delegitimising connectors. Conversely, an intervention can have a positive impact, strengthening connectors or serving to reduce dividers.

Dividers and connectors analysis – understanding the sources of tension and the local capacities for peace (see Table A2.4) – is a key tool developed in relation to conflict sensitivity. It identifies factors that bring people together (connectors) / drivers of peace and factors that push people apart (dividers), as well as mitigating measures for the same.

Understanding **what divides people** is critical to understanding how interventions can feed into and support these forces or weaken them. Understanding **what connects people** despite conflict or conflict risks is critical to understanding how interventions reinforce and support, or undermine, those factors that can mitigate conflict or constitute positive forces for harmony in society.

The dividers and connectors analysis exercise works much better if done in a participatory manner among a group of actors who are involved in peace programs and local development. Dividers and connectors identification may also have implications for a number of key dynamics related to development cooperation, such as resource transfers, implicit ethical messaging (Swisspeace, n.d.) and publicity/communications.

Interaction analysis. This is a simple, yet effective, analytical tool to promote shared, joint reflections on conflict sensitivity issues related to specific programmes or areas of interventions and to reflect on possible adjustments and adaptations to enhance conflict-sensitive approaches (see Table A2.5).

Conflict-sensitive monitoring. Conflict-sensitive monitoring helps to determines if an intervention is conducted in a conflict-sensitive way (+/- impact) and

(1) Source: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (2003).

TABLE A2.2 Five patterns of resource transfers

PATTERN	EXAMPLE
Theft/diversion	Fuelling conflict through diversion or theft of project funds
Distribution effects	Distributing goods along the lines of the conflict or of patronage
Market effects	Unintended changes to local markets with an influx of outside goods
Substitution effects	• Replacing existing systems or structures with new parallel systems • Relieving the government of its duty to care for citizens
Legitimisation effects	Giving legitimacy to elites or un-elected leaders by working with them; or to conflict parties

TABLE A2.3 Conflict sensitivity: examples of implications of resource transfers

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS	RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION MEASURES
Market effects: By purchasing goods from far away and bringing them in for free, although they are available on the local market, there might be a risk of pricing people out of their own markets. This can force farmers and sellers into unemployment, which in turn could exacerbate tensions.	Low/ Moderate/ Substantial/ High	• Making do no harm a key criterion of procurement policies and procedures. • Ensure that people can continue to afford local goods and services in an equitable and fair manner. • Consider inclusive and sustainable value chains, and supports to local markets. • Make sure that the intervention can balance and stabilise markets and will not have unexpected domino effects (e.g. land dispossession, growing indebtedness, fuelling conflict economy or illicit economies, etc.)
Distribution effects: uneven distribution along conflict lines or societal cleavages and structural inequalities can exacerbate tensions/divisions, unfairly benefiting one side of a conflict over another. For example, risks in relation to cash transfer programmes include diversion or theft of funds, corruption in the selection of beneficiaries and in transfer of cash, collusion in corruption by aid agency staff and/or money transfer staff, fraud, and security risks to staff and beneficiaries. There is also the risk that cash transfers could have inflationary effects on local markets, pushing up prices of key goods, or that cash transfers will be controlled only by men and not by women.		• Understanding local issues of social cohesion, dynamics between different communities and groups, and the role of conflict actors can help determine beneficiary selection without exacerbating tensions. • Fair does not always equal 'even' distribution, but should consider the targeting and protection of the most vulnerable and marginalised, including women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, minorities, etc.
Substitution and/or diversion effects: State building through international development in fragile and conflict-affected contexts often risks to replace State functions or service delivery, thereby weakening the State ability to manage its own development, provide services, manage conflicts and respond to disasters. Large parts of the resources spent on public goods may get channelled and diverted outside the system of the State and its decision-making structures and create a parallel system of institutions and services.		• Budget support is sometimes not an option, therefore strategic and medium-term sector-wide approaches or joint trust funds can be viable options. • Policy dialogue components or other activities that can contribute to strengthening State-society relations should be focussed also on minimising risks of doing harm to marginalised and excluded groups.
Legitimisation effects: inadvertently legitimising a government, institution, social group or leader by promoting implicit ethical messaging through development programmes.		• There has to be a clear analysis of how the legitimacy of a State and other actors is perceived among elites and among diverse social groups, as well as the relative importance of competing sources of legitimacy. • Having a clear view of decision-making processes and actors and power-sharing dynamics is essential. This understanding should inform decisions on how direct or indirect support to the State or any other partner should take place.

TABLE A2.4 Dividers and connectors analysis

		DIVIDERS (SOURCES OF TENSION)	CONNECTORS (DRIVERS OF PEACE)
		Elements in societies that divide people from each other and serve as sources of tension.	Elements that connect people and can serve as drivers of peace/local capacities for peace
SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS	Formal structures, institutional policies, local organisations	• How do institutions function – and how do they influence conflict? • How does leadership function within institutions? • What factors, issues or elements are causing conflict and/or dividing people, and how?	• What are the informal mechanisms at the community level, such as local dispute resolution processes? • Who exercises leadership for peace and how?
ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS	Pre-dispositions and behavioural patterns between stakeholders	• What attitudes, behaviours and perceptions, are feeding into conflicts?	• What attitudes, behaviours, perceptions, and skills do people have that may reduce conflict and constitute peace capacities?
VALUES AND INTERESTS	Different interests and points of view about the importance of one thing over another	• How do different groups in society relate to each other? • Are there deep divisions and, if so, along what lines? • Are there links or tensions at the leadership level?	• What social norms support conflict or mitigate it? • What are the relationships and alliances that could support peace?
EXPERIENCES	Different experiences of conflict may exacerbate divisions or unite some individuals or communities	• Some marginalised groups facing state oppression might end up expressing their grievances violently. • Are there dividers associated with gender roles or among organised groups of men, women or youth? Or along ethnic lines?	• Conflict effects can unite traumatised individuals regardless of their different affiliations. • What currently connects people across conflict lines? How do people cooperate? • Are there dividers or connectors associated with gender roles or organised groups of men, women, youth or ethnic groups?
SYMBOLS	Based on e.g. identify, gender, history, religion	Which symbols are divisive and/or are fuelling conflict? (can be religious, historical, cultural, determined by gender roles, ethnic, etc.)	Which symbols, cultural and social dynamics can be used to connect people and support capacities for peace?

Source: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

how the conflict context or conflict risks evolve and what impact this has on the intervention.

It is a prerequisite for ensuring that an intervention is and remains conflict sensitive, and should consider implications for ongoing adjustments.

Monitoring the conflict sensitivity of an intervention should be an ongoing process conducted as part of regular programme/project monitoring, If possible. It should therefore be correlated both to context and interaction indicators (see Table A2.6).

TABLE A2.5 Interaction analysis

FIELD OF OBSERVATION	INTERACTION	ADJUSTMENTS FOR CONFLICT-SENSITIVE INTERVENTION
	Which areas of the programme/ project have a negative impact on conflict factors/ risks and dynamics (trigger or enhance tensions)? (has a negative impact, does harm)	What needs to be adjusted to mitigate the risk to do harm?
Programme or project		
Partners		
(Organisation)		
	Which aspects of the programme/ project have a positive impact on conflict factors/ risks and dynamics (reduce or mitigate tensions) (positive impact, does good)	What can be further strengthened to contribute to reduce existing tensions?
Programme or project		
Partners		
(Organisation)		
	What impact does the context have on the programme/project? Is the project relevant for and sensitive to the context?	What needs to be adjusted to ensure the intervention remains context-relevant and is fit for the context?
Programme or project		
Partners		
(Organisation)		

Source: Adapted from Swisspeace Conflict Sensitivity Course, June 2020.

TABLE A2.6 Conflict sensitivity indicators

TO MONITOR	TYPE OF INDICATOR	BASELINE(S)	ASKS
Evolution of conflict contexts, conflict risks	Context indicator	Conflict analysis, political economy analysis, etc.	How does the context evolve, do tensions/conflict increase/ decrease?
Conflict sensitivity of intervention +/-	Interaction indicator	Interaction analysis, risk management	Has the intervention caused changes to the conflict context/ risks? Did it harm, did it do good?
Effect of conflict / fragility context on the intervention	Interaction indicator	Interaction analysis	Has the intervention adjusted to changes of the context?

Source: Swisspeace Conflict Sensitivity Course, June 2020.

Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 3

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Annex 2, Module 5, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*. Ideally, it should be read in conjunction with the other nine thematic guidance notes in this publication covering gender; democracy and human rights; working with national actors; working with international actors; economic development and employment; climate change, the environment and natural resources; sustainable agriculture, land issues and food security; COVID-19; education).

Introduction

A **positive peace** – meaning not just the absence of conflict but the presence of conditions amenable for all people to live full and dignified lives (Galtung, 1969) – is vital for sustainable social, political and economic development. The European Union (EU) recognises that there can neither be development without peace nor peace without development. In line with this, the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EU, 2016) commits to being conflict preventative at all times, noting that,

> preventing conflicts is more efficient and effective than engaging with crises after they break out. Once a conflict does erupt, it typically becomes ever more intractable over time… We will therefore act promptly to prevent violent conflict, be able and ready to respond responsibly yet decisively to crises, facilitate locally owned agreements, and commit long-term. (EU, 2016: 29, 18)

To this end, the **EU's Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises** deploys the instruments and approaches of diplomacy, cooperation and multilateralism to build resilience in and across states and societies as an essential dimension of conflict prevention (Council of the European Union, 2018a)[1]. As affirmed in its Sustainable Development Goal commitments, the New European Consensus on Development, the Global Strategy, the Joint Communication on Resilience in External Action (Council of the European Union, 2017a), and Commission priorities for 2019–2024[2] and related priorities for international partnerships and development cooperation, the EU has pledged secure, adequate and accessible funding for conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives throughout

[1] This approach builds and expands upon the Comprehensive Approach, and concerns 'the need for an integrated effort at all stages of the EU response from planning to implementation and lesson learning'. It is multilevel (applied at the local, national, regional and global levels as needed), multiphase (applied throughout all phases of the conflict), and multilateral (bringing together Member States, relevant EU institutions, international and regional partners, and civil society organisations) in order to contribute to sustainable peace.

[2] See Council of the European Union (2017a, 2017b); EC (2017); EU (2016); and the EC website, '6 Commission priorities for 2019–24'.

the world. In the 2021–2027 programming cycle, conflict sensitivity and resilience are mainstreamed in the new financing instrument. This will include addressing the root causes of conflicts and crises through long-term approaches to conflict transformation and peacebuilding. This guidance note outlines ways to do this in a conflict-sensitive manner.

Peacebuilding involves a range of measures aimed at reducing the risk of conflict and addressing the root causes of conflict. These are often related to implementation of ceasefires, peace agreements and reconciliation processes and frequently involve processes for strengthening national capacities for conflict management and laying the foundations for sustainable peace through a broad number of actions.

Such actions are specific to each context. However, they commonly entail some of the following: security sector management and reform; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants and child soldiers; civilian peacebuilding; inclusive decision-making processes, especially of women, youth and minorities; small and light weapons control; transitional justice and justice sector reforms; participation and support to civil society groups in sustaining peace and conflict prevention; confidence-building measures such as mediation and dialogue; supporting the development and implementation of peace agreements in an inclusive and participatory manner; psycho-social support for victims and survivors of conflict with a gender-sensitive perspective; tackling inequality and injustice at the root of the conflict; electoral support, monitoring and observation; restoration of key services and resilience building; wider socio-economic development and rehabilitation measures; and providing access to effective conflict resolution mechanisms.

Different types of interventions should be designed for different phases of the conflict cycle, depending on what is needed and possible. Conflict cycles are often neither linear nor predictable. Some efforts may seek a cessation of violence or prevention of conflict; others look at more long-term peacebuilding efforts, such as building or repairing relationships between communities or improving state provision of essential services.

In areas affected by or at risk of conflict, it can be challenging to sequence conflict prevention or peacebuilding interventions effectively. Specifically, communities might be experiencing unique realities that merit a local rather than a national response. Failing to think through and mitigate these challenges, and provide the best assistance in a way that will do no harm, is conflict insensitive.

Therefore, any type of conflict prevention and peacebuilding intervention the EU might deploy – from local community peace work or crisis management, to national stabilisation or recovery efforts, and up to high-level diplomatic interventions – needs to design, tailor, prioritise and sequence actions to ensure conflict sensitivity. This is true for any EU department working to address conflict dynamics and promote peace.

However, the way in which the EU conducts and supports these interventions can still inadvertently undermine peace in a fragile context even with the best of intentions. The next sections present issues and guiding questions to be considered during the design and implementation of any peacebuilding work.

Key issues

The Council stresses the need for EU engagement in fragile contexts to work in a conflict-sensitive manner. Conflict sensitivity is a deliberately systematic practice that ensures all processes and actions minimise negative and maximise positive effects within a given context. Conflict sensitivity is relevant to all interventions as part of the principle of doing no harm and a commitment to contributing to conflict prevention and peace.

It should not be assumed that interventions focused on peacebuilding and conflict prevention will automatically be conflict sensitive. Such interventions can still be designed in ways that disproportionately benefit certain groups; reinforce existing power dynamics; or unintentionally cause tensions between groups over access to resources, assets or opportunities.

Tailoring and timing actions across the conflict cycle

Contextual knowledge of the root causes of conflict, awareness of stakeholders' agendas and appropriately timed activities are vital to an intervention being conflict sensitive. The best programmes and actions have sufficient contextual understanding of the conflict or conflict risks to act appropriately at most opportune moments (Zartman, 2008).

Getting it wrong, however, can exacerbate conflicts or creates further tensions and division. For example, a stable, positive peace would see warring parties able to meet and work through conflict issues together. Rushing that process and bringing groups together when they are not ready to engage constructively could lead to increased tensions and worsen conflict dynamics. Being conflict sensitive in this situation would mean tailoring interventions to mitigate sensitivities at different points in the conflict cycle, and working carefully and purposefully towards lasting peace conditions.

This approach requires having an in-depth knowledge about the local context. Such knowledge includes the root causes of conflict, as well as how any programmatic interventions are interacting with that context and the actors involved. The work must also be designed to address the particular sensitivities associated with the different types of violence. Each conflict is unique, with particular causes, drivers and triggers. Different sections of society will experience these dynamics in different ways.

While this premise may seem self-evident, the complex reality of working in highly volatile contexts means such differences may be overlooked during intervention design and implementation. As a result, implementing actors too often fail to fully tailor their work and end up proceeding in a 'business as usual' fashion, rather than focusing on what is really needed to address the root causes of violence. This approach can be conflict insensitive and risks fuelling further grievances.

The last 15 years or so have seen a steady rise in the number of programmes working on countering/preventing violent extremism. While these commonly purport to tackle underlying social grievances that provide space for extremist/non-state armed groups to grow, many evaluations have shown that these programmes do not necessarily offer the right instruments to do so.

Over-reliance on countering/preventing violent extremism and hard security partnerships can come at the expense of other critical conflict risk factors and conflict sensitivity considerations. Additionally, rather than improve societal conditions, poorly designed or implemented actions aimed at countering/preventing violent extremism can be heavy-handed or disproportionately target certain individuals or groups – this only aggravates people's sense of marginalisation and vulnerability.

The unintended (and evidently conflict-insensitive) consequence is that more people are inclined to reject the state or authority operating these programmes aimed at countering/preventing violent extremism (Khalil and Zeuthen, 2014). The lesson is that any interventions out of step with the actuality of nuanced, complex conflict realities are likely to be conflict insensitive and/or risk doing harm – not least in terms of human rights standards. As has been observed with misdirected work aimed at countering/preventing violent extremism, the results are more state fragility, more state repression, and weaker social contracts in a number of already fragile areas (Attree, 2016).

Conflict-sensitive justice reform and security sector reform

The EU's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy makes it clear that the EU's internal and external security are intertwined. The EU committed to taking a more active role in preventing conflict and promoting human security by addressing the root causes of instability and conflict and supporting legitimate institutions to deliver services to local populations and prevent further violence (EC, 2016). This underlines the importance of supporting the rule of law and a justice system that is independent, fair and accessible to all – including those who do not belong to the elites and to the most vulnerable – and is therefore based on the principle and practice of equality before the law.

Security and justice institutions are among the most vital of these institutions. A global order based on international law, human rights and human development requires fair, accountable and transparent security and justice institutions able to guarantee participatory decision-making, human rights compliance, greater accountability, and balance of state powers and public access to information. Working on justice and security sector reform carries significant conflict sensitivity risks, as it unavoidably requires transforming the way power is considered and distributed by relevant institutions and is very often resisted by powerful groups – especially when they are likely to lose control and power through any planned reforms.

Notwithstanding political settlements that move towards more pluralistic and democratic state structures, **justice and security sector reform work might inadvertently replicate existing tensions, reinforce patterns of exclusion, or open avenues for corruption** by introducing resources that then become the focus of a new struggle between elites or conflict parties. Processes of transitional justice are often about broader accountability and addressing root causes of inequalities and conflicts. They can be extremely conflict sensitive and may remain unrealised because of their possible implications and outcomes on accountability. Transitional justice processes must be locally and nationally owned, inclusive and gender sensitive; and must respect states' obligations under international law (EU, 2015).

Supporting strong, inclusive justice and security sector institutions is slow work. It also must be repeated, monitored and updated at regular intervals. In truth, this work never really ends, with reforms often taking one step back and two steps forward. The most insensitive programmes focus superficially on the symbols or forms of an institution (such as new badges, buildings or names); the best and most sensitive take a more long-term approach and prioritise steadily transforming the functions of the institutions themselves. It is these deeper transformations that help maintain and build the sort of positive peace people can support. The EU firmly believes in the principle that there cannot be lasting peace without justice and the rule of law. Therefore, the EU supports the established United Nations policy to oppose amnesties for war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide or gross violations of human rights, including in the context of peace negotiations.

Gender inclusivity and peacebuilding

Peacebuilding processes must consider gender dynamics and analyse the conflict, as well as capacities for peace, through a gender lens. When planning and implementing interventions and programmes, both gender and conflict sensitivity should be applied by systematically considering the interplay between different gender roles and gendered power imbalances, and how these affect conflict dynamics and power relations, as well as opportunities for participation in peace and reconciliation. This approach is in line with the 2018 EU Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security and the EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security (Council of the European Union, 2018b), which make it clear that being gender insensitive is also a way of being conflict insensitive.

Indeed, confining women, youth and other minorities to the margins of a peacebuilding or other programme risks reinforcing structural inequalities that likely drive particular forms of gender-based violence, and condemns less powerful groups still further to the periphery of society.

At the same time, it is incorrect to assume that groups with less power are automatically victims. Women in particular are often considered peacemakers by default, when in truth they may have the capacity to be combatants and perpetrators of violence. Nonetheless, it must be recognised that women and children are often the targets of violence by security forces and armed groups and may be forced into collaborating in order to survive. Being conflict sensitive means recognising that everyone – every group and every community – is a potential agent for change, and has capacities to promote either peace or conflict.

The EU is already committed to integrating gender perspectives in all policies including conflict prevention and resolution, long-term peacebuilding and security. Specific measures aimed at gender equality will be needed, including training military and police forces on specific gender and human rights standards. Measures should place a long-term

emphasis on women's leadership, rights and agency in all areas of policy and programming related to peace while acknowledging the roles that women, men, girls and boys from diverse backgrounds play in furthering gender equality and preventing/resolving violence and conflict.

Coordination and coherence across EU peacebuilding instruments

The Thematic Evaluation of EC Support to Conflict Prevention and Peace-building 2001–2010 emphasised that the EU's political tools and external assistance must complement each other in support of peaceful change (ADE, 2011).

The recently published External Evaluation of EU's Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (2013–2018) identifies key lessons and good practices, and highlights strategies and interventions to ensure such a complementary approach. The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an independent, evidence-based assessment of the extent to which the EU has achieved its conflict prevention and peacebuilding objectives and the impact of EU support in this area on the ground between 2011 and 2018. This global evaluation examines spending and non-spending activities of the former DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, EEAS and FPI. It also considers the activities of DG ECHO, Common Security and Defence Policy missions/operations and EU Member States from the perspective of coordination and complementarity.

The Joint Communication on Resilience in External Action (Council of the European Union, 2017a) stresses the need to prioritise close cooperation between EU political, humanitarian and development actors.

These various actors, related processes and instruments are interconnected, because under the EU Global Strategy, peace and security are indivisible from sustainable and inclusive development, and from the respect of global norms and rules-based international systems. At the same time, each instrument must respect the **mandates of different EU and international actors**, and adhere to both **humanitarian principles** (humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence), and **development principles** (leave no one behind, local ownership, alignment, sustainability, transparency, and predictability).

Promoting the peace agenda includes **coordinating humanitarian and development instruments** with different types of actions – often, but not exclusively political – to help resolve crises in a non-violent way, such as political dialogue, public diplomacy, or EU-supported mediation to promote a peace agreement, policy dialogue, etc.

Being conflict sensitive in conflict prevention and peacebuilding requires an **agreement on the analysis of root causes of conflict** so that all the instruments pull in the same direction towards peace, and complement each other in collectively addressing conflict drivers in the short, medium and long term. Failure to ensure this coordination and coherence can undermine the effectiveness of security, economic, development or humanitarian actions and worsen root causes of conflicts. The repercussions on conflict dynamics can be severe, and set peace back instead of propelling it forward.

Koenig and Brusset (2019) present examples from Burundi, Central African Republic, Libya, Myanmar, and Yemen upon which to draw. Their report makes it clear that when planning a conflict-sensitive peacebuilding programme, it is important to **build on a whole-of-EU understanding** of the conflict context and the motivations of key actors. Even though EU work might be undertaken alongside other engagements (e.g. by other aid and development entities or crisis management operations or missions) conflict sensitivity requires that these different interventions all be based on a shared understanding and position towards the conflict, so that one initiative does not undermine another.

A **clear theory of change** that articulates core assumptions about how each EU actor's intervention will affect conflict and peace dynamics can help ensure better coordination from the outset, better risk mitigation and enhanced conflict sensitivity as a result. Sustained conflict-sensitive monitoring can ensure that interventions have the right information to enable adaptation to and mitigation of emerging risks and risks of doing harm, while remaining coherent and effective over time.

Guiding questions

1. What factors drive conflict or, alternatively, promote peace in the affected area? Which actors influence conflict dynamics in the proposed intervention area or sector? What are their interests and incentives towards violence or peace?
2. What conflict drivers and actors are relevant to the planned EU intervention? How will the intervention help address these conflict drivers?
3. According to the EU joint conflict analysis, what conflict risks are present in the planned programme area?
4. How does the conflict affect specific sections of society differently – on the basis of gender, age, geo-location, ethnicity, indigenous status, religion and socioeconomic status?
5. To what extent will your actions promote inclusivity and improve conditions for marginalised groups? Is there a risk they could further marginalise these groups, and how can this be prevented?
6. What might be the negative consequences of your work? Could the intervention inadvertently contribute to conflict or worsen conflict risks; if so, what steps can be taken to mitigate the risk? How will you monitor these risks and adapt over time?
7. What is the theory of change or underlying assumptions for the intervention in terms of how it is intended to resolve conflict and promote peace? Is this based on a conflict analysis, including an actor analysis? Is there a process in place to monitor whether these assumptions are true and to learn lessons for future interventions?
8. How will your activities complement the existing work of other EU institutions and vice versa? Is a common EU position towards the conflict dynamics clearly expressed by each instrument in a coherent manner? Are the institutional reporting lines conducive to collaboration?
9. Does the intervention risk the safety of EU staff and partners, or might it be seen as siding with one of the conflict parties? How will these risks be mitigated?
10. How might resource transfers linked to the programme affect conflict dynamics or conflict risks?
11. What are the risks of doing harm in terms of exacerbating conflict drivers, tensions and divisions?
12. Is the EU supporting the most inclusive and legitimate actors?
13. What gender-specific interventions are or will be in place? How do they support and expand opportunities for women's equality and participation in peacebuilding?

Further resources

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 'DNH [Do No Harm] Guidance Note: Peacebuilding and DNH' (2011).

Council of the European Union, 'Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities' (2009).

Council of the European Union, 'Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises' (2018).

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Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 4

Gender

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to gender into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Note 3 and Annex 2, Module 2, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*.

Introduction

The European Union's (EU's) Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security (Council of the European Union, 2018) and the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) II and GAP III emphasise gender equality as a core European value and a stand-alone priority to be mainstreamed across all EU policies and programmes.

Any intervention set in a fragile and/or conflict-affected context will inevitably have an impact on the peace and conflict environments, and on conflict risks. This impact may be positive or negative, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional. Understanding these dynamics is a fundamental tenet of conflict sensitivity, as well as the responsibility of doing no harm. It has been increasingly recognised that **understanding the relationship between gender and conflict dynamics** is also vital for ensuring interventions are conflict sensitive and is key to developing effective and inclusive peacebuilding responses (Anderlini, 2006; Barandun and Joos, 2004).

Gender norms and roles are at the heart of a society's values. They influence the attitudes, behaviours and societal expectations of women and men, girls and boys, in fragile and conflict-affected situations – and as a result, shape and drive conflict as well as peacebuilding. Conflict and violence also have differential impacts on men, women, boys and girls.

Challenging gender norms and empowering women and girls can, depending on the context, be met with resistance. This does not mean that such work should be avoided, but rather that the potential for resistance and risk to partners, beneficiaries or EU staff should be anticipated and factored into programme planning and design – and that this potential might be quite specific to the fragility and conflict-affected context.

Conflict-sensitive gender-focused interventions should therefore think through these risks and take steps to mitigate them, as well as **supporting women's involvement** in addressing root causes of conflict issues and enabling women's participation in peacebuilding.

Applying gender sensitivity means taking into account the different needs, experiences and interests of people of different genders. (See Box 3.1 for relevant definitions.) EU actions should furthermore ensure doing no harm; in so doing, they should not perpetuate, exacerbate or create gender inequalities, directly or indirectly. Instead, they should underpin gender-transformative and gender-responsive interventions aimed at equal and full enjoyment of human rights.

BOX 4.1 Useful definitions

Gender. Socially, culturally and politically constructed roles, behaviours and attributes that a given society considers most appropriate and valuable for men and women. Gender is also a system of power that shapes the lives, opportunities, rights, relationships and access to resources of women and men, girls and boys.

Gender-based violence (GBV). Physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuse that is directed against a person on the basis of their gender. The phenomenon is deeply rooted in gender inequality and gendered systems of power. GBV includes, but is not limited to, intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault and harassment, incest, dowry-related violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, trafficking in persons, sexual slavery, forced abortion, abduction and confinement, verbal abuse and mental harassment, and use of rape and GBV as a weapon of war.

Gender mainstreaming. The integration of a gender perspective into every stage of a policy process, intervention or programme – from design, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting greater equality between women and men and the human rights of all genders and ensure the gender responsiveness of all actions.

Gender norms. Sets of expectations and rules about how people of each gender should behave, according to notions of masculinity and femininity. These are not determined by biological sex, but rather are specific to particular societies, cultures and traditions, and often to particular social groups and social classes within those societies.

Gender-responsive programming. Programmes where gender norms, roles and inequalities have been taken into account by taking specific measures to actively redress inequalities, power imbalances and harmful norms and practices. Such programmes go beyond increasing sensitivity and awareness and actually do something to reduce and challenge systemic gender discrimination and inequalities.

Gender-sensitive programming. Programmes where gender norms, roles and inequalities have been considered and an awareness of these issues has been raised, but the focus of the intervention is not primarily gender-related or gender-focused. Gender-sensitive efforts need to be accompanied by gender-responsive actions in order to achieve greater gender equality and transform gender norms and power structures.

Intersectionality. The idea that different aspects of each identity interact with each other and cannot be understood separately from one another. Gender identities are shaped by other systems of power and by group and individual characteristics related to people's identities, such as age, marital status, class or socioeconomic status, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, (dis)ability and gender identity.

Femininity. Those behaviours and attributes that many societies expect of women and girls. Ideas about what is feminine vary over time, as well as within and between cultures and generations. What is considered feminine is usually less socially valued than the norms, roles and behaviours considered to be masculine.

Masculinity. Those behaviours and attributes that societies expect of men and boys. Ideas about what is masculine vary over time, as well as within and between cultures and generations. What is considered masculine is usually more socially valued than the norms, roles and behaviours considered to be feminine.

Sources: Saferworld, 2016: pp. 6–7; EU, 2019 (for gender mainstreaming).

Ensuring a gender-sensitive approach thus means that gender analysis needs to begin at the design phase of an intervention and be integrated throughout implementation to monitoring, evaluation and learning. Sufficient provisions need to be made at the resource level too, both financially and – from a human resources perspective – by ensuring that the right people with the right competencies are involved, as well as building the capacity of other staff on gender analysis.

Key issues

The approach needed to ensure EU policy and programming are both gender and conflict sensitive differs depending on the intervention being undertaken. The important thing to remember is that **a gender- and conflict-sensitive approach is relevant for all interventions in all contexts**. The approach taken should build on the commitment for every intervention to be informed by a gender analysis in order to identify how it will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment in line with the priorities set in GAP III (EC, 2020).

A gender- and conflict-sensitive approach facilitates an understanding of how gender norms, roles and expectations affect conflict dynamics and fragilities and provides an increased awareness of gendered experiences of conflict and peacebuilding (see Table 4.1; also see Box 4.2 for sample guiding questions on gender and conflict analysis). The risks of doing harm or of worsening gender-based violence, gender inequalities, or negatively affecting the security and safety of women and girls should be considered at all times.

Besides asking how an intervention is going to affect conflict dynamics, questions must be asked about **how the intervention is going to affect gender dynamics** – and, indeed, how gender dynamics may affect the intervention. Points to keep in mind include the following:

- **'Women' and 'men' are not homogeneous groups.** People's experience varies greatly according to other aspects of their identities such as age, marital status, class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability and so on.
- **There are more than two genders/sexes.** Not everyone fits into the category of 'man' or 'woman' – so other gender identities and/or minorities must be considered.

TABLE 4.1 Gender and conflict

DIMENSION/ISSUE	GENDER PERSPECTIVE
History of armed conflict	• Sexual and gender-based violence trauma and impacts, as well as stigma on widows, women-headed households, former child soldiers, children born of rape, association with armed groups, etc. • How gender roles are affected/changed by conflict or peacebuilding in a positive or negative way
Governance	• Women's exclusion from peace negotiations, peace agreements, etc. • Women's exclusion from public decision-making, political representation, power imbalances, etc. • Discriminatory laws and constitutional provisions • Transitional justice that is not gender sensitive and inclusive
Impact of militarisation	• Increased sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment, child soldiers • Militarisation of communities • Security issues in everyday life, e.g. risks related to access to water, education, health, livelihoods; impossibility of denouncing violence to authorities; impunity; different forms of criminality, proliferation of small arms and light weapons
Ethnicity/religion	• Gender expressions and impact of ethnic and religious differences • Certain traditional gender roles and norms incompatible with human rights standards
Economic and social inequalities	• Exclusion of women from recovery and reconstruction • Women's undervalued care work; over-representation in the informal sector; higher poverty risk related to gender/age/location • Lack of access to land and control over natural resources

Source: DEVCO B2 Conflict Sensitivity and Fragility Training Module, Context for Development 2018–2019.

BOX 4.2 Examples of guiding questions for gender-sensitive conflict analysis

13. How will the views of both women and men be elicited in the conflict analysis process?
14. What are the predominant gender norms for people of different genders and from different social groups?
15. How have norms relating to masculinity and femininity been shaped and changed by conflict?
16. How are women and men from different backgrounds and their gender roles affected by the conflict?
17. What are the different security concerns of women, men, girls and boys from different groups and areas?
18. What roles are women, men, girls and boys playing in the conflict? What roles do they play in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict?
19. How do gender norms and behaviours shape how violence is used, by whom against whom?
20. Are there norms relating to masculinity and femininity which (could) help build or facilitate peace?
21. Who promotes peace at different levels, including locally? What networks and structures are being used to do so?
22. What kind of activities are women's organisation and networks carrying out? Do these organisations have the capacity to promote peace?
23. What does the conflict analysis itself reflect regarding differential impacts of the conflict on women, men, girls, boys, youth, elderly, etc.?
24. Has the analysis revealed any gender-based differences in terms of particular potential roles or capacities for men or women in promoting peace, participating in peacebuilding processes and/or addressing specific conflict factors?
25. Has the analysis revealed specific dynamics of the conflict that empower or disempower women and men in certain ways based on their gender? Could these dynamics assist a sustainable preventive action process?
26. Are the outcomes of the gender analysis followed up, i.e. are gender-sensitive early response options developed as part of a preventive action plan?

Sources: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012; Saferworld, 2016; Saferworld et al., 2018.

- **Examine your own assumptions.** This means trying to set aside common gender stereotypes, biases and assumptions, whether general or related to the context. For example, in some cases, women may be perpetrators of violence and/or combatants, and men also may be victims or survivors of sexual violence.
- **Think beyond gender and conflict being only about gender-based violence.** While it is essential to identify where gender-based violence occurs and who commits it against whom, it is also key to analyse how gender norms, roles and power dynamics influence different forms of conflict and violence not typically thought of as gender based.
- **Do not assume that gender norms are an inherent part of a culture.** These norms have evolved over time and will continue to do so. Whereas they often change slowly over long periods, gendered behaviours and gender roles may change much more quickly in contexts of conflict and fragility (e.g. post-natural disasters, etc.).

Guiding questions

1. What impact do gender roles and norms have on conflict dynamics? Are men and women behaving in certain ways (enlisting, encouraging violence, promoting peace) partly due to their gender identities and roles?
2. To what extent are gender norms, conditions and laws limiting women, men, boys and girls in the conflict-affected situation? How can greater gender equality be supported while addressing causes of conflict and promoting peace?
3. What are the different impacts of the conflict and violence on men, women, boys and girls? What support is available to prevent violence and

assist survivors? What types of (specific) violence affects different gender groups, also considering their age, location, ethnic and religious affiliation, etc.?

4. What are the different perceptions of women, men, boys and girls with regard to their personal and community safety? Are internally displaced persons exposed to specific risk and specific forms of violence?
5. What role are women currently playing in peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities? How can these be built upon in the intervention? Are there gender roles that could help, build or facilitate peace? To what extent?
6. Are there women's groups and organisations that can help ensure that women are represented and heard during informal and/or formal peace processes and negotiations?
7. Are women's specific needs and concerns reflected in the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration support as well as security sector reform, both as potential participants – e.g. ex-combatants and/or security sector providers – and as recipients of future security, development and justice processes?
8. Has gender analysis informed conflict analysis and/or conflict sensitivity assessments?
9. What risks may emerge for beneficiaries, partners and staff as a result of working on gender issues and the empowerment of women? Can you mitigate these risks by, e.g. engaging with a broader network of partners; asking a respected public figure to champion the initiative; engage with trusted security actors, traditional leaders, etc.?
10. Who will feel threatened and who will be empowered by your interventions? What are the risks of doing harm and creating more risks for women, including sexual and gender-based violence, threats or insecurity? Could a programme to empower women (e.g. economically) also involve men in their community to get their support, while maintaining a focus on improving gender equality and promoting peace?
11. How will you identify and engage with key community/religious leaders to support your work in a way that is not harmful towards women and girls?
12. How will the programme seek feedback from vulnerable and marginalised groups including women and girls, minorities, indigenous peoples, etc.? How will the programme create a sufficiently safe environment for them to report any type of abuse (e.g. safeguarding policies)?

Further resources

Center for International Peace Operations and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, 'Trainer Manual: Mainstreaming Gender into Peacebuilding Training' (2013).

Conciliation Resources, 'Gender and Conflict Analysis Toolkit for Peacebuilders' (2015).

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Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 5

Democratic governance and human rights

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to democratic governance and human rights into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Note 3 and Annex 2, Module 1, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*.

Introduction

The European Union (UN) and its Member States have committed to implementing a **rights-based approach to development cooperation**, encompassing all human rights and the promotion of inclusion, participation, non-discrimination, equality, transparency and accountability. This means ensuring that nobody is left behind, wherever people live and regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, migration status, indigenous status and/or other factors.

Similarly, **good governance and the rule of law** are vital for sustainable development, as well as prerequisites for the protection of all fundamental rights. This requires effective governance institutions and systems that are responsive to public needs and deliver essential services. Furthermore, inclusive political processes ensure that citizens can hold public officials to account when standards fall short. The quality and inclusivity of a governance system and its institutions, be it on a national or sub-national level, has a serious bearing on conflict dynamics and conflict risks, even for places seemingly at peace. Where key services are weak, of poor quality, or else unequally distributed, the likelihood of conflict and tensions increases. **Policy and political dialogues** are among the key instruments the EU uses to promote democratisation and accountability and to strengthen a culture of policy reform and human rights protection.

The fields of peacebuilding and democracy and human rights are interdependent in the implementation of **Agenda 2030** and **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16**. This SDG links and integrates peacebuilding, democracy and human rights through its focus on peaceful and inclusive societies, access to effective justice for all, and accountable and inclusive institutions.

Societal actors – including citizens and representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups, civil society organisations (CSOs), human rights defenders and national institutions such as **national human rights commissions and ombudsmen** – play an important role in holding their governments accountable; promoting transparency and the protection of human rights; and building proactive, participatory approaches and dialogues. However, these institutions and actors need to be independent, sufficiently funded and/or with adequate resources and protections, which often is not the case. Therefore, independent CSOs and non-governmental organisations – including women's organisations and

organisations representing marginalised groups – have an important role to play in promoting the accountability of duty bearers; in promoting gender equality and human rights; and in fighting discriminatory legislation, policies and practices, as well as gender-based violence and marginalisation.

Human rights perspectives on conflicts and fragility help to understand how inequality, injustice and insecurity are structural conditions underpinning tensions and violence. For example, a country's legislative, policy and judicial frameworks may be biased against certain identity groups, resulting in their continuous exclusion and marginalisation from political, economic and social spheres. Such conditions create structural fault lines in society that may provide fertile ground for violence, intimidation, hate crimes, impunity, etc.

Human rights violations can both be the root cause as well as the consequence of violent conflicts, and always add to fragility and to conflict risks. Human rights abuses such as the excessive use of force by police and other security forces, intimidation of political opponents, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence can be either the immediate consequences or indicators of an imminent violent conflict and/or conflict risks. Widespread impunity of such violations may gradually become a structural condition that fuels grievances and conflict, often when a number of triggers converge.

Balancing and overseeing state powers (executive, legislative, judiciary) can be an ongoing challenge and a driver of conflict if people perceive such core institutions over which a state presides as illegitimate, opaque, ineffective, corrupt or unaccountable (DCAF, 2019). There is an especially high risk of escalating tensions in situations where major political organisations, elite factions, ethnic or other groups are excluded from the process. This may even contribute to conflict if incentives remain in place for political organisations and powerful elite interests to engage in violent confrontation (OECD, 2010). The problem can be further compounded if there is weak access to justice – or the perception that this is the case – and security forces that are not responsive to the population but protect a specific group's interests without adequate civilian oversight.

The way **elections** are conducted and how parliaments and political parties function can also determine whether a political system fuels or helps resolve conflict constructively. Electoral competition can either lead to a more or a less inclusive political settlement. There is a high risk of escalating tensions in situations where major political organisations, elite factions, ethnic groups, women, etc. are excluded from the process. More often than not, incentives remain in place for political organisations and powerful elite interests to engage in violent confrontation through pre-electoral political violence, unfair electoral competition, fraudulent electoral processes or questionable constitutional reforms to indefinitely extend certain political mandates. In this type of context, violence can also flare up during elections or afterwards due to the lack of acceptance of electoral results or the imposition of a fraudulent outcome or alleged victory.

Decentralisation processes involving administrative, economic and political devolution, as well as efforts to consolidate and restore basic dimensions of the rule of law and accountability, face similar trade-offs (OECD, 2010). An effective and inclusive decentralisation process is often a key dimension of peace processes, peace agreements and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction.

The **EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024**, in its section 2 clearly refers to the importance of human rights and democracy as underpinning state and societal resilience, as well as a security that is rights-based, and an ongoing commitment to accountability and fighting impunity (EC and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2020).

The action plan has a dedicated section on 'Reinforcing a human rights and participative approach to conflict prevention and crisis resolution' which focuses on:

- supporting the inclusion of young people (in particular young women) and their participation in all efforts to prevent conflict, and build and sustain peace, as well as broader Women, Peace and Security Agenda commitments;
- supporting capacities of CSOs and human rights defenders to document and monitor human rights violations, including in conflict situations;

- continuing to strengthen the links between human rights, including gender equality, security, environmental degradation and climate change – the latter being an important threat multiplier – in policy dialogues, conflict prevention, development and humanitarian actions, as well as disaster risk reduction strategies;
- supporting the prevention of human rights violations of children affected by armed conflicts, as well as their demobilisation and reintegration;
- supporting EU human rights due diligence policies for the EU security sector, etc.;
- supporting EU and in-country initiatives to combat impunity for human rights violations and abuses (including against children and women, sexual and gender-based violence, war crimes, etc.) and support transitional justice processes, including by strengthening links with the United Nations and the International Criminal Court;
- promoting continued political commitment to and operationalisation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) not least as an analytical tool to specific country situations and to prioritise EU's early action to prevent mass atrocities.

Key issues

Conflict sensitivity highlights the need for careful analysis that can help anticipate tension, resistance or outright conflict and develop strategies for handling these in the best way possible. A thorough **stakeholder analysis** is critical to capture the extent and severity of grievances between groups, including discerning gender, religious, ethnic, sectarian and political divisions and patterns of structural discrimination.

In fragile and conflict-affected situations, the state more often than not is the source or perceived advocate for the **exclusion of specific social groups and minorities**. Donors should carefully identify responsible actors and stakeholders, and the likely impacts of resource transfers to different stakeholders. This should include consideration of unintended negative impacts, such as exacerbation of tensions and divisions, implicit and explicit political and policy messaging, the risk of supporting illegitimate and abusive regimes, etc.

Conflict sensitivity emphasises the **principle of responsibility and accountability**. Actions implemented in fragile and conflict-affected contexts become part of the conflict dynamics – whether they are focused on directly addressing the conflict or not.

By assessing the conflict sensitivity of ongoing and proposed actions, **initiatives can be redesigned** to correct and minimise negative effects on peace and human security, and to maximise opportunities for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Being conflict sensitive is not about avoiding change or allowing injustice or inequality to persist out of fear but **finding the best options** for how to support that change in order to avoid doing harm.

When challenging an unjust status quo, care should be taken to **support non-violent processes, conflict prevention, and inclusive and participatory peacebuilding** as well as the protection of certain groups and individuals from violence and threats, while supporting them in the change process. To this end, a conflict-sensitive approach should identify and mitigate any potentially negative effects on violence risks and human rights abuses that an intervention might carry, even if it is well intended.

The **do no harm principle** should be relied upon, both in its conflict-sensitive interpretation – considering the unintended impacts on conflict, violence, tensions, etc. – and from a human rights perspective – considering the unintended impacts on human rights, human rights defenders, gender equality, etc.

The do no harm principle **links the EU rights-based approach to the EU's approach to conflict sensitivity**. Even though the interpretation and implementation of both concepts are guided by different standards and methodologies, they both adhere to the same principles of aid effectiveness, particularly with regard to ownership and alignment, accountability and transparency.

For example, trying to promote and support people's socioeconomic rights will likely involve a **transfer of resources and opportunities** away from those with too much and towards those in need. This shift will have to be managed sensitively to lessen the potential for violence, conflict and other types of backlash.

Similarly, working with the state on economic development necessitates abiding by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UN, 2011). States, as duty bearers, need to implement their own due diligence human rights requirements to ensure that economic development does not detract from or infringe on people's rights, as the following two examples illustrate.

Example 1: Conflicts over land

Competition and conflict over land is likely to intensify with the growing pressures of climate change, population growth, increased food insecurity, migration and urbanisation. Mounting pressure on land resources will drive conflict dynamics at the global, regional, national and local levels. There is growing evidence of a link between land, armed conflicts and human rights abuses; and there is increasing acknowledgement that land issues can be a root cause or trigger for conflict, a critical factor in its relapse, or a bottleneck to recovery. Evidence from the field demonstrates the significance of resolving land-related issues to achieve sustainable and durable peace. Land-related human rights abuses, such as forced evictions linked to large-scale population displacements, are often key to social conflicts and gross violations of human rights, as well as violent conflict. Large-scale land-based investments by international and national business may lead to forced evictions and human rights abuses, including the destruction of livelihoods, environmental degradation and further marginalisation of excluded groups. In this context, implementation of the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for indigenous peoples is imperative, as was reaffirmed in the 2017 Council Conclusions on Indigenous Peoples (Council of the European Union, 2017).

International standards identify the distinct but complementary roles of government and business, whereby the state has the duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties – including businesses – and ensure the implementation of equitable, fair and transparent land policies. The state as a duty bearer has a key role in providing effective human rights safeguards and standards, and access to effective remedies.

Example 2: Security sector reform

Support to security sector reform, if not well designed, can lead to an increase in human rights abuses. For example, an intervention that merely strengthens the 'hard' capabilities of security sector institutions may lead to a police force being better equipped and trained to ramp up abuses against marginalised groups, political opponents or human rights activists. Repressive tendencies may be reinforced with perceived legitimacy and tacit approval provided by international actors, which might reinforce a harmful securitised response to development.

If designed and implemented effectively and with a conflict-sensitive approach, supporting democratisation, human rights protection, the rule of law and security sector reform can be powerful responses to address root conflict causes. All such interventions will necessarily challenge the status quo, thereby threatening the interests of particular groups while trying to ensure that others gain access to services, justice or decision-making power from which they were previously excluded. Interventions also need to be part of a package that ensures civilian oversight and accountability – especially of security forces – to limit the potential for violence and abuse.

Guiding questions

1. What are the most common human rights violations, and how are they linked to the different instruments and dimensions of governance (e.g. institutions and laws governing security, justice, health, welfare, land, tax, education, natural resources, labour)?
2. What democratic and rule of law systems and structures exist for people to redress their human rights grievances? What systems and structures exist that promote equitable distribution of resources?
3. What particular governance problems currently pose conflict risks? How will the planned intervention address these?
4. Could the EU give additional legitimacy to, and be seen to side with, the government, thereby reinforcing conflict trends?

5. What would be the challenges for the EU to take action against governments (e.g. suspend support and/or impose sanctions) for corruption, human rights abuses and/or other actions contrary to the EU's fundamental values and commitments to conflict prevention and peace – for example, where such abuses and unaccountable behaviours may fuel violence, conflict and grievances?
6. Is the government considered legitimate by all segments of the population? Do people trust the justice system and security providers? In what ways do problems with the political system and security and justice provision contribute to conflict dynamics or risks? Which of these dynamics will your intervention address?
7. To what extent are the core functions and resources of the state contested by different groups? How could your intervention help find solutions for peaceful management of state-society relationships? How might the intervention inadvertently contribute to conflict causes or undermine human rights?
8. Might any of the planned human rights and/or democratic governance interventions unintentionally lead to increased violence/threats/aggressions towards certain groups of the population, because of the change they are promoting? Are there mitigating and protection measures that can be put in place?
9. If budget support is only provided at the national level, is there a risk that neglected peripheries may be further disadvantaged, thereby further fuelling conflict drivers? Do state-building contracts include sufficient risk assessments against the risks of the government not fulfilling its commitments and instead contributing to tensions and conflict? Do they contain sufficient flexibility for the EU to react and adapt programmes in such a scenario?
10. Have you considered the possible unintended negative impacts of the intervention on vulnerable and/or marginalised groups and/or on social groups affected by structural inequalities, discrimination, exclusion?
11. Have you considered specific measures for inclusion, consultation, participation and consent of marginalised and vulnerable groups (women, indigenous peoples, youth, people with disabilities, etc.), thereby ensuring their involvement in decision-making?
12. Who are the key stakeholders benefiting from the status quo? Who would lose and who would gain from a change in the status quo? With which of these stakeholders will the intervention engage and/or aim to strengthen or weaken? Who are the agents for positive change, and how can they be supported?
13. How will those individuals and groups challenging, monitoring and/or documenting human rights violations be protected from threats and violence?
14. How will the intervention ensure the participation and involvement of women in governance structures related to peacebuilding, recovery and reconstruction?
15. How will gender-specific measures be taken into account actions supporting transitional justice and justice sector reforms?
16. What conflict dynamics and risks exist around election processes, and what are the implications for the EU's engagement?
17. How is the presence of external military actors as part of crisis response affecting the context and the population? Are codes of conduct and accountability mechanisms in place to prevent, investigate or redress possible abuses, human rights violations, and sexual and gender-based violence?
18. What are the risks that EU funds may be diverted or utilised by the government to pursue/sustain conflict and conflict economies, or support corrupt or patronage networks to the exclusion of the population at large? Have you considered the role and interlinkages between licit and illicit economies in this regard?
19. If contracting work to external organisations and/or consultants or subcontractors, what is the public opinion of them? Are they considered representative and impartial? Do they have due diligence processes in place to detect, prevent and remedy possible violations to human rights? Do they have expertise in conflict sensitivity?

Further resources

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 'Guidance Note: Human Rights and Do No Harm' (2010).

Council of the European Union, 'Women, Peace and Security - Council Conclusions' [includes the EU Strategic Approach and action plan] (2018).

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Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 6

Working with national actors

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to national actors into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Note 7 and Annex 2, Module 3, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*. It should be read in conjunction with Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 7, which covers working with international actors.

Introduction

Working with national actors can be challenging in situations of conflict and fragility, but it should be systematically pursued, as it can offer significant opportunities for conflict prevention and peace building. The term 'national actors' can cover a broad range of groups or partners, notably those operating primarily at national and sub-national levels. This guidance note focuses on the European Union's (EU's) engagement with three types of national actors:

- government and state actors;
- local authorities, including formal, informal and/or traditional authorities;
- local civil society, including civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs).

The emphasis on partnership with national actors is in line with the EU Council's 'Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises', which stresses 'the importance of local ownership, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainability of supported actions, by engaging with national and local authorities, communities and civil society' (Council of the European Union, 2018, p. 3). The Joint Resilience Communication also recognises the relevance of such engagement in terms of conflict sensitivity, highlighting the 'link between inclusive and participatory societies, with accountable, transparent and democratic institutions, and sustainable development and the prevention of violent conflict' (Council of the European Union, 2017, p. 4). These policy commitments, combined with other EU commitments including to the global 2030 Agenda, define the reasons and parameters for the EU and its Member States to work with a wide variety of national actors and ensure the conflict sensitivity of such interventions.

Actor mapping

Note that the following material is also relevant in working with international actors.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness focuses on aligning the policies of international donors with the policies, plans and actions of national counterparts and on national ownership of development programmes. In addition, the Declaration's principles for engaging with fragile and conflict-affected countries aim

> to build legitimate, effective and resilient state and other country institutions. While the guiding principles of effective aid apply equally to fragile states, they need to be adapted to environments of weak ownership and capacity and to immediate needs for basic service delivery. (OECD, 2005, p. 6)

In many cases, however, it is not always immediately clear **who are the most legitimate counterparts** – and getting this wrong or supporting illegitimate or exploitative national actors could risk contributing to the worsening of conflict, conflict risks or other dimensions of fragility. In such contexts, it is only through cooperation with the right national counterparts that the EU can respect the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations' (OECD, 2007), and provide the kind of support that will encourage positive relationships between state and society, and that will contribute to peace and resilience building at all levels.

There are many issues and dilemmas in supporting state building in fragile contexts and in identifying the right actors with which to work. Actor and stakeholder mapping with a conflict sensitivity focus will help ensure that interventions **avoid the pitfalls of working only with the most visible and obvious – or powerful – national actors**.

In the context of EU interventions, 'national' can mean any actor based in the country, including those at the local governance and community level. Each of these actors will have their own agendas, interests and priorities, as well as different levels of influence and power. Moreover, they may control key elements relevant to the conflict dynamics in the local context (natural resources, land, social services, security forces, relationships with armed groups, etc.). It is vital to **understand these actors, their positions, interests, power relations and level of authority before an intervention is designed and implemented** in order to avoid exacerbating tensions and conflict.

This mapping involves thinking through all the different actors or partners with which the EU is, may or will be involved; and their interests, goals, positions, capacities and relationships. Box 6.1 provides information and guidance that can help in ensuring that engagement is thought through carefully, as well as in identifying issues that might arise as a result of engagement and ways to ensure that a conflict-sensitive approach is applied and maintained.

Carrying out an actor/stakeholder mapping with a conflict-sensitive lens will help identify the key strategic actors with which to work, including those that might not be immediately obvious. Where national counterparts are weak, the EU must provide concerted and sustained support to strengthen the relationship between society and the state, with a do no harm focus. The mapping process should help shed light on how, where and with whom to do this, for example by revealing which actors might help EU activities at the local level connect to broader reform at the top/national level, and vice versa[1], as well as acting as drivers of peace and resilience.

Working with government and state actors at the national level

There are risks in engaging with government and state actors at the national level. National counterparts are often weak or compromised in contexts affected by conflict or fragility, or may be politically unwilling to engage with international donors on certain issues, such as human rights, natural resources, gender equality, democratic reforms, rule of law, transitional justice, etc. They may also be exposed personally or collectively to risks of repression. In some other cases, their level of legitimacy may be compromised, and they may not have the trust of the population nor the capacity or resources to deliver the services they are expected to provide. Support by international donors carries extra conflict sensitivity and conflict risks when it concerns the security and justice sectors, especially in regimes with serious governance, rule of law and democratic issues.

Corruption in public procurement processes, especially in conflict-affected states, and the misappropriation and manipulation of public funds is by no means uncommon. In certain countries, national government actors may be colluding with a

[1] For more ideas and different ways to approach an actor mapping, see Herbert (2017), pp. 14–15.

BOX 6.1 Guidance for conflict-sensitive national actor/stakeholder mapping and analysis

Considerations

- **Interests and goals.** The underlying motivations of the actors in relation to the conflict and/or the peacebuilding context.
- **Positions.** The stance of conflict actors on key and emerging issues in a given context, irrespective of the interests and goals of others.
- **Capacities.** The actors' potential to affect the context, the conflict/and or peacebuilding, positively or negatively. Potential can be defined in terms of resources, access, influence, social networks and constituencies, other support and alliances, etc.
- **Relationships.** The interactions between actors at various levels, and their perception of these interactions, as well as power imbalances.

Key questions

- **Who are the main actors?** Typically these would include: national government, security sector (military, police), local (military) leaders and armed groups, private sector / business (local, national, trans-national), donor agencies and foreign embassies in situ, nationally based multilateral organisations, religious or political networks (local, national, global), independent mediators, civil society (local, national, international), peace and human rights groups, youth and women's groups, indigenous peoples' organisations, trade unions, political parties, traditional authorities, diaspora groups, refugees / internally displaced persons, community leaders, etc. Do not forget to include your own organisation, as well.
- **What are their main interests, goals, positions, capacities and power relationships?** These may be related to religious and ethnic values and belonging, gender norms and stereotypes, political ideologies, access to land and natural resources, interest in greater political and economic participation, constituencies, access to information, political ties, global and regional networks' affiliations, etc.
- **Among identified actors and stakeholders, which ones are likely to lose and which ones are likely to win from triggering, continuing or resolving the conflict? And how?** The analysis of interests, positions and power relations is key to understand this. The ways that benefits or damages might occur to different groups may not be immediately easy to figure out. For example, there might be actors that could be strongly interested in maintaining the status quo, to the point that they might resist any intervention or reform, including through the creation or exacerbation of tensions and conflicts.
- **What capacities for peace can be identified?** Normally these capacities can be identified in different actors and institutions, CSOs, informal approaches to conflict resolution, traditional authorities, local authorities, informal justice systems (although gender implications must be considered carefully), political institutions (e.g. head of state, parliament, judiciary, regional organisation representatives, and multilateral bodies in-country, etc.). Capacities for peace are related to those stakeholders that push towards unifying goals, interests and processes; are inclusive in their approach; and are able to help negotiate compromises instead of dividing and creating tensions.
- **Which actors can be identified as spoilers? Why?** For example, these may be groups benefiting from the war economy (combatants, arms/drug dealers, smugglers, human and wildlife traffickers etc.). These actors may have connections with institutional actors, the private sector, etc., and will have an impact on already existing dividers in a specific context.

Source: APFO et al., 2004, p. 4.

range of illicit economies that undermine the potential for peace. At the same time, it is critical for medium- and long-term sustainability to work with government and state-level actors.

Therefore, conflict sensitivity as well as human rights due diligence are essential to ensure that any support is provided to legitimate national actors, and that the type of support provided will avoid doing harm or creating additional risks to selected partners. Particular consideration may be necessary when the EU makes decisions about whether and how to provide budget support, its geographical and social targeting, disbursement criteria, as well as policy dialogue priorities and related processes.

Although a useful platform for policy and political dialogue at the national level, general or sector budget support poses conflict sensitivity dilemmas. Ensuring that programme support is used for intended purposes, and reaches the right recipients rather than being diverted for vested interests, is a crucial condition for conflict sensitivity and building capacities for peace. Existing risk management frameworks or other related risk management tools for budget support are opportunities to identify structural risks and mitigating measures[2]. Budget support operations may be subjected to tailored conflict sensitivity assessments, with a view to informing more specific risk mitigation – for example, through appropriate policy dialogue priorities and indicators relevant to doing no harm approaches and to tackling fragility.

Working with local authorities at the sub-national level

The influence and role of local or traditional authorities will differ in each context. However, they can be highly relevant partners in states where central authorities might be weak and lack legitimacy or capacity to provide for local people's needs. Working with authorities at the local level also provides the potential to work from the bottom up and closer to community organisations. Ideally, local governance structures will be better able to reach local stakeholders, be more inclusive and representative, and play an important part in dispute resolution mechanisms, mediation and access to justice. In some areas, traditional authorities could also be able to address these issues, but their role could be more ambiguous or controversial, as discussed below.

Local authorities are key stakeholders in decentralisation processes, and are often a valuable issue and asset for peacebuilding and reconciliation. Decentralisation can also be part of reforms contemplated by peace agreements, as it affords opportunities for forms of governance that are more locally considerate, responsive and inclusive, and are theoretically more attuned to local needs and identities.

All these factors can improve service delivery and improve impact by offering more sensitive and equitable management of, among other things, natural, financial and human resources. However, engaging with and supporting local authorities entails conflict sensitivity risks that need to be carefully managed in order to increase the chances of maximising potential positive outcomes for peace (Bennett, 2018).

Wherever relevant, local authorities should be central actors in implementing the terms of peace agreements. At the same time, they may collude with or be threatened by non-state armed groups that could have an interest in undermining such agreements. Decentralisation processes can provide unintended opportunities for influential local groups or elites, including unscrupulous local authority representatives (or those associated with them) to capture state and natural resources, and to generate more corruption, patronage and marginalisation of already excluded groups.

In such cases, local authorities' interventions can widen inequalities within society and increase divisions between groups, with detrimental impacts on peace. From a conflict sensitivity perspective, it is important that local authorities meet people's needs in a way that does no harm, and that include spaces for dialogue, consultations, accountability and shared decision-making. Their role is also very important in circumstances where territories are no longer in the control of armed forces, and there is a risk of a governance vacuum that can create new forms of violence and conflict.

[2] See EC (2017).

Working with traditional authorities also presents risks and opportunities. While local government authorities tend to be part of the broader national state bureaucracy, the local organisations may also be composed of non-state, informal or community-based local governance actors and structures, often termed 'traditional authorities'. In certain contexts, these traditional authorities can play critical roles in conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms – for example, through the management of informal or semi-formal justice systems.

These systems often hold local legitimacy and are frequently the preferred modality through which people seek redress and resolution of their grievances, particularly when formal justice is not effective or is perceived as power-biased; in some settings, they might be the only justice people have access to at the local level. On the other hand, these institutions might perpetuate unequal power dynamics and structural discrimination, especially from a gender equality perspective (Denney, Bennett and Khin Thet San, 2016), and in relation to human rights standards and principles. In other words, traditional customary laws of different kinds (including religious) might not be aligned with key human rights and values. Specific attention should be given to indigenous peoples' customary law and its potential as a mechanism for conflict prevention should be carefully assessed.

This situation poses tricky dilemmas and trade-offs. While informal or traditional authorities may enjoy strong local legitimacy (often more so than formal or governmental authorities), they can perpetuate exclusionary practices that can ultimately undermine the prospects for long-term peace. It is essential that programmes engage with them, and account for their role in shaping local practice, while promoting gender equality and human rights in a culturally sensitive way that takes minorities and vulnerable groups into account.

As a rule, providing non-threatening opportunities and spaces to listen to the grievances of all sides, build trust over time, and negotiate political and social settlements that consider the needs of local people can help mitigate conflict risks in contested spaces with multiple authorities.

Working with civil society organisations

Civil society encompasses a vast range of actors and viewpoints. CSOs frequently serve as implementing or consultation partners for the EU and other donors, and their diversity represents the broad spectrum of citizen interests, human rights and environmental activists, indigenous peoples, women and youth. A non-exhaustive list of CSOs may include community-based organisations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, human rights organisations, indigenous peoples' representative organisations, trade unions, cooperatives, professional associations, youth groups, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, academia, and non-profit media and local media[3].

CSOs have a vital role to play in peace and development processes. Working with them at the grassroots, local and national levels is a must to be able to draw on their field experience and networks – which can help inform more responsive and sensitive decision-making. Similarly, interactions and dialogue between CSOs and local and national authorities can help facilitate more inclusive, peaceful governance outcomes by connecting bottom-up approaches with top-down processes. To be effective and participatory, local authorities should represent the diversity of civil society; to this end, legitimate consultation and decision-making forums with the full range of relevant CSOs should be supported, as well as independent accountability mechanisms.

Working with CSOs entails conflict sensitivity risks. In more fragile situations where the national state actors that are mandated to deliver basic services may be weak or absent, CSOs often provide many of these services. Even though CSOs may be the only service providers in a given context, supporting them might prove problematic in the long term. For example, supporting CSOs in provide basic services can contribute to undermining the legitimacy of the state and the sustainability of the services,

[3] Adapted from the conclusions of the 2007–2008 Advisory Group on CSOs and Aid Effectiveness subsequently adopted by the OECD DAC (OECD, 2009).

and substitute the responsibilities of the authorities towards the population. Support to CSOs thus should be addressed as part of a broader effort to ensure sustainability and continuity and to reconstruct the local political and governance space, so that state institutions that should be in charge of providing public services can return in due course to delivering their functions, while contributing to state-society relations and building trust. This is a necessary condition for building greater state and social resilience, and for restoring the social contract between the people and the state. A constructive way forward is to strengthen shared spaces for dialogue, consultation and decision-making between local authorities and CSOs, while simultaneously building the capacity of citizens to hold authorities accountable and have a meaningful say in the way their lives are governed.

Supporting existing or developing new mechanisms for independent CSO-led monitoring of local governance or national initiatives can help improve their overall accountability and effectiveness. In this context, the role and participation of women needs to be strongly supported and promoted. CSO leadership can be contested when issues of representation and inclusion are apparent (whether they are the legitimate representatives of certain interest groups or identity groups, etc.). Additionally, CSOs may compete for resources; have different agendas; or be fragmented through politicisation, polarisation and lack of common advocacy goals.

Interactions between CSOs and local and national authorities can be tense. Managing this process sensitively is critical, particularly in terms of the inclusion of different stakeholders, such as women, minorities, indigenous peoples, the private sector, etc. The particular risks for human rights defenders and environmental defenders should be considered and mitigated, and their protection included in interventions supported by international donors.

Working with CSOs obviously entails risks of doing harm in live conflict zones or in authoritarian states. In such settings, there is likely to be a much smaller space for CSOs to operate and fewer opportunities for them to participate in governance, policy and decision-making processes. Where spaces for civil society are shrinking, CSOs are often perceived as being the agents of foreign governments or international organisations – and have even been labelled as terrorists.

When CSOs have little possibility of influencing local and national government policies, their effectiveness and their capacities for peace are significantly compromised. This scenario can be reinforced and exacerbated by limits on freedom of expression, rigid and hierarchical gender and identity norms, targeted repression and violence against CSOs, and restrictive legislation hamstringing CSOs' ability to advocate for positive change.

On the other hand, some CSOs may be co-opted by political or economic actors, not least by authoritarian governments. They may on occasion be linked to armed groups, or other specific groups, elites or political actors that are contributing to violence and are interested in intercepting or diverting resources. Identifying and choosing CSOs that are potential and capable partners for positive change and peace is therefore a vital step towards being conflict sensitive.

CSO staff often face significant challenges to their safety and security. CSO staff are often targets for violence by state and non-state actors alike. Many CSO workers are at a higher risk of persecution and violence in fragile states – a risk that spikes during active conflicts. Conflict sensitivity assessments and conflict analyses should be applied and updated to ensure that engagements with CSOs mitigate such risks and provide protection to their staff (Poskitt and Dufranc, 2011).

Working with civil society involves respecting the legitimacy and power of local norms and power structures, while at the same time ensuring that CSOs can support gender equality, human rights and inclusive democracy. In this regard, it should be noted that there is a broad diversity of CSOs working on an equally broad range of topics, and that there are divergent views within these organisations. Therefore, it is important to strengthen those that promote and further core shared values and represent local capacities for peace, while recognising that this might cause on occasion tensions that need to be mitigated through the identification of connectors and dividers.

Guiding questions

1. Which groups or individuals will lose and which will gain power, influence or resources as a result of the EU intervention? How could this influence conflict dynamics and/or the potential for conflict or even worsen dimensions of fragility?
2. What are the positions and influence of central government, local authorities, traditional leaders, and community-based actors with regard to conflict drivers? Is there a risk that the intervention may exacerbate negative behaviours or that resources might be intercepted by these actors to support conflict or unduly benefit from it? Or could the intervention support positive, peace-promoting attitudes and greater capacity for peacebuilding and reconciliation by these actors?
3. What measures are in place to ensure that any contracts associated with service provision to the EU/procurement do not benefit patronage networks of government officials, fuel corruption or strengthen the financial power of an oppressive regime or armed groups, including by supporting the 'war economy'?
4. What is the impact of corruption or lack of government service delivery on public attitudes towards the state or towards particular groups associated with the state? Could such perceptions lead to conflict or violence, or reinforce the legitimacy of non-state armed groups?
5. What resources and support are local or national actors already receiving and from whom? Is there a risk that the same actors and/or organisations are monopolising opportunities, including the chance to tap into support for covert uses?
6. Are there any local actors that might have been overlooked that could support peace-promoting activities?
7. What is the role of civil society in this context? Which CSOs may be linked to armed groups or particular political or identity elites, or conversely be part of broader social change movements that harness local capacities for peace? Which groups could be potential partners for positive change, and which may worsen conflict and violence?
8. What measures are you taking to ensure that local conflict resolution mechanisms are strengthened as part of the set-up for sustainable management of services and resources? Are all sectors of society able to participate in these mechanisms, including women, minorities, indigenous peoples and marginalised groups and communities?
9. What is the role of traditional authorities and their capacities for peace and conflict resolution? Is it possible to ensure that their actions are inclusive and respectful of women, minorities, youth, etc. and their contributions? Do these authorities manage informal justice systems, and how could these ensure inclusive reparations and justice processes?
10. What are the security and safety risks for the CSOs or activists with whom you are planning to work? Are there risk-mitigating and protection measures that can and should be incorporated in the intervention?

Further resources

APFO, CECORE, CHA, FEWER, International Alert and Saferworld, 'Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Building Resource Pack' (2004).

European Commission, 'Budget Support Guidelines' (2017).

R. Howard, 'Conflict Sensitive Journalism: A Handbook' (2004).

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Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 7

Working with international actors

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to international actors into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Note 8 of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*. It should be read in conjunction with Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 6, which covers working with national actors.

Introduction

This guidance note focuses primarily on the European Union's (EU's) engagement with three types of international actors:

- international donors, cooperation agencies and multilateral institutions;
- international civil society organisations and other implementing partners;
- international development banks and international financial institutions.

For each of these actor categories, the EU faces particular conflict sensitivity risks and opportunities. A structured actor mapping exercise can be a critical first step in helping EU staff identify and understand the key international organisations and groups with influence over conflict in the focus country; see Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 6.

Key issues

Coordinated and complementary approaches

Coordinated and collective action is critical for ensuring that internationally supported interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts are conflict sensitive. Weak coordination can lead to poorly targeted programmes or create duplications or gaps, which can exacerbate local grievances and contribute to escalation of tensions and conflicts as well fuelling existing divisions and inequalities. As detailed in Box 7.1, Principle 8 of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations' recognises the importance of cooperation among international actors and donors.

Coordination and complementarity are also key to ensuring the EU meets specific policy commitments, such as those contained in the EU's Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security (Council of the European Union, 2018b), which puts the responsibility for implementation on all EU Member States as well as all other EU actors, plus contractors and organisations funded by the EU.

Better collaboration involves designing common conflict and resilience analyses and strategies based on shared assessments; effectively sharing information; dividing tasks and responsibilities among actors;

BOX 7.1 OECD Principle 8: Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors

- Coordination between international actors can occur even in the absence of strong government leadership.
- It is important to work together on upstream analysis, joint assessments, shared strategies and coordination of political engagement.
- Practical initiatives can take the form of joint donor offices, an agreed-upon division of labour among donors, delegated cooperation arrangements, multi-donor trust funds, and common reporting and financial requirements.
- When and where possible and feasible, international actors should work jointly with national reformers in government and civil society to develop a shared analysis of challenges and priorities.
- In the case of countries in transition from conflict or international disengagement, the use of simple integrated planning tools, such as the OECD's transitional results matrix, can help to set and monitor realistic priorities.

maximising complementarities and synergies; avoiding gaps and contradictions; taking advantage of each other's expertise, experience and added value; and sharing knowledge and learning on conflict sensitivity. It does not necessarily imply joint or pooled financing of programmes, but should always ensure that initiatives do not work at cross purposes.

Collective action between international actors can be difficult to achieve in practice. Agencies often have different priorities, perspectives and processes, which can make collaboration and coordination complex and time-consuming. Disjointed international responses are also easier for host governments or powerful local interests to manipulate for their own interests – for example, by playing agencies against each other.

In some contexts, this lack of effective coordination can act as a powerful incentive for national political actors to inhibit or obstruct efforts to promote more effective international responses. The transaction costs associated with coordination can also be seen as a barrier to quick, decisive action, while many international coordination mechanisms focus on a subset of international actors – for example, donors, the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank – and may not include important civil society actors and non-traditional or emerging donors. In some cases, the presence of local planning authorities (such as the ministry of planning and international cooperation) may be desirable as well to avoid misunderstandings and ensure better alignment and ownership.

Collaborative and mutually reinforcing action between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors can be particularly challenging. Actors from each sector are likely to have different mandates, priorities, partners, working cultures, target groups, timelines, budgets and financial tools to operate. A humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus approach – the **triple nexus** approach – can be useful in helping agencies break down silos and ensure more systematic and up-front coordination between the humanitarian, development and peace actors at Headquarters and on the ground. It is essential that HDP nexus approaches be informed and supported by shared analyses or assessments, as well as conflict sensitivity considerations.

The HDP nexus is relevant for EU Institutions, EU Member States, operational agencies and all other involved actors. The nexus can enable a more joined-up, holistic approach that goes beyond individual programmes. However, care must be taken that sector-specific priorities are not compromised while pursuing the nexus approach. This is not to say that all donors can and should be doing the same thing or supporting the same sectors, but rather that they should ensure good communication, coordination and shared analysis, including in relation to conflict, conflict risks and conflict sensitivity issues, as well as resilience.

Ensuring coherent engagement between EU institutions

EU actors should ensure internal coordination before attempting to coordinate with other actors. This internal coordination needs to be achieved at different levels – from Headquarters to EU

Delegations – in relation to individual programmes and projects as well as with regard to larger interventions supported by the EU. EU Member States should also be part of this coordination, as in joint programming.

The Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) approach preceded the HDP nexus; it utilised the **Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework (JHDF) methodology** to ensure that humanitarian and development actors worked from a common understanding of situations, including root causes, and defined joint priorities for collective actions. The development of a JHDF is best done through a workshop, ideally organised in-country with the EU Delegation and Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) field office, EU Member States, and other partners and donors.

At the **country level**, the strategic planning of missions and operations should be coordinated with relevant actors at an early stage, as a more coherent approach increases the effectiveness of EU efforts and paves the way for long-term sustainable peace and development. Good practices between EU Delegations, Foreign Policy Instrument and ECHO field offices have been identified with specific reference to operationalising the HDP nexus[1].

Collaborative engagement with international donors and multilateral institutions

In countries where the EU works, numerous other actors are often present, including EU Member States and other international donors and institutions, such as the World Bank, regional development banks and UN agencies. **As contexts change, though, coordination mechanisms may need to be adapted**, and flexibility and common sense should be employed to this end. The EU's Strategic Approach to Resilience also notes that in the face of constantly changing environments and challenges (e.g. COVID-19), the EU needs to work effectively with partners inside and outside of its immediate loci to ensure support is as sensitive and relevant as possible (Council of the European Union, 2017).

The EU often coordinates with other donors in multi-donor funding instruments, such as trust funds and joint funding facilities. These provide opportunities for pooling resources, coordinating with other actors, reducing transaction costs and intervening at a scale that the EU may not be able to achieve on its own. Alongside this, the EU can support and/or manage trust funds (as it does in the Central African Republic) to serve as a transition funding instrument to support reconstruction, including government administration, elections and provision of basic services.

From a conflict-sensitive perspective, **multi-donor trust funds and joint funding mechanisms** could enable a higher level of coordinated policy dialogue among external donors and with recipient governments in order to address structural conflict issues. Lack of coordination can be highly detrimental in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, where resources are spread too thinly, thereby preventing a mitigating impact on important conflict and fragility risks. On the other hand, joint funding mechanisms require more complex consultations and management arrangements. This requirement in turn makes it more difficult for EU staff to maintain close monitoring of the conflict sensitivity impact of a mechanism, or to ensure decisions are made in a timely manner to change priorities or partners if they have been found to have adverse impacts on conflict or conflict risks. In such cases, conflict sensitivity facilities and mechanisms can support operationalisation of such type of flexible funding (see Box 7.2).

Donors and implementers sometimes have different agendas, diverging national or international interests and different analyses of a situation. **Joint approaches are nevertheless essential to support complex state building processes.** Joint context-specific analysis is a key starting point, and the EU should liaise with other actors such as the World Bank, the UN and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) – which may have their own conflict sensitivity approaches – to ensure all are pulling in the same direction. For partner countries, collective actions improve the predictability of resources

[1] For examples, see the European Commission's Resilience and Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus webpage, and 'Lessons Learnt from the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Approach' on the Capacity4Dev website.

BOX 7.2 The South Sudan Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility

The South Sudan Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) is a multi-donor facility that brings different international actors together from across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors to share experiences and learning about how to adopt conflict-sensitive practices in South Sudan. Supported by the United Kingdom, Dutch, Swiss and Canadian donor missions, the CSRF provides tailored analysis, research and capacity-building support for donors, UN agencies, multilateral institutions and INGOs. By facilitating shared analysis on a range of thematic and geographic topics, and building trusted relationships between diverse international actors – including EU Delegation and ECHO staff – the CSRF has contributed to more coherent, effective and contextually informed aid programming in South Sudan.

Source: CSRF website.

and minimise transaction costs. They also stimulate national actors' efforts in support of the transition out of fragility. To the extent possible, the partner government (at the central, sub-national or local level) should lead aid coordination and participate in coordination structures.

Conflict-sensitive engagement with international civil society organisations and other implementing partners

The EU works closely with INGOs, UN agencies and private contractors in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. These partners include contracting agencies and INGOs to design and deliver aid programmes, and they could as well be involved in supporting advocacy, research and human rights activities. The EU is at various times a donor, an advocate, and the target of advocacy from a wide range of international civil society, multilateral and implementing agencies.

Implementing agencies are critical partners for helping the EU to ensure that it is integrating conflict-sensitive considerations into its own engagements in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Implementing partners are, for example, often the principal intermediary between EU staff and wider civil society and non-governmental networks in the country. For instance, INGOs may have strong civil society networks, especially outside of the capital city, where donors often struggle to access diverse viewpoints. UN agencies often have access to governmental networks (national and sub-national) that EU Delegations may not be able to reach directly and may have a much greater field presence. As such, they are essential for helping the EU design interventions that are informed by diverse perspectives – which is essential in conflict-affected contexts.

As a donor, the EU has a critical role to play in supporting and encouraging the integration of conflict-sensitive approaches into the programmes it supports – and consequently into the policies and practices of its implementing partners. Its role can be fulfilled by:

- **Supporting and encouraging implementing agencies to undertake conflict sensitivity assessments, regularly update conflict analyses, and demonstrate how programmes are responding to address conflict drivers and mitigate conflict risks.** EU Delegations, for example, can make conflict sensitivity a key principle and evaluation criteria in calls for proposals/ tenders, and ensure that funding is available to support agencies with capacity and experience in this area; specific clauses may be added in contracts in this regard.
- **Encouraging flexibility and adaptability within programmes.** This can be done by being open and supportive of changes in programme design, activities and approaches, where agencies can demonstrate that they are adapting to changes in the context, or adapting to changes in their understanding of the context. EU staff can also encourage the use of adaptive programme management and monitoring and evaluation tools and approaches such as outcome harvesting[(2)], in the design of programmes, and make use of conflict sensitivity monitoring systems during implementation.

[(2)] For more on outcome harvesting, see Saferworld (2018).

TABLE 7.1 Examples of partnerships and coordination mechanisms

PROCESS	MAIN PURPOSE	REFERENCE
2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	The 2030 Agenda and its SDGs are universal and applicable to all countries at all stages of development, based on national ownership and shared responsibility. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are key to implementation of the SDGs. This approach will help pool resources, reduce fragmentation and boost effectiveness. Joint monitoring and results frameworks are core elements of the joint response to maintain momentum, inform dialogue and enhance mutual accountability. Joint programming should be open to other relevant donors and international actors, when EU and Member States' representations assess this to be relevant at the country level. Alignment and careful consideration of national development plans at the country level is also important, not least in relation to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.	United Nations, 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (2015)
World Bank and UN multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs) and EU trust funds	MDTFs are generic funding mechanisms that can channel and leverage resources in an effective, predictable and coordinated way. The EU can now lead MDTFs – i.e. EU trust funds – for external action. These can support specific conflict prevention and peacebuilding objectives and should be informed by conflict sensitivity approaches at all times.	EC Trust Funds webpages
Recovery and peacebuilding needs assessments (RPBAs) and post-disaster needs assessments (PDNAs)	RPBAs and PDNAs are assessments that are needed after a conflict or a disaster, respectively. They are government led exercises, with integrated support from the EU, the UN, the World Bank, and other national and international actors. Both RPBA and PDNA processes have to be informed by conflict sensitivity guidance.	EC RPBA webpage European Union, United Nations and World Bank, 'Guidance for PDNA in Conflict Situations' (2019) European Union, United Nations and World Bank, 'Joint Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments (RPBAs): A Practical Note to Assessment and Planning' (2017)
UN-EU Strategic Partnership on peace operations and crisis management	The EU and the UN have a successful track record of close cooperation in crisis management around the world, dating back to the beginning of EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations. In September 2018, the EU and UN agreed on a new set of forward-looking priorities for cooperation on peace operations and crisis management in 2019–2021.	Council of the European Union (2018a)
EU-UN partnerships on conflict prevention and peacebuilding	The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) have partnered with the EU to build national capacities for conflict prevention. Through the deployment of Peace and Development Advisors, the joint programme offers critical support to UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and national stakeholders to consolidate local capacities for dialogue, mediation, social cohesion and national infrastructures for peace. The programme is currently active in more than 70 countries. Often information that can be shared with and by the DPPA offices in-country is very useful for conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding purposes. Other EU-UN partnerships are the UN-EU Steering Committee on Crisis Management, the UN-EU High Level Political Dialogue, the UN-EU Annual Partnerships Meeting on Conflict Prevention, the UN-EU Leadership Dialogue on Counter-Terrorism and the UN-NATO Staff Talks. The EU also directly supports the UN Peacebuilding Architecture.	UN Political and Peacebuilding Affairs: European Union webpage UN Liaison Office for Peace and Security Support to Institutional Dialogue Mechanisms webpage EU Commission Press (2019) EU (2019)
EU-UN Partnership on Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention	The partnership has developed a number of practical guidance notes and training materials on land and conflict, extractives and conflict, renewable resources and conflict, capacity building for natural resource management and conflict prevention in resource-rich economies. The partnership has also produced a capacity inventory analysis of available capacities for the consensual and sustainable management of land and natural resources within the UN system.	EU-UN Partnership on Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention website

- **Providing support to agencies to help them build internal capacities for their staff and partners that will allow agencies to more effectively integrate conflict-sensitive practices.** This might include allowing for institutional and staff capacity development within programme budgets.
- **Encouraging implementing partners to work together closely to share analysis, knowledge, networks and experience.** This includes sharing existing conflict analyses or conflict sensitivity help desks or facilities.
- **Encouraging robust risk management systems.** These should address all dimensions of fragility and include conflict sensitivity indicators related to changes in the conflict / conflict risk context and to the ongoing interaction between programme, implementer and context.

As front-line delivery agents, implementing partners may be acutely aware of the day-to-day challenges the international cooperation and humanitarian sectors faces on the ground. The EU can draw upon these relationships to build more conflict-sensitive practices into its own programming and funding practices, for example by:

- including implementing partners in conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity assessments and other joint shared analysis to facilitate the sharing of diverse perspectives, and using this to inform EU strategy development;
- developing forums for the EU and implementing partners to openly, frankly and confidentially share experiences about challenges in aid delivery (e.g. related to aid diversion, corruption concerns) without fear of penalisation or of losing funding.
- ensuring that grievances and complaints from local partners (institutions, community organisations, beneficiaries) or unexpected impacts are collected, transmitted and raised at the appropriate level and addressed promptly in a credible and fair manner.

Guiding questions

1. What other international actors are present in the context? What is their role? What are their interests?
2. Are there other international actors that have their own conflict sensitivity approaches? What opportunities are there for coordination? For example, are there opportunities to share context and conflict analyses, or to conduct joint conflict sensitivity assessments?
3. Who are potential allies and who might work against a coordinated agenda? What mechanisms can be used to pull international actors together?
4. Can the humanitarian-development-peace nexus be used as a coordination tool? What are the opportunities and what are the risks of this approach?
5. What are the positions and influence of other international actors with central government, local authority actors and civil society actors? How can these be built upon? For example, who is best placed to approach/work with certain actors in a conflict-sensitive and do no harm way?
6. Is there a risk that coordinated approaches may exacerbate negative behaviours by national actors? Could the interventions instead support positive, peace-promoting behaviours by these actors?
7. Do implementing partners have the skills, capacities and networks to translate principles of conflict sensitivity into practice in an effective manner? What support can be provided to help these agencies develop, refine and share the necessary capabilities?
8. Are we building enough flexibility into interventions and encouraging partners to adapt interventions in light of sudden changes in the context? What more can we do to encourage flexible and adaptive programming that can be more effective and conflict sensitive?
9. Are we including implementing partners (and their local partners) in EU strategy development and planning processes? Can we make better use of our partnerships with implementing agencies to ensure that we are including local voices and perspectives into our own plans and strategies?
10. How can we share analysis, learning and experiences of working in fragile and conflict-affected environments with our implementing partners? How can we encourage them to share the same with us? Are there opportunities for joint conflict sensitivity monitoring?

Further resources

Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 'Promoting Conflict Sensitivity amongst Donor Agencies: Policy Brief' (2012).

European Commission, 'Resilience and Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Factsheet' (2021).

European Union, United Nations and World Bank, 'Guidance for PDNA in Conflict Situations' (2019).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 'International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF)' (webpage).

United Nations, 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (2015).

United Nations Development Programme, 'Conflict Analysis and Risk Assessment' (webpage).

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'New Way of Working' (2017).

United Nations Development Group, 'Conducting a Conflict and Sustainable Development Analysis' (2016).

United Nations and World Bank, 'COVID-19 in Fragile Settings: Ensuring a Conflict-Sensitive Response' (2020).

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EU (European Union), 2019. 'EU Statement – United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: 2020 Review of UN Peacebuilding Architecture'.

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OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), 2007. 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations'. OECD Publishing, Paris.

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Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 8

Economic development and employment

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to economic development and employment into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Note 8 and Annex 2, Module 7, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*.

Introduction

This guidance note identifies and discusses conflict sensitivity issues associated with European Union (EU) interventions aimed at supporting sustainable economic development in countries eligible for official development assistance (ODA). It begins with a brief description of how economic development initiatives can interact with conflict dynamics, and then analyses the conflict sensitivity implications for EU action around the European Commission's green and sustainable economic growth and development agenda[1].

A fragile or conflict-affected environment undermines sound economic performance, and poor economic performance is likely to increase the risks of violence (World Bank, 2020), along with other dimensions of fragility. A focus on supporting sustainable and inclusive economic growth – for example, by promoting favourable business environments; regional integration; the green and circular economy, and the establishment of markets that work for the poorest and most marginalised members of society, particularly the bottom 40 per cent of the population – can have significant positive impacts for peace and development.

This kind of intervention can also exacerbate risks of doing harm, conflict and conflict risks by promoting **unequal and unbalanced growth** and reinforcing patterns of exclusion, as well as create negative social and environmental impacts. For example, some oil-producing countries have experienced skewed economic growth and resource capture by elites, which has exacerbated existing tensions and inequalities, and contributed to violent conflicts. Companies and/or the private sector can be co-opted into war economies, illicit economies or political resource networks as a compromise for them to continue doing business. Companies and the private sector in general therefore also need to be conflict sensitive in their operations.

Conflict-sensitive economic development initiatives must consider how interventions are likely to interact with both the **formal and informal economies**, as well as with licit and illicit ones, and how these interactions may subsequently do significant harm, affect conflict dynamics and/or conflict risks, as well as interconnected harmful negative impacts. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts – as well as in contexts perceived as more stable – the vast majority

[1] See European Commission 'Green Alliances and Partnerships' and 'Green Growth and Circular Economy' webpages.

of livelihoods are likely to rely on informal economic activities.

Vulnerable groups – including women, children, refugees, internally displaced persons and marginalised communities – are disproportionately likely to be employed in the informal economy, and are likely to be the first to lose jobs in the face of economic downturn, while being the least likely to be able to access social security programmes. Vulnerability and marginalisation particularly affect wages and disposable income, meaning households cannot invest in better education or better health services. Because informal workers are often not covered by any social protection mechanisms that can help absorb economic shocks, they risk attaining higher levels of poverty in a vicious circle that increases fragility. Conflict also can normally affect vulnerable and marginalised groups by exacerbating existing social, economic and gender inequalities, often causing intergenerational negative effects and destruction of traditional livelihoods.

Illicit economies, such as those that relate to cultivation of illicit crops, drugs' and weapons' trade, wildlife trafficking and poaching, human trafficking etc., interact with conflict in diverse ways in many fragile contexts. Predatory state actors or non-state groups are often able to access and control the major hubs of illicit economies (e.g. drug or human trafficking routes) to entrench power, capture profits and/or undermine more legitimate and representative governance structures (Schultze-Kraft, 2016).

Competition over the control of illicit economies and natural resources can sustain and fuel protracted crises and conflicts. But these illicit economies also offer critical livelihood opportunities for many people, including from among the most marginalised, poor and vulnerable segments of society in the absence of alternative livelihoods, such as youth, women and rural communities, etc. Efforts to support transitions from illicit or licit economic structures are likely to have complex and diverse impacts on power structures, communities and people, with often unpredictable impacts on peace and conflict dynamics.

Key issues

The main focus areas for the EU to support sustainable and green economic growth are employment, livelihoods and decent work standards; promoting investment and better business environments; private sector supports and sustainable value chains; responsible consumption and production; and women's economic empowerment and trade. These have been recently integrated with the Green Deal and its focus on green economies, green jobs, the circular economy, sustainable food production and sustainable management of natural resources, etc. Moreover, the Gender Action Plan III focuses specifically on women's social and economic empowerment, taking into account the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the female workforce both in formal and informal employment. All of these areas face conflict sensitivity challenges and opportunities.

Employment, livelihoods and decent work

A lack of access to decent jobs, employment and economic opportunities, and subsequent threats to livelihood and food security, have frequently been cited as key drivers of conflict. The evidence paints a more complex picture, however (World Bank, 2011).

Access to decent jobs can play an important role in supporting conflict prevention by creating economic opportunities, improving self-esteem, individual and household resilience by addressing inequalities, including gender inequality. But the lack of employment is unlikely to be the only, or even the most significant factor, driving conflict or conflict risks in any given context. Sociopolitical considerations, such as the perceived social value of jobs, as well as the degree to which access to jobs and other economic opportunities are seen as equitable and fair, can be more important in determining the degree to which job creation measures contribute to conflict prevention (World Bank, 2011).

Job creation initiatives should carefully consider how they contribute to broader economic opportunities and sustain livelihood opportunities for marginalised and vulnerable communities, in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way, and how

they can promote greater gender equality. In particular, building resilience of the working poor, informal workers and the bottom 40 per cent of the income distribution should be taken into account more consistently. Employment promotion interventions in fragile contexts also need to combine long-term approaches (e.g. building infrastructure, human capital and state capacity) and short-term interventions to support people's income generation and livelihoods at the household and community levels and promote opportunities for youth. These should be informed by a consideration of conflict dynamics, conflict risks and the inequalities underlying the root causes of conflict (which are often linked to environmental, land and climate change dimensions, structural inequalities, etc.).

Direct provision of grants, such as start-up cash or in-kind capital or capital transfers, has had an effective record of increasing poor people's earning potential. Several studies provide evidence of this effect (e.g. Blattman and Ralston, 2015; Brück, Justino and Verwimp, 2013). Interestingly, the impacts appear to be even greater in fragile areas affected by natural disasters or conflict, especially when carefully designed to address identified employment barriers and inequalities (including gender-based) specific to the fragile context and the affected population (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011). The increased flexibility that such transfers provide may be better suited to supporting people in maximising livelihood-supporting initiatives in the informal sector.

Nonetheless, no type of intervention is better than others per se. Different active labour market programmes have different purposes and characteristics. **Evidence-based and accurate diagnostics** in the specific context are needed to inform decision-making as to the active labour market policies best suited to the context, issues around decent work and environmental sustainability, better social protection, green and circular economies, etc.

EU interventions focused on supporting employment, livelihoods and decent work face a number of significant conflict sensitivity risks. If such interventions are seen as disproportionally benefiting one or more social, gender, age, ethnic or political groups, then these initiatives can exacerbate levels of horizontal inequality (inequality between groups). This is often a major predictor of conflict[2]. Moreover, the creation of jobs that are exploitative, demeaning or considered low status, but which are offered as a viable alternative to engagement in illicit or criminal activities or recruitment into armed groups, may have exactly the opposite effect.

Such jobs may also reinforce grievances and exacerbate tensions between marginalised communities and political and economic elites as well as existing inequalities. Furthermore, many job creation schemes in fragile and conflict-affected contexts have, intentionally or unintentionally, targeted mainly young men, although men in general experience fewer barriers than other groups in accessing employment. Such schemes often missed economic empowerment opportunities for women and girls – and their potential to contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the long term.

The EU has embraced the International Labour Organization's (ILO's) Decent Work Agenda[3] (see Box 8.1) and the 2030 Agenda for Change; these provide a solid basis upon which to ensure that interventions are designed and implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner. Specific conflict sensitivity implications and considerations in this regard include the following.

- Employment programmes that seek to play a conflict preventative role should **target communities most likely to turn to violence**, in a gender-sensitive and responsive way. They should try to mitigate inter-communal and inter-ethnic tensions; address conflict drivers; as well as take into account possible gender impacts, inter-generational and intra-family tensions. From a conflict prevention perspective, efforts to reduce overall inequalities are more likely to be effective than those focused primarily or exclusively on economic growth.
- Targeting certain priority economic sectors should be informed by **conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity assessments** – for example, sectors with

[2] See e.g. Brown and Frances (2015); Cederman, Weidmann and Skrede Gleditsch (2011); and Gudrun (2008).

[3] See European Commission, 'Employment and Decent Work' webpage.

BOX 8.1 ILO Definition of Decent Work

The EU adopts the International Labour Organization's definition of decent work – 'productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity'; such work:

- pays a fair income;
- guarantees a secure form of employment and safe working conditions;
- ensures equal opportunities and treatment for all;
- includes social protection for the workers and their families;
- offers prospects for personal development and encourages social integration;
- ensures workers are free to express their concerns and to organise.

Source: European Commission, 'Employment and Decent Work' (webpage).

a high impact on sustainable development, such as agriculture, energy, infrastructure and natural resource management.

- Place emphasis on the **quality of employment**, and the distribution of jobs likely to be created, as well as the quantity. Gender equality issues should be taken into account at all times, as well as risks of doing harm towards specific groups in society. What the job is, who gets it, for how long, and how much it pays all matter for conflict dynamics and conflict risks. The Decent Work Agenda, drawing on the ILO definition and standards of decent work, presents a solid framework for ensuring employment programmes comply with basic principles of conflict sensitivity.
- Because unemployment is unlikely to be the only driver of violence, **complementary programmes that address other conflict issues, root causes and grievances** are important. They can provide a space to discuss and redress the grievances underlying violent behaviours, and are thus likely to improve the overall effectiveness and conflict prevention impacts of any employment intervention.

Investments and business environment reform

Stimulating investment in ODA-eligible countries, including fragile and conflict-affected contexts, is a major focus of EU External Investment Plan (EIP). One pillar of the EIP focuses on investment climate supports.

Improvement of the investment climate can play an important role in supporting peaceful transitions in conflict-affected countries. It can, for example, help to stimulate local economies, develop critical infrastructure in a conflict-sensitive manner, create jobs for marginalised groups (especially through targeted support to small and medium-sized enterprises) and widen the taxation and revenue base. All of these are necessary prerequisites for improved public services.

There are, however, conflict sensitivity risks associated with initiatives that are implemented without due consideration of the conflict dynamics at play. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows can be captured by powerful political and military elites; fuel war economies; and undermine governance by facilitating corruption and unintended diversion of resources, including from development and humanitarian aid, land grabbing, etc.

The construction of large-scale infrastructure is often likely to exacerbate grievances by (i) limiting access to land or causing land dispossession or misappropriation, (ii) contributing to environmental degradation and loss of ecosystems, and (iii) causing the involuntary displacement of local communities (e.g. indigenous peoples).

The EU Business Environment Guidelines (EC, 2020, pp. 67–69) outline certain basic principles related to fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The guidelines state that, to ensure risk-informed investments and/or mitigating measures particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states, conflict sensitivity should be applied as well as due diligence of business and human rights. Other key considerations are as follows:

- Ensure that investment strategies are informed by **awareness of conflict dynamics**, including which groups are likely to benefit most from investment decisions. Also ensure that due diligence is carried

out with partners to minimise risks of elite capture and unduly benefiting powerful conflict parties.

- Make sure that **environmental, social and economic impacts of infrastructure development projects are fully accounted for**, and that any negative impacts are identified and planned for based on comprehensive and broad-based community consultation and dialogue. This should include social dialogue with social partners, and the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for indigenous peoples.
- Include relevant EU financial institutions (e.g. the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) in strategy development and conflict analysis processes, and support them in integrating conflict sensitivity considerations in financing instruments that draw upon blended finance.

Private sector, sustainable industries and value chains

Encouraging private sector engagement in fragile states is another difficult but vital element to kick-start the economy. Being conflict sensitive means doing this in a careful and inclusive way. Too often, fragile states with vulnerable economies can be taken advantage of, with contracts signed that do little for the local populations actually suffering from violence or post-conflict legacies.

Companies can be co-opted into war economies or political networks as a price for them to continue doing business. Consequently, **public-private dialogue** can be an important tool for the EU to help bring international and national stakeholders together to discuss and plan economic development programmes. The EU already considers private sector actors to be key players, able to affect both conflict and development in fragile contexts, and thus seeks to engage them in discussions related to conflict prevention and sustainable and inclusive economic development with a particular focus on green and circular economies.

Further conflict sensitivity considerations include the following.

- **EU partners in economic development programmes should be vetted to ensure their conflict sensitivity and due diligence policies and practices.** This includes companies and other commercial entities. Knowing which, and avoiding supporting, actors that might be affiliated with conflict actors depends on the quality of the conflict analysis and conflict actor mapping, and careful conflict sensitivity assessments on the issue of resource transfers.
- **Partners could be required to report on the conflict sensitivity of their actions.** They should be requested to show due diligence in terms of how they work and their relationships with communities, and their respect for human rights as well as social and environmental potential negative impacts. In general, implementing partners should be required to report on impacts on conflict, conflict risks and do no harm implications aligned with due diligence.

Responsible consumption and production

Exploitative and unaccountable business practices can drive violence in many countries, especially against women and vulnerable groups, minorities and indigenous peoples. For example, women and girls are frequently exploited and abused by unscrupulous factory managers and owners within the garment sector (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Workers are often penalised for seeking to join or form unions, or forced to put in overtime or risk losing their jobs. Such practices feed into wider grievances, which drive and sustain violent conflict in many fragile states. Consumers within the EU, as well as some European companies, often benefit from the low production costs that unethical business practices can sustain. **Youth and children** are also very vulnerable to exploitative labour practices. On the other hand, employment and livelihood creation is often an important dimension in disengagement and demobilisation from armed groups by youth and children, as reflected in the UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security.

The EU is committed to ensuring that European companies comply with the **United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights** (UN,

2011), including ensuring responsible and sustainable value chains and business practices.

Supporting transitions from carbon-intensive to greener forms of economic development and circular economies is another key objective of EU action. The long-term, conflict-preventative and resilience benefits of decarbonising economies are clear (and outlined in Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 9). However, any macroeconomic transition processes may carry the risk of reinforcing inequalities and inequitable access to natural resources, employment opportunities, etc., as well as having potentially negative environmental impacts.

Because this transition will add value to certain resources, it most certainly will create incentives for competition and control of such resources by powerful economic and political actors. On the other hand, it will create new economic opportunities for some (e.g. green technologies, jobs and livelihoods, green energy provision, greener agricultural practices), but may undermine the livelihoods of others (e.g. artisanal miners, coal industry workers) – potentially creating grievances that can fester and become violent if not properly addressed. Potential conflict sensitivity considerations include the following.

- Ensure that staff, partners and programmes are **compliant with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights**, as well as human rights due diligence in the case of investments and financing. Staff can refer to overarching (EC, 2015) and sector-specific guidance[4].
- Make sure that the **risks that accompany macroeconomic transition processes are carefully considered** and accounted for. **Marginalised groups and individuals** (youth, women, indigenous peoples) who may lose out should be included in consultations and decision-making about future plans for local development and employment creation, and encouraged to support the process peacefully. This 'buy-in' can help to create peace dividends in terms of sustainable and decent economic opportunities.

Trade

International trade and trade policy can greatly affect the risk of conflict, but can also **present some opportunities for peace**. Trade can, for example, encourage the reallocation of resources to more efficient activities and thus stimulate economic development (Calì, 2015). Greater economic integration may also increase the opportunity costs associated with conflict, creating incentives for a more peaceful and stable co-existence.

Trade, on the other hand, can **undermine the economic viability of local industries**, which in turn can undermine livelihood security for people employed in non-competitive industries. When trade flows are dominated by the export of primary commodities, such as minerals, oil and other natural resources (as is the case in many fragile states), conflict risks are amplified. Most fragile states, meanwhile, are net food importers, so they are particularly exposed to trade-related swings in international food prices.

Trade agreements can have vastly differing impacts on peace and conflict dynamics, human rights, societal resilience and the environment. These differences depend on the nature of conflicts within and between countries, the structure of the economies involved, and the degree to which the benefits of trade are seen to be distributed fairly across society and geographical areas (e.g. urban-rural) and whether they might accelerate processes such as land dispossession and land grabbing.

Where trade agreements contribute to the deepening of existing inequalities, or exacerbate or generate new grievances, they are likely to increase tension between certain sections of society, even if the overall macroeconomic impact may seem positive.

Sustainable chapters in international or EU trade agreements[5] and human and labour rights standards of EU trade preferences – Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP, GSP+), Everything but Arms

[4] See European Commission, 'Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings' (webpage), for sector guides for employment and recruitment agencies, information and communication technology companies, and oil and gas companies.

[5] See European Commission, 'Sustainable Development' (webpage).

(EBA) – should be leveraged as much as possible to prevent and mitigate harmful impacts on the most vulnerable and on the environment (EC, 2020b).

The EU is the largest provider of aid for trade (AfT). In 2019, the EU accounted for roughly 30 per cent of total AfT flows (EC, 2019). The 2017 revised AfT Strategy commits the EU to 'Better target least developed and fragile countries' and to 'carefully sequence and prioritise stabilising and quick-win interventions by applying a fragility lens and "do no harm" principle' (EC, 2019, p. 44). Facilitating access to EU markets and promoting regional integration are also core components of wider EU development policy.

Conflict sensitivity considerations for EU interventions focused on trade include the following.

- AfT programmes and policies should be informed by an **awareness of the likely winners and losers of increased or altered trade flows**. Political economy analysis should be included in the design of such initiatives, and specific measures included to ensure that groups likely to lose out are actively engaged in designing and implementing remedial actions.
- Sensitively seek out opportunities to **encourage trade across conflict lines**, but only if all groups are able to engage on an equal basis and the gains will be distributed equitably across communities. This needs to be accompanied by a risk assessment of unintended resource transfer towards conflict or illicit economies.
- Consider the potential impact trade policy initiatives may have on human (and labour) rights in focus communities, as well as on the environment and on climate change. The EU Guidelines on the Analysis of Human Rights Impacts in Impact Assessments for Trade-Related Policy Initiatives provide a strong mechanism to support this.
- Where the benefits of trade are seen to accrue to small numbers of elite groups, and the costs are concentrated on particular vulnerable or marginalised groups, or felt by the population at large, interventions are likely to exacerbate conflicts or conflict risks. The EU should carefully weigh decisions to support interventions where this risk cannot be adequately managed in contexts of conflict and fragility.

Guiding questions

1. What economic factors may contribute to conflict or conflict risks in the intervention area, and in what ways (e.g. competition over access to jobs, productive economic assets such as land or natural resources, or other economic assets identified as factors driving conflict, tensions and divisions)?
2. Which groups have access to and control over key economic assets in the country? Which groups are excluded from or lack access to these key assets? How do powerful groups make use of control of these assets (e.g. for personal gain, to support patronage networks or reward certain groups such as armed groups, or for the wider benefit of multiple groups in society)?
3. Which groups will benefit most from improved access to economic opportunities as a result of the intervention? What are the risk and opportunities for gender equality? Which groups will miss out? How is this likely to have an impact on relations between dominant and marginalised groups in the context?
4. Will the intervention disrupt existing economic activities and/or livelihood patterns? Who will benefit most as a result of this disruption, and who will lose the most? What kinds of coping mechanisms and behaviours will those who lose adopt as a means of survival? How will this affect conflict dynamics?
5. Are there risks that the benefits of the intervention will be captured by certain armed groups or will exacerbate competition over control of resources between groups (including state and non-state armed actors)?
6. What anti-corruption measures are in place? What steps will you take to ensure that the benefits of development are not captured by elite or armed groups and will provide benefits to the broader base of the population?
7. Will the intervention provide decent work as per the ILO Decent Work Agenda? If not, which groups are likely to benefit the most and least in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, rural/urban divide, religion, disability, etc.)? What impact might this have on relations between these groups and wider conflict dynamics? What impact might this have on how the EU or the business community is perceived?

8. How much employment is likely to be created, and what is the quality of the work? Will it help formalise informal employment? Will all groups be able to access these jobs (consider gender inequalities, for example)? What effect will this have on conflict dynamics?
9. Does the intervention risk contributing to unsustainable economic development and growth or increasing levels of inequality, marginalisation and environmental degradation? How can these risks be managed and mitigated as part of the investment strategy? How can gender equality be promoted in this context?
10. Has the programme undergone a full environmental and social impact assessment, e.g. in relation to infrastructure and energy projects? Has it been part of a due diligence process at the planning stage? Have any negative impacts been identified and planned for based on broad, comprehensive community consultation and dialogue (including through women's inclusion, social dialogue with trade unions and employers' organisations, and free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples)?
11. Where appropriate, have other EU institutions with a mandate for supporting private sector growth and sustainable economic development (such as the European Investment Bank) been included in programme and strategy design? How will they implement their social and environmental safeguards and conflict sensitivity assessments?
12. Are partner organisations and their suppliers, as well as implementing partners, capable of ensuring conflict-sensitive operations? Are private sector partners complying with due diligence approaches and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights? Are they duly taking into account gender analysis and conflict analyses?
13. Have aid for trade programmes and policies been informed by conflict analyses or political economy analysis, and have steps been taken to ensure that the benefits of increased trade flows are not captured by a small number of elite groups and/or armed groups?
14. Have the impacts of trade policies and preferences been informed by an analysis of likely human rights impacts, and appropriate steps

Further resources

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taken to mitigate against potential harmful impact? Have environmental and climate change impacts been fully assessed? What risk mitigation strategies are in place in this regard?

15. Are there opportunities to encourage increased trade flows and other types of economic activity across conflict parties or between divided communities in a way that may build connectors? If so, how can we ensure that the gains will be distributed equitably and transparently across communities?

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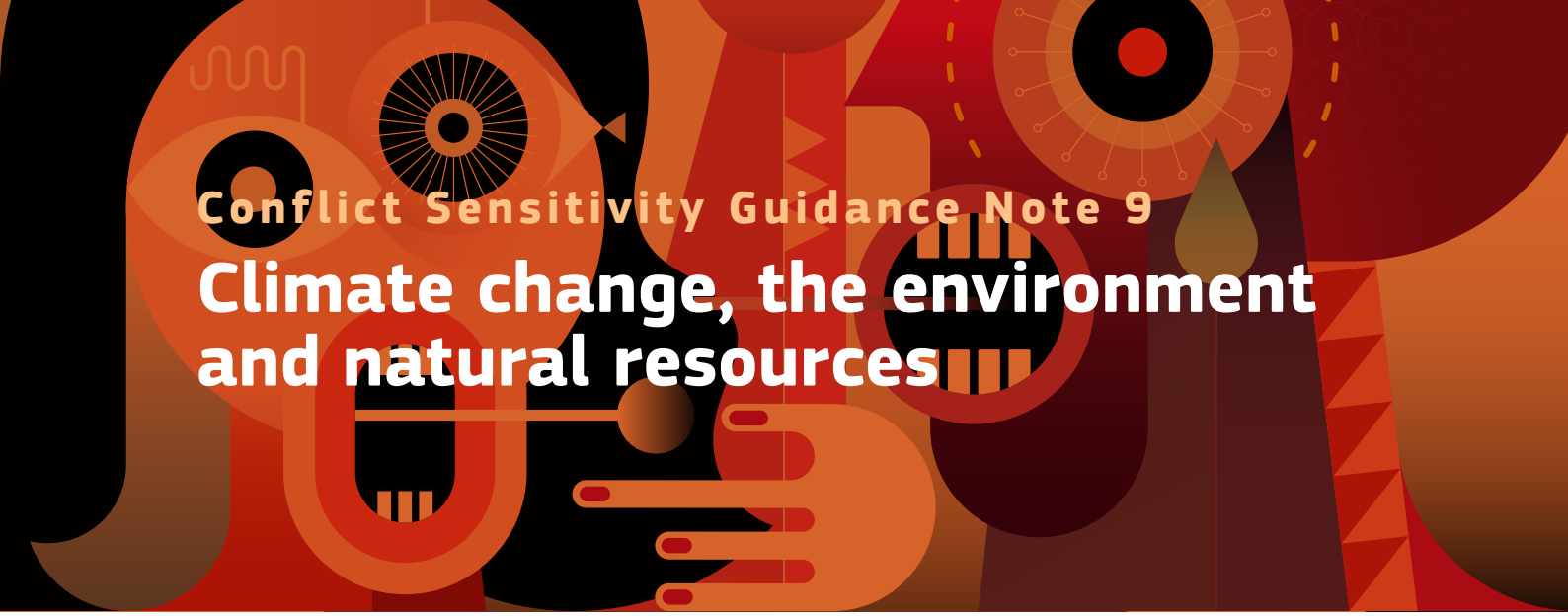

Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 9

Climate change, the environment and natural resources

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to climate change, the environment and natural resources into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Note 3 and Annex 2, Module 4, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*.

Introduction

In its current form, human life and economic activity is negatively affecting our planet's environment, biodiversity and climate. Climate change pertains to an alteration in global or regional climate patterns, which is predominantly attributed to increased emissions levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, stemming from a heavy reliance on the use of fossil fuels, exploitation of natural resources and intensive farming.

The current concentration of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere is at its highest in 3 million years (UN, 2021). In terms of a carbon footprint, the deforestation sector alone accounts for 11 per cent of all global greenhouse gas emissions. Some 800 million individuals – accounting for 11 per cent of the world's total population – are currently vulnerable to the devastating effects of environmental events such as droughts, floods, famine, rising sea levels, disease and extreme weather. Most available forecasts – including from the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) and the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) – indicate that this is likely to worsen. Average temperatures in the 21st century are the hottest on record and getting hotter each year. In Europe, 11 of the 12 warmest years ever recorded have occurred since 2000 (CS3, 2019). Already, yearly averages are 0.99°C higher than during the mid-20th century. Biodiversity loss is also occurring at an alarming rate, with a quarter of wild species threatened with extinction in Europe alone (EU, 2011). Furthermore, it is estimated that a third of global soil is moderately or highly degraded (WBCSD, 2018).

Precariousness is rising as livelihoods are being threatened, and increasing resource scarcity creates new risks and incentives for conflict and conflict risks. In line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda, the European Union (EU) has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 per cent over 1990 levels. The European Green Deal, adopted in 2019, goes further and commits to transforming the EU into a resource-efficient, sustainable and competitive economy where[1]:

- there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050;
- economic growth is decoupled from resource use;

[1] European Commission, 'A European Green Deal: Striving to Be the First Climate-Neutral Continent' (webpage).

- no person and no place is left behind.

To be conflict sensitive, build resilience and maintain sustainable peace in the near future, it is imperative that these targets be met.

This guidance note breaks down a conflict-sensitive environmental approach with regard to developmental interventions, mainly along two topics: **climate change** and **natural resources**. For each topic, the relevance to conflict sensitivity is first explained, followed by a discussion of conflict-sensitive approaches to be pursued in any related interventions.

Key issues

Relevance of climate change to conflict-sensitive approaches

Communities and the quality of their day-to-day functioning are inextricable from their surrounding environments and the climate that supports them. Marginalised communities living in fragile settings are far more likely to experience the worst of environmental degradation, with climate change being a major proponent (Scherer and Tänzler, 2019).

Climate change is a major driver and amplifier of disasters and a source of instability. Disasters disproportionately affect lower-income countries and people living in poverty and communities in vulnerable situations. Climate change impacts not only can cause more frequent and intense extreme weather events but can also disturb stability – for example, through volatile food prices or in terms of access to water or land, natural resources and livelihoods.

Climate change can intensify the drivers of conflict and conflict risk, not least by increasing grievances and structural inequalities. These issues may be between local-level actors, such as pastoralist-farmer conflicts in areas where degrading environments increase inter-group competition, a lack of access to traditional transhumance corridors, desertification, etc. (World Bank, 2016). Alternatively, they may involve international actors, often from the extractive industry, whose business operations may be at odds with local needs and environmental protection.

It is crucial that any conflict-sensitive approach to development, particularly in fragile contexts, envisions climatic impacts vis-à-vis conflict risks or existing conflicts. Achieving the targets of the European Green Deal is in line with conflict sensitivity, as it will speed the move towards green economies that work for all people and uphold social fairness and prosperity.

Incorporating climate change–related conflict sensitivity into EU interventions

When looking at a proposed site of intervention, a conflict-sensitive approach considers all of the present climate change–related drivers of conflict that may exist. This entails joint, integrated, evidence-based **conflict analysis** specifically aimed at identifying potential sources and risks of violent conflict, or a thorough **conflict sensitivity assessment** of the proposed action.

An inclusive range of stakeholders should inform the analysis, and the intervention's logic and related theory of change should be conflict sensitive with regard to everyone's needs. A climate change–related conflict analysis or a specific programme's conflict sensitivity assessment should be used to identify potential triggers of conflict by analysing the positions, interests and needs of key actors and stakeholders (e.g. the contributors to climatic change in the area); historical and cultural relationships (e.g. the connectors and dividers between communities and polluting industries); issues related to land, water and forestry for communities in the context of climate change; and advance mapping of potential conflict-inducing scenarios (so as to plan how to mitigate them from the outset).

A conflict-sensitive approach necessitates incorporating **flexible measures and approaches** to respond to risk mitigation of sudden shocks or a resurgence of violence.

To this end, ongoing stakeholder engagement can be a means towards maintaining peace and building resilience as well as trust in the intervention process. Public concern over climate change can also be used as an opportunity to further increase civil society engagement, including from marginalised

populations. If done well, harnessing and acting on collective concerns over the consequences of climate change can help build support for developing reliable governance mechanisms to deal with them.

This process can greatly aid efforts towards establishing long-term peace and resilience. **If done poorly**, however, and without the necessary discussions between stakeholders and the government about what is needed and possible, conflict-insensitive climate change management interventions can potentially overburden local institutions or undermine people's trust in them, triggering underlying tensions that might have violent ramifications.

The intervention should also consider that climate change affects certain communities in different ways, with each deserving a tailored response. Men, women, children, people living with disabilities, minority groups, indigenous people, refugees, internally displaced persons and other stakeholders who may be in the area where the intervention will operate all experience climate change–related conflict issues in different ways.

Climate is a transboundary issue requiring joint thinking across programmes. For example, forced displacement due to climate change can become a source of violence unless dealt with sensitively, as refugee flows can create new conflict dynamics such as resentment, nativism or discrimination by certain populations within the host country.

Concurrently, climate change interventions can help build bridges between different sections of society. Because climate change affects everyone – albeit to varying degrees – working to prevent its negative consequences can encourage inter-community dialogue and bring people together, even adversaries, in collaborative, transparent processes (USAID, 2017).

These approaches can improve resilience to climate change–induced conflicts through better environmental management, disaster risk reduction strategies and climate-proofing initiatives. Given that conflict-sensitive approaches commit to maximising peace opportunities, these should be borne in mind during programme identification, formulation, implementation and monitoring.

Relevance of natural resources to conflict-sensitive approaches

Natural resources include land, water (freshwater and seawater, including oceans), animals (including wildlife), forests (vegetation), mountains, soils, rocks, fossil fuels and minerals.

Most communities and settlements are closely tied to their land, and this is likely to have been the case for many years. As a result, locations and their cultural values can be inextricably woven into the relationship inhabitants have with the land and the natural resources that surround them. Changes to this relationship can be traumatic and may contribute to violent conflict and/or do harm. This is especially true in fragile environments or resource-constrained settings, where the precarious connection between land, resources and life may be more delicate.

Tensions between groups over competition for the right to own, access and use local land and resources are common. Researchers find that, from 1950 to 2011, 40 per cent of all civil wars could be associated to some degree with natural resources (UN FT, 2012). Therefore, managing natural resources sustainably and inclusively can help avoid conflicts in the first place, as well as improve the likelihood of lasting peace once a conflict ends.

In fragile democracies or authoritarian regimes, control over resources gives elites a strong financial incentive to maintain power. This may even be at the expense of public welfare and the rights of the population (McIntosh and Buckley, 2015). Worse still, unaccountable elites accumulating large revenues from natural resources have multiple opportunities to divert funds away from the public. For example, state banking systems may be used to finance private accumulation rather than investment. Conversely, illicit wealth gained from natural resource exploitation (often linked to conflict economies) may be diverted to offshore accounts, denying national banks much-needed revenue generation and less financing for the delivery of basic services or the promotion of economic development. Widening inequalities often raise the likelihood of grievances and violence, as well as competition for resources. Therefore, certain behaviours by the elites can undermine the social contract between the government and

the public – without which, governments may resort to using excessive security measures to retain control.

Resource extraction poses known conflict risks. Depending on the resource, the EU conducts due diligence to inform all its policies and actions. Key regulatory processes in this regard include the following:

- The EU-supported due diligence initiative for timber, the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative, was established in 2003 with the aim of reducing illegal logging by strengthening sustainable forest management, improving governance and promoting trade in legally produced timber.
- The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is the global standard for the good governance of oil, gas and mineral resources. Its principles stress that the 'prudent use of natural resource wealth [can be an important] engine for... sustainable development and poverty reduction, but if not managed properly, can create negative economic and social impacts' (EITI, 2003).
- To prevent diamonds from becoming conflict minerals, the regulations set out in the Kimberley Process seek to unite administrations, civil society and industry in reducing the flow of rough diamonds used to finance wars against governments around the world.

Even when due diligence protocols are followed, the presence and influence of external extractive industries can be a source of conflict and tensions. Natural resource extraction is often the source of local tensions, especially if there appears to be inequitable benefit sharing, or if extractions excessively affect the local economy, society and the environment. Some external actors employ armed groups to secure the exploitation and extraction of natural resources, or take advantage of weak national institutional and legal frameworks to maximise resource-related profits. Corruption, patronage and nepotism are common, which leads to circumvention of the law and the undermining of peace. These dynamics pose significant risks of doing harm, as well as conflict risks, which must be addressed and alleviated by any actor working in this sector.

Incorporating natural resource–related conflict sensitivity into EU programmes

A conflict-sensitive approach must understand and account for all potential triggers of violence related to natural resources. As a result, a thorough **conflict analysis** of the relevant natural resources panorama in a particular location and the environmental, social, economic and power impacts these imply must be undertaken. A **conflict sensitivity assessment** can be used to delve in more depth to better understand the (intended or unintended) potential negative and positive impacts of specific interventions through its resource transfer implications.

The role and voices of local actors, marginalised groups, civil society, private entities, and members of local and national government should all be mapped and analysed in relation to do no harm and conflict risks. EU institutions and their partners are, in principle, well positioned to play a neutral role mediating between these groups and preventing potential sources of resource-related conflicts and harmful impacts. However, without proper preliminary consultation and efforts to understand intricate local resource-related relationships, intervening external bodies also run the risk of exacerbating long-running feuds and tensions – thereby increasing the likelihood of violence, and of negative social and environmental impacts.

Maintaining stakeholder inclusion and engagement, keeping channels of communication open, and making sure any interventions are locally supported and will contribute to rather than detract from peace are essential. At the same time, stepping in to provide capacity-building support, strengthen conflict resolution mechanisms, and implement oversight and auditing based on natural resource–related international standards (e.g. United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; see UN, 2011), can all help ensure the sensitivity of the EU's work.

Taking actions so as not to legitimise conflict-insensitive processes or actors is also very important. Incentivising equitable benefit sharing from the returns of extractive industries or improvements of productivity can keep the interests

of private corporations consistent with those of the greater community and quell the chances of violent conflict. Additionally, providing equal employment opportunities avoids discrimination against marginalised groups, such as indigenous communities and women.

Mitigation of environmental impacts as well as negative economic issues is also required, such as preventing price shocks, corruption, or the misallocation of funds. Done thoroughly, this can serve as a long-term strategy for conflict prevention by ensuring resource-related sectors function legally and transparent. If collaborating with private actors working in this sector, the EU must ensure that the do no harm approaches enshrined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are upheld in their entirety (UN, 2011).

The issue of indigenous communities is highly sensitive. Historically, many communities have been displaced from their lands to make space for extractive operations and explorations. The Council of the European Union's Conclusions on Indigenous Peoples (Council of the European Union, 2017), include an explicit reference to the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) ahead of any interventions[2]. If this provision is not adequately operationalised and communities are not fully involved in processes of deliberation and decision-making, these groups and the grievances they bear likely present a credible conflict risk – as well as a risk of doing harm and not abiding by the EU's rights-based approach.

Women are also often disproportionately affected by the presence of natural resource–related mega-development projects and extractive industries. Studies indicate that where young male workers are concentrated in areas of industry, there is marked proliferation in female vulnerability. This can include increases in exploitative sex work, gender-based violence, transmission rates of sexual and other communicable diseases, and human trafficking (USAID, 2017).

[2] See also Minority Rights Group International (2019); this report identifies countries where communities – with a special focus on minority groups and indigenous peoples – face the risk of genocide, mass killing or systematic violent repression.

Finally, working at different levels offers different opportunities to be conflict sensitive. The EU's status means it can play a key role at the national/constitutional level to encourage better oversight and accountability of resource extraction and sustainable resource management. At the same time, working at the local level, the EU can support conflict resolution mechanisms, and access to legal services and mediation support to redress natural resource–related grievances and prevent further conflict.

Guiding questions

Climate change

1. How is climate change currently affecting the area targeted by the proposed or ongoing intervention?
2. What are the potential climate-related conflict risks? What would be the most affected communities/stakeholders? What are the links between climate change and the livelihoods of the most affected communities?
3. Would community-based institutions and conflict resolution mechanisms be able to adapt to new realities brought about by climate change?
4. To what extent is the planned intervention climate-proofed? Has a climate risk assessment been carried out or planned to be carried out? How will activities contribute to better environmental management, climate action and disaster risk reduction?
5. Is the planned intervention aligned with local and/or national adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies? If not, why not?
6. How will the intervention contribute to decent green jobs and a circular economy?
7. How does the intervention integrate wider EU policy objectives related to the environment, human rights, peace and conflict prevention?

Natural resources

8. What are the existing natural resource–related conflicts affecting the area?
9. Which actors will be strengthened or weakened? How will resources be channelled? Is the action supporting actors that might do significant harm

to other segments of the population? How will power and gender relations be affected?

10. What effect will new employment opportunities offered by natural resource industries have on pre-existing community businesses and trade? Will jobs be open to everyone? Who will benefit, and who will lose? How will women and minorities be affected? What will be the impacts on the environment?
11. Will the intervention affect people's access to land or water? What will be the impacts on indigenous peoples, marginalised groups and women? How will any changes be managed? What processes of due diligence will be put in place (social and environmental impacts; human rights impacts, etc.)?
12. How will the intervention improve local resilience by promoting the development of locally sourced and sustainably managed natural resources (e.g. sustainably managed forestry resources or local power supply based on renewable energy)?
13. What affect will the use of particular contractors have on local conflict dynamics? How will foreign companies' extraction or cultivations be perceived? What steps have you taken to ensure pre-existing tensions related to natural resource allocation will not be triggered or new sources of potential conflict created?
14. How does the intervention integrate broader EU policy objectives related to the environment, human rights, peace and conflict prevention?

Further resources

International Institute for Sustainable Development, 'Conflict-Sensitive Conservation Practitioners' Manual' (2009).

N. Scherer and D. Tänzler, 'Guidelines for Conflict-Sensitive Adaptation to Climate Change' (2019).

UK Aid, 'Supporting Infrastructure Development in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: Learning from Experience' (2012).

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Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 10

Sustainable agriculture, land issues and food security

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to sustainable agriculture, land issues and food security into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Note 3 and Annex 2, Module 4, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*.

Introduction

Issues related to agriculture, such as food security and land, are closely connected to conflict and conflict risks. The frequency of violent conflicts often increases when food security is threatened, or where the sharing and use of land between humans, animals and crops is fraught. These issues are compounded in fragile contexts with weak governance that lack the institutions, functions or capacities necessary to mitigate land tenure insecurity, food shortages or supports to sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable agriculture is farming in responsible and tenable ways to meet the food and environmental needs of local communities and greater societies, with the guiding principle of ensuring future generations are able to achieve the same objective. In accordance with the stated visions of farmers and consumers, sustainable agriculture integrates three main goals of equal and complementary importance:

- environmental health;
- economic profitability; and
- social and economic equity.

For indigenous peoples and many small farmers, sustainable agriculture also supports cultural and religious identities, world views and livelihoods; and sustains the definition and principles of food sovereignty (Edelman, 2013).

These goals help to ensure that, if well planned and implemented, sustainable agriculture initiatives should be more conflict sensitive than conventional agricultural approaches. However, there are still a number of risks that must be considered and mitigated to make sure sustainable agricultural practices remain conflict sensitive over time. This guidance note outlines some of those risks, and highlights some strategies and guiding questions to help navigate through them.

Key issues

Two billion people currently live in places affected by conflict (UN OCHA, 2018). The majority of these people are largely dependent on agriculture as the main source of their livelihoods (FAO, 2017).

Any European Union (EU) intervention in a fragile or conflict-affected context requires a full and up-to-date understanding of the local context. Based on this understanding, the activities that emerge can be sensitive to conflict dynamics and can adapt as

those dynamics change. Conversely, certain types of agricultural development can in turn cause land dispossession and related displacement and loss of livelihoods, and may ignite social conflicts as well as natural resource conflicts.

For sustainable agriculture, this means understanding all of the potential negative impacts any actions might have. These include not just impacts on food security, livelihoods and resilience (which sustainable agricultural interventions look to improve), but on all economic, cultural, social, political and relational dynamics that may contribute to conflict or conflict risks.

These dynamics may be related to environmental mismanagement or competition over land, water, food and other vital natural resources, such as forests, fisheries and pastures. Two areas are of particular relevance to conflict sensitivity and sustainable agriculture – land and food security – as expanded upon below.

Land ownership, access, and use

Land is hugely important for people's livelihoods, cultural identity and security and can be a source of tension. As a productive and increasingly scarce resource (exacerbated by environmental degradation, population growth, climate change, land grabbing), land competition can be intense.

As a result, many agrarian societies suffer from both acute income and land inequalities, whereby elites use control over the land to further leverage personal wealth, exacerbate inequalities and aggravate conflict dynamics (McIntosh and Buckley, 2015). In the context of displacement, housing, land and property rights should be carefully considered in intervention design and implementation (UNHCR, 2015).

Unless managed sensitively, these dynamics, and the process of deciding who has access to land and how it is used, can be a source of conflict and tensions. Moreover, decisions about land use and ownership in fragile and conflict-affected societies are often governed by informal systems – or else legal documentation and legal frameworks are scant or incomplete (cadastre systems, titling for communal and collective lands, etc.). It can thus be difficult for international actors such as the EU to understand and navigate a path where the risks of doing no harm are truly minimised.

Disagreements about legal ownership and titling of lands intersect with other conflict drivers. Such drivers include historical injustices, the prevalence of small arms and light weapons in certain regions, pastoralist practices disrupted by conflict dynamics, profound gender inequalities, and a lack of recognition of customary uses and ownership of land (e.g. collective and communal use, lands traditionally used and occupied by indigenous people, including related demarcation issues). Often, protection and conservation initiatives that do not take local communities into account through consultation and engagement fail to achieve their key objectives and worsen conflict dynamics or illegal economies; they might also widen existing inequalities and structural discrimination.

Land issues feature heavily in peace agreements. Any agrarian reforms or efforts at more equitable agricultural redistribution and restitution, such as those offered by the shared benefits of sustainable agriculture, can in fact be a source of improved peace conditions, and a foundation of peacebuilding. Nonetheless, supporting more equitable and transparent land titling might inadvertently produce negative impacts. This is particularly true in the absence of a sound legal framework and institutional capacity, and in the presence of strong vested interests towards redefining land use in a certain way (e.g. for extensive cattle raising, cash crops for exports, monocultivations, extractive industries; or to make space for major infrastructure such as dams).

All EU interventions should therefore strive to include sound legal, social and environmental **impact assessments** and **include marginalised groups** in consultations and decision-making processes, not least to prevent land tenure disputes that may contribute to violent conflicts. This should include active measures to prevent corruption in all forms, as well as to prevent pushing through land tenure changes too quickly and without full local support or consideration of unintended harmful consequences.

Moreover, this will include **preventing known conflict risks** associated with sustainable agriculture, including risks posed by water use shortages; by cultivated

land loss; and by inappropriate usage of fertilisers, pesticides and any practices that might contribute to environmental degradation.

Being fully conflict sensitive is likely to include broadening initial intervention designs beyond a narrow focus on sustainable agriculture. For example, this may involve extra measures to safeguard legitimate tenure rights against infringements and threats such as forced evictions and land grabbing in accordance with national and international laws.

Where disputes do occur and where legal systems are weak, interventions might consider how to **strengthen and develop alternative forms of dispute resolution** at the local level, taking into account gender inequalities and marginalised groups. For example, where customary forms of dispute settlement already exist, EU interventions should make sure they are providing fair and accessible services with regard to resolving disputes over land ownership, access and use.

Specific consideration should be given to the **right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) by indigenous peoples**, which has now been incorporated in a number of peace agreements (Colombia, the Philippines, etc.) as well as in the work of international organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO; see FAO, 2016) and in the 2017 EU Council Conclusions on Indigenous Peoples (Council of the European Union, 2017).

Food security

Conflicts and fragility can have a devastating impact on food security. Other types of insecurity can make it impossible for people to sow, tend and/or reap crops, or to practice traditional forms of agriculture or pastoralism. The situation is often compounded by the destruction of critical infrastructure needed for agricultural production and marketing, and of local value chains.

Food insecurity can also contribute to conflict. For example, it can drive up prices just as incomes and livelihoods dwindle, and leave people with little recourse to access food, sell it and produce it. It can also induce and push people to engage in unsustainable agricultural methods that may ensure short-term food security but undermine the long-term health of the land.

The impacts of food insecurity on conflict and violence can be felt far beyond the directly affected agricultural area. Food insecurity has contributed to refugee crises, which consequently put added pressure on social services, political systems and human security (FAO, 2018). Sustainable agriculture interventions, despite their best intentions, 'may induce (latent) conflict in settings that are not even considered conflict areas' (The Broker, 2017). Practices aimed at preserving soil nutrients, for example, will support more sustainable crop yields over the long term but are likely to result in smaller annual yields, especially in the first few years. This can put pressure on people's immediate food security, particularly if harvests are disrupted.

Notwithstanding these challenges, it is clear that investing in sustainable agriculture is essential to improving food security in the long run. Such investment can in turn help maximise agricultural resources and, over time, generate higher incomes for farmers and ensure sustainable management of natural resources. Indeed, it is these responsible investments in land, fisheries and forests that genuinely support interconnected social, economic and environmental aims in the most conflict-sensitive way (FAO, 2012). The EU is committed to the implementation and promotion of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (the VGGT) as well as the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agroculture and Food Systems (the RAI principles) (CFS, 2014). Both the guidelines and the principles contain specific guidance on conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

Long-term food security – and conflict sensitivity – can be improved through diversifying sustainable agricultural farming, fishing and forestry practices. Practices such as rotating, shifting, diversifying and planting cover crops, integrating livestock and crops, adopting agroforestry practices, or managing whole ecosystems and landscapes can all maximise yields as well as build in resilience to agricultural and economic shocks. This type of **sustainable intensification** can help farmers meet some of the more

manageable challenges of climate change and food security (FAO, 2012).

Incorporating sustainable agriculture–related conflict sensitivity into EU interventions

Conflict-sensitive planning of sustainable agricultural interventions requires identifying any potential triggers of violence and tensions in advance. This should begin with a **thorough conflict analysis** of the relevant actors and factors that may either promote or hinder the development of more sustainable agricultural practices, as well as an appreciation of the positive and negative consequences of any planned work.

Given the sensitivities on land use, **early and iterative deliberation with implicated local actors** should be incorporated into planning. Moreover, to help ensure the confidence of local stakeholders, the planning of EU interventions should frequently refer to early warning systems to ward off conflict threats before they become unmanageable. Similarly, monitoring and preparing for climatic and natural disaster events that might affect sustainable agricultural production and food security ahead of time constitute essential elements of best practices for conflict sensitivity.

One **tool that may be of use** is FAO's Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA), which takes a quantitative approach to analyse households' resilience to food insecurity. Due to seasonal and environmental fluctuations in the agricultural sector, local tensions tend to go through peaks and troughs. Factoring these in should be a key part of any conflict-sensitive intervention, with careful deliberation about when to use which programmatic resources for maximum effect. Local communities are best placed to inform these decisions, whose inclusion can contribute to peace and trust building.

Interventions should connect actors involved at different stages of sustainable and inclusive agriculture value chains. This includes local, national, international, government, private and research actors. Collectively, it is the smooth functioning of these interdependent networks that best helps ensure sustainable agriculture.

It is also vital to consult and attend to the needs and rights of **indigenous people**, many of whom remain unfairly marginalised and separated from their own lands in a number of fragile settings – or whose lands are constantly under threat and predation. In the African context, these peoples may include various pastoralist or nomadic groups or minorities living in protected areas or forests.

Value chains

Improving the sustainability of food value chains can also ward off food insecurity. In doing so, and if done in a conflict-sensitive manner, it can mitigate conflict drivers by ensuring access to nutritious food for all. Essential considerations of biodiversity protection and traditional food systems should be incorporated to ensure protection of the environment, as well as the cultural importance and significance of food systems and their contributions to resilience.

EU interventions can facilitate this process by ensuring **farmers, agribusinesses, governments and civil society collaborate** to promote inclusive and sustainable food systems that incorporate the produce and respect the needs of small farmers into 'value chains that improve their access to markets, generate decent employment, and make nutritious food available'[(1)].

Practitioners should not assume that a standard value chain project will necessarily have a positive, peacebuilding impact. This sort of positive outcome needs to be built explicitly into an intervention. Further, given the resources and time needed to build the relationships and trust that underpin peace (USAID, 2008), the intervention should include measures to prevent doing harm.

In fragile situations where an economy may be faltering, focusing on sustainable agricultural value chains can **help stabilise food production, pricing and availability, mitigating the risk of short-term violence**. It can also help fulfil the longer-term ambitions of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Notably, Goal 1 on eradicating poverty, Goal 2 on achieving zero hunger, and Goal 12 on responsible consumption

(1) Source: 'Sustainable Agribusiness and Food Value Chains', FAO website, Policy Support and Governance Gateway.

and production would clearly benefit; being conflict sensitive would also result in advances for Goal 16 on peaceful and just societies.

Guiding questions

1. What might be the do no harm and conflict risks of moving towards an agricultural programme? For example, could tensions arise over the ownership, access and use of land? How can these risks be mitigated? What would be the impact on women, minorities and indigenous peoples?
2. Who makes decisions about control over access to and use of land? Whose interests do they take into account, and who is excluded in the decision-making process?
3. What are the locally accepted mechanisms for resolving disputes over access to land? Are these robust, fair, equitable and accessible for all groups, including women? How will your intervention have an impact on these mechanisms?
4. What are the risks of agricultural disruptions arising from conflict dynamics and tensions? For example, how is the work resilient to the risk that military recruitment – by the army or non-state armed groups – might take people away from agricultural production and further threaten food security?
5. How will the intervention stimulate sustainable and inclusive value chains that contribute to both food security and peace and inclusion?
6. Could the proposed agricultural value chains potentially open new avenues and opportunities for corruption or violations of human rights? How can these risks be mitigated? What processes of due diligence and social and environmental impact assessment are envisaged to mitigate these risks?
7. How are the value chains connected to the global market, and will fluctuations in prices severely affect them? In addition, how are the value chains sensitive to the climatic and natural disaster shocks that could disrupt food security, drive internal displacement and increase the likelihood of conflict?
8. Are there contested borders or territorial boundaries that overlap agriculturally active areas? How could tensions be mitigated or, ideally, leveraged in peacebuilding? For example, could safe and agreed-upon transhumance corridors be established?
9. Is the action considering specific measures for inclusion, consultations and consent of marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as indigenous people, women and minorities?
10. If the intervention includes activities related to improving security of land tenure and land titling, are these assessed in relation to conflict sensitivity and risks of doing harm (e.g. inadvertently favour vested interest towards exploitative and environmentally unsustainable land use)?
11. How does the action directly or indirectly affect and address natural resource management (e.g. water, land, energy, forests, livestock, pastures, fisheries, protected areas) in an inclusive, participatory and rights-based manner?
12. Will the intervention significantly affect people's access to land or water? What will be the specific impact on women, indigenous peoples, minorities, etc.? How will any changes be managed? What processes of due diligence will be put in place (social and environmental impacts; human rights impacts, etc.)?
13. How does the intervention complement and support wider EU policy objectives on the connected issues of climate change, natural resource management, biodiversity, socioeconomic and cultural rights, poverty reduction and peace?

Further resources

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'Corporate Framework to Support Sustainable Peace in the Context of Agenda 2030' (2018).

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security' (2012).

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'The Programme Clinic: Designing Conflict Sensitive Interventions. Approaches to Working in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts: Facilitation Guide' (2019).

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA)'.

GSDRC Applied Knowledge Services, 'Economic Development in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: Topic Guide' (2015).

International Institute for Sustainable Development, 'Conflict-Sensitive Conservation Practitioners' Manual' (2009).

UK Aid, 'Supporting Infrastructure Development in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: Learning from Experience' (2012).

UN Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, 'Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict' (2012).

United States Agency for International Development, 'Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Value Chain Development' (2008).

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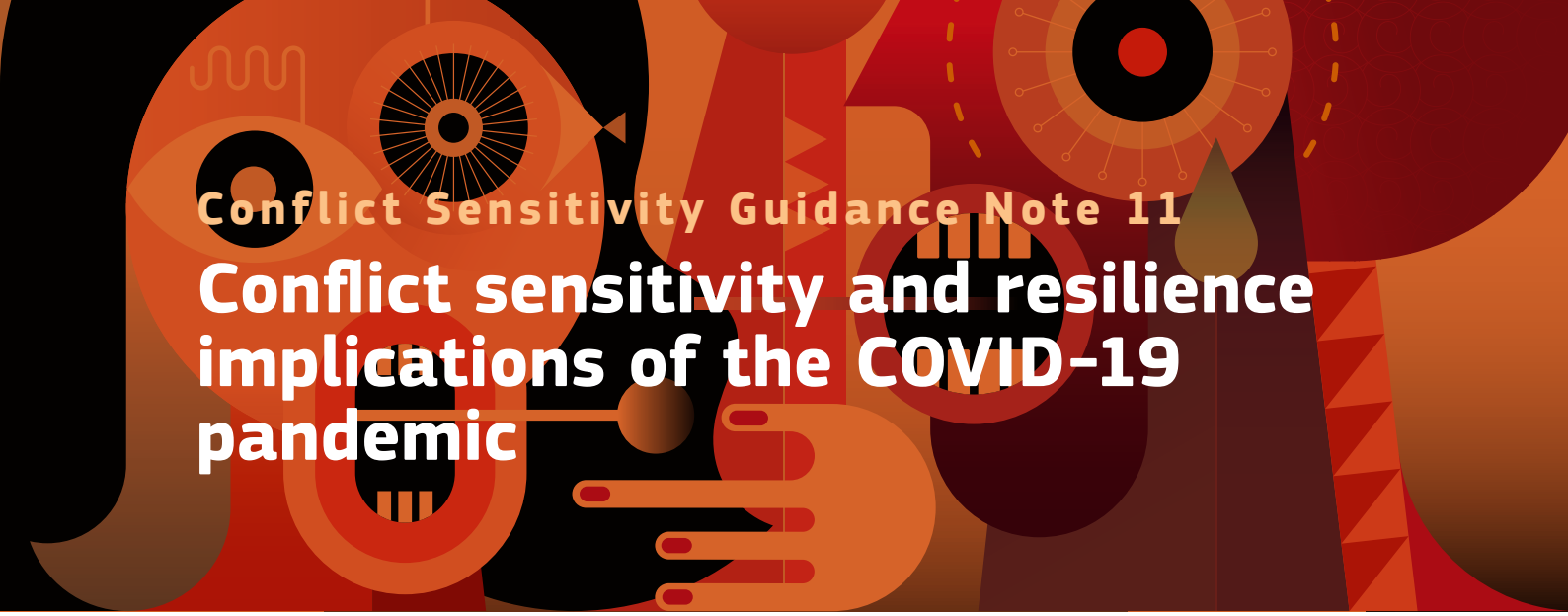
McIntosh K., Buckley J., 2015. 'Economic Development in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: Topic Guide'. GSDRC Applied Knowledge Services, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.

UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), 2018. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019*.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), 2015. 'Housing, Land and Property (HLP)'. In: *UNHCR Emergency Handbook 4th edition*.

USAID (United States Agency for International Development), 2008. 'Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Value Chain Development'. USAID, Washington, D.C.



Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 11

Conflict sensitivity and resilience implications of the COVID-19 pandemic

This note provides guidance on taking key conflict sensitivity issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Annex 2, Module 6, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*.

Introduction

In fragile or conflict-affected countries and contexts, the COVID-19 crisis is rapidly turning into a protracted socioeconomic crisis, triggering violence and political and social unrest. In these contexts, and even in otherwise stable countries, it is critical to carefully screen proposed responses and actions for conflict sensitivity, ensure that they will not exacerbate factors in fragility and risks of conflict, and will instead take all necessary precautions for strengthening resilience and doing no harm.

From a development perspective, it is essential to closely monitor the main risk factors and conflict drivers linked to the COVID-19 crisis. They include the following:

- **High levels of inequality between communities, locations and social groups.** COVID-19 impacts vary significantly for different groups, depending on socioeconomic status, living conditions, type of employment (formal or informal), place of residence (particularly in high-density areas), access to social support and healthcare, etc. More specifically, wherever the risk of exposure to COVID-19 intersects with other factors of vulnerability, including poverty, forced displacement, marginalisation, gender and age, its impact will be more severe. For example, the risks will be particularly acute in crowded refugee or internally displaced person settlements and camps, with very limited availability of basic services and poor access to healthcare, water, sanitation, vaccines, etc.
- **Economic recession, loss of income, food insecurity and unemployment.** The major economic impact of the crisis and lockdown measures have caused closure of entire branches of the economy, dramatically increased unemployment, fuelled inflation, and reduced access to basic supplies and local markets. This is disproportionately affecting women and the most vulnerable communities, often causing food insecurity and internal displacement.
- **Loss of state or government legitimacy, due to mismanagement of the response and ineffective or belated measures.** In addition, weak social protection systems, poor health services, and limited availability of or access to vaccines and other essential services will deepen public mistrust in authorities and create tensions. Beyond structural challenges, the lack of trust in institutions makes it more unlikely for people to follow public health recommendations.

- **Discrimination, scapegoating, xenophobia or fear directed at communities blamed for the pandemic.** In some countries, this is provoking hateful behaviour against migrants or local minorities perceived as 'foreigners'. The crisis can deepen existing social divisions (ethnic, caste, religion, gender, age, disability, urban/rural location, etc.).
- **Restriction of human rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of movement and freedom of assembly.** Abuse of power and emergency measures by opportunistic or authoritarian governments might restrict the political space for opposition and stifle already limited opportunities for civil society to express dissent; the pandemic has also affected electoral processes and milestones.
- **Behaviour of security forces.** This might also generate tensions, particularly where national or local authorities rely heavily on security measures to enforce public health injunctions. In conflict-affected contexts, or wherever the level of trust between the people and their security forces is already very low, this can further damage relations and create deeper divisions.
- **Gender impact.** With the pandemic, there has been a dramatic increase in domestic violence and in sexual and gender-based violence in general. Moreover, since a majority of women are among front-line healthcare workers, full-time care providers and teachers, women have to take on additional risks as well as bearing the increased burden of caring for the sick, the elderly and children. Traditional ways of coping – for example, through shared childcare – have become more difficult during lockdown, as has access to sexual and reproductive health rights, and the general availability of services for women affected by sexual and gender-based violence.
- **Indigenous people.** There are increasing reports of food insecurity, forced displacement, land grabbing and lack of access to food and water in indigenous communities, particularly in remote areas. Natural resources in indigenous territories, including forests, are increasingly under attack. The impact on indigenous women, widening gender disparities and gender-based violence are becoming more acute.

Key issues

How can the European Union (EU) act through its different instruments to build resilience and develop a conflict-sensitive response to the ongoing pandemic in its partner countries?

- **Conflict sensitivity.** Development interventions can have unintended consequences and do harm. This is true everywhere and for all areas of intervention, but especially in fragile and crisis contexts. Influential groups can misappropriate, or try to exercise control over, development or humanitarian assistance; the selection of beneficiaries and priority groups might be perceived as discriminatory; and, in some cases, social protection mechanisms may strengthen inequalities and fuel pre-existing tensions. All these, and many other unforeseen local factors, could trigger violent conflict. In a crisis, the pressure to respond quickly reinforces the need for careful conflict sensitivity assessment of EU support. All new or re-oriented projects related to COVID-19 response should follow the do no harm principle, and ensure that support is reaching targeted populations in an inclusive, transparent and effective manner.
- **Resilience.** Building resilience at all levels, from the state to the individual, and along all five areas of fragility, with a view to reducing the damaging impact of future crises and supporting a sustainable recovery from the current one, should be a permanent concern for development interventions designed to address the COVID-19 impact. While the importance of responding to the most urgent needs cannot be overstated, it is critical not to lose sight of the long-term structural recovery of health services, social protection mechanisms and economic activities. Both short-term and longer-term responses should operate jointly and in a complementary manner.
- **Joint approach to conflict analysis, conflict prevention and fragility.** As in all crisis and conflict-affected situations, responding to a multi-faceted emergency demands that the different EU institutions and instruments involved are fully aligned and contribute towards a shared analysis of risks and common objectives for the response.

- **Mediation and peacebuilding.** The EU should keep all options open to encourage dialogue and reconciliation opportunities, facilitate negotiations towards cessation of hostilities, promote humanitarian initiatives or sanction relief, and reinforce its support to mediation while ensuring that efforts towards peacebuilding will be sustained in the post-crisis period.
- **Support to civil society organisations (CSOs).** The crisis is understandably giving a priority role to humanitarian non-governmental organisations and CSOs that are involved in public health, education or food distribution. More rights-based or politically active CSOs fighting for transparency, human rights and social justice risk being squeezed out. The response to COVID-19 should continue supporting interventions promoted by these organisations, particularly at the community level.
- **Coordination and the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus.** Availability of significant – but not coordinated – unconditional, and sometimes duplicated humanitarian and development funding from different donors might increase competition for resources among conflicting elites and their constituencies. This in turn increases the risk of inefficient use and neglect of the real needs of the most vulnerable segments of society. It is essential to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach along the HDP nexus at the global, national and local levels, based on shared assessments of needs and drivers of resilience. A major challenge lies in better connecting the nexus with the political-security context of fragile countries, including the need to acquire **greater legitimacy and transparency**. This can be addressed by how our response programmes and their financing are designed and structured – i.e. through more inclusive, locally led and accountable approaches.
- **Information and communication.** Response programmes should ensure that all information related to the measures taken during and after the COVID-19 crisis – including allocation of financial resources and criteria for access to support from social services and vaccination – is disseminated widely and in a context-specific manner to all communities, including vulnerable groups, to avoid stigmatisation and counter rumours and misinformation.

In all cases, ongoing interventions or activities aiming at **conflict prevention** or addressing structural causes of fragility and conflict should continue. Similarly, during the post-crisis recovery process, **community-based resilience** and local capacities for social solidarity and peacebuilding will need to be supported.

Guiding questions

1. Is there continuing support to interventions addressing core drivers of conflict and fragility and building resilience?
2. Has there been an assessment of how COVID-19 impacts are affecting peacebuilding and conflict risks?
3. Is conflict sensitivity applied systematically in all COVID-19 responses by partner countries?
4. Are the long-term impacts of COVID-19 interventions being considered, and can selected approaches help build resilience against violence beyond COVID-19?
5. What measures are included to ensure that national response is flexible and adaptable, and that the targeting of assistance and vaccination in response to COVID-19 is fair and transparent to all communities?
6. Are interventions related to the COVID-19 emergency not only supporting health systems but also social protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups and communities?
7. Are communities involved in a participatory manner in the design of COVID-19 responses, including, at a minimum, women, children and youth?
8. Are refugees, internally displaced persons and other forcibly displaced groups – particularly children and youth – included in all COVID-19 interventions provided by local government and other agencies, including vaccination?
9. Are food security interventions considering conflict sensitivity issues and the targeting of hard-to-reach and marginalised communities, including indigenous peoples?

10. Are prevention, preparedness, containment and treatment efforts informed by human rights standards and consideration of unintended negative impacts on women and girls, marginalised groups and minorities?
11. If elections are postponed, is support being offered or considered to mediate potential conflicts and find acceptable interim or transitional solutions?
12. Is (re-) prioritisation of funding and programming allowing existing peacebuilding initiatives to continue and to address drivers of violence and conflict (as they can contribute to minimising and mitigating the risk that conflicts will be exacerbated by COVID-19)?

Further resources

Saferworld, 'Conflict Sensitivity in Responses to COVID-19: Initial Guidance and Reflections' (2020).

Search for Common Ground and World Vision, 'Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Conflict Sensitivity' (2020).

Search for Common Ground, 'COVID-19 Discussion Paper: Youth and the COVID-19 Crisis in Conflict-Affected Contexts'.

United Nations, 'COVID-19 in Fragile Settings: Ensuring a Conflict-Sensitive Response'.

World Food Programme, 'COVID-19 and Conflict Sensitivity: Rapid Operational Conflict Risk and Prevention Tool' (2020).

Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note 12

Education

This note provides guidance on taking conflict sensitivity issues related to education into account at the beginning of, and throughout, the intervention cycle particularly when identifying and formulating future programmes and developing multi-annual or annual action plans and related measures. It includes guiding questions aimed at a better understanding and integration of conflict sensitivity considerations, including measures to address and prevent conflict risks; these may also be used in facilitating group discussions. This guidance note updates Annex 2, Module 6, of the EU staff handbook *Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility*.

Introduction

Education in conflict-affected and fragile contexts is an acute challenge. Education can play a critical role in social transformation and long-term sustainable peacebuilding, but it can also perpetuate or even exacerbate the source of conflict and risks, as well structural and cultural violence.

Conflict-sensitive education encompasses:

- understanding the context in which education takes place;
- analysing the two-way interaction between the context and education programmes and policies (development, planning and delivery);
- acting to minimize negative impacts and maximise positive impacts of education policies and programming on conflict, within an organisation's given priorities (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012).

Key issues

There has been growing recognition that any support to education systems must take into account the potential risks associated with fragile and conflict-affected contexts, as well as peacebuilding challenges, and should therefore consider more **systematic integration of conflict sensitivity**.

Provision of basic services is seriously undermined in contexts of violence and fragility – and, more generally, in contexts where people do not have equitable access to educational opportunities, such as in emergencies. Unequal service delivery can feed into dynamics of exclusion and marginalisation, and thus contribute to the potential for conflict and lack of resilience.

In contexts of fragility, population needs often outweigh response capacity. Those most in need may be more difficult to reach, and power dynamics can lead to misinformation about the different levels of need. Decisions about where to focus such assistance may therefore contribute to some areas of the country or some population groups having more access to resources than others. Weak coordination and poor data management systems can lead to duplication of efforts and ineffective targeting.

Conflict-sensitive service provision should avoid reinforcing patterns of exclusion (or perceptions of exclusion). Instead, it should seek to base decisions on criteria that can be defended as needs-based, justified and communicated transparently to both governments and recipient populations. Even in cases of well-justified, needs-based targeting, populations

may still harbour perceptions of unfairness, fuelling feelings of resentment and hostility. Transparent communication of selection criteria and accessible complaint response mechanisms are thus essential.

Education systems should be inclusive, adaptable and resilient. Furthermore, they should take emergency situations into account in order to ensure the provision of longer-term education in countries in crisis due to conflicts, violence and natural disasters – including, in situations of forced displacement, for displaced populations and host communities alike. Education systems should include tools to address the psychological trauma of children and to prevent conflict and violence in the future; issues in this regard include the re-integration and rehabilitation of former child soldiers, as well as of children disabled by conflicts when applicable.

In areas of protracted crisis, humanitarian actors may be involved in providing education services. In such situations, it is important to be clear about who qualifies for what type of assistance (e.g. humanitarian versus development) and the impact of the criteria selection on fragility, conflict dynamics, tensions, divisions, existing inequalities, etc. Providing sustainable education and recognising educational qualifications – for beneficiaries, locations, etc. – are key to an effective humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach.

Conflict analysis is the critical first step in delivering conflict-sensitive education programming. This is the systematic study of the background and history, root causes, actors and dynamics of a conflict – the factors that contribute to violent conflict and/or peace, and their interaction with an education programme or policy (UNICEF, 2016).

The do no harm principle should be applied as a minimum standard in all education interventions and programmes. This principle is especially relevant in the consideration of the impact of education assistance on gender equality as well as in situations of ethnic and cultural diversity. For instance, education provision in countries where religion, faith or a particular ethnic group predominates and has a principal role in education's design and delivery might not prioritise inclusion and equality – or may even reinforce the exclusion of girls, minorities, disabled students, indigenous peoples, etc.

Specific attention should be given to do no harm considerations and approaches when supporting religious and faith-based education and related institutions, in contexts where educational values could be contrast with gender equality and human rights international standards, or where religious or faith-based education might potentially promote hatred, divisions or even radicalisation. In all contexts, child protection policies and principles should be paramount at all times.

Any potential negative impacts on teachers – who are often women – and the low representation of women and minorities in school management structures should also be mitigated. Moreover, the revision of educational curricula and the production of education materials are key in terms of promoting quality education and universal accessibility and inclusion; as well as in challenging harmful gender stereotypes and stereotypes about minority groups, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities.

Specific attention should be given to multilingual and mother tongue–based education. Such education is important in (i) sustaining inclusive peacebuilding and addressing the root causes of inequalities, (ii) obtaining better learning outcomes for ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, and (iii) promoting social inclusion and respecting cultural diversity and different identities, thereby addressing structural and cultural forms of violence. Mother tongue–based education is often key to the recognition and inclusion of certain ethnic groups in the context of reconciliation and peacebuilding processes, and in specific peace agreements (Guatemala, Myanmar, Nepal, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, etc.).

Teachers' training should also be targeted in specific settings to build requisite skills and competencies. These should aim for inclusive education and equal learning outcomes for all (e.g. through mother tongue–based education, intercultural education, peace education, and promotion of gender equality and human rights education)[1]. An inclusive curriculum, reflecting different identities and challenging gender stereotypes and all types of biases, is essential to positive peace.

[1] See e.g. UNESCO (2018); ENAC (2018).

Conflict-sensitive **education strategies** may intentionally promote inclusion and equitable access, or even aim to actively transform tensions and support peace by teaching respect for diversity as well as local, national and global citizenship.

Peace education is clearly included in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework as well as in a number of peace agreements around the world. SDG4, specifically target 4.7, aims to:

> ...ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, **promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence**, [emphasis added] global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of cultures contribution to sustainable development.

Peace education is often linked to civic education. It could also or alternatively be linked to education on gender equality and human rights; the promotion of intercultural and interfaith dialogues; and the respect of different ethnic, social and religious identities. Peace education may or may not be part of formal education systems. It is also promoted in processes of reconciliation, inter-group dialogue and mediation, adult education and training; and in the strengthening of capacities for peace for civil society, youth, women, etc.

UNESCO defines peace education as follows:

> Education for non-violence and peace includes training, skills and information directed towards cultivating a culture of peace based on human rights principles. This education not only provides knowledge about a culture of peace, but also imparts the skills and attitudes necessary to defuse and recognize potential conflicts, and those needed to actively promote and establish a culture of peace and non-violence' (UNESCO, 2008, 3).

In this context, peace education is a critical component of peacebuilding initiatives, as it entails learning **about** and learning **for** peace. It is meant to be a driver for positive peace and human rights, as well as for inclusive education systems.

Guiding questions

Context, policies and strategies

1. Is your education intervention based on a contextual and sectoral conflict analysis? How do conflict dynamics and fragility affect education, and how might education in turn contribute to conflict prevention, peace and resilience?
2. Does the education strategy provide a description and analysis of known disparities among various population sub-groups with regard to access to and completion of primary education? (These may include disparities along ethnic or religious lines, gender, disability, or refugee, displacement or former combatant status.)
3. Does the education strategy document clearly articulate an understanding of how the conflict, conflict risks or fragilities create or exacerbate barriers to educational access?
4. Does the sector strategy document provide a clear, context-specific message about the importance of conflict sensitivity to donors and implementing partners?
5. Has the sector strategy been informed by a do no harm analysis in relation to the education sector, and related policies and plans? How is diversity inclusion ensured and promoted?
6. Are there specific education dimensions in peace agreements? How can they be supported?

Service provision

7. Are there good examples of education providers applying conflict-sensitive programming that could provide key pointers and guidance for your intervention?
8. How will humanitarian and development actors collaborate to ensure that those most in need benefit from education services, while at the same time avoiding reinforcing patterns of exclusion and/or fuelling tensions or animosity between groups (e.g. refugees/internally displaced persons and host populations)?
9. Have you considered whether education interventions might end up favouring one group over

another? One region over another? How will it promote gender equality?

10. What measures are or will be in place to ensure that the intervention does not reflect and perpetuate gender and social inequalities?
11. Have you considered the risks that education may be manipulated to promote exclusion and hate, and perpetuate marginalisation of certain groups?
12. Are there safety and protection policies (e.g. child protection policies) to protect girls and boys, and young women and men from abuse and exploitation?
13. Are you supporting state faith-based education systems that might perpetuate gender inequalities and do not provide specific support of girls' school attendance?
14. What measures will be included to ensure an equitable distribution of education services across identity groups (ethnic, religious, geographic, gender) and to address pockets of exclusion and marginalisation?
15. Does the sector strategy document explicitly address the conflict sensitivity implications of postings of trained teachers (e.g. to various sub-national regions and communities) – for example, by ensuring the cultural and linguistic diversity of teachers and competencies in mother tongue–based education?
16. Do curricula and teacher training have a focus on peace through pedagogy; challenge gender and social prejudices; and build competencies for responsible citizenship, conflict transformation and resilience?
17. Are teachers from one ethnic group, or represent only one side of the conflict? Are services available to children in hard-to-reach areas and areas affected by active conflict?
18. Are displaced children able to access services? Are host communities supported? Are mechanisms in place for social integration of learners?
19. How are parents, communities, civil society and local leadership involved in educational establishments?
20. Do trained teachers reflect the diversity of their societies (different ethnic and religious groups, gender)?
21. Have interventions incorporated flexibility measures to ensure adjustments in changing conditions on the ground, such as displacement or attacks? Are there measures to protect teachers and students from attack or recruitment into armed forces and to protect learning environments in general?
22. Do admission policies or school practices disadvantage girls or minorities?
23. Are water, sanitation and hygiene facilities available to schools? Are they built to be gender-sensitive, safe for all genders and supportive of girls' school attendance? Are sanitary facilities available for menstruating girls?

Languages

24. Are there teacher training, curricula and materials focusing on mother tongue–based education and on cultural diversity and inclusion?
25. Are minority language groups considered in the curricula? Are teachers trained and available in different languages?
26. Are refugees and displaced children able to learn in their mother tongue and able to learn the language of their host community?

Curricula

27. Are curricula screened and revised with regard to messages of violence, hatred and discrimination that may be contained in their materials?
28. Are certain groups under-represented in curricular content (girls, marginalised groups)?
29. Are learning expectations different for girls and boys? Are more limited curricular options available to girls?
30. Are religious and faith-based schools monitored and accredited by national authorities? Are the curricula validated? Are messages of discrimination reinforced through school processes or curricula (against girls, women, other religious or ethnic groups, other minorities)?

Further resources

Education in Crisis and Conflict Network, 'Conflict Sensitive Performance Indicators' (2019).

European Commission 'Communication on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises' (2018).

GSDRC Applied Knowledge Services, 'Conflict Sensitivity: Topic Guide, Section 3.5: Services' (2014).

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 'Guidance Note: Gender' (2019).

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 'INEE Guiding Principles on Integrating Conflict Sensitivity in Education Policy and Programming in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts' (2018).

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 'Three Steps to Conflict Sensitive Education'.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 'UNESCO's Work on Education for Peace and Non-violence: Building Peace through Education' (2008).

United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, 'Peace Dividends: Contributions of Administrative and Social Services to Peacebuilding' (2012).

United States Agency for International Development, 'Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs' (2013).

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Glossary

Conflict. A situation in which two or more parties perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals (Mitchell, 1981). **Violent conflict** refers to those conflicts resulting in violence occurring within, between and across state boundaries and including violence targeting particular groups, such as mass atrocities. **Situations at risk of conflict** are those 'threatening the security of a population or particular groups, and/or the fulfilment of core state functions, and/or the international order' (Council of the European Union, 2021).

Conflict analysis. Conflict analysis in the EU context is a structured analytical process that offers key insights into the risks of violent conflict and conflict dynamics in a particular area, country or region. While the analytical approach remains flexible, key elements of the analysis generally include (i) structural and proximate causes of (potential) violence, and patterns of resilience; (ii) actors who shape the conflict risks (including parties to the conflict, people affected by it and those with interests and stakes in it); (iii) potential scenarios for violence; (iv) mapping of ongoing conflict prevention and stabilisation activities and recommendations to ensure conflict-sensitive engagement and conflict prevention to inform decision-making at different levels (e.g. political dialogue, policies, programming, specific projects). Can be based on possible scenarios. Conflict analysis helps to ensure that integrated EU engagements in fragile countries are conflict-sensitive and that informed, timely and effective conflict prevention reduces the risk of human suffering and further harm. It normally generates actionable recommendations from a joint conflict analysis among all EU actors (EEAS and EC, 2020).

Gender analysis. A tool to understand the social and power dynamics between women, men, girls and boys within a given context and to identify the roots of gender inequality. It should help in understanding how contextual dynamics affect women and men differently, and how the traditional roles and social status of men, women, boys or girls may change because of these dynamics in conflict-affected contexts. Gender analysis should be a core component of a conflict analysis, ensuring that any understanding of conflict is informed by an understanding of how gender dynamics (including gender norms and roles) can help to drive conflict or can be leveraged to support peace, greater gender equality and conflict prevention (adapted from EC, 2020; Saferworld, 2016).

Phases of conflict. 'Conflict is not a static, unchanging state of affairs, but rather, a dynamic and non-linear process. While phases of conflict such as early warning (characterised by pre-violence or low scale violence), crisis management and stabilisation (characterised by violence) and transition post-conflict recovery (characterised by a descending trend of violence) can be identified, they do not necessarily follow a sequential/cyclical pattern and can at times overlap (OECD, 2001).

Conflict prevention. Refers to 'upstream' action to prevent the emergence, escalation and spillover of violent conflict, as well as effective stabilisation and sustained support for peacebuilding and long-term development to prevent the emergence and re-emergence of violence. Article 21 of the Treaty on the European Union spells out that: 'The Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all

fields of international relations, in order to … preserve peace, [and] prevent conflicts …'

Conflict sensitivity. A policy, methodological and programming approach that seeks to ensure that interventions avoid doing harm or generate unintentional negative impacts such as exacerbating conflict dynamics, intergroup tensions, divisions, inequalities, etc. and instead maximise potential opportunities to make a positive contribution to peace and resilience. The European Union's approach to conflict sensitivity aims to:

- live up to the do no harm principle and approaches in all contexts;
- understand the complexities, risks and opportunities in a given context;
- understand the possible interactions between the (proposed) interventions and conflict, and/or conflict risks and/or risks of increasing fragility (and conversely, the impact of the context on interventions), in order to monitor and adapt accordingly;
- minimise negative effects and maximise the contributions of interventions on positive peace.

Crisis situation. Interpreted by the European Union (EU) as those posing a threat to law and order, as well as to the security and safety of individuals, and which have the potential to (i) escalate into armed conflict, (ii) destabilise a country and (iii) cause seriously harm. The EU therefore prioritises (i) the safeguarding of the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union; and/or (ii) the security of the Union, by supporting peacekeeping and international security, the promotion of international cooperation and development, the strengthening of democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 168(2) of the Implementing Rules of the EU Financial Regulation and of the 10th EDF).

Do no harm. The concept of do no harm is at the core of conflict sensitivity approaches and methodologies in development and humanitarian action. In this context, the do no harm approach was first developed by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects in 1999 (by Mary Anderson). It sets out as a minimum obligation for any action or intervention to avoid (or minimise) harm. The do no harm principle is based on the understanding that whenever an intervention enters a context it becomes part of the context by interacting with the (conflict) context itself, and is therefore not neutral or may have negative effects (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2018).

Fragility. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development fragility framework builds on five dimensions of fragility – economic, environmental, political, societal and security – and measures each of these dimensions through the accumulation and combination of risks and capacity. The dimensions can briefly be defined as follows (OECD, 2016).

- **Economic.** Vulnerability to risks stemming from weaknesses in economic foundations and human capital, including macroeconomic shocks, unequal growth, high youth unemployment, lack of diversification of the economy, ineffective public finance management and revenue generation, etc.
- **Environmental.** Vulnerability to environmental, climatic and health risks that affect citizens' lives and livelihoods. These include exposure to natural and man-made disasters, climate change impacts, pollution, environmental degradation and disease epidemic.
- **Political.** Vulnerability to risks inherent in political processes, structures, events or decisions; these could be linked to the lack of political inclusiveness and representation, lack of transparency and accountability, lack of state legitimacy, etc.
- **Security.** Vulnerability of the overall security context to violence and crime, including political and social violence and specific violence by security sector forces and non-state armed groups, but also human security more generally.
- **Society.** Vulnerability to risks affecting societal cohesion that stem from both vertical and horizontal inequalities, including inequality among culturally defined or constructed groups and social cleavages, structural discrimination, gender inequality, shrinking civil society spaces and so on.

Humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP or triple nexus). The humanitarian-development-peace nexus is a way of working and a process that tries to shift the work culture towards more systematic and up-front coordination between the humanitarian, development and peace actors at EU headquarters

and in the field, coordinating efforts of all EU actors, including Member States while maintaining respect and full compliance with their respective mandates and roles. The triple nexus is not only relevant in countries where there is active fighting or a peace process but should also serve as a basis for conflict prevention and to enhance overall resilience. For example, it is important that health responses to COVID-19 be designed in a conflict-sensitive manner and in coordination with community security approaches to ensure communities see it as legitimate (Council of the European Union, 2017b).

Human security. The United Nations defines human security as freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live a life in dignity. It takes a people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented approach to the protection and empowerment of individuals (United Nations Trust Fund on Human Security, 2016). As noted in General Assembly Resolution 66/290, 'human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people'. It calls for 'people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people'. Outside of the United Nations, the human security concept has evolved along narrow versus broad, idealistic versus pragmatic, definitions and approaches. Over the years, the European Union (EU) has echoed both the narrow and broader definitions. The EU Global Strategy stresses that the EU will foster human security through an integrated approach, but seems at times to equate human security with more traditional 'security' approaches (EU, 2016).

Integrated approach. The integrated approach to external conflicts and crises aims at fostering human security by drawing on all relevant European Union (EU) policies and instruments spanning diplomatic, security, defence, financial, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid fields (multidimensional). 'The Integrated Approach respects and reaffirms the various mandates, roles, aims and legal frameworks of the stakeholders involved. It is applied at the local, national, regional and global levels (multi-level) as needed and throughout all phases of the conflict… (multi-phase) in prevention, crisis response, stabilisation and longer-term peacebuilding, in order to contribute to sustainable peace. It is an approach that brings together Member States, relevant EU institutions and other international and regional partners as well as civil society organisations (multi-lateral)' (Council of the European Union, 2018, para. 1).

Mediation. A way of assisting negotiations between conflict parties and transforming conflicts with the support of an acceptable third party. The general goal of mediation is to enable parties in conflict to reach agreements they find satisfactory and are willing to implement. The specific goals depend on the nature of the conflict and the expectations of the parties and the mediators. A primary goal is often to prevent or end violence through cessation of hostilities or ceasefire agreements. In order to ensure the peace and stability over the long term, mediation should be cognisant of, and as appropriate, address the root causes of conflict (Council of the European Union, 2009).

Peace. There are several definitions of peace. According to Galtung (1996), in negative terms, peace is the absence of violence, war or conflict. The absence of violence/stability is a clearly prerequisite for human security and for positive peace (Galtung, 1996), a situation in which all groups within a society enjoy equal opportunities, human rights and meaningful access to participation, opportunities, livelihoods and decision-making and can relate to one another non-violently due to the effectiveness of social and state institutional mechanisms and related structures to manage differences and address grievances.

Peacebuilding. This is a complex, long-term process aimed at creating the necessary conditions for positive and sustainable peace by addressing the deep-rooted structural causes of violent conflict in a comprehensive manner (thereby reducing the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict) and by strengthening national capacities for conflict transformation and sustainable peace. This can happen in support of implementation of specific peace agreements/accords or national reconciliation processes, but is not a necessary prerequisite, although national ownership of peacebuilding is essential (adapted from UN, 2010).

The New European Consensus on Development considers peacebuilding as essential for sustainable

development, and that peacebuilding activities should take place at all levels and in all phases of the conflict cycle (EC, 2017b). Peacebuilding activities often encompass a broad range of actions to support peace processes, not least in development cooperating, including support to the implementation of peace agreements, electoral reforms and assistance, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), transitional justice, justice sector reforms, socioeconomic interventions, psycho-social support to survivors of conflict and of sexual and gender-based violence, mine action, small arms and light weapon control, etc.

Resilience. The ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt and quickly recover from shocks and pressures in a manner that reduces vulnerabilities and risks (Council of the European Union, 2017a). Resilience, like conflict sensitivity, does not apply only to conflict-affected and fragile situations, but may be relevant to all contexts, as the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted. The EU's strategic approach to resilience aims at strengthening:

- the adaptability of states, societies, communities and individuals to political, economic, environmental, demographic or societal pressures in order to sustain progress towards national development goals;
- the capacity of a state – in the face of significant pressures – to build, maintain or restore its core functions as well as basic social and political cohesion in a manner that ensures respect for democracy, rule of law, human and fundamental rights and fosters inclusive long-term security and progress;
- the capacity of societies, communities and individuals to manage opportunities and risks in a peaceful and stable manner, and to build, maintain or restore livelihoods in the face of major pressures.

Stabilisation. The political objective of managing the prevention of, or the exit from, a crisis in countries/regions suffering from a major weakening if not the breakdown of state structures and torn by internal and/or transboundary conflicts and violence (EEAS, 2017).

Stabilisation situation. Critical moment where there has been recent serious violence and Insecurity and where there is a need and opportunity to support the foundations necessary for peacebuilding, resumption of development activities and preventing the cyclical re-emergence of violence. Stabilisation situations may refer to contexts where there is a risk of ongoing violent conflict and instability to escalate and/or spill over. There may be ongoing national, regional and international military operations, violence committed by state and/or non-state armed groups and high levels of criminal violence. There may or may not be a peace agreement or peace process (EEAS, 2017).

Statebuilding. An endogenous process of strengthening the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state driven by state-society relations. This definition places state-society relations and political processes at the heart of state building and identifies legitimacy as central to the process as it both facilitates and enhances state building. It recognises that state building needs to take place at both the national and local levels (OECD, 2011).

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