

# K O F F I n f o S h e e t

## Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment and Conflict Sensitivity

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Content

Terminology and Core Concepts

Targeting and Structure

Basics

Analysis

Project Cycle Management

Impact

Outlook

Current Approaches

Since the late 1990s the international community has become increasingly aware that no actor in the context of violent conflict can ever be neutral. Accordingly all interventions have the potential not only to have a positive impact but also to generate unintended negative impacts on the conflict context. It is now acknowledged that, even in well-thought out and circumspect peacebuilding programs, interventions do not automatically build peace. Many scholars and organizations subsequently started to develop conflict sensitive methodologies and tools to assess the impact of their humanitarian, development or peacebuilding interventions on the conflict context. Many institutions are currently looking for appropriate tools and methodologies to mainstream conflict sensitivity. This KOFF InfoSheet discusses important aspects of the current debate and trends without claiming to provide a complete overview. Please note that the abbreviations are explained at the end of this paper.

### Terminology and Core Concepts

The terms Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), conflict sensitivity and conflict analysis are nowadays widely used for methodologies or approaches to assess the actual and potential impact of external interventions in a conflict context.

Conflict analysis often stands for multi-step comprehensive approaches which involve phases of analysis as well as strategy formulation or adaptation. This is the case in papers from organizations like the German GTZ, the British DfID, the World Bank and the German platform FriEnt. Newer publications from Fewer, International Alert and Saferworld with Partners in Africa and Asia propose a shift away from «PCIA» towards «conflict sensitivity» as the core concept in assessing the actual or potential peace and conflict impact of all external interventions in situations of latent or actual

Which kind of intervention can be assessed?

conflict (see Fewer et al. Resource Pack). A new paper from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) also includes conflict analysis as part of the analytic process in conflict sensitive Project Cycle Management (PCM).

Most current PCIA and «conflict sensitive» approaches state that the methodology is equally applicable to development assistance, humanitarian aid as well as peacebuilding interventions in a conflict context.

Mary B. Anderson's Collaborative for Development Action (CDA) is following a slightly different path in dealing with this issue. Since CDA uses a mainly inductive approach, developing the methodology from field experience, it is interesting that CDA has come up with two totally different approaches. On one hand, there is the *Do No Harm* approach which is mainly targeted at development assistance and humanitarian aid by offering tools to prevent unintended negative impacts resulting from interventions. On the other hand, there is the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) framework outlined in the CDA's «Confronting War» publication, which aims at peacebuilding interventions and also contains some elements of impact analysis.

KOFF's use of terminology

KOFF uses the term *conflict sensitivity* as the core concept to deal with a context of actual or potential conflict. For KOFF, conflict sensitivity means to analyze the peace and conflict context, to understand and to anticipate the interaction between one's own intervention and the context, and to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts in the actions taken (e.g. Fewer et. al. 2004, slightly modified). Conflict analysis, on the other hand, encompasses the analysis of actors, causes and dynamics of a conflict as well as the identification of (possible) entry points for peaceful conflict resolution and transformation.

KOFF believes that the use of a special term for specifically tailored analytic and strategic practices within the project cycle management is helpful in a situation of actual or potential violent conflict. The crucial point is to draw a clear line between «PCIA» for a particular conflict sensitive assessment practice in any phase of the project cycle management, comprehensive conflict sensitive PCM approaches, conflict analysis as an analytic tool, and conflict sensitivity as the overarching principle.

General trend

Nevertheless the general trend regarding methodology is to develop all-in-one universally applicable tool kits to deal with all interventions in the context of actual or potential violent conflict, which allow the user to pick whatever is suitable in a certain situation.

## Targeting and Structure

Focus and aim of the tools

It is striking that the majority of tools follow a top-down approach, designed to assist donors in assessing their potential or actual contribution to a certain conflict context. Although practitioners are increasingly familiar with the concept of conflict sensitivity or PCIA, so far only a few bottom-up approaches have emerged out of practice.

## Micro – macro

Most approaches deal equally with programs and projects in spite of the fact that a significant part is designed to deal mainly with macro issues (e.g. World Bank, DfID, CPN) while broader tool kits provide guidance for all levels (GTZ, Fewer) and allow the user to pick whatever is considered suitable. Only a few methodologies like «Do No Harm» or Ross's «Action Evaluation» are targeted at the field level. These approaches tend to equally emphasize the way an intervention is implemented, while macro approaches concentrate on policy issues and strategic conflict analysis. There is still a great need for practical approaches that are developed in cooperation with implementing partners to suit their needs, while at the same time creating enough useful information for donor organizations.

## Different procedures

Finally there are considerable differences in the procedures the various approaches suggest. Many provide a comprehensive tool kit where the user has to select suitable tools and methodology, while others propose a step-by-step procedure where the user is taken on a guided tour for conflict analysis and strategic planning. While such a step-by-step procedure is advantageous, if the methodology perfectly fits the situation or if the aim is a general conflict analysis, a flexible tool kit clearly also has its benefits.

## Implicit assumptions and normative values

It is repeatedly emphasized in the literature (INCORE) that explicit statements on the stakeholders' underlying assumptions regarding conflict transformation are an important prerequisite of assessments. This fact is rarely mirrored in guidelines and tool kits. The importance of making explicit diverging visions and definitions of peace is also stated in theoretical work. Accordingly some approaches differentiate between insiders/outsider views (RPP), while others state that there are multiple perspectives on the conflict (SDC) or that there are different understandings of peace and conflict (GTZ).

## Participation

In spite of the widely acknowledged fact that participation of a great number of stakeholders is necessary for sustainable peace processes, this is unfortunately not always mirrored in practical tools. However, approaches emerging out of development oriented organizations (GTZ, SDC) or organizations that have their foundations in Action Evaluation (Ross) underline the importance of multi-stakeholder participation and provide guidance to do so. Approaches that work with participatory conflict analysis equally point out that common analyses are part of conflict transformation processes. It is a widely discussed subject, whether (participatory) PCIA is a means for capacity building or a peacebuilding tool in itself.

## Theoretical and Conceptual Basics

## Analysis

Most approaches refer to conflict analysis as an important step in assessing peace and conflict impacts of an intervention. Focus, method, and intensity of the different procedures differentiate substantially. While a number of papers work with (participatory) conflict analysis tools developed by Responding to Conflict (RTC), others propose an issue based approach where

## Implementing partners

(standard) root causes and problem areas are being assessed (CIDA, CPN, World Bank). In the different papers a wide variety of concepts and terms used to describe the analysis of conflicts can be found. Stakeholder analysis, conflict context analysis, conflict causes, conflict history and analysis of dynamics, triggering factors and trends as well as conflict lines, conflict models and conflict scenarios form the mixture out of which the analysis of most approaches is made. Some methodologies use the term «risk assessment» to assess the risk a conflict environment poses for a certain project and vice versa, while others propose a «risk screening» process to indicate the necessity of a thorough conflict analysis. As to the context in which an intervention normally takes place, a few papers emphasize the need for a thorough analysis of the (international) response to a certain situation (FriEnt, Dfid).

A seemingly blind spot is the assessment of implementing partners. Only a limited number of papers address this issue. Since northern agencies normally work through local partners, it appears rather important to know exactly whom one is working with. This is particularly the case in a context where questions of (official and unofficial) affiliation, impartiality and special skills are crucial. Rather infrequent is the notion of having to carefully assess one's own capacities and experience of working *in* or *on* conflict.

## PCIA in the Project Cycle Management

While earlier perceptions of PCIA tended to understand the approach as a method mostly used for evaluations, most recent publications state that the methodology should be used in all phases of the Project Cycle Management (PCM). The main focus of project management, however, is either planning or evaluation whereas monitoring still receives less attention.

The pressing need to be more accountable and to keep things manageable and simple, stimulated many authors (SDC, GTZ, Fewer) to clearly link PCIA or «conflict sensitivity» with common PCM. Good PCM is obviously not sufficient in a conflict prone setting; nevertheless it is a prerequisite of good conflict sensitive project/program management.

## Indicators

While it is widely acknowledged that good PCM needs indicators, it is becoming more and more obvious that a standard set of conflict sensitive indicators is not possible. What is more likely is a set of broad criteria like those developed by CDA in the context of the RPP project. These criteria indicate to some extent whether a project is effective in reaching its peacebuilding goal. With the general shift from output to outcome and impact indicators, developing SMART indicators is a tough task.

## Are we doing harm or maximum good?

The question whether we are doing harm or maximum good is unfortunately not easy to answer. As the term PCIA suggests, impact is clearly always at stake. KOFF understands impact as the consequences and products of an

## Project Cycle Management

## Impact

intervention which always include effects that go beyond the planned results and cannot be separated from the wider social, political, institutional and cultural context. In fact, every effect of an intervention that goes beyond the planned output is by definition an impact. Even though few papers explicitly suggest ways to assess impact, in a conflict context it is very important to be aware of a project's potential positive and negative effects beyond the planned outputs. This makes it a complex task to plan, monitor and evaluate outcome and impact of a project on the conflict context as well as taking into consideration the impact of the context on the project. To deal with this challenge some approaches are creating impact hypotheses to facilitate the assessment and monitoring of impacts (GTZ, FriEnt). With this technique it is feasible to describe possible unintended negative impacts as well as the desired positive impacts and monitor them accordingly. Other approaches work with predefined areas of impact or rely on catalogues of possible peace and conflict impacts (CIDA, World Bank, CPN).

Despite all the help of tools and good planning, impacts will always occur where we do not expect them. But since impact is also dependent on wider social and political changes, causal attribution unfortunately is often virtually impossible. In order to be aware of and design appropriate systems to keep track of impacts, a general openness towards controversial views and a very broad and open-minded consultation seems to be the most promising attitude. A good monitoring system throughout the project is a particularly promising way and ideally a prerequisite of impact assessment. Accordingly, the bottom line of good impact assessment is sensitivity to the context and the use of a good mixture of outsider and insider indicators. This enables an organization to grasp the overall picture of what is really happening and to deal with the situation effectively and appropriately.

## Outlook

Some promising ways of approach:

- A clear distinction between the various terms is necessary: *conflict sensitivity* as an overarching principle for any work in a conflict context (actual or potential), *conflict analysis* as an analytical instrument to show entry points for conflict transformation, special terms for *conflict sensitive management approaches* to deal with all interventions in the conflict context, and for example «PCIA» for a particular conflict sensitive assessment practice in any phase of the project cycle management.
- Integrated conflict sensitive management approaches tailored to an organization's institutional set up are necessary to assure conflict sensitivity.
- Practical approaches developed in collaboration with and tailored for implementing partners and non-governmental organisations could be further enhanced.
- The assessment of diverging visions of peace of all relevant actors beyond project goals should be emphasized in conflict sensitive practice and included into project cycle management.

- Participation of all relevant stakeholders (with a special eye to gender roles) has to be ensured when working *in* or *on* conflict. This should be sufficiently mirrored in tools and methodologies.
- A focus of conflict analysis on possibilities, options and solutions instead of putting too much weight on problems would be useful.
- Impact monitoring is the key to good impact assessment and project management and should therefore receive careful consideration.

## Current Approaches for Practitioners

Anderson, Mary B. Do No Harm. How Can Aid Support Peace - or War. Boulder: Lynne Rienner. 1999.

Bush, Kenneth. Hands-On PCIA Handbook Vol. I and Vol. II. 2003.

CDA. Confronting War. Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners. Mary B. Anderson & Lara Olson with assistance from Kristin Doughty. 2003.

CIDA. Programming for Results in Peacebuilding - Objectives «Tree» & Performance Indicators. Anne-Marie Laprise.

CPN. Conflict Impact Assessment. A Practical Working Tool for Prioritizing Development Assistance in Unstable Situations. Ebenhausen. 1999.

DfiD. Conducting Conflict Assessments: Guidance Notes. Jonathan Goodhand, Tony Vaux and Robert Walker. 2002.

Fewer, African Peace Forum, Center for Conflict Resolution, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, International Alert and Saferworld. Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Building: Tools for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment, (A Resource Pack). March 2004.

FriEnt, FES, GTZ. PCIA: Methodenleitfaden zur Konfliktanalyse und zur Entwicklung von Handlungsoptionen für gesellschaftspolitische Kooperationsprogramme. Katharina Hübner-Schmid, Bodo von Borries, Armin Hasemann. 2003.

GTZ. Guidelines on Conflict Impact Assessment for Development Projects. Manuela Leonhardt, Eschborn. 2001.

RTC. Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action. Fisher, Simon et al. London: Zed Books. 2000.

Ross, Marc Howard. Action Evaluation in the Theory and Practice of Conflict Resolution. Peace and Conflict Studies. 8 (Spring 2001), 1, 1-1.

SDC. Conflict Sensitive Program Management (CSPM). Ein Prozessvorschlag zum Einbau der Konfliktperspektive in den Programm- und Projektmanagementzyklus der DEZA. Arthur Zimmermann. 2004. Unpublished.

World Bank. Social Development Department, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit. The Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF): Identifying Conflict related Obstacles to Development. October 2002.

#### Other relevant Publication

INCORE. The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play. Cheyanne Church. and Julie Shouldice, 2003.

### List of Abbreviations

CDA	Collaborative for Development Action
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPN	Conflict Prevention Network
DfiD	Department for International Development
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Fewer	Forum for Early Warning and Early Response
FriEnt	Gruppe Friedensentwicklung
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
INCORE	International Conflict Research
PCM	Project Cycle Management
RPP	Reflection on Peace Practice
RTC	Responding to Conflict
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SMART	Specific - Measurable - Agreed - Realistic/Relevant - Timed