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5 Key Steps for building conflict sensitivity into DFID infrastructure programming



Tags: Infrastructure, Programme Design, FCAS

1. Build conflict sensitivity into all stages of programming

This means thinking about conflict sensitivity risks at each stage of the project cycle, starting with analysis and concept, through design, implementation, monitoring and final evaluation. Basic questions to consider would include: does our analysis take into account the views of excluded groups, how can we minimise opportunities for aid capture in the design of the programme, how to ensure that implementation partners work consultatively with local communities, do we have monitoring systems which allow us to capture unforeseen and unintended negative impacts, can we adjust the programme to mitigate for these effects, what are conflict risks arising from evaluation? Monitoring is particularly critical, as it can pick up and feed back problems as they emerge, and enable programming to adapt to work in more conflict sensitive ways. The national and sub-national programme teams are very well placed to provide this kind of support to DFID programmes.

2. Be explicit, be consultative

Conflict sensitivity issues can often be the elephant in the room – the issues that everyone knows about but doesn't like to mention for fear of causing offence. It has to be on the agenda and explicitly discussed. Aid staff – at both central and field level – have to be prepared to ask questions that may be uncomfortable; who benefits most from this intervention? Why is the NGO spending so much in Kathmandu? How might it increase tensions between communities? What is the opportunity for corrupt politicians or officials to capture or misdirect these resources? What will the poorest members of this community feel about this intervention? Consulting communities is equally important; is this a good programme? Does it help you? Is it well run? How could it be improved? Again the Field Office and RMO can play valuable roles here.

3. Address Barriers to Conflict Sensitivity

Post-conflict recovery and reconstruction covers the transition from emergency response through to long term development. The need for urgency, an immediate response to a crisis situation, to develop and implement programmes, to spend money etc. can all make it harder to take time to reflect and consider issues like conflict sensitivity. The fact that the total sums involved are often very high, that multiple donors and Government are engaged, and decisions are subject to considerable political and media scrutiny, will be added challenges. To address these barriers requires consistent, high level attention, with clear signaling from the leadership that this matters.

4. Work with others

DFID cannot be conflict sensitive on its own. It needs to consider the broader context as well as its own performance, and how the totality of the EQ response is or is not conflict sensitive. Influencing local governments, multi-laterals and other development actors may require DFID to frame issues in language and around risks to which they can respond (e.g. investment risks when engaging with Multi-lateral development banks). This is more likely to be the language of anti-corruption, managing fiduciary or implementation risks, leaving no one behind, or addressing community cohesion rather than conflict sensitivity. Working out what resonates will be essential.

5. Use available learning and resources

There is plenty of guidance and lots of local and international experience on conflict sensitivity which will be helpful to you. For a general introduction, the Conflict Sensitivity Topic Guide funded by DFID provides an excellent overview, including links to sector specific reading on conflict sensitivity. The Stabilisation Unit's Conflict Sensitivity Tools and

Guidance provides some very easy to use “how to” style guidance. The SU also runs tailored training on request which may be helpful, particularly if working with FCO partners. Be sure to identify and contact local organisations supporting peace-

building and stabilisation efforts as well as those representing disadvantaged or conflict-sensitive groups to build your localised understanding of conflict-related issues.

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