

Adaptations for conflict sensitivity exercise

Responding to risks and opportunities based on organisational factors



This exercise helps you to think through how you will make changes to your organisation's policies and programs in response to an identified conflict sensitivity risk or peacebuilding opportunity. The risks or opportunities are typically recognised when it is revealed that programmatic activities (or an organisation's broader policies) are having an adverse impact on the conflict context, or are missing an opportunity to contribute optimally to peacebuilding outcomes. They might be recognised as part of an intentionally monitoring system (like conflict sensitivity indicators), or unintentionally during the implementation of programmatic and non-programmatic activities (e.g. during meetings or consultations with partners, beneficiaries, or other implementing organisations).

These changes can be challenging to make, especially if the program was not designed and socialised with stakeholders in such a way that the potential to make adaptations to activities/partners/modes was prepared for. This exercise asks you to specify the change needed, generate potential options to address the risk or opportunity, consider the people, processes, and timeline involved in making that change, and make a reasoned choice about making the changes which are both practical and impactful.

The exercise can be worked on by an individual, but will produce better results when multiple people with knowledge of the context and organisation can collaborate to discuss and respond to these questions. It is important to note that people with different roles and experience are likely to understand risks, opportunities, and how best to respond quite differently. Discuss and respond to each question.

1. What is the conflict risk or peacebuilding opportunity that you are responding to?

Describe what needs to change. Is it a conflict risk that needs to be mitigated, or a peacebuilding opportunity that your program or organisation might capitalise on? Why is it a problem or an opportunity? How do you know? How does it link to intelligence that you are receiving about the context, or your program/organisation's interaction with the context? Is the risk or opportunity 'active' or 'latent'? Is harm/benefit already being caused, or is it still only a possibility? How significant is the risk/opportunity? (e.g. are there direct implications for violence, how severely are dividers/connectors affected)

2. How do things need to be different?

Describe how things would be different in future, ideally. If this change risk or opportunity were well responded to, how would your program or organisation be behaving differently? How would priorities, activities, communications, or staff behaviours be different? How would relationships with other actors change? What different impacts in the context would ideally arise from the changes that you make?

3. What level of the system does this risk or opportunity relate to?

Does the risk or opportunity that you are responding to primarily involve making changes to your own behaviour? Or does it primarily concern the activities of a program that you or someone else is working on, or how it is delivered? Does it instead relate to the policies and procedures of your organisation more broadly, beyond the scope of any one program? Or does it concern priorities or policies that are coming from further 'upstream' in the system, from yours or others headquarters, or from donors for example? Consider how responding to risks and opportunities that present at different 'levels of the system' involve less or more complexity, stakeholders, and efforts to respond to. In general, risks and opportunities at higher levels of the system have greater overall impacts on peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, but they are less direct (and vice versa).

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4. When does this change need to be implemented by, realistically?

Is this something that requires immediate changes, for example because lives are at risk? Or is it something that can take longer, and will likely require more time? Would it still be worth doing if this change took one week, one month, six months, or two years to implement? Are there things that we might do now while also working on longer term strategies in parallel?

5. Which options do we have to make these changes?

Brainstorm options to make the desired changes individually or with others. What are all the potential ways in which you could respond to the risk or opportunities you identified in 1? What are all of the ways of creating the change that you outlined in 2? What new activities could lead to these changes, or which different ways of doing existing activities? Are we talking about programmatic activities on non-programmatic? Should we do more of something or less of something? Should we work faster or slower? Should we change locations? Or partners? Who should we include or stop including as beneficiaries, suppliers, or otherwise? Who do we need to consult? What options might there be to achieve these changes by modifying public communications or or staff behaviours? What organisational policies or procedures could we change to achieve the desired effect?

Identify as many alternatives as you can, but at least five. Then narrow them down to one to three preferred options based on the following questions. Which of these options are likely to be most impactful towards the changes that we need? Which are most realistic within the timeline that we need? Which are most realistic within the resources that we have access to? With the remaining options, consider in more depth what organisational implications making these changes will have.

6. Which organisational policies or processes would be involved in making this change?

Which procedures or parts of the organisation need to be involved for this change to be approved and implemented? Are changes to budgets or workplans required? Will procurement or recruitment processes be involved? Do monitoring and evaluation logframes or processes need to be adjusted? Will any policies need to be updated? Which internal meetings or communication processes might need to be involved? Which external reporting, coordination or consultation processes? What are the likely approval processes and timelines involved in working through these organisational processes?

7. Which other people and organisations would be implicated in this change?

Which people inside your organisation would need to be informed, consulted, or influenced? Who would decide on these changes? Which staff from your organisation would need to support in relation to the organisational policies and processes listed above? Which external people, organisations or forums might need to be consulted, informed, or influenced in relation to these changes? From headquarters business units, donor organisations, beneficiary communities, partner organisations, other international organisations, government, civil society organisations, or otherwise?

8. Refine options and plan actions

You might select a final option to move forward with based upon the considerations in questions 7 and 8. The next step is to plan and take actions to make the changes that you have selected, which is the subject of the action planning exercise.

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