Water, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Development: Lessons for Practitioners

Toolkit Launch Event

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DEVELOPMENT GOALS

• Manage and prevent water-related conflicts
• Capture long-term peace and resilience-building opportunities

PURPOSE OF TOOLKIT

• Raise awareness about linkages between water resource management, conflict and fragility and peacebuilding
• Review a broad range of development issues associated with water management – considering different sectors and scales
• Act as a companion piece to conflict assessments, helping to bridge analysis and practical interventions
• Inspire creative thinking among development professionals from a variety of disciplines and sectors
CMM Conflict Toolkits
PART 1: KEY ISSUES

**Socio-economic and Demographic Issues**
- Population Growth
- Population Movement
- Agriculture and Food Security
- Infrastructure Development and Modernization

**Institutional Issues**
- Data and Information Management
- Weak, Non-Inclusive or Corrupt Governance
- Institutional Inefficacy
- Tradition and Customary Practices

**External Influences**
- Hydropolitics
- International demand for economic products

**Physical and Geographic Issues**
- Upstream/Downstream Flows
- Groundwater
- Pollution
- Climate Change
- Natural Disasters
BOX 1: Women, Water, and Conflict

Men and women use water differently according to their gender-specific roles. Women tend to have greater water needs due to their domestic responsibilities like washing family clothes, bathing children, and preparing meals. Even basic hygiene, like hand washing to reduce the transmission of disease, increases water needs at the household level. Menstruating women have additional demands such as washing clothing and bathing when they are not present. If the only water source is in a public or highly frequented location, they may wait until dark or travel to remote areas for privacy.

Women produce half of the world’s food supply. They are often responsible for feeding their families. As small farmers who are dependent on sources beyond rainfall, women and their dependents are at risk of food insecurity when alternative water sources are not available.

Yet, water is hard to access in many parts of the world. When water is far from home, women and girls generally shoulder the burden of transporting it. They may be at risk of harm during travel to obtain it.

These patterns make females highly vulnerable to violence in conflict environments. Water access becomes more difficult as previously safe routes become dangerous territory. Household responsibilities may increase such as caring for the sick and wounded or meeting family members’ nutritional needs. Taking care of personal hygiene by dark or in isolated places increases the risk of direct or indirect violence.

The humanitarian discussion of water access and violence generally focuses on women as victims. However, water resources are part of a system that affects and is affected by its entire population. In some contexts, men and boys access water for their households and face the same risks as females. Women and men may travel far for water in rural areas, or walk long distances from refugee settlements or slums and thus be more vulnerable to attack. For example, there is anecdotal evidence of Somalia men killed over water access and the “water widows” who have survived them. Both women and men are affected by poor water access and the complications of a fragile or conflict-affected context.

The experiences of men and women are also not consistent across time and culture. There is variation across gender experience based on social and community traditions, class structure, gender relations, urban versus rural environments, livelihood practices, and more. Due to their different roles in the community, women and men may have different information and perspectives about the causes and consequences of water-related problems. In addition, gender roles themselves often change as a consequence of conflict and fragility. Water practitioners will therefore find it constructive to move their analysis beyond the limited focus on female vulnerabilities and to consider gender dynamics within the system as a whole.

How can field staff better understand gender and water access issues? Seeking gender- and age-specific data is one answer. These questions serve as a starting point to examine how water access connects to wider conflict dynamics:

- Who is at risk of harm when accessing water?
- Who perpetrates the harm? What means do they use, and what are their objectives?
- Does the conflict involve water supply and resources? Directly or indirectly? Are there opportunities to mitigate the conflict by addressing water access?
- How do gender roles associated with water access change over time?

Adapted from S. Rodan/FU 2011.
1. Consider all water issue as part of complex, dynamic cross-boundary systems

2. Enhance information management and public awareness

3. Build formal and informal institutional capacity for collaborative governance

4. Strengthen equitable and affordable water access

5. Coordinate water-related aid and investment

6. Ensure conflict-sensitive design and capitalize on peacebuilding opportunities
BOX 2: Conflict Sensitivity and “Do No Harm”

Together, “conflict sensitivity” and the “Do No Harm” approach require a practitioner to:

a. Understand the context in which she is operating. In particular, to understand intergroup tensions and the “divisive” issues with a potential for conflict, as well as the “connecting” issues with the potential to mitigate conflict and strengthen social cohesion.

b. Understand the interaction between the intervention and the context and how they interact with the conflict dynamics whether they intend to or not, creating new risks and opportunities for USAID, its partners, and the communities where they work. The idea behind conflict sensitive practice is to make practitioners more aware of the context, more self-aware and deliberate in their actions, and more strategic and responsible in the risks taken.

Why is conflict sensitivity important?

Conflict sensitivity is fundamentally about making foreign assistance more sustainable, effective, and ethical. Organizations operating in a country context become part of that context. They interact with the conflict dynamics whether they intend to or not, creating new risks and opportunities for USAID, its partners, and the communities where they work. The idea behind conflict sensitive practice is to make practitioners more aware of the context, more self-aware and deliberate in their actions, and more strategic and responsible in the risks taken.

STEP 1: Understand the conflict context.

A systematic conflict assessment and rolling conflict analysis should help donors, implementers, and stakeholders understand the conflict dynamics: patterns of grievance and resilience, how key actors mobilize groups for peace or conflict, and which likely events could trigger violence or create openings to build peace. At a minimum, conflict analysis for conflict sensitivity requires basic knowledge about the dividing and connecting issues in a society as well as important actors pursuing conflict or peace. Where possible, analysis should be done in conjunction with local partners and updated during project implementation.

STEP 2: Understand Interactions between the project and the conflict context.

What is the interaction between the identified key elements of conflict and fragility and key elements of the intervention itself? The three fields of observation include: [1] the project, [2] the partners and stakeholders, and [3] the organizational setup. Identify relevant factors in each of these categories which are either creating tensions or positively affecting the conflict context. This should include consideration of sequencing and how the intervention fits with other assistance activities (e.g., connecting humanitarian assistance and development interventions thoughtfully).

STEP 3: Adapt and make strategic choices.

There are always options and opportunities to be more conflict sensitive. Project, program, and management decisions should be taken on the basis of conflict analysis. Be prepared to admit mistakes and make changes—donors and beneficiaries will be appreciative. Remember that conflict sensitivity is as much about HOW you work as WHAT you do. It is possible to modify a project while keeping the goals the same. Making reflective, strategic adaptations in operations and implementation should become part of the program management cycle.

Adapted from Swiss Peace KDOF, Conflict Sensitivity, Fact Sheet and CDA Collaborative “Do No Harm” Program Resources and Fact Sheet
PART 3: PROGRAM OPTIONS

Illustrative Examples

• Strengthen Planning and Governance
• Enhance Knowledge and User Behavior
• Water as a Tool for Peacebuilding
• Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict-Affected Environments

Emphasis on Key Dimensions

• Roles
• Relationships
• Capacity
• Dialogue
BOX 3: Want to know more?

The following print publications and websites provide additional practical recommendations and ideas from real-world cases.


Reviews policy and legal mechanisms, including five case studies, for preventing and resolving conflict related to natural resource governance.


Contains nineteen case studies exemplifying the role water can play in a post-conflict situation to facilitate or undermine peacebuilding.

USAID Global Water for Sustainability Program. Information available online at: http://www.globalwaters.net/

Summarizes information on a consortium of water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, water management, and building local capacity projects financed by USAID.


Presents examples of projects (focused on multi-level and interdisciplinary dialogues that promote cooperation rather than conflict over the management of shared water sources.


Presents evidence in support of including administrative and social services amongst the menu of choices available to directly support peacebuilding in any given context.


Demonstrates methods to alleviate potential environmental harm in disaster and conflict situations with research publications, general information, and program options.

Natural Resource Management and Development Portal. Information available online at: http://importal.net/

Collection of resources to be distributed among natural resource networks to foster open communication on available information, projects, media, etc.
PART 4: RAPID APPRAISAL GUIDE

Checklist of General Considerations

- Context-specific Interventions
- Politically Strategic Interventions
- Timing and Sequencing
- Indicators of Conflict or Collaboration
- Level of Intervention
- Government Buy-in
- Key Actors and Stakeholders
- Local Capacities
- Donor Coordination

Guiding Questions

- Identifying Social and Institutional Patterns of Grievance
- Accounting for Emerging Issues and Trends
- Understanding Key Actors
DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT:

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