Standard 9: Conflict

Our Commitment:
We are committed to designing activities that are sensitive to situations of conflict and the safety needs of project participants, and that contribute to building their capacities for peace.

“Five UN Helicopters”: Learning to count from 1 to 10 on a children’s activity centre wall in Darfur, Sudan
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The issues
Conflict is a major development issue: poverty and injustice can feed the anger which leads to conflict, and violent conflict can deepen poverty and injustice. Violent conflict entails the loss of civilian life, social and economic disruption, displacement, destruction of the environment and of infrastructure. There are ongoing effects even after a conflict ends: a legacy of democracy and human rights denied, landmines, surplus small arms, amputees, orphans, children who have missed out on education and communities who have been left mentally scarred by witnessing or taking part in atrocities.

Conflict has a negative effect on development by restricting access to those in need, destabilising government and political systems that would usually provide services for the population, adding to distrust and fear between communities and contributing to the physical, psychological or emotional harm of the population.

Most of the world’s poor people live in countries affected by conflict. Violent conflict destroys hard-won relief and development gains, prevents progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and hinders economic growth. Of the 34 poor countries farthest from reaching the millennium development goals, 22 are in or are emerging from violent conflict.

Biblical foundations
Tearfund’s response to conflict is guided by key biblical principles, namely, that:

- Injustice, broken relationships and violence are the result of human sin, and the victims of conflict often suffer because of the sin of others
- Violence cannot advance the kingdom of God
- Those with power have a duty to defend the victims of injustice, and to oppose and punish those who cause it, by force if need be.

Good Practice commitments
Just as violent conflict sets back development, flawed development or emergency response can worsen conflict. Aid influences the political and economic dynamics of conflict. It can, for example, introduce resources that alter power relationships in ways that fuel local tensions. At worst, programmes that do not consider the conflict situation in which they work can increase the vulnerability of beneficiaries to violent attack or heighten the intensity of the conflict itself. It is not enough to rely on development or relief aid to prevent violent conflict. The

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1 Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, UN Millennium Project, 2005
potential impact of relief and development work upon a conflict must be thoroughly evaluated. We should also beware of those people who use and promote violent conflict for political and personal benefit.

Close links to other Quality Standards
There are close links with Impartiality, ensuring our impartiality is clearly understood by all parties is vital in conflict situations; Accountability, in recognising the particular considerations needed in making information publicly available, facilitating participation and feedback in conflict situations; Gender, recognising the vulnerability, particularly of women and girls in conflict situations; and HIV, recognising the vulnerability, particularly of women and girls to HIV in conflict situations.

Where to look for further information:
- Tearfund Conflict management documents: http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/Conflict.htm
- Oxfam’s Protection Training pack: Disaster Management Ref Docs\Conflict Sensitivity\Protection
- Conflict Sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building resources pack: http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/resource_pack/chapter_2__266.html
- Conflict sensitivity organisation: http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/node/114
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Practical Steps for carrying out our Conflict commitment

Identification

Step 1: Analyse and understand the conflict situation in order to guide your project design

Step 2: Identify the appropriate level of association that the organisation should have with different actors in the conflict

Design

Step 3: Ensure the project design prioritizes the safety of beneficiaries when this is their primary concern

Step 4: Assess the potential impact of the project’s design with the community before you commence activities

Implementation

Step 5: Publicise the impartiality and independence of the organisation

Step 6: Seek out opportunities for building the capacity for peace

Step 7: Monitor the attitudes within the community towards the organisation and adapt project plans in light of feedback received
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Step 1: Analyse and understand the conflict situation in order to guide your project design

- Use conflict analysis tools with project staff and as many community members as possible and appropriate, including men, women, boys and girls.
- Gain a full understanding of the conflict context, the changing dynamics - at the local level, regional/national and the wider global context: use analysis in security reports, look at news website analysis, look at IRIN or Alertnet analysis, ask the UN Resident Coordinator for the latest summary document of analysis of the situation.
- Repeat at regular intervals to keep the analysis current.
- Stay up to date with political, humanitarian and security information that might help identify trends, patterns of abuse, belligerents’ behaviours, high risk locations, anticipated spikes in conflict etc.

What to analyse and why?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>What?</th>
<th>Why?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify all the groups involved in the conflict</td>
<td>To understand their different perspectives, aims, objectives and how they relate to each other, where they get their support, how they operate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify where the organisation sits in the conflict</td>
<td>To assess where we can have a positive impact, i.e. if our work could reduce the conflict in any way, and where we might be having a negative impact, i.e. perpetuating the conflict or adding to beneficiaries’ insecurity. At the very least we need to be sure that we are not making the situation worse by working in the places that we do in the way that we do. This serves as the basis for developing strategy and plans.</td>
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<td>Find out the history of the conflict, underlying grievances, patterns, current events and past experiences.</td>
<td>To identify some of the long-standing root causes of the conflict. To assist with our project planning - not to do things which add to the conflict.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Find out if the beneficiary communities have any safety needs</td>
<td>In order to decide ways in which projects could be designed and implemented in a way that will improve the safety of beneficiaries.</td>
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NGOs have often become targets in a conflict when they have been perceived to be favouring one group over another through the assistance they provide, or in the level of association they have with the different actors in the conflict. Perception is the critical consideration here: even if the NGO hasn’t deliberately set out to associate themselves in this way, there may be a serious perception problem and this will call into question the foundational principles of impartiality and independence and potentially endanger staff and beneficiaries alike.

• Assess how the different actors are perceived by the beneficiary groups and wider population: government, opposition groups, UN presence, peacekeepers, NGOs etc: ask staff what their own perceptions are, ask staff what they think the communities’ perceptions are, if appropriate explain the process to the community and ask them directly what their perceptions are, if safe ask local authorities their perceptions.

• Ensure that close association with any one group does not call into question your impartiality and independence.

• Develop key relationships at a number of levels - not just with community leaders, militia commanders and others, but find out who the influencers are. Ask local staff for advice as to who the influential people are.
• Assess the safety needs of the community; at the needs assessment stage take note if the primary need of the community is safety from abuse. When this is the case, safety must be the overarching concern used to guide the design of the project, designing sectoral projects (WATSAN, Hygiene Promotion, Nutrition, Shelter, Food Security) in a way that provides safety for beneficiaries or reduces their vulnerability to violence and attack.

• Ensure that the project does not heighten the vulnerability of beneficiaries (risk of attack, gender-based violence, bombardment, theft, jealousies etc) but aims instead to reduce it.

• Set indicators in your projects to measure the improved safety of civilian beneficiaries throughout the life of the project.

• Do needs assessments and provide services early on to establish an understanding amongst beneficiaries, leaders and combatants of how an NGO works. A culture of accountability does not always come naturally to leaders. If they are allowed to manipulate service delivery or distributions early on it will be difficult to correct this later.

• Find out what agencies in your location are mandated to protect the safety of civilians, assess the risks involved and agree the appropriate level of association and method of referral with them. This can be done informally in highly sensitive situations.
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Step 4: Assess the potential impact of the project’s design with the community before you commence activities

- Consult with local staff and beneficiaries to understand how your proposed actions will be perceived.
- Consider the selection process of beneficiaries as it relates to the assisting of different beneficiary groups on different sides of the conflict.
- Ensure the level of assistance provided to different groups is proportionate to needs and can be clearly justified and ensure that to exclude one community from a project does not add to the insecurity of another group (i.e. retaliation for perceived prioritisation).
- Look for any possible “side effects” of a programme: indirect repercussions of your work that add to the conflict.

Step 5: Publicise the impartiality and independence of the organisation

- Ensure your NGO status and commitments to NGO principles are understood by all beneficiaries, the wider community, and by all sides of the conflict (also refer to Standard 3: Beneficiary Accountability). The Red Cross Code of Conduct is very useful in promoting humanitarian principles. Consider use of posters and sharing booklets of the RCCC with stakeholders. If a donor requires high visibility and the donor government is perceived to have a strong position on the conflict, then a decision needs to be made if it is really wise to accept such funding.
- Provide repeated training to reinforce these messages.
- Ensure recruitment of local staff is balanced and cannot be interpreted as you favouring one particular group.
Step 6: Seek out opportunities for building the capacity for peace

- Ask the staff and communities what their idea of a peaceful state would look like and see if you can incorporate any actions into your sectoral work that would move towards some of these things. Some people will be opposed to “peace” in any form and so overt peace-building or even use of the word may need to be avoided.

- Consult with beneficiaries and others to ensure that activities listed below are appropriate to your context. They are often possible when a relationship of respect and trust has been established with the community:
  - Introduce peace-building and reconciliation messages within project activities, such as a Health Education curriculum or training for a development committee.
  - Create opportunities where issues relating to the conflict and opportunities for peace & reconciliation can be discussed.
  - Create appropriate opportunities (only after careful planning and discussion) where people can interact with the “opposition”, such as joint activities on a community project, a health lesson, joint training etc.
  - Use resources or design activities which reward activities which build peace and discourage those which make hostility.
  - Where there are local churches, work with these churches to promote peace. The church, in many communities, naturally sees its role as one of reconciliation and peacemaking. In complex emergencies, it can have a role in preventing future outbreaks of violence by helping people to address issues of resentment, forgiveness, exclusion and alienation. It can enable the appropriate resolution of disputes at a local level before they escalate onto a regional level by setting up and running disputes commissions.
  - In natural disasters the same principles can apply, with the church playing a role in challenging favouritism and competition over scarce resources. Justice, impartiality and forgiveness are important principles in such contexts and the church is in a position to offer these.
Step 7: Monitor the attitudes within the community towards the organisation and adapt project plans in light of feedback received

- Verify that your impartiality and independence is understood and accepted - every few weeks or months ask the community what they think of NGOs and your project activities. Note any significant changes and adjust the level of association with the different actors in the conflict, as needed. Use the feedback mechanism to help to do this. Solicit feedback on how your project assistance is perceived, what complaints have arisen (also refer Standard 3: Accountability for more information on feedback mechanisms).

- In light of the above, reinforce the messages around your impartiality and independence, adjust project design (beneficiary selection, assistance package etc)

- If possible, establish “indicators of instability” - i.e. attitudes or behaviour in the community which suggests that relationships are beginning to break down - e.g. the closure of local markets, or people migration.
Project Examples:

In Sierra Leone, alongside water and sanitation projects which supported the resettlement process at the end of the civil war, projects also included conflict transformation training with communities. This led to some creating “peace committees”, where communities resolved to addressing their disputes without needing to go to the regional authorities (an issue which was a contributing factor behind the war).

A partner carrying out relief and risk reduction projects in Marsabit, North Kenya, worked with local churches to establish peacemaking forums to prevent future outbreaks of violence between two pastoral communities over grazing rights and scarce water sources.

The Baptist and Presbyterian churches in Manipur’s NE India peace initiative challenged both communities on either side of a conflict to forgive the wrongs committed against each other and overcome the deep-seated anger that had gripped both sides of the conflict. The pastors challenged their communities with Christian values to stop the fighting. These churches and their pastors were ultimately the only people with sufficient authority to be able to mobilise the wider community for peace.

In Zimbabwe, a partner implemented a seed, fertilizer and tools project for victims of political violence relating to the elections of 2008. Beneficiaries included people from both sides of the violence, who in many cases were neighbours. The project design included joint training sessions so that relationships could be re-established in a safe environment and even encouraged them to work together to prepare their fields. This has promoted reconciliation and healing.