

## ANNEX 2: CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

International assistance should look to opportunities to support trust-building, to create 'space' for dialogue between stakeholders, to help empower and build the confidence of local communities as well as meeting the physical, social and economic needs of communities.

It is incumbent on aid agencies and donors working in conflict-affected areas to invest in understanding the context they are operating in, including local political cultures, perceptions (of the context *and* of external aid), and the dynamics of peace and conflict – both in the areas/sites they are seeking to work in and at the level of nation-wide peace process efforts. This understanding needs to be maintained and brought to bear throughout the lifecycle of programmes of support – in timing and in adjusting support to ensure it remains in accordance with the needs of peace and peace processes.

Agencies need to ensure that the investment in understanding the context they are operating in is also put into practice on an operational level, and importantly, is adequately resourced. This includes not only guidance to staff on "conflict sensitivity" and "Do No Harm", but also recruiting project staff who will be able to gain the trust and confidence of local populations. Efforts should be made to ensure staff include people from the target communities. External partners should not be guided by their assistance entailing the 'most efficient' and 'technically correct' approach, but instead the most responsive and appropriate to the context.

### *Box 1: Overview of Conflict sensitivity / Do No Harm*

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Understand the local context (through engaging with local stakeholders, analysing potential sources of conflict as well <i>local capacities for peace</i>;</li><li>2. Understand the relationship between the proposed interventions and the context (by analysing the suggested intervention and how that impacts the sources of conflict and sources of connections);</li><li>3. Design strategic programs based on step 1 &amp; 2, that have the ability to adapt and be flexible given changing circumstances on the ground and as such minimizes the chances to do harm and maximizes the chances to <i>do good</i>.</li></ol> |
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This list of 'considerations' for aid partners working in conflict-affected areas – derived from two years of pilot project work by the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative - set out below should help in designing-in trust building interventions that take the local context into account. The list is not exhaustive, but it is hoped it will be useful for those seeking to provide support in conflict-affected areas.

(1) **Does the project have agreement (at least in principle) from Government, Ethnic Armed Groups and communities?**

- *Has the project been proposed or requested by ethnic group representatives?*
- *Does it strengthen their ability to support the ceasefire and continuing peace process?*

A key way for stakeholders such as Ethnic Armed Groups to be engaged is through Stakeholder Engagement/Consultations. International principles such as Do No Harm and the New Deal highlight the need for interventions to be shaped by the local context, and to engage with local stakeholders, which is more comprehensive than simply 'informing' stakeholders of the planned intervention.

**(2) Does the project build trust and confidence in the ceasefire and peace process through meeting the priority needs and concerns of the conflict-affected communities?**

The contexts of conflict-affected communities are unique, with different local histories, experiences, and aspirations. Support should be directed towards reinforcing local resilience, coping strategies and their ways out of crisis.

Ethnic grievances are at the heart of the conflicts - 'top down' approaches are unlikely to be cognizant of or responsive to these grievances, and maybe perceived negatively in communities who have experienced conflict. Grievances can start to be addressed through consultative processes from the bottom-up not through pre-conceived, unilaterally determined 'solutions'. Peace processes will be more sustainable if **locally** driven and owned and supported by affected communities.

**(3) Does the project help build the capacity of local actors to articulate and address their needs and concerns?**

A key focus of international assistance should be *recognising* local capacity and providing opportunities for local actors to articulate their needs and concerns. This takes time and is resource intensive – both of which need to be accommodated realistically in programmes of support. Included in this is the need for prior and (routine) on-going consultations between the key stakeholders – consultations that provide an opportunity to voice needs and concerns and ensure a full range of views are heard, understood and responded to. To the extent possible, projects should be owned locally and recognise existing local capacity. While local actors may acknowledge the need for capacity building of their organisations, they must be seen as equal partners in fully participatory project processes by national NGOs, INGOs and UN organisations.

There is a need to find flexible ways to achieve accountability when working with CBOs that don't necessarily have the capacity to produce proposals, budgets or narrative and financial reports of the kind demanded by international donors. National NGOs and INGOs can play important roles in bridging this capacity gap with supportive, not dominating, project management and technical support.

**(4) Does the project provide practical support to specific, agreed elements of ceasefire/peace agreement implementation?**

Where projects support some of the key elements agreed in the ceasefires (many of the ceasefire agreements refer to provision of services, assistance) – they also test the commitment to these elements of the ceasefires and, where commitment can be demonstrated, it can be an important confidence-building measure and indicator of confidence in the peace process. The extent to which support to elements of a ceasefire agreement is '*monitorable*' or '*verifiable*' may also be considered.

**(5) Does the project protect the social fabric that connects CBOs to communities? Does the project incorporate safeguards against disempowering, over-whelming or by-passing local stakeholders?**

An essential consideration when supporting CBOs should be to protect the *social fabric* which connects these organisations to their communities. This includes 'protecting' their space from an influx of external actors, avoiding over-formalising their structures or networks, and not overburdening them, (which includes offering or providing too much assistance, which may reduce self-reliance or demanding too many formal administrative measures, which may undermine self-confidence. The harmful effects of international actors disempowering, over-whelming or by-passing local stakeholders can be amplified in

conflict-affected areas. Investing time in meaningful consultation for project planning and meaningful partnership in implementation can go some way in reducing these risks.

**(6) Have you considered if the project could be planned and implemented through a locally owned CBO consortium approach? – Would this be appropriate?**

A locally-owned CBO consortium approach can work well, building trust between conflict-affected communities and Ethnic Armed Groups, and international organisations and donors. There can be significant value in including women's organisations and organisations with a gender-focus in the local consortium, aiding other consortium members to better understand gender-related issues and importance of women's roles and participation in decision-making.

*Box 2: Practical tools to help secure accountability in conflict-affected areas*

Conflict Sensitive Consortium (2012), How to guide to conflict sensitivity,  
(<http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/content/how-guide>)

Helvetas / Swisspeace (2013), Manual: 3 Steps for Working in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations (WFCS), ([https://assets.helvetas.ch/downloads/2013\\_hsi\\_manual\\_3\\_steps\\_wfcs.pdf](https://assets.helvetas.ch/downloads/2013_hsi_manual_3_steps_wfcs.pdf))

CDA – DNH in Land Tenure and Property Rights Programming Tool  
(<http://www.cdacollaborative.org/publications/search/?as=2&bs=&publisher=&pubTypes=1732&programs=1149-1336-1337-1338-1642-2804&country=0&tags=1151&author=&pubYear=&sort=date-.Uvsxw0KSzLB>)