C2 - Conflict sensitivity assessment

Why use this activity?

The word conflict covers many different situations. Conflict can be open and obvious, or more subtle and hidden. It may involve countries or regions, or may be more localised within communities or even households. As communities begin to mobilise, relationships and situations can be transformed. However, our actions can have negative as well as positive impacts. If there are underlying conflicts that have the potential to erupt into violent conflict, then there is a risk that our actions could make things worse and make violence more likely. Without knowing, we might be doing harm. It is therefore important to analyse both the context within which we are working, and our actions, to see how we are influencing these issues. This ensures that our actions are 'conflict sensitive' and that we do not accidentally cause harm.

There are several Reveal tools to help plan projects in conflict settings. We suggest they are carried out in the following order:

1. C2 - Conflict analysis (this includes carrying out A2 - Do people feel safe?, A2 - Conflict timeline, A2 - Stakeholder analysis, A2: ABC triangle and A2: Conflict map
2. C2 - Conflict sensitivity assessment
3. C2 - Planning projects and actions - a conflict sensitivity checklist

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When and how often should you do a conflict sensitivity assessment?

A conflict sensitivity assessment should be done when planning a project where there is the potential for violence within the community or between one community and another (please see Section A2 of Reveal for a series of tools which address the specific issue of violence against women and girls (VAWG)). The assessment looks at how the project will impact the relationships between people and groups in the area. Relationships change and so this should be repeated throughout the life of the project. How often the assessment is carried out will depend on how serious the conflict is, but it is good practice to review the thinking within the assessment every three months. In addition the assessment should be reviewed following any major changes in the nature of the conflict.

Time taken

Any conflict sensitivity assessment is always better than no conflict sensitivity assessment and how long it takes may be affected by what time is available. Depending on the complexity of the project and the context a full assessment may take between half a day and three days.

Keys to success

It is extremely important to ensure that the right people take part in the assessment. People from all groups should be included - people of different ethnicity, age, gender and disability.

What to do

There are many tools available for conflict sensitivity assessments. The following steps are taken from the "Do No Harm" Framework developed by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA). The full handbook can be found online at the CDA website. See the 'Finding out more' section below for more information.

Many of the questions in Steps 1 - 3 are similar to questions in Tool C2: Conflict Analysis. If you have already carried out a Conflict Analysis, please use the information gathered during that process to answer the questions below.

Step 1: Identify the conflict

Conflicts exist in any community. Most of the time, they do not lead to violence and differences are resolved peacefully. The first step therefore looks to see which conflicts exist in the community and might become dangerous or violent.

- ❏ What are the different groups within and around the community (or project area)?
- ❏ What tensions currently exist between these groups?
- ❏ What tensions could develop between these groups?
- ❏ Is there any history of violence between groups? What was the cause or basis of this violence?
- ❏ Which of these existing or potential tensions could lead to violence during the course of the project?

Step 2: Identify the dividers and tensions

The next stage is to examine the context and to identify what it is that divides the conflict actors (the different groups) and what things create or deepen tension between groups.

- ❏ What are the current threats to peace and stability here?
- ❏ What causes the level of tension between groups to increase?
- ❏ What has led to violence in the past?

Step 3: Identify connectors and local capacities for peace

The third step is to look for the positives. What is it that, despite the tensions, brings people together? What do they connect over? What are their shared interests? Also it is important to look for what abilities, skills, practices or capacities exist that can be used to generate peace.

❏ What are the current supports to peace and stability here?

❏ What causes the level of tension between groups to decrease?

❏ What has calmed or prevented any outbreaks of violence in the past?

Step 4: Understand the project or programme

Having looked at the context the fourth step is to look at the project. Why is it being done, who is it focused on, where? The details are important.

❏ What are the needs that this project is trying to address?

    ❏ Why did we choose these needs?

    ❏ Whose views did we draw on to identify these needs? Whose views were not included?

❏ Why are we doing this project now? Why is this the right time?

❏ How long will the project last?

❏ Where are we planning to work?

    ❏ Why did we choose these locations and not others?

    ❏ Which areas were left out and why?

❏ What resources (if any) are we bringing into the project environment?

❏ If we are purchasing resources for the project, where are we purchasing them from?

    ❏ How did we choose these suppliers?

    ❏ Why did we choose these and not others?

❏ Who are the beneficiaries?

    ❏ Why and how did we choose them and not others?

    ❏ Who was left out and why?

❏ How exactly will we be delivering the project?

Step 5: Understand the project's impact on the dividers and connectors

Once you have a good understanding of both the context and the project, the next step is to explore how the project interacts with the dividers and connectors identified in steps two and three. It asks who wins and who loses as a result of this project.

❏ Who is likely to gain from the project? Who is likely to lose from the project? Think in terms of:

    ❏ Political factors (power, voice and influence)

    ❏ Economic factors (trade, jobs, income)

- ❏ Social (access to services such as health, education etc., the ability to maintain cultural and religious practices, language)

- ❏ Technological (skills transfer, knowledge, expertise, access to information and to communications)

- ❏ Legal (human rights, protection of minorities, anti-discrimination)

- ❏ Environmental (access to land, water or other natural resources, infrastructure such as roads and markets, protection from the effects of climate change)

- ❏ If we are bringing in resources, what impact will they have on the dividers and connectors?

- ❏ How will different groups feel about the project?

Step 6: Identify conflict sensitive alternatives

With the information gathered, Step 6 looks at how the project might be changed to reduce any unhelpful impact on the dividers whilst maximising any positive impact on the connectors.

- ❏ Identify possible alternative ways of delivering the project. Brainstorm as many different options as possible - the more options that you generate the more good options you are likely to come up with.

Step 7: Test and redesign

The final step is to choose which of the alternatives to adopt, and to amend the project to include these changes. Once done, the revised and updated project should be tested to confirm that the revised project does no harm.

- ❏ Select the best options and redesign the project as required to include these changes.

- ❏ Once done, review the new project and make sure that the changes will not cause any new tensions.

Finding out more

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) - http://cdacollaborative.org/

 (Download the handbook in English here: http://cdacollaborative.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Do-No-Harm-DNH-Participant-Manual-2016.pdf)

[Box: Related tools
A1: Revealing conflict: information for facilitators (A1: Conflict & peacebuilding-1)
A2: Do people feel safe? (A2: Conflict & peacebuilding-1)
A2: Revealing how conflict has changed over time (Conflict timeline) (A2: Conflict & peacebuilding-2)

A2: Understanding the people affected by conflict and the relationships between them (Stakeholder matrix) (A2: Conflict & peacebuilding-3)

A2: Understanding conflict attitudes, behaviours and context (ABC triangle) (A2: Conflict & peacebuilding-4)

A2: Conflict map (A2: Conflict & peacebuilding-5)

B: Christ triumphs over conflict (Bible study) (B: Conflict & peacebuilding-1)

B: Love your enemies (Bible study) (B: Conflict & peacebuilding-2)

B: Unity in Christ (Bible study) (B: Conflict & peacebuilding-3)

C2: Analysing conflict (C2: Conflict- & peacebuilding-1)

C2: Planning projects and actions – a conflict sensitivity assessment (C2: Conflict- & peacebuilding-2)

C2: Conflict sensitivity checklist (C2: Conflict- & peacebuilding-3)]