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## **GUIDANCE NOTE #2:**

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY  
THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT  
DESIGN CYCLE **IN LEBANON**

## Guidance Note #2: Conflict Sensitivity throughout the Project Design Cycle in Lebanon

This guidance note aims to provide partner in Lebanon with conflict-sensitive learning and tools to be applied during a project's preparatory phase, specifically to promote conflict-sensitive beneficiary outreach, needs assessment, and follow-up throughout the project design cycle. It is part of a series of three guidance notes developed in 2021.

The note specifically supports the implementation of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). Under LCRP, the partners include national and international NGOs, as well as UN agencies. Many are focused on delivering humanitarian and stabilization interventions across Lebanon, so the guidance note draws numerous learnings and examples from those sectors. Even so, the principles found in the guidance note are equally relevant to any short- or medium-term intervention - be it in-kind assistance, community development, community support projects, advocacy, or peacebuilding interventions – that is currently being implemented in Lebanon. The content is also anticipated to be useful to other partners such as development banks and donors that are seeking a multi-dimensional overview and practical guidance on conflict-sensitive operations in Lebanon.

### How to use this guidance note

It is not necessary to read the entire guidance note from beginning to end. For reference to the section on Understanding the Context, which is recommended for all partners, please refer to the Guidance Note entitled “Getting Started with Conflict Sensitivity in Lebanon” ([Link here](#)). After that, you can jump to any section that appears to meet your needs.

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For best results, please use this guidance note alongside your own local conflict sensitivity analysis. The guidance note reflects generalized inter-group relationship analyses at a snapshot moment in time, during which the Lebanese operational environment is changing rapidly due to multiple compounded crises. Therefore, some details will vary in your local context and/or eventually go out of date. See guidance note #1 on the Getting Started with Conflict Sensitivity ([link](#)) for details on how to maximize your own project-level conflict sensitivity analysis.

This guidance note cannot provide fully customized solutions for every unique LCRP partner and local community. However, it does provide a wide range of ‘options’ for improving your impact on social stability. These options can be considered, carefully selected, tested, modified, and built upon. Ask yourself:

- Does this option appear to fit our organization, given our unique mandate and structure?
- Does this option appear to fit in the local context of the area where we are working?
- After testing, did this option reduce tensions as hoped? If not, what can be done to adapt in a different way?

If you have conflict sensitivity learnings to share, please send them to the LCRP Conflict Sensitivity Mainstreaming Focal Point at [fadel.saleh@undp.org](mailto:fadel.saleh@undp.org). Your contribution will help in updating and expanding this series of guidance notes.

# 1. What is Conflict Sensitivity?

Aid saves lives and aims to help communities thrive – but it can also do unintentional damage. Delivering assistance in a context where there is underlying fragmentation, social tensions or violent disputes can potentially worsen those conflicts in dangerous ways. Most partners in Lebanon are aware of such risks, but they find it difficult to consistently identify and manage these risks within the demands of their everyday work.

The active practice of conflict sensitivity can help your organization to pursue the ethic of ‘doing no harm.’ Conflict sensitivity provides processes and tools to help you do three things:<sup>1</sup>

- Understand the context of conflict in which you are operating;
- Understand the interaction between the context and your actions; and
- Act upon this understanding to improve your impact on social stability.

Conflict sensitivity is a cross-cutting approach that applies to all programs operating in conflict zones. It is related to - yet distinct from - other cross-cutting program quality approaches such as gender responsiveness and anti-corruption mainstreaming.

This guidance note uses primarily the foundational Do No Harm (DNH)<sup>2</sup> conflict sensitivity tool, which is widely known for its practical emphasis on identifying inter-group **Dividers** and **Connectors**, recognizing programming **dilemmas** and identifying adaptive **options** to improve how a project affects inter-group relationships.

DNH can be summarized in a 7-step analytical cycle.

1. Identify which groups are in conflict or tension with each other. (If there are many inter-group conflicts, then focus on the one most likely to lead to violence or destructive behavior.)

2. What **Dividers** (or sources of tension) exist between the groups?
3. What **Connectors** (or factors that bring people together) exist between the groups?
4. How do the elements of your project interact with the Dividers and Connectors?
5. What patterns or **dilemmas** are evident in this interaction?
6. What are the **options** for improving your impact on social stability by?
  - decreasing the negative effects of our program and increasing its positive effects?
  - weakening Dividers and strengthening Connectors?
7. Think and test: How do these new options affect the existing Dividers and Connectors?

After understanding the context, the next step in conflict sensitivity practice is to understand how your actions and decisions interact with that context, and then take action to improve your impact on social stability. Within Lebanon, many of the conflict sensitivity current dilemmas center around four patterns in how partners acquire and use resources in a context of increasing scarcity and inter-group tensions. Under these circumstances, being selected as an employee or contractor to an LCRP partner can make a big difference in the wellbeing and social power of an individual or an organization. This will affect their relationships, including inter-group relationships.

- **Distribution effect:** When an inter-group relationship is already tense, and then one group is perceived to be unfairly receiving more aid allocation than another, the level of tension often increases.
- **Theft or diversion effect:** When the use of stolen goods strengthens a conflict actor,

or when an influential actor redirects selection processes in ways that favor one social group and bypass others, the level of tension often increases.

- **Legitimization effect:** When a partner implies the acceptability of a conflict actor by publicly working with them, inter-group tension often increases.
- **Market effect:** Aid spending influences local markets, which sometimes distorts market structures and incentives in ways that increase tensions or reward violence. This also further increases the perceptions of aid bias.

Additionally, the behaviors and words of staff, can implicitly reinforce certain values that inflame inter-group conflict in Lebanon, particularly:

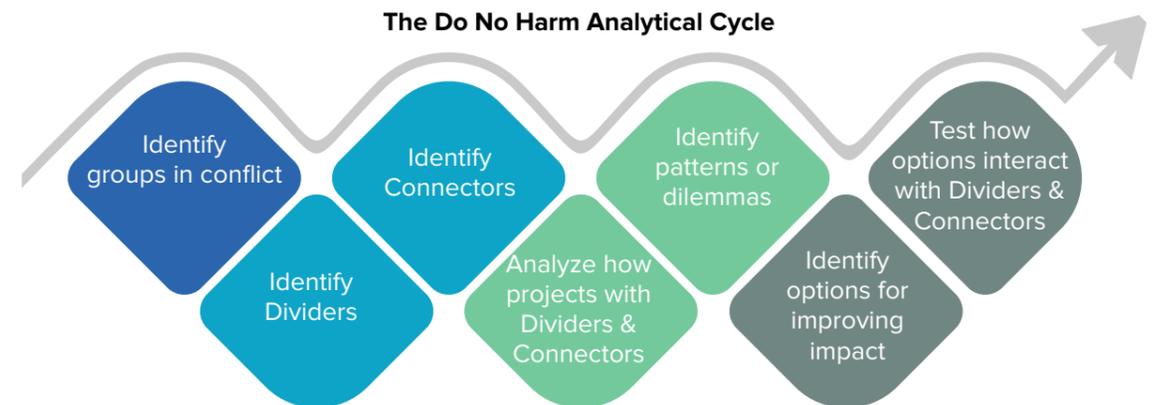
- Exclusion or discrimination on the basis of social background;
- Unfairness or inequity in how people of different social groups are treated;
- Lack of transparency about information that candidates and communities believe should be shared; and

- Powerlessness in which partner staff decline to take active responsibility for the problems their work may unintentionally cause.

However, these dynamics can also work in positive ways! For instance, when opportunities are seen to benefit all social groups and reward cooperation, the tension between groups may decrease. If a partner consistently models inclusion and equity, this can help to improve the atmosphere of relationships throughout their entire circle of influence.

What this means is that partner decisions and actions can make a very real difference in the level of inter-group social stability within Lebanon. The specifics are summarized below, in the form of frequent dilemmas and options for addressing them to improve your social impact.

For more on context analysis and how to apply Conflict Sensitivity, see guidance note #1 on Getting Started with Conflict Sensitivity in Lebanon [\[hyperlink\]](#).



<sup>1</sup> Adapted from International Alert et al. 2004. ‘Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack.’

<sup>2</sup> DNH was developed by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and its many partners. All DNH components are adapted by permission. For more information see: <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/what-we-do/conflict-sensitivity/>.

# Summary of the Project Design Cycle

During the Project Design Cycle, the first step is understanding the context in which you are operating in. See guidance note #1 on the Getting Started with Conflict Sensitivity [\[hyperlink\]](#) for details on how to conduct project-level conflict sensitivity analysis. Henceforth, after understanding the context, the next step in conflict sensitivity practice is to understand how your actions and decisions interact with that context, and then take action to improve your impact on social stability.

Summary: Conflict Sensitivity throughout the Project Design Cycle		
Concept	Project Goal	-Consider the project's overarching goal and its supporting theory of change. Is it inclusive in both its intentions and its likely effects?
	Project Location	-Based on the proposed location, which social groups are likely to be included? Excluded?
Outreach & Assessment	Co-Planning with the Community	-Develop quality communication with and learn from the perspective of each social group in the area.  -Work with community-based committees for participatory planning. This may begin with one committee to represent Lebanese and another to represent refugees from Syria; over time they may develop trust and work together.
	Conducting Conflict Sensitivity Analysis	-Project-level analysis runs either as a stand-alone exercise or integrated with other context themes.  -There are 'good enough' approaches for situations of time pressure.
	Selecting Implementing Partners	Implementing partners should be accepted by the community, free of affiliations with political parties and armed groups, and committed to practicing non-discrimination.
Activity Design	Selecting Beneficiaries	-Blend vulnerability criteria with an effort to diversify participation.  -The community will look for fairness - equitable allocations based on levels of vulnerability among all social groups.
	Making Critical Decisions	-Examine every design detail for its impact on intergroup relations. For whom (beneficiaries)? With whom (authorities and partners)? What? Where? When? By whom (staff)? How?
	Communicating your Project Plans	-Communicate your aid allocation decisions, and the fair criteria behind them, widely and transparently.  -Be sure to reach Lebanese audiences, as they may assume they are not eligible.
Implementation & Monitoring	Supporting Frontliners and Implementing Partners	-Create space for regular team discussion and support around Dividers, Connectors, and conflict sensitivity dilemmas.  -Demonstrate care for staff and partner wellbeing.
	Monitoring Conflict Sensitivity	-At minimum, track your organization's compliance with its own conflict sensitivity commitments, and the changing status of key Dividers and Connectors within the context.  -Apply community feedback to organizational decision making.
	Adapting through Options	-There are always options for improving your impact on social stability – and they are best identified through inclusive teamwork.  -Test the options to observe their impact on Dividers and Connectors and adapt accordingly.
Eval.		-Ensure that evaluations identify unintended effects, and that those learnings are applied to inform future programming.

# 2. Concept Development Phase

It is important that conflict sensitivity begin in the conceptual phase, rather than waiting until you are designing the details.

## 2.1. Considerations during the project design phase

Given the current context of increasing vulnerability and inter-group tension in Lebanon, the concept development phase should include key conflict sensitivity considerations to reduce the perception of aid bias.

### Conflict-sensitive options:

- ▶ Target inclusively. Align the demographic profile of your beneficiaries with the demographic profile of vulnerable people within the broader population. Assist people identified as vulnerable across all social groups.

**Partner example: Livelihood projects often have equitable intentions, but inequitable results. Lack of job opportunities provoke increasingly intense competition between and within communities. Additionally, the theory of change must realistically account for limitations that are built into the labor system. For example, refugees' legal access to different job sectors is limited by labor law. Even where access exists, Syrian workers are more likely than Lebanese workers to be underpaid, overworked, and working without a contract. These realities make it harder for refugee workers to progress and bring stress to inter-group relations.**

- ▶ Share with donors your recent vulnerability assessments and conflict sensitivity analyses, to better inform the donor of why inclusion is so important in the current context of Lebanon. Encourage the donors to increase aid to meet planned targets and support inclusion based on their own commitments to 'do no harm.'

- ▶ Coordinate deeply and respectfully with local authorities. Guard against the possibility of local authorities over-influencing aid locations, by using your own vulnerability and conflict sensitivity analyses.
- ▶ Be sure to review your overarching objective and theory of change through a conflict sensitivity lens. Is it inclusive in both its intentions and its likely effects?
- ▶ Choose the project's geographic zone through a conflict sensitivity lens. Be aware of the settlement patterns of different social groups. The selection of a particular area often implies the inclusion of some social groups and the exclusion of others.
- ▶ Consider timing because the project schedule can affect diverse social groups in differentiated ways. When a process is hurried, the rush is likely to lead to errors such as serving one social group faster than another or skipping the participatory consultation processes that are necessary for constructive inter-group relationships.
- ▶ If you are undertaking a rapid emergency response, or facing other significant time pressures, quality project design and conflict sensitivity processes are still important. There are 'good enough' processes available to help expedite your start-up, as described in guidance note #1 on Getting Started with Conflict Sensitivity [\[hyperlink\]](#), section 4.2.
- ▶ Coordinate actively with other partners to avoid the possibility of gaps in covering certain populations and/or social groups, and duplication of efforts in covering others.

## 2.2. Addressing donor requirements

Donor requirements often include specifications on scope, targeting and selection criteria. These specifications are made with good political and policy intentions, but they can sometimes have unintended impact on inter-group relations. It is therefore important to include elements of conflict sensitivity analysis and highlight the potential negative impacts of discrimination and exclusion, aiming to 'leave no one behind.'

**“Leaving no one behind involves reaching the most underprivileged to ‘reach the furthest behind first’ but also to combat discrimination and rising inequalities within a country and their root causes.”<sup>3</sup>**

**Dilemma:** Some donor requirements ask partners to only target Syrian refugees for certain interventions. This may increase the perception of aid bias within the host community.

### Options for improving impact:

Seek to expand your assistance project budgets, in order to meet increasing needs by adding in newly vulnerable communities, without penalizing others.

**Partner example:** One organization was attacked in a village while distributing aid based on nationality, in keeping with the donor requirement. This also led to further tensions between social groups within the village.

- ▶▶ Assist vulnerable people across all social groups, rather than limiting your assistance to a particular social group. Where appropriate, supplement the vulnerability focus with approximate targets that help to ensure balanced benefit across different groups.
- ▶▶ Discuss the problem with donors in light of their own commitments to 'do no harm.' Bring your own recent vulnerability assessment and conflict sensitivity analysis to the discussion and ask your donor to increase support for assisting vulnerable people across all social groups.

- ▶▶ Plan some projects or activities that can benefit an entire mixed-group community, rather than individuals or households. For example, a shared recreational building, an improved water supply, a park. Even if this cannot be done immediately, it is worth visioning for the future.

**Dilemma:** Many donors' anti-terrorism policies have led them to screen out communities that are affiliated with particular political parties. Since the parties are sect-based, this means in effect excluding a particular social group from assistance. In addition to leaving some potentially vulnerable communities isolated from support, this exclusion reinforces dangerous intra-Lebanese sectarian tensions and divisions that run from the level of grassroots Lebanese citizens all the way up to the cross-border and international level. It also decreases the acceptance of some communities towards NGOs and UN agencies.

### Options for improving impact:

- ▶▶ These policies are particularly entrenched, so consider multi-partner action in collaboration with other partners to advocate with donors for change in the medium-term.
- ▶▶ Diversify your funding streams, interweaving some donors who do not practice this particular restriction, allowing your organization to include the excluded communities in its overall service profile.
- ▶▶ Establish collaborative partnerships with other NGOs and/or UN agencies that are able to operate in the excluded communities, so that you can contribute indirectly to their wellbeing and develop inter-group linkages even if you are not physically present.
- ▶▶ Channel aid through other neighboring communities that are not under restrictions, in order to empower relationships and trust.

## 2.3. Addressing authorities' requirements

Municipalities and other local authorities are among the most trusted governance institutions in Lebanon, a very key set of stakeholders for NGOs and UN agencies. At the same time, experiences vary widely, because local institutions are naturally composed of people whose political affiliations reflect the affiliations of the local population and link into the sectarian political dynamics at the national level, and whose actions may sometimes fail to uphold human rights. Partners should invest in consultation and coordination with local authorities, in a principled way that models a commitment to inclusive humanitarian ethics and conflict sensitivity.

The national government sits farther away in the experience of partners who are NGOs, yet national policies have a tremendous impact. National policies may potentially be influenced by the collective policy analysis and advocacy efforts of UN agencies and NGOs.

**Dilemma:** Local authorities sometimes seek to determine aid locations, eligibility, selection criteria or beneficiary lists in ways that disproportionately benefit people of their own religious or political affiliation. They may also request high-level infrastructure that partners are not in a position to provide or create legal/logistical barriers that prevent disfavored groups from accessing the assistance. If partners follow their lead, this can lead to benefitting one group over another, and also legitimize the politics of exclusion, both of which increase inter-group tension.

### Options for improving impact:

**Partner Example:** One partner demonstrates a unique, responsive, and principled way of engaging municipalities. It provides a website through which municipalities can freely and transparently submit their own development ideas and requests. The organization then seeks to meet their needs in ways that align with the organization's established criteria.

Do not neglect the important process of respectful coordination with local authorities. However, be sure to conduct your own needs assessments and conflict sensitivity analysis and establish your own criteria for where and whom you will serve, instead of indiscriminately following the local authorities' requests.

- ▶▶ Nurture your relationships with local authorities over time, so that the relationships are consistently engaged, principled and respectful of the distinct complementary roles of each party. Communicate frequently using multiple media your commitment to inclusive humanitarian ethics and conflict sensitivity. Be sure the local authorities can reach you directly and immediately by phone in case of any concerns. All of this will make it easier to achieve conflict-sensitive decision making when a pressured moment arises.
- ▶▶ Create a criterion for areas' selection that take into account municipalities collaboration/attitudes towards refugees and make these criteria public to put indirect pressures on municipalities.
- ▶▶ In the case of municipalities that do demonstrate inclusive behavior, consider channeling aid through them, so that they can be confident in front of their constituencies as service providers during harsh times. If local authorities appear to overlook certain NGOs because they are 'local,' or because of the nationality or religion of their representative, multiagency back-up through a network or consortium of NGOs with UN agencies may help to improve the situation (This would also help in increasing collaboration among NGOs).
- ▶▶ If your organization is large, use your advocacy capacity to encourage municipalities to use inclusive, rights-based approaches when distributing aid.

**Dilemma:** National-level politicians may also seek to determine assistance locations and shape assistance sectors in ways that skew the benefit towards people of their own social group. This reinforces systemic inequity and exclusion on a very large scale.

<sup>3</sup> UNDP. 2020. 'Leave No One Behind: For an Inclusive and Just Recovery Process in Post-Blast Beirut.'

#### Options for improving impact:

- ▶ For partners who are NGOs, this issue lies well beyond the reach of your programs department, but not necessarily beyond the influence of your advocacy department, especially if you team up with other NGOs and UN agencies. As a multiagency possibility, consider collective or consortium advocacy around a message such as ‘leave no one behind.’
- ▶ Institutional donors and multilaterals are in a relatively strong position to influence through aid policy negotiations, ideally in coordination with their implementing partners.
- ▶ Be actively alert to the strong inter-connection between skewing assistance allocations and establishing policies or practices that restrict the wellbeing of certain groups in other ways, such as restricted access to jobs or services. (Such restrictions are addressed below and, in the companion, guidance notes).
- ▶ Include capacity building for advocacy and mobilization in all project plans.

## 2.4. Improving your policies and practices

Donors and authorities have power, but they are certainly not the only source of exclusion and imbalance in aid targeting. Partners can also reinforce exclusion through their own policies and practices, both consciously and unconsciously. They can also reinforce exclusion by perceiving themselves as powerless, and therefore failing to take action to help inform and influence donors and authorities.

**Dilemma:** In a challenging and restricting operating environment such as Lebanon, it becomes tempting and easy to overlook the unintended negative effects of your own targeting decisions.

#### Options for improving impact:

- ▶ Assess the composition of the team that is responsible for making targeting decisions. Is the team diverse and inclusive, including representation of all key social groups? Is the team free of conscious biases? Does the team have processes in place for identifying and correcting unintentional biases?
- ▶ Assess regularly within your organization: Does the demographic breakdown of your beneficiaries align with the demographic breakdown of the broader population within your operating area? If not, why not? Differing levels of vulnerability may be a good reason, but you still need an effort to ensure that perceptions of inequity do not increase inter-group tensions. Other reasons may not be good reasons, so they merit self-scrutiny and potential changes.
- ▶ Assess regularly within your organization: Are there any geographic zones in Lebanon where our organization has decided not to go? Why? As a result of this decision, which social groups have been included, and which have been excluded? How does this affect inter-group relations? If there are negative effects, how could they be mitigated over the short or medium term?
- ▶ Assess your feedback mechanisms: Are they in place and operating? Do they detect inter-group tensions caused by your organization’s projects? Does this feedback from community members influence organizational decision-making? Do your monitoring and evaluation exercises include questions about unintended effects?

**Dilemma:** Within the humanitarian sector, there are sometimes gaps in covering certain population groups, and duplication of efforts in covering others. When this happens, it consistently leads to aid inefficiency, confusion and frustration among potential beneficiaries, and some people being left out. When the people left out belong disproportionately to a particular group, then it can also increase inter-group tension.

#### Options for improving impact:

- ▶ Service mapping: Build on the existing available service mapping tools in place. This will help with tracking the organizations working in your area, their sectors/types of intervention and their target groups. Keep ensuring that you are using the most updated service mapping.
- ▶ Coordinated decision-making: Go beyond service mapping by creating or participating in a multiagency forum for coordinated decision-making at key time intervals or during emergencies. Building on the learnings from COVID-19, much of this coordination can be done online to save time. Agree amongst yourselves who will cover which areas, and how you will avoid gaps. Numerous partners have taken up this kind of coordination effort in response to the August 2020 explosions in Beirut, response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and the Bekaa winter storms and reported that the situation – while still challenging – has significantly improved.
- ▶ Referral System: If you cannot meet the needs of an individual or group of beneficiaries, kindly refer to the Inter-Agency Referral System in place. Also, please use either RIMS or RAIS already operative in Lebanon. Keep the referred beneficiaries informed, so that they know they are being valued and treated equitably. In the medium term, consider multiagency action such as integrating the two referral systems into one, and/or conducting a meta-analysis of all data within the referral systems to help identify systemic gaps and opportunities.
- ▶ Culture of the humanitarian sector: Challenge yourself to create a culture of collaboration and synergy. Many organizations compete with each other for funds, which is not necessarily negative in itself. However, competing with each other for beneficiaries is a problem, because it can directly fuel tension between groups in the community. Withholding information on the context or on our own inevitable failures is a problem because it prevents the entire sector from learning. What action can you take to help the humanitarian response the same type of inclusive cooperation that you hope to see among people living in Lebanon?

- ▶ Build alliances with organizations that have different mandates to complement each other’s work in a particular area (triple nexus approach). This does not necessarily require having the same donor but increasing coordination and collaboration by sharing knowledge and resources to serve the same community.

## 2.5. Listening to communities

The more flexible the donor, the earlier and more significantly you can involve the community in decision making. Note that you can also influence this flexibility through dialogue and advocacy.

**Dilemma:** Listening exercises usually start in the Outreach & Assessment phase – after key strategy decisions have already been made on the location, the type of intervention and the beneficiary profile. This undermines both local ownership and local insight for conflict-sensitive decision making.

#### Options for improving impact:

- ▶ identify the main actors representing different social groups and hold semi-formal meetings with them.
- ▶ Have a friendly approach (not necessarily formal) to hear the needs of local communities directly through a diverse team (especially front-liners).
- ▶ Choose wisely the meetings location if open for the public to be welcoming and inclusive for all.

## 3. Outreach & Assessment Phase

The Outreach & Assessment phase is all about all about understanding the context, forming key relationships, consulting with local authorities and local people. From a conflict sensitivity perspective, the key is to develop quality communication with and seek information from the perspective of each social group in the area. Those perspectives will be diverse and potentially contradictory. For that reason, you need to hear from all of them to develop a balanced understanding and make good decisions.

### 3.1. Co-planning with the community

Develop quality communication with each social group in the area. Those perspectives will be diverse and potentially contradictory, so you should hear from all of them to develop a balanced understanding and make good decisions.

#### Conflict-sensitive options:

- ▶ Start this process as early as you can. Early consultation means more local ownership, and the more local insight for conflict-sensitive decision making.
- ▶ Consult both formal authorities and alternative leaders such as mukhtars, Shawish, elder leaders, religious authorities, etc. However, be sure to consider the inclusiveness of each individual leader, and do not legitimize or be overly compliant towards those who behave in exclusionary ways.
- ▶ Form one or build onto existing more community-based committees, involving all social groups in the area, to play a key role in outreach and assessment. The way you facilitate inter-group communications during this process will shape your project's social impact in important ways.
- ▶ During needs assessments, be very careful to include equitable representation of each social group. If you use enumerators, be sure that they are locally accepted and

trusted, or else consider hiring unknown enumerators from outside the area. Ensure enumerators are visibly identifiable and well trained.

### 3.2. Selecting implementing partners

Selecting an implementing partner organization is an extremely important part of project planning because the implementing partner will be representing your organization in face-to-face interaction with the community.

At minimum, your implementing partners should be:

- acceptable to the community in terms of their identity and reputation
- free of affiliations with political parties and armed groups
- committed to the active practice of non-discrimination.

Preferably, your implementing partner should also share your organizational core values, and bring strong experience in conflict sensitivity and participatory, empowering facilitation methodologies. Build a good relationship with your implementing partner, as they will need both support and accountability.

### 3.3. Conducting your own conflict sensitivity analysis

The conflict sensitivity analysis found in this guidance note reflects generalized inter-group relationship analyses at a snapshot moment in time, during which the operational environment is changing rapidly due to multiple compounded crises. Therefore, some details will vary in your local context and/or eventually go out of date. For best results, your organization should work towards conducting its own conflict sensitivity analyses at the project level. For details on how to maximize this, see guidance note #1 on Getting Started with Conflict Sensitivity[\[hyperlink\]](#).

### 3.4. Consulting key informants

Key informants can be very helpful in planning and setting up for a community-based assessment, sharing information about local demographics and sensitivities, and brokering key relationships to help you move forward. The shift to online communication may make it easier to reach some types of key informants.

#### Conflict-sensitive options:

- ▶ In addition to consulting formal authorities, do not overlook the potential importance of alternative leaders such as mukhtars, Shawish, elder leaders, religious authorities and/or civil society influencers who are trusted by their constituencies. However, be sure to assess the inclusiveness of each individual leader, and do not legitimize or be overly compliant towards those who behave in exclusionary ways.
- ▶ Form one or more community-based committees to play a key role in outreach and assessment. Identify people who are seen as inclusive, respected, and trustworthy. For example, if working with refugees and host communities, it may be best to form two committees, one to represent host community and the other to represent Syrian refugees, so that both groups can speak freely. After trust is built, you may be able to bring both groups together for key processes. Provide conflict sensitivity training followed by active mentoring and oversight. Include time and space for interpersonal interaction, allowing people of different groups to discover and build upon the Connectors of their shared values, experiences, and cultural similarities, and even to possibly form relationships. Develop mutually respectful relationships between your organization and the committees as a first step towards holding yourself accountable to the community.

### 3.5. Conducting community-based assessment

#### Conflict-sensitive options:

- ▶ Conflict sensitivity analysis. Ideally you already have a current context analysis at the national or governorate level, but this may be your first conflict sensitivity analysis in a new local area. The conflict sensitivity analysis can either be run as a stand-alone exercise or integrated with the assessment of needs. Under normal circumstances it should go into some depth; in an emergency there are 'good enough' approaches to help you move quickly toward action.
- ▶ Assessment of needs. To assess needs in a conflict-sensitive manner, be very careful to include equitable representation of each social group as described above. If you use enumerators, be sure that they are locally accepted and trusted, or else consider hiring unknown enumerators from outside the area. Provide enumerators with a uniform or other visible sign of their official status. Train them in how to demonstrate cultural sensitivity, and how to manage expectations by explaining that assistance is limited. These precautions will help to cushion disappointments and avoid any perceptions of bias.
- ▶ Appropriate processes. Choose methodologies that are as genuinely participatory as possible under the circumstances. In working with community-based committees, give them space for self-leadership while also continuing conflict sensitivity mentoring and oversight. Work with them and through them to reach a joint agreement on priorities. Note that these same committees may also be able to inform the work of other partners.
- ▶ Plan sufficient time to complete quality assessment and analysis processes without the participants feeling overly rushed; if necessary, negotiate with the donor for more time/budget or supplement the budget with your own discretionary funds, because the importance of this phase demands getting it right.

► Coordinate and share. If appropriate, team up with another partner organization to conduct the needs assessment and conflict sensitivity analysis, and/or share information afterwards to the greatest extent possible while respecting all data use agreements made with the community. This is particularly important during a specific emergencies such as storm response, to avoid overstressing the capacity of NGOs and damaging community trust by over-assessing some pockets of local residents. However, be cautious if you receive a data sharing request from a political group, which may violate the data use agreements that you have made with the community and may be used to restrict participation or divert assistance.

## 4. Activity Design Phase

Given the deteriorating economic situation and the increasing tension around perceived aid bias, the focus here is on how to provide expanded and increasingly inclusive assistance to vulnerable people across all social groups. The effort involves blending vulnerability criteria with an intentional effort to diversify participation in order to spread the benefits across social groups.

### Targeting Modalities Under the LCRP

There are multiple ways to target vulnerable individuals, households, and communities under the LCRP. These modalities are designed to support conflict sensitivity. However, to become more fully conflict sensitivity, these modalities must be applied within a high-level project design that includes vulnerable people across all social groups (see Section 2), and emphasizes consistently transparent communication with communities. These modalities also need to be supported by the critical decision analysis presented later in Section 4.3, and by an emphasis on consistently transparent communication with communities.

Under LCRP, each sector targets its activities based on the assessed needs of each population group, and partners deliver activities at the individual, household, community and institutional level depending on the type of activity and the needs.<sup>4</sup> The LCRP ensures that the targeting is based on socio-economic, categorical, as well as geographic considerations which combined reduce the likelihood that a vulnerable individual or family is excluded. Further details on targeting modalities under the LCRP for additional guidance can be found [here](#).

The multiple ways to target individuals, households and communities include:

- Categorical targeting: Focuses on the individual needs and known vulnerability of defined groups of individuals throughout the country who present common verifiable characteristics, and who are known to be more at risk due to these characteristics and/or the context in which they live, including protection risks
- Geographical targeting: Focuses on a geographic area where indicators suggest that issues, such as low primary schooling level, high maternal mortality rates or just poverty, are most prevalent.
- Proxy Means Testing (PMT): Focuses on an econometric method employed to estimate income or consumption when there is a lack of information on either of these indicators in order to assess vulnerability and programming thereafter.
- Mixed approaches: Focuses on more than one approach in a multi-dimensional manner accounting in order to enhance targeting and ensure humanitarian as well as stabilization considerations.

Categorical and geographical targeting focuses on the individual, households and/or neighborhood/area/community needs and known vulnerability of the defined entity. For example, categorical targeting is based on the inclusion of all members of a group defined by verifiable characteristics correlated with vulnerability. Examples can be:

- Social pension for all individuals over the age of 65
- Programmes for all children aged 0 to 3 years old from single women-headed households
- Female/women-head of household
- Persons with serious medical conditions

In terms of community-based targeting, this allows the partner to select the community/area that is the most vulnerable based. It is often:

- Guided by facilitation or the provision of some criteria, and is often combined with proxy means targeting
- Based on covering an area where indicators suggest that issues, such as low primary schooling level, high maternal mortality rates or just poverty, are most prevalent.
- Often combined with another form of targeting (usually categorical or PMT) to select beneficiaries appropriate for the intervention within the geographical area.

### 4.1. Making critical decisions

**Partner example: One type of critical decision is the choice of where activities will be implemented. Several years ago, at a time of increased tensions in Tripoli, there was a newly opened hospital to serve all population groups, yet it was perceived as strongly biased. Why? Because the location was welcoming to some social groups, yet impossible for other social groups to access safely. As a result, intergroup tensions escalated further.**

There are certain types of decisions that frequently lead to unintended negative effects. If your organization's project design staff can watch out for these questions, then many problems can be avoided. The attached critical decision worksheet can be used by project design staff who are familiar with conflict sensitivity basics plus the Dividers and Connectors identified in your latest conflict sensitivity analysis.

<sup>4</sup> Populations are also targeted through support to public institutions which strengthens service delivery, policy development, capacity building and institutional stability in the public sector.

Who? Beneficiaries: Which groups are represented?	With whom? Partners: Which groups are represented?	With whom? Authorities: Which groups are exercising power?	What? What are the details of the activities to be done?	Where? Where will activities be done? Who has access?	When? When will activities start? How long will they last?	By whom? Staff: Which groups are represented?
<p><b>Step 1: Details.</b> Outline the known details of the project as it is designed.</p> <p><b>Step 2: Criteria.</b> Why did you make this decision?</p> <p><b>Step 3: Impact through resources.</b> What patterns do you foresee? -Distribution effect -Diversion effect -Legitimization effect -Market effect</p> <p><b>Step 4: Impact through the words/actions of staff/volunteers.</b> What patterns do you see? -Exclusion or discrimination -Unfairness or inequity -Lack of transparency -Powerlessness</p> <p><b>Step 5: Options for improving impact.</b> What changes do you think should be made to the project design?</p>						
				Example: Proposed service to towns W, X, Y & Z in Wellington District.		
				Because this was requested by local authorities.		
				Potential problem with distribution effects. There is one highly vulnerable social group that lives only in the rural areas outside the towns.		
				Volunteers recruited in the towns sometimes act impatient with people from the nearby rural areas.		
				Consider making the whole district eligible for service, not just the towns. Also, recruit additional volunteers from the rural areas.		

5 Adapted from: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. 2016. [‘Do No Harm Workshop Trainer’s Manual’](#). Cambridge, MA. p.188.

## 4.2. Assessing vulnerability to inform beneficiary selection

Before you assess the vulnerability of individuals, households and local communities, review the high-level project design decisions that you have already made to ensure that they lay a conflict-sensitive foundation by:

- including vulnerable people across social groups, rather than limiting your assistance to a particular social group; and
- communicating transparently regarding the criteria so that the process is perceived and experienced as fair.

Remember that fairness does not necessarily mean that all social groups should receive equal allocations of aid, but rather that all social groups should receive equitable allocations based on levels of vulnerability, selection criteria and ideally the overall drivers of tensions in the area at hand.

When you assess vulnerability in Lebanon, keep in mind that vulnerability is currently shaped by many different factors, which reflect different aspects of life. Therefore, a person, household or local community may experience severe vulnerability in relation to one sector (such as protection) while experiencing no vulnerability in relation to another sector (such as food security). The level of vulnerability cannot be determined based on a person’s, household’s or community’s social group - yet different social groups do tend to experience certain factors in common.

Exploring the conceptualization of vulnerability and understanding different types of vulnerabilities which may allow for more inclusive programming. This will also help to develop selection criteria.

When developing a selection criterion, “the most vulnerable” can be determined by considering various aspects of a person’s life circumstances (e.g., poverty, education), physical, social, or other characteristics (sex, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, legal status, etc.) and access to rights, services, and livelihoods, which may increase or

decrease their vulnerability. These definitions are reflected in the sectors’ targeting criteria.

Examples of individual risks factors include being a woman, status, elderly person, pregnant women, married as a child, adolescent, victim of violent discipline, sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation, discrimination, or trafficking, stateless, part of the LGBTQI community, having a disability, mental illness and/or criminal record, working as a child, and/or dropping out of school.

For household risks factors, for refugees from Syria, households living in extreme poverty tend to have similar characteristics that contribute to increased risk of vulnerability. These households are more likely to have more members, more dependent members and more members with disability or chronic illnesses. Increase of debt, coupled with less access to legal residency and other civil documentation restricting mobility and access to jobs, have created barriers to sustainable improvements. [II] Female-headed households are more often living in non-permanent shelters than male-headed households, and their mobility may be restricted by gender norms and the risks of gender-based violence. The vulnerability of these families is compounded by the limited capacity of municipalities to provide basic services to host and displaced populations and to manage intergroup relations.

Vulnerable Lebanese households also have characteristics that contribute to increased risk, particularly among those living in extreme poverty. They tend to have a bigger family size, with an important share of dependent members headed by someone with relatively low levels of education, and with no member of the family of working age employed. There are relatively few females participating in the labour force in Lebanon (23 per cent compared to 47 per cent worldwide)[III] due to gender norms among other factors. Living in poverty affects their access to services, particularly education and health.

Examples of community risks factors include demographic pressure including presence of refugees, poverty and deprivation levels, access to services (food, WASH, health, education, solid waste management, NFIs) and discrimination and violence experienced in a community, level of social acceptance and/or interactions between refugees-host community.

For certain sectors, or specific interventions under some sectors, the refugee “status” remains a high weight (score) (such as legal support under protection, shelter repairs, and NFIs during winter storms) while other services are needed by almost all communities (such as education, health, and access to livelihoods). This approach ensures that refugees receive the aid they need to live in dignity and at the same time lift some of the burden cast on vulnerable host communities, without shifting aid from one community towards the other.

It is not always easy to blend your vulnerability assessment with an intentional effort to ensure inclusive participation across social groups.

When you begin to explicitly consider the social background of potential beneficiaries, you may fear that you are over-emphasizing inter-group differences, or even compromising your ‘neutrality.’ However, the reality is that those inter-group differences already exist and have become heightened to a dangerous level. No partner effort is perceived or experienced by local people as ‘neutral.’ The better aim is to be ‘impartial’ – which requires an explicit effort to be inclusive and even-handed towards all.

**Partner example:** One organization has noticed that while eligibility for their projects is not restricted by nationality, it still becomes very clear during implementation that one group benefits over another! Further action is required.

**Dilemma:** Ensuring the eligibility and vulnerability assessment of host-communities may not be enough to bring diversity and balance to your beneficiary group. Even after making such changes, beneficiary participation may remain unbalanced across social groups.

**Partner example:** Not long ago, a particular health care center became perceived as a center serving mainly Syrians. Over time fewer Lebanese came and there were notably increasing tensions between Syrians and Lebanese patients in the center. In addition to making a direct outreach to Lebanese people, other key conflict sensitivity steps included capacity building for staff work and establishment of a complaint mechanism. The center is now increasingly seen as one that serves Lebanese, too.

#### Options for improving impact:

- ▶ Consider supplementing vulnerability criteria with targets on the proportion of benefit that will go to each social group. LCRP 2022 plans in several sectors call for targets to be set based on the demographics of the subset of the population that is considered vulnerable. For example, if approximately 30% of vulnerable people are Lebanese host community, then approximately 30% of the available assistance could be allocated toward Lebanese households in host communities. The approach depends on having accurate and unbiased criteria for determining who is vulnerable.
- ▶ Perceptions matter. Many people currently assume that humanitarian organizations serve mainly refugees from Syria. As you practice vulnerability-based inclusive targeting, be sure to let people know through municipalities and direct communication to communities.
- ▶ Ensure the diversity of the staff teams responsible for making beneficiary criteria and selection decisions. Teams that do not include representation of all beneficiary groups are likely to produce skewed results, due to conscious and/or unconscious biases. Teams that do include this representation can model fairness and inter-group collaboration. If you do not have this representation among your staff, consider a diverse beneficiary selection advisory committee in the short term, and a strategy for diversifying staff in the medium term.

Scan for other hidden sources of unconscious bias in the details of your beneficiary selection and project implementation systems.

**Dilemma:** As your beneficiary selection becomes more inclusive, new conflict sensitivity issues may arise! The change in project details may cause tensions to be exacerbated in new ways. The DNH process is not just about identifying one-time options for improving impact. Those options need to be tested and observed to determine how they are interacting with the inter-group Dividers and Connectors.

#### Options for improving impact:

- ▶ When you welcome a wider group of beneficiaries within your program, be prepared for conflict sensitivity issues to arise between them, possibly including disputes, resentments, or complaints. Be alert, ensure your monitoring system is capturing changes in Dividers, and be prepared to adapt.

**Partner examples:** Labor-intensive approaches to infrastructure are an excellent way to generate employment, but fairness is crucial. In one recent cash-for-work project, Lebanese workers have become more interested in participating as their economic hardship increases. However, they requested a higher rate than their refugee counterparts because they were anticipating a different currency, and the discrepancy caused tensions to escalate quickly. The partner was able to address this situation by raising everyone’s cash-for-work rates to a level aligned with current market rates, and by ensuring all workers were paid in the same currency.

In a different situation, a partner wanted to offer vocational training in a school, including both refugee and Lebanese students in the class. However, the topic of vocation inflamed the underlying Divider of legal restrictions that limit employment of recent refugees to the agriculture, construction, and cleaning industries. Tension grew. In this case, the partner addressed the issue by changing the first phase of the training to focus on the less divisive topic of life skills. Later on, after relationships had developed between students, they returned successfully to the topic of vocation. Another option sometimes used, depending on the objectives and the context, is to offer the vocational training to Lebanese students and refugee students separately.

- ▶ Be alert to changes in the relationship between host communities’ beneficiaries themselves. Ideally your project might nurture the cross-sectarian collaboration that has recently emerged among some Lebanese sub-groups and help that collaboration to expand. However, the context of intra-Lebanese relationships is changing rapidly, and partners that were focused until recently on refugees may not yet understand these dynamics. Be alert,

incorporate intra-Lebanese relations into your monitoring system, and be prepared to adapt.

- ▶ Be aware of the positive potential to support existing bridging initiatives within the community, or to use your own activities to encourage person-to-person contact between Lebanese people and refugees displaced from Syria. For example, depending on the location, some Lebanese workers and displaced workers from Syria may have little face-to-face interaction until they suddenly end up on the same work crew. If both groups feel they are being treated justly and respectfully, the Connectors of their shared values, experiences, and cultural similarities can help to improve their mutual perceptions and possibly even form relationships. However, do monitor the situation and proactively address any tensions that may arise.

**Partner example:** Where people are divided over competition for a specific resource, then increasing the overall availability of that resource may reduce tensions. However, it is not just what you do that matters, but how you do it. One partner that was planning to build irrigation canals discovered that two families were engaged in a long-standing dispute over shares of the water supply. When it came time to implement, the partner took care to employ someone who was chosen and approved by both families. Someone that the families trusted was managing the water shares, so the irrigation project went forward without further disagreements.

### 4.3. Communicating your project plans

Transparency requires that aid allocation decisions, and the criteria behind them, need to be widely communicated. A lack of transparency leads to the perception of unfairness, and to anxiety that can worsen intergroup tensions. The matrix below can help you to systematically ensure that all the communication needs are covered.<sup>6</sup>

#### Communication Matrix

	Has this information been shared?	With whom?	How?	Any barriers to access / understanding?
<b>Selection Criteria</b>	Example: Sharing is in process, approximately 90% complete.	Community residents including both those who are eligible and those who are not. Local authorities. Social development centers. Partner organizations.	Laminated posters and paper flyers at project sites, social development centers and municipal offices. Radio announcements. Social media by our office and by the municipality.	Yes, there is one small social group that does not speak Arabic, so announcements will be translated for them before the project launch.
<b>Project Goals</b>				
<b>Project Timeframes</b>				
<b>Funding &amp; Donors</b>				

**Partner example: Sometimes transparency means involving community members themselves in aid allocation decisions. One partner organization implementing a cash transfer project does not have enough funding to serve all the people who are eligible under their vulnerability criteria. They are aware of the potential for this to worsen tensions, so they aim to prevent it through community consultation. They have asked refugees from Syria for their ideas on how to handle the dilemma. The refugees responded by suggesting that smaller amounts of aid be given to a higher number of recipients! The organization has not yet been able to implement this advice - but it is a powerful example of how refugees' ideas on how to reduce tension may be quite different than the ideas of NGO and UN staff.**

The anxious uncertainties of hoping for assistance in a time of need can create a lot of tension in inter-group relationships. Do not allow the communication of your project plans and beneficiary selection decisions to become an afterthought, or to 'fall between the cracks' as you prepare for implementation. Communicating these decisions is one of the most important steps in a conflict-sensitive project cycle.

#### Conflict-sensitive options:

- ▶▶ End the 'wondering' by letting aid applicants know of your decisions as quickly as possible. After beneficiaries have been selected, communicate not only with those who have been included, but also those who have not. Explain in clear and transparent terms what criteria were used in

order to help address any suspicion of bias. Let people know specifically how they can access alternate sources of assistance (helplines, websites, WhatsApp groups, etc.), and/or help them by directly making a referral on their behalf.

- ▶▶ At the community level, information on project plans and beneficiary selection, including FAQ on who is receiving, who is not, why, and frequency, should be explained verbally and also made consistently available in visual forms, e.g., distributed in writing and via social media. Wherever possible, ensure that local authorities are part of this communication process.
- ▶▶ If you are just starting to serve Lebanese beneficiaries, you may need to communicate proactively and creatively with local residents and authorities, to raise awareness that you do serve all social groups, and to explain the vulnerability-based criteria.
- ▶▶ Keep in mind that your overall organizational message of inclusiveness is communicated not only with words, but also with visuals. For example, the use of photos that include diverse individuals, including females, males, elders, youth, women both with and without hijab, people with specific needs, etc.
- ▶▶ Be sure to have your feedback and complaint mechanisms up and running, so that any community member who has a concern can communicate it to you and receive a timely response.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from a CDA tool based on: Anderson, M., Brown, D., and Jean, I. 2012. *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

## 5. Implementation, Monitoring and Adaptation

Conflict-sensitive programming requires adaptation during implementation, so that your organization can respond nimbly when you discover that Dividers and Connectors are changing, or that your project is interacting with Dividers and Connectors in ways that you did not anticipate. Front-liners play a very key role in this process, both staff and implementing partners, as the eyes, ears, and hands of the organization. They need to be well-equipped, and also well-supported by a management structure that listens and that demonstrates care for their needs when working in stressful conflict situations.

### 5.1. Monitoring conflict sensitivity

Many partners have begun to practice conflict sensitivity in the assessment and activity design phases but have not yet integrated conflict sensitivity into their monitoring. It is understandable that conflict sensitivity mainstreaming takes time. However, without monitoring, it is very difficult to identify the unintended negative effects that may be happening in your project and take adaptive action to address them.

There are three types of indicators used to monitor conflict sensitivity, based either on your conflict sensitivity analysis or your existing organizational policies. You can use these indicators within an iterative cycle of updating, monitoring and adaptation, both within your staff and together with community members.

Using Indicators to Monitor Conflict Sensitivity			
	Description	Examples	How to Use It
<b>Process indicators</b>	Compliance with your organization's own conflict sensitivity policies and/or procedures.	-% of new projects that were supported by a conflict sensitivity analysis. -% of projects in which design changes have been made in an effort to improve impact on inter-group relations.	This is the easiest type of indicator to use. However, note that it reflects only organizational activities. It does not provide information about the actual effects of your projects.
<b>Context indicators</b>	Key Dividers and Connectors selected based on their importance within the context and possibly their likelihood of being influenced by your project.	-Level of political pressure within the community to push for non-voluntary return of refugees. (Divider). -Level of academic collaboration between Lebanese and refugee secondary students. (Connector).	Perception ratings among local staff and volunteers. During the past month, has this Divider gotten stronger, gotten weaker, or stayed the same? What is its intensity this week on a scale of 1-10? Note: This does not tell you whether or not your project influenced the changes, but you can consult local people to find out.

<b>Interaction indicators</b>	Key signs that your project is interacting with Dividers and Connectors, carefully selected based on your conflict sensitivity analysis and local implementation experience.	-Level of perception of aid bias among local non-beneficiaries. (Negative interaction).  -Number of cross-group friendships formed among project participants. (Positive interaction).	This is the hardest type of indicator to identify/select. However, if selected wisely, it can also provide the most meaningful information about the actual effects of your projects.
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Additionally, even if you have no prior conflict sensitivity analyses or policies, it is possible to conduct a simple **rapid conflict impact assessment** at a key point in time – perhaps just after a large distribution of tangible aid items – through interviews with community members. Include both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, across the social groups. For instance, if you are concerned about distribution and/or diversion effects, you might include questions such as:<sup>7</sup>

- Do you have any comments about the recent aid distribution?
- How has the distribution helped your community?
- Why do you think the beneficiaries were selected? Who selected them?
- Are there any households that you feel should have received aid but were not included in the list? How many? Why? How is their standard of living?
- Are there any households that were initially on the list, but then later replaced by others? If yes, why, and how?
- How do you feel about this?
- Did you notice any new voluntary actions or collaborations happening during and/or after the distribution? If yes, what has changed?
- Did you notice any conflict happening during and/or after the distribution? If yes, between whom? About what? Who helped to resolve the conflicts?
- Do you have any recommendations on how the community and/or my organization should manage such aid distributions in the future?

Finally, the monitoring mechanisms mentioned described above can be complemented by additional ways of seeking input:

#### Conflict-sensitive options:

- Consider a **community-based social stability committee**, ideally leveraging on an existing committee in the given area, which is oriented to conflict sensitivity and other related considerations such as protection, gender, etc. The committee can watch for any emerging program-related tensions and help in developing and implementing solutions in a localized manner. Note that this type of committee requires a significant investment of staff time in formation, training, oversight, and support.
- Have a **confidential mechanism outside the project's operational hierarchy** to invite reports of conflict sensitivity concerns within the organization. This allows staff to report unintended negative effects without reprisal and with confidence that their concerns will be taken seriously.

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from the work of World Vision Cambodia in: Garred, M. et al. 2007. 'Conflict Sensitivity in Emergencies: Learning from the Asia Tsunami Response.' World Vision International.

- Ensure that monitoring reports – and all project reports - give equitable attention to different social groups. To avoid worsening tensions, do not associate any social group with stereotypical characteristics or problems unless you have strong evidence and a good reason for doing so. Have the draft reports reviewed by colleagues who represent the perspectives of different social groups, in order to identify and rectify any text that could be perceived as biased.

## 5.2. Using feedback loops

Most partner organizations already have mechanisms for collecting feedback, including complaints. For conflict sensitivity purposes, it is very important to check that the mechanisms are equally simple and accessible for every social group in and around the area that you are serving.

Additionally, receiving the feedback is not enough. Feedback should influence organizational decision-making. Therefore, it is necessary to:<sup>8</sup>

- acknowledge the feedback (including a periodic aggregated analysis of overall trends);
- analyze the feedback;
- make a decision on whether and how to apply the feedback; and
- respond to update the community member who originally offered the feedback. When you respond, be sure that your organization takes responsibility for its own decisions and actions, rather than blaming donors, other partners, or politicians.

Conflict-sensitive **options** for enhancing your use of feedback loops:

- Hang in the office a board where staff can post unofficial feedback heard in the community. Also appoint a team member to keep an eye on mentions of your organization in social media. Review this unofficial feedback regularly in team meetings, to keep in touch with how the organization is perceived in the community.

**Partner example: One partner recently conducted a detailed consultation with a community in order to decide together how to design the most accessible and functional local feedback and complaint loops.**

Link your feedback mechanisms to your use of referral systems (RIMS or RAIS), so that if a person or community is asking for a service that you do not have available, you can link them to another provider.

## 5.3. Adapting through options

One powerful principle of Do No Harm is: there are always options! There is always a way to adapt in order to mitigate an unintended negative effect, or to help strengthen inter-group Connectors.

The conflict sensitivity guidance note series [\[hyperlink\]](#) provides a wide range of ‘options’ that can be considered, carefully selected, tested, modified and built upon. To select wisely, ask yourself:

- Does this option appear to fit our organization, given our unique mandate and structure?
- Does this option appear to fit what we know about Dividers and Connectors in the area where we are working?

<sup>8</sup> Francesca Bonino, F., with Jean, I. and Clarke, P.K. 2014. [Closing the Loop: Effective Feedback in Humanitarian Contexts, Practitioner Guidance](#). London: ALNAP-CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

You can also generate options yourself. This is often done through creative brainstorming, with a group as diverse and inclusive as possible. It may help to bring in staff from outside your immediate team, to gain a fresh perspective. Likewise engaging your volunteers or community-based committees is an excellent source of options, and also a boost to their empowerment.

After selecting an option, test it to determine whether it is impacting Dividers and Connectors in the way that you hoped. You can do this first by asking the opinion of local people, and next by actually implementing the option and monitoring what happens. Does the option reduce tensions as hoped? If not, then adapt it again, or select a different option for testing.

## 6. Evaluation and Learning

Many UN and NGO staff assume that if a conflict sensitivity problem exists within a project, it will certainly show up in the evaluation. However, this is not always the case. In reality, “many widely used impact evaluation designs, ...frequently fail to detect what are often quite serious unintended consequences of development programs.”<sup>9</sup> Many evaluation designs look only for pre-planned positive change, so the evaluators sometimes fail to uncover systemic bias.

**Good practices** for ensuring that evaluation promotes conflict sensitivity learning within your organization:

- Evaluation proposals should articulate what approach they will use to identify unintended effects and, additionally, how the evaluation process itself will model and reinforce inclusion.
- Evaluator candidates should have a track record of behaving independently of the common sources of bias within the context.
- Be aware that some evaluation methodologies are stronger than others at detecting unintended effects in complex contexts. The purely quantitative measurement of pre-defined indicators tends to be weak in this regard. Mixed methods and emergent methodologies such as Outcome Harvesting tend to be stronger.

→ Every evaluation report should include one or more recommendations on conflict sensitivity, to help the organization consider and make decisions for change

→ Define a process with timelines for decision makers to review each evaluation recommendation and make a decision: Yes, or no? Does this recommendation shed light on any of the other projects that we are implementing?

→ Nurture an organizational culture of learning through mistakes. Do away with the fear of acknowledging problems and create incentives for staff to talk openly about unintended negative effects. For inspiration, consider the idea of a learning-centered [Fail Festival!](#)

<sup>9</sup> Bamberger, M., Tarsilla, M. and Tortilla & Hesse-Bibe, S. 2016. “Why so many ‘rigorous’ evaluations fail to identify unintended consequences of development programs: How mixed methods can contribute” in *Evaluation and Program Planning* 55:155-62.

## 7. Building Relations with the Community

Community relations matter during every phase of the project cycle, as reflected throughout the guidance note. This is a serious matter for partners in Lebanon, given the increasing needs across populations and the perception of aid bias among Lebanese. As of January 2021, just 38% of the Lebanese and 47% of the Syrian populations agreed that “International aid/assistance goes to the people who most deserve it.”<sup>10</sup> Key ongoing considerations that transcend the project cycle are summarized below.

### 7.1. Collective benefits

Most communities expect and hope that the presence of NGOs and UN agencies will not only benefit individuals and households - as detailed throughout Section 3 - but also the community as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Communities look for:

- Local hiring, and local procurement of vendors and contractors. ‘Local’ is a relative term. If you are not sure what community members consider to be ‘local,’ ask them during your participatory consultations. It is important to emphasize local contracting, but also keep that emphasis in careful balance with your other conflict-sensitive criteria and technical requirements. For more on that balance, see guidance note #3 on Conflict Sensitive Procurement, Recruitment and Accountability [hyperlink]
- Positive influence on governance. Keep in mind the increasing level of citizen distrust toward the Lebanese government. It is important for partners to collaborate with official institutions on the basis of transparent, conditional criteria, to help reinforce the government’s accountability to the people. It is also important to demonstrate your commitment to labor rights, staff wellbeing, constructive conflict management and relevant codes of conduct.

**Partner example: One partner observes that when working in Palestinian refugee camps, it is very important to be evenhanded when communicating with the multiple Popular Committees. You really cannot meet with one committee without simultaneously meeting with the others in the nearby area. The organization invests a significant amount of staff time and skill in maintaining good communications with all.**

- Positive influence on security. An ‘acceptance approach’ is more beneficial than ‘hard security.’ Acceptance involves active, culturally sensitive stakeholder outreach; a commitment of time by staff with excellent communication skills; attention to clear, transparent messaging; and minimizing the use of guards.<sup>12</sup>

### 7.2. Cultural sensitivity

Actively demonstrating cultural sensitivity always improves the relationships between partners and communities. In the Lebanese context, this practice also communicates a message that every unique social group is valued and respected, which helps to change the prevailing atmosphere of discrimination and exclusion.

Cultural sensitivity tips shared by partners include the following:

- Observe local dress codes.
- Communicate with people in their first language, if possible, using their preferred accent. own dialect.
- Schedule events in ways that do not conflict with religious or cultural celebrations, the typical daily routines of women, the typical daily routines of men.

- Schedule events in locations that are accessible to all target participants. For women, this often means a location near their home.
- Seek informed consent before taking photos.
- Consult with parents before addressing their children.

### 7.3. Trauma-informed approaches

Trauma is real given the multiple crises that people are facing, including violence, displacement, economic hardship, COVID-19, and uncertainty about the future. It is entirely normal for these things to affect people’s mental health and their physical bodies. Trauma can cause people to act and react in unexpected ways.

**Partner example: One partner recently got an unexpectedly strong rejection when offering incentives to encourage property owners to rent to refugees from Syria. One Lebanese property owner said that he would never accept any amount of money no matter how high to rent a house to Syrians. He would also prevent all his neighbors from renting any houses to Syrians. He later explained that he felt he simply could not bear being in the presence of people from Syria, because his family had been tortured in Syria.**

Trauma awareness requires, at minimum, sensitivity to the potential for trauma among community members and staff, and patience when people appear to overreact. This indicated the importance of trauma-informed interventions and sensitivities. Where possible, partners can also contribute toward the restoration of relationships and a sense of community, plus individual purpose, participation, and contribution within that community.<sup>13</sup> This can be further supported by developing staff capacities for nonviolent communication.<sup>14</sup> In some instances, when the above is considered without positive outcomes, then the optimal solution is to suspend the specific intervention.

<sup>10</sup> ARK/UNDP. 2021. Perception Survey Wave 9 - January 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from Chapter 2 of: Anderson, M.B. and Zandvliet, L. 2009. Getting it Right: Making Corporate-Community Relations Work. Sheffield: Greenleaf.

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from: Swisspeace. Organizational-level conflict sensitivity worksheet.

<sup>13</sup> Katie-Jay Scott. 2019. ‘A Trauma-Informed Approach to Humanitarian Action.’ iACT.

<sup>14</sup> To get started see: Center for Nonviolent Communication. [The Nonviolent Communication Instruction Self-Guide.](#)

## Annex A: Resources for Further Learning

### On conflict sensitivity by LCRP partners

- [Perception Survey Dashboard](#), ARK Group, DMCC & UNDP.
- *'Qualitative Research on Social Tensions in Lebanon'*, Empatika & UNDP, Beirut, 2019. Retrieved from: [Qualitative Research on Social Tensions in Lebanon](#).
- Sadkni, E., 'Conflict Sensitivity: Stories that Shape the Concept' Their Voices Paper #4, House of Peace, Beirut. Retrieved from: ['Conflict Sensitivity: Stories that Shape the Concept'](#)
- Annual Report, UNDP, 2018. Retrieved from: [Annual Report 2018](#).
- Lebanon / LCRP Information Hub, UNHCR. Retrieved from: [Lebanon / LCRP Information Hub](#).

### On the 'Do No Harm' conflict sensitivity tool (used in this guidance note)

- Anderson, M.B. *"Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War."* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999.
- Anderson, M.B. *'Options for Aid in Conflict: Lessons from Field Experience.'* Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. 2000.
- CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. *'Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual.'* Cambridge, MA: CDA, 2016.
- CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. *'Do No Harm Workshop Participant's Manual.'* Cambridge, MA: CDA,
- CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Disaster Ready, *'30-Minute Introduction to Do No Harm: A Conflict Sensitivity Tool.'* 2017. (This is a video. You will need to open a learning account, but the video is free).
- Garred, M. *et al.* *'Do No Harm & Gender: A Guidance Note.'* Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2018.

### On other related conflict sensitivity tools

- Check out the online library at [conflictsensitivity.org](#), or the selected core documents below.
- Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, *'How to Guide to Conflict Sensitivity.'* 2012.
- Goldwyn, R., and Chigas, D, *'Monitoring and Evaluating Conflict Sensitivity: Methodological Challenges and Practical Solutions.'* London, UK: Care International UK, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, and DFID, 2013.
- Handschin, S., Arbitol, E., and Alluri, R., eds. *'Conflict Sensitivity: Taking it to the Next Level.'* Swisspeace and Conflict Sensitivity Community, 2016.
- International Alert et al. *'Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack'*, 2004.
- Zicherman, N. et al. *'Applying Conflict Sensitivity in Emergency Response: Current Practice and Ways Forward.'* London: Humanitarian Practice Network, 2011

### • Communities of practice

- [Conflict Sensitivity Community - Hub](#). A global network for organizations and individuals working on conflict sensitive approaches in their own fields and seeking to advance conflict sensitivity practice.
- [Conexus](#). A global networking platform and resource hub for people responding to coronavirus in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

## Annex B: Background & Methodology

The conflict sensitivity guidance note series is a product of the LCRP conflict sensitivity mainstreaming initiative led by UNDP Lebanon in collaboration with House of Peace.

Tensions between communities in Lebanon (Intra-Lebanese & Lebanese-Syrian) remain pervasive. Tensions are growing more complex and localized, while propensity for violence is rising nationally. This scenario requires LCRP response actors to be equipped with data and analysis on the evolution of tensions to ensure that their interventions are adapted to the context and conflict sensitive to reduce tensions between communities on the intra-Lebanese as well as the host community-refugee fronts.

The Tensions Monitoring System is built to better inform Social Stability partners and decision-makers within the LCRP framework with data and analysis on the state of tensions between communities. It is designed to ensure that rigorous and relevant data is collected and analysed, and to ensure that tailored information is made accessible to key interlocutors. The overarching aim is to best inform these actors with specific analysis to prevent manifestations of violent conflict.

This is done through developing the understanding of the nature, geographic variation, and trajectory of tensions between communities using innovative methods as well as enhancing engagement with the LCRP coordination structure on that understanding of tensions to ensure a response that works to prevent violence in a conflict-sensitive manner. As such, this is a direct contribution to the Social Stability sector's Outcome 3, as per the Social Stability Sector Strategy: Outcome 3: Enhance LCRP capacities on tensions monitoring and conflict sensitivity.

The initial guidance notes were shaped by four online consultations held with LCRP partners in October and November 2020. Over 150 diverse partner staff participated. In the first consultation, the participants discussed their conflict sensitivity experiences and needs, and then collaboratively determined the key themes of the initial guidance notes. After that, one focused consultation was held on each of the key themes that participants had identified:

- Overview of Conflict Sensitivity in Lebanon
- Beneficiary Outreach, Needs Assessment & Project Design Cycle
- Procurement, Recruitment and Accountability

This report was written by Dr Michelle Garred (Ripple - Peace Researching & Consulting, LLC) with the support of Safaa Shahin on the research through online surveys and Key Informant Interviews. Elias Sadkni (House of Peace) facilitated the workshops and the overall implementation of the project. Fadel Saleh drafted the overall design and methodology of the project in addition to the facilitation of consultations and the overall project implementation. This project was generously funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Government of Australia, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Denmark.

All of the partner examples found in the guidance note were shared during these consultations, under the Chatham House Rule and therefore anonymous.

This guidance note was also informed by LCRP tensions monitoring system research, and by supplementary surveys, interviews, and inquiries to which numerous colleagues in Lebanon and around the world have contributed generously. The guidance notes have also been reviewed by expert stakeholders.

We want to hear from you! If you have conflict sensitivity learnings to share, or feedback on our work to date, please contact the LCRP Conflict Sensitivity Focal Point, Fadel Saleh, at [fadel.saleh@undp.org](mailto:fadel.saleh@undp.org). Your contribution will help in updating and expanding this series of guidance notes.



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