

Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development – Integrating Humanitarian Assistance, Development and Peacebuilding

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Abstract:

An integrated framework for conflict sensitive programming that informs a conflict systems response to crisis and post-crisis contexts. The framework is contained within a graphic model that can be used to assist groups of aid and development workers in conceptualising, planning and monitoring how a value based and principled approach to humanitarian assistance could contribute to longer-term social transformation goals. This paper presents a discussion of the development paradigm that informs this conflict sensitive approach and that places humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding processes within a nested systems response towards a long-term social transformation agenda. A brief example of the circumstances within which the framework can be applied in practice adds an additional set of insights into the potential value and use of the tool. Finally the paper critically discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the framework and explores the opportunities and challenges of its application in different contexts.

Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development –

Integrating Humanitarian Assistance, Development and Peacebuilding

This paper presents a framework for conflict sensitive programming that was developed by the researcher as part of a broader engagement with the peacebuilding and development sectors. The framework consists of a graphic representation of a conflict systems response to crisis and post-crisis contexts.

The graphic model is a product of a decade long collaboration between the highly acclaimed peacebuilder and development worker Dekha Ibrahim Abdi and the researcher who presents the tool here for discussion.

The model can be used to assist groups of aid and development workers in conceptualising, planning and monitoring how a value based and principled conflict sensitive approach to humanitarian assistance could contribute to longer-term social transformation goals.

Initially developed in response to the need for a tool that was engaging and effective at initiating dialogue the framework also assists in shifting the paradigm through which people think about resources, power and their relationship to the people affected.

This paper presents a discussion of the development paradigm that informs this conflict sensitive approach and that places humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding processes within a nested systems response towards a long-term social transformation agenda.

The discussion explores how conflict sensitive thinking is strongly informed by a more people-centred approach to development and draws also from conflict transformation theory. In so doing it is highly critical of neo-liberal developmental theory and seeks both to define development in different terms and to change developmental practice.

Evidence cited points to the increased practice of conflict sensitive development that draws on several theoretical bases underlying the approach. This section is informed by a review of developmental practice carried out by Safer World, International Alert and the International Development Research Centre (Gaigals & Leonhardt, 2001).

Several examples of shifts amongst developmental actors highlight the circumstances within which the framework outlines in this paper could be useful.

The specific conflict theories that support the thinking that underlie the framework are also presented by way of introduction. The Conflict Sensitivity Framework is then offered in its graphic form and described in some detail, in order to outline the various components that constitute the integrated approach it seeks to enable.

A brief example of the circumstances within in which the framework can be applied in practice adds an additional set of insights into the potential value and use of the tool. Finally the paper critically discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the framework and explores the opportunities and challenges of its application in different contexts.

The paper concludes by pointing to additional learning forums within which the framework will continue to be refined and sharpened, and locates this further refinement within a particular context of action and reflection.

Background

As a strong proponent of bottom-up and people-centred development Chambers points out how information and knowledge is valued differently according to the source from which it emerges (Chambers, 1997). Chambers places learning at the centre of how he proposes we set out to change development practice. It is this centrality of learning that informs both the development of the tool that forms the focus of this paper, as well as the broader approach to conflict transformation within which it is located.

The praxis cycle approach used in the development of the conflict sensitive framework links research and practice and values all contributions to this particular developmental paradigm. This is part of the conflict sensitive processes that the framework seeks to inform and influence. Innovation, reflective practice and action research have become the essential tools of many development workers and conflict transformation practitioners who are intent on learning from and improving their practice. This development of an internal and self-reflective learning culture is often taking place in sectors and contexts about which relatively little has been written that is useful or practically applicable.

Chambers recognises the need for experiential learning when he writes, “This is a good time to be alive as a development professional. For we seem to be in the middle of a quiet but hugely exciting revolution in learning and action.” (1997,xxiv)

It was in this spirit and out of this type of learning culture that the integrated conflict sensitivity framework” was developed. (Figure 1: CONFLICT SENSITIVITY FRAMEWORK)

The tool was developed in a series of training workshops carried out over about 10 years, with aid and development workers, conflict transformation practitioners and staff and representatives of international agencies and community-based organisations from thousands of different contexts.

It was written up formally in 2011 for the first time as part of a collaborative engagement between Modus Operandi, an institute associated with the University of Grenoble in France, and the ACTION Support Centre, a Johannesburg based conflict transformation organisation. The framework will be published by Modus Operandi as part of the outcomes of the collaborative enquiry they are coordinating.

The framework was originally developed as a way of explaining complex concepts and demonstrating how the thinking they contained could be applied in practice. It is intended

primarily for development practitioners and policy makers concerned about how to effectively implement all types of social change processes.

The tool is concerned with development in contexts deeply affected by social conflicts, particularly those that manifest at community level. It recognises and makes explicit the interconnections between different levels and forms of conflict and seeks to develop conflict sensitive responses to development needs that are informed by this conflict paradigm.

The framework works best when used or discussed by mixed groups of people representing a range of interventions, and developmental change theories.

A facilitated dialogue that uses the tool as a catalyst can frame a peer review type of process that enables the group to reflect together on each other's and their own interventions. This discussion can also serve as a useful element of a planning or monitoring approach within a broader development process.

Connecting Humanitarian Assistance, Development and Peacebuilding

The conflict and tensions associated with developmental change processes, particularly in fragile contexts, have led to the introduction of a number of key elements into development thinking. These elements provide an important thread that link the emergency responses of external agencies, often triggered in response to forms of violence, to more sustainable forms of development.

Conflict sensitive development practice suggests that it is possible to move beyond emergency response and basic needs driven development to a social transformation process that establishes new systems and structures. Recognising the links between development and peacebuilding entails a focus on the impact of developmental resources on the relationships and interconnections between people, groups and systems in a society.

A seminal piece of work in this regard is often referred to in the development sector as the

Do No Harm (DNH) approach. Developed as part of a CDA Inc. Collaborative Learning Project the DNH approach is associated with Mary B. Anderson, but comprises of the contributions of thousands of practitioners that have been involved in the project (CDA Inc. 2011). DNH sets out to influence developmental thinking by pointing out how the introduction of resources into a context affected by conflict can either reinforce or undermine the existing connectors and the dividers in that context. Using a divider-connector lens enables practitioners to better understand the potential and actual impact of their interventions on the conflicts in the context (Goddard, 2009).

In her own reflections on how DNH affected development and humanitarian aid practice Goddard points out that at the time of its introduction there was a great deal of concern about tools or approaches that would influence the agendas of organisations and agencies. In introducing DNH to humanitarian aid and development workers in trainings Goddard stresses that:

“We emphasized repeatedly, emphatically, and forcefully, that the tool was developed by examining the experiences of humanitarian aid and development workers and so it was NOT a tool for peacebuilding. We told people that peacebuilding requires a different set of skills. We told them that peacebuilding often requires a political solution, which DNH cannot offer. We told people all of these things. And then they used DNH for peacebuilding anyway. And they used it well.” (Goddard, 2009,1)

Development projects can be designed to achieve economic, social and political objectives that have long-term, medium-term and short-term benefits for the society. Miall points to the way in which conflict transformation approaches have been particularly useful to development workers. Miall notes:

“NGO practitioners advocate a sustained level of engagement over a longer time-period. They seek an in-depth understanding of the roots of conflict, working closely with people both within and outside the conflict parties. They seek to open a space for dialogue, sustain

local or national conferences and workshops on paths towards peace, identify opportunities for development and engage in peacebuilding, relationship-building and institution-building over the longer term. (Miall, 2005,14)

De Beer (1998,10) uses the notion of ‘structural transformation’ as one of the 5 key elements that form part of what he refers to as ‘another development’. In his definition he points to social relationships, economic activities and power relationships as those aspects of society requiring transformation. These fit well with the elements that are focused on in conflict transformation processes.

The framework for conflict sensitive programming presented in this paper seeks to respond to the longer-term needs of social transformation apparent to development workers. It also seeks to extend and give form to the way in which Do No Harm has been used by practitioners to develop peacebuilding programmes out of developmental and humanitarian aid interventions and the reciprocal way in which conflict transformation appears to contain elements that would be useful in the search for an alternative development paradigm.

Paradigm Shifts in What Constitutes Development

The dominance of World Bank and International Monetary Fund thinking on developmental paradigms often referred to as ‘the Washington consensus’, with the concurrent focus on economic indicators and the liberalisation of markets, had a major influence on policy formulation in relation to development in the 1980’s and early 1990’s.

Fine refers to this process in his provocative piece on social capital when he writes that, “In the mid-1990s, I came to the conclusion, on the basis of the new information-theoretic microfoundation ... that economics was colonising the other social sciences as never before”. (2002,18)

This set of economic theories became the basis for the related structural adjustment programmes that were often presented as being developmental in intention when they were first introduced. The measures that were imposed by the IMF and the World Bank on the recipients of economic development aid, or loans, included cutting spending by developing countries on key sectors such as health and education. Much of the impact of these policies appears to have been biased towards the debt payment related needs amongst countries in the North, despite the enormous poverty related development needs of the countries that introduced them.

Gore (2000) points out how the notion that a profit driven accumulation cycle would eventually result in a trickle down effect that would bring wealth to developing countries, and people in communities has not played out in practice. That these policies appear to all intent and purpose to have failed to impact on levels of poverty adds weight to the calls for a developmental paradigm shift.

The Notion of Social Capital

The late 1990's and early 2000's saw a rapid rise in the use of the notion of 'social capital'. Coleman had an early influence on the introduction of social capital thinking into economic and developmental debates, referring to it as 'a particular kind of resource available to an actor' (1999,16).

The emergence of the notion of social capital was at least partly in response to the clear failure of the neo-liberal development paradigm. It served as the entry point to an alternative paradigm suggested by then World Bank Head of Economic Research, Joseph Stiglitz presented as the 'post Washington consensus'. Stiglitz pointed out that neither the market nor the state could adequately address all of the poverty (and conflict) related problems associated with underdevelopment.

As Stiglitz puts it,

“The mantra holds that once property rights are appropriately assigned, the market will find an efficient equilibrium. But, remarkably, all this has been based on a matter of assertion and faith; there are few analytic results.” (1999,59)

This shift, at least at the level of theory, recognised that the market was not omnipotent and that there were roles for both the state and civil society in addressing poverty related developmental needs.

A Contested Paradigm

Many writers argue that social capital is used to describe and define too many different things, and in its entirety can sometimes appear to encapsulate so many things that it no longer has value (Fine, 2002).

Nevertheless the concept is useful when it recognises and attaches value to the interconnections and relationships between people and society, and acknowledges the manner in which the structure of these relationships and connections adds value to the ability of actors to take action and make informed decisions.

Social capital is thus inherent in the structure of the relationships in a society. Recognising the value of relationships and the people they involve represents a shift in paradigmatic thinking. Developmental thinking that recognises social capital as important implicitly acknowledges the importance of people, and the unique sets of factors inherent in each different developmental context.

The meteoric rise of social capital as the buzzword in development served mostly as a reminder that the hegemonic thinking of the Bretton Woods instruments was deeply flawed. Fine (2002, 24) goes so far as to suggest that a total rejection of the notion of social capital is the most appropriate response given the way it is being used.

Fine may however also recognise that all concepts are contested, and that the broader forms of struggle and social transformation are often reflected in the manner in which concepts are overtaken and then have to be reclaimed. In the notion of social capital we have the opportunity to articulate and explain some of the reasons why, and how, people are central to any useful developmental process.

A Real Alternative

In exploring the epistemological and ontological base on which theories of development are founded, and in searching for the theoretical base on which to argue for the need for a paradigm shift it is useful to draw again from Chambers, as part of a useful group of reflective practitioners or active scholars who are learning directly from their experiences within the social transformation sector.

Chambers (2005) emphasises that development studies needs a self-critical epistemological awareness. In other words, in the context of the researcher or the development worker, awareness is needed of how knowledge is affected by the lens through which it is viewed. The outlook of a researcher is affected by the context that is being viewed and by the socio-cultural background of who is doing the viewing (2005,83). This understanding of external actors implicitly rejects the notion of the neutral observer.

Given that external actors carry out much of development practice this insight becomes all the more pertinent. What we think we are seeing, particularly when we are in an environment that we are not familiar with, is as much the product of who we are and how we see as to what there is to see.

Amartya Sen (1987) also called for a rethink of what constitutes development. Sen has become a seminal thinker in the need to move beyond economic developmental indicators linked to growth and Gross Domestic Product and of recognising the importance of personal well-being, agency and freedom in the development of people.

Dudley Seers (1972), another influential scholar, talks about development in relation to three key factors, poverty, inequality and unemployment. This is certainly useful, if arguably limiting, and neatly ties together some of the structural issues that form part of the political economy that frame much of development.

Conflict Sensitive Approaches

The tensions and conflict that inevitably arise out of poverty alleviation processes, and the consequences of shifting power and changing relations as one seeks to address issues of inequality, poverty and unemployment are also not purely an economic issue. It is this complexity that opens the opportunity for social change theories and notions of transformation to reassert their value alongside the powerful influence of economics. Clements (2005) specifically calls for making all development policies and programmes conflict sensitive.

In the publication developed out of an expert group meeting called together by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, highly influential within UN and UNDP thinking, Hemmati (2007) talks about how the expert group discussions were specifically prompted by a desire to understand more clearly how dialogue processes could help to overcome obstacles that impede the implementation of the United Nations development agenda. This included how to make development more conflict sensitive, and how to build ownership and a sense of belonging in stressed communities.

The strong influence of conflict sensitive thinking on more recent development approaches may provide a complementary opportunity for bringing conflict transformation theory into the heart of the developmental debate.

Gaigals and Leonhardt (2001) draw attention to how governmental and non-governmental actors are involved in processes that recognise the need for conflict-sensitive approaches to development and humanitarian assistance and are “consequently attempting to develop the theoretical underpinnings as well as the structural prerequisites for integrating conflict-sensitive

perspectives into development assistance” (2001,4).

The shifts in thinking about development within agencies and institutions responsible for implementing development programmes created a need for a framework that is engaging and effective at catalysing dialogue that assists in shifting the paradigm through which people are thinking about resources, power and their relationship to the people affected. It was in response to and out of this need that the following contribution was developed. It serves as both a theoretical framework for thinking about development as well as a tool for dialogue that can be used to stimulate thinking within a group of humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding practitioners.

The Integrated Framework

Underlying Hypothesis

The underlying hypothesis of this approach is that resources that are brought into a fragile or conflictual context can end up exacerbating existing tensions and can even provide the trigger that reignites open conflict and violence.

In all contexts development resources shift power and in so doing affect existing forms of structural control and influence, and change systems that affect the people involved. If the introduction of new resources is not carefully considered their introduction will inevitably initiate unforeseen consequences that may undermine the stated values and intentions of the implementing groups.

These same resources can however also be used to foster connections between people, and can be used to respond to the short term needs in a manner that also rebuilds the longer term desires of a society of people who seek to define and contribute to their own developmental path.

Conflict Theory

The tool draws from conflict theory that emphasises the interconnections between short and long term responses to conflict, and the essential linking of responses to conflict to a long-

term development perspective. This understanding is strongly rooted in a conflict transformation approach.

The tool provides a useful framework for linking development and humanitarian efforts to a conflict response that in its application shifts thinking beyond development and conflict resolution to a deeper understanding of society and for the need to focus on the transformation of the underlying contextual dynamics.

This understanding is well articulated by practitioner scholars including Chris Mitchell (Mitchell, 2002). Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005) are also led by the complexity of contemporary conflicts in their support for more comprehensive forms of engagement. Ramsbotham et al. (2005, 27-28) propose that long-term peacebuilders have to address the deeper sources of conflict and that interventions might need to include contextual change at international level, structural change at the level of the state, relational change between the parties to a conflict and cultural change at all levels.

Such an approach emphasises and underlines the integrated multilevel approaches to conflict transformation put forward by Lederach (1997, 79) in his outline of the dual lenses of structure and procedure required for effective conflict transformation.

In his explanation of social conflict Azar (1990, 7-10) makes the links between group identity formation, the desire for or denial of basic human needs, repressive or incompetent internal systems of governance and dependent international relations, and puts these forward as comprising the various factors that give rise to protracted conflict within a society. Conflict transformation by implication should focus on the relationships between and within groups and the individuals that identify with these groups, as well as the extent to which the relations between and their access to the basic needs that are often more related to development processes.

Galtung (2000) also articulates the contribution of developmental needs to peacebuilding in his description of a positive peace that is about both the absence of violence, and the presence of values and systems that ensure the fulfillment of basic needs.

The work of Lederach is perhaps most strongly associated with the growing emphasis that is being placed on the concept of conflict transformation. In 'Preparing for Peace' Lederach argues that conflict transformation has "emerged in the search for an adequate language to explain the peacemaking venture" (1995a, 17).

Lederach proposes that the concept of conflict transformation responds more effectively to the dynamic nature of society that social scientists such as Coleman (1956) and Boulding (1962) have suggested is an important part of understanding social conflict.

Lederach places these interconnections between systems and relationships at the core of his contribution. Using a model of nested paradigms that draw from the work of Marie Dugan and other writers Lederach (1997, 80) provides an integrated framework for understanding conflict and building peace that links the immediate issues that manifest as crisis or visible conflict with the latent, deeper conflicts that lie within the relationships, subsystems and overarching systemic frameworks that form part of the context. This set of 'nested paradigms' is reflected in the tool.

In further explaining his preference for taking an engagement with conflict beyond resolution Lederach (1995b) argues that the concept of conflict resolution,

"perhaps unintentionally ... carries the connotation of a bias toward 'ending' a given crisis or at least its outward expression, without being sufficiently concerned with the deeper structural, cultural, and long-term relational aspects of conflict."(Lederach, 1995b, 201)

In an interesting analysis of the two concepts of resolution and transformation Mitchell (2002, 19), who acknowledges that his initial position was skeptical of any major differences,

recognises in his conclusion that there is at least one significant difference that goes beyond emphasis in approach. As Mitchell points out conflict transformation assumes that structural change will necessarily form part of the conditions by which an effective outcome to a given conflict will be found.

Furthermore Mitchell (2002, 20) argues that conflict transformation recognises that the processes of rebuilding relationships will not automatically take place once the immediate crisis surrounding a conflict is diffused. Relationships have to be deliberately rebuilt through directed effort. Mitchell recognises the interdependence of these levels of change and concludes that without both of these aspects either one is unlikely to head off future tensions and the return of conflict and crisis.

Lederach suggests we need to work together to create an integrated framework:

“Structure suggests the need to think *comprehensively* about the affected population and *systematically* about the issues. Process underscores the necessity of thinking creatively about the *progression* of conflict and the *sustainability* of its transformation by *linking* roles, functions, and activities in an integrated manner.” (Lederach, 1997, 79)

Lederach (1997, 82) takes his model of nested paradigms further in explaining that the concept of conflict transformation refers to change that works at both a descriptive and a prescriptive level. Descriptively it refers to the effects that social conflict brings about. Prescriptively it refers to the deliberate interventions that are made in response to conflict, in an effort to direct the dynamics of conflict in a particular direction.

The Conflict Sensitivity Framework

Figure 1: The Conflict Sensitivity Framework

This analytical framework provides ways of understanding how humanitarian and development resources can be consciously used to conceptualise and plan developmental

processes that impact deliberately on conflict dynamics in support of a social conflict transformation agenda.

The Framework also resonates well with the “Do No Harm” approach to development associated with Mary B. Andersen (Andersen, 1999) and builds on the analytical tools outlined in the “Working with Conflict – Skills and Strategies for Action” co-authored by Fisher et al. (2000). While the framework itself does not outline the details of what constitutes a thorough conflict analysis in its presentation it would include a breakdown of all of the important historical, relational, attitudinal, behavioural, systemic and structural elements, and the related issues of power, interests and needs that could form part of such an analysis.

By providing a graphic description of this social transformation paradigm relief workers and development and peace practitioners have a model that can serve as a practical and self-reflective planning and monitoring tool that assists in finding the complementarity in their approaches, and that amplifies the need for a shared vision of the long term desired future.

Explanation and Diagram

The model can be used in several ways but serves its most useful purpose as a framework for reflecting and analysing the conceptual thinking behind a programming intervention. In this sense it provides an additional analytical component to planning and monitoring that turns the lens away from the context and onto the programme and the implementing organisation.

At the same time it outlines the various components that require attention in thinking about what constitutes an effective intervention in a context deeply affected by various forms of conflict. In so doing the framework assists practitioners and policy makers to think more deeply, and in a more integrated way, about the intended outcomes of their engagement.

Used as a discussion starter and as a reflective or inwardly focused tool of analysis the framework enables groups to focus on several areas of questions pertinent to a conflict sensitive intervention:

Conflict analysis

- Has it been done?
- What areas has it focused on?
- Has it included an analysis of the causes and consequences of any violence?
- Has it included an analysis of the underlying latent conflicts and the existing connectors and dividers in the social fabric?

Values and Principles

- Are the values and principles of the implementing team clearly articulated, commonly understood and discussed in relation to each aspect of the programme?

Vision

- Is there a shared vision of the future, or at least ongoing dialogue about the different visions?
- Does this vision guide the process and approach to programming and implementation?

Linking time frames

- Are short-term actions guided and informed by their contribution to longer-term goals and objectives?

Linking forms of action

- Do short-term responses contain elements in form and approach that assist in alleviating the consequences of conflict and violence?
- Is the programme consciously engaging with and addressing the causes of the conflict?
- Does the programme explore ways in which activities can assist in building the social fabric of the society and in contributing to a longer-term conflict transformation agenda?

Collaboration and Coordination

- Is the implementing group aware of and in contact with other organisations in the context doing similar work, with whom it could be working more closely to establish how each of the different interventions fit together and complement each other?

Figure 1 CONFLICT SENSITIVITY FRAMEWORK

An Example of the Framework Applied in Practice

As part of a training workshop on conflict sensitive thinking the framework was introduced to a set of representatives from the United Nations country team, in a workshop organised by the United Nations Development Programme Kenya country office. The tool was introduced and further developed with a mixed group of practitioners and policy makers working for UN agencies and partner organisations in the post-election conflict context of Kenya.

Context Outline

The announcement of the results of the December 27, 2007 Kenyan election was followed by unprecedented and widespread violence that devastated Kenyan society and shocked the world. Within hours of the announcement of the results on December 30th, extreme violence erupted in most parts of the country. Widespread mob and police violence in the weeks that followed left over 1,000 people dead (Wachira, 2010).

Over half a million were on the move, displaced from their farms and homes both in the rural areas and urban centres. As law and order quickly broke down, the dispute among the political leaders created a leadership and power vacuum, ruling out any acceptable official response. The survival of Kenya as a country was severely threatened (Wachira, 2010).

This eruption of violence led many development stakeholders and peacebuilding practitioners to think long and hard about the effectiveness of their work. Many of the development gains that had been made were swept aside in the wake of the violence. The rapid escalation of the conflict and the destruction that followed brought with it a realisation that much of the development work that had taken place had either ignored or simply been unaware of the extent of the latent conflicts and deep rooted tensions that characterised Kenyan society.

In response to this realisation UNDP embarked on a process aimed at strengthening their own capacity and those of their partners to enable a more effective response to the residual tensions and ongoing underlying conflicts.

Conflict Sensitive Development Workshops

The following extract is taken from the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the subsequent workshops organised by UNDP.

These ToR articulate the thinking behind the response that led to the introduction of the Integrated Framework:

“Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive approach encompassing short-term and long-term political, diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights, developmental, institutional and other measures to address prevention.

To respond to this context and ensure that the UN system’s multifaceted development programmes and activities contribute to the prevention of conflict by design rather than default, in January 2010 the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Kenya endorsed

the UN Conceptual and Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention in Kenya, which adopts the Community Security and Social Cohesion (CSSC) approach as the framework for UN support for conflict prevention during the UNDAF period 2009-2013.

The CSS approach includes enhancing local governance and strengthening institutions; strengthening the rule of law and security sector governance; conflict prevention and peace building; targeting livelihoods; improving the community environment and enhancing service delivery; addressing the tools of violence; and a public health approach to crime and violence.” (UNDP Kenya Country Team, Workshop ToR, 2010)

Working with a group of representatives from community-based organisations, local partners and the UNDP country team, the Conflict sensitivity Framework formed part of a strategic review and capacity building workshop. This workshop focused on influencing the development interventions of the UNDP and its partners to become more conflict sensitive.

The Dialogue Process

The process that was followed began by introducing the framework into the context of a workshop that had its own wider agenda, and in which a number of introductory and relationship building processes had set out to create the space for a discussion characterised by some level of trust and openness.

After the framework was introduced participants were asked to relate the theories contained in the framework to their own practical experiences and the real programming examples that they were involved with. The key question was whether or not the forms of thinking contained within the framework were already part of the planning and monitoring processes or not.

Participants then worked in groups of mixed representatives working their way steadily through a series of questions related to the framework and outlined in this paper in the narrative description of the framework. Critical and analytical insights that emerged in the small group discussions were then fed back into the whole group. In addition participants were asked to suggest ways in which the framework could be strengthened.

In the workshop some time was then allocated to isolate the challenges involved in shifting programmes and in encouraging organisations to align themselves more closely to the conflict sensitive approach suggested by the framework. More group work then looked at ways in which these challenges could be overcome, particularly with a more supportive and better coordinated approach between stakeholders.

Process Outcomes

The discussion that took place amongst participants from the various UNDP programmes that formed part of the Country Team was lively and animated. In reflecting on their work several participants cited examples of how their programmes appeared to ignore several elements contained within the framework.

In particular many programmes failed to carry out any kind of meaningful conflict analysis of the local context within which they were working. Most were overly reliant on the overarching UN Development Assistance Framework, that contained some conflict analysis, but that was usually carried out by external consultants and scarcely referred to in the programming cycle.

The relatively short-term programming cycle, constrained by budget cycles and bound by project agreements that were more focused on outputs than process, also worked against long term forms of development thinking. Participants recognised this as an internal systems fault that undermined the potential of programme interventions to contribute to deeper social transformation.

Throughout the discussions it also became clear that while individuals could offer examples of the kinds of values and principles they believed informed the developmental approach these were by no means shared across the Country Team. This resulted in lively disagreement and a strong call to the senior UNDP management to engage staff more vigorously in developing a common value-based approach to each of the country programmes component parts.

An initial set of principles and values was developed that will be used to inform a wider discussion within the institution. These included values of empowerment, recognition of diversity, valuing local knowledge, respect and tolerance. Some of the principles concerned the need for bottom-up approaches to development, a need to employ a connectors and dividers lens in anticipating and monitoring programme impact and an outline of the elements that should be included in an analysis of the conflict context.

The most telling part of the discussion concerned that surrounding the different visions of the participants. It became clear that there were widely different developmental paradigms within the group, and that the differences underlying these paradigms had never previously been discussed. While many in the group were more concerned with economic development, focused on meeting the basic needs of the people they were working with, others introduced elements to the vision that were more focused on the relational aspects of what a developmental vision might contain. Issues of gender relations, the empowerment of marginalised groups and what these issues would mean for a future society, as well as concerns around sustainability and the protection of local resources also arose as subsets of the debate.

While much of this discussion was inconclusive it served the useful purpose of pointing out and making explicit some of the underlying considerations critical to a conflict sensitive development intervention. As with all organisational change processes the workshop, and the

critical discussions that it raised, served more as an initiator of the deeper more institutional change processes that will need to follow.

Recommendations Emerging

The workshop culminated in a series of recommendations to organisation representatives not present at the workshop. Recommendations were developed that aimed to address both the analytical gaps and the internal systems challenges, backed up and supported by some of the issues presented and discussed in the workshop.

Participants also undertook to recreate some of the discussions from the workshop within their programme teams, using some of the models and frameworks that were introduced in the workshop. These discussions would be focused particularly on those areas concerned with discussing the values and principles that informed the programme as well as the need for greater clarity on the developmental paradigm informing the overall vision of the country team.

These recommendations and commitments were taken back for further discussion, in an effort to try and influence development planning and implementation approaches beyond the participants themselves.

Critical Discussion

The Framework has been well received in a number of different contexts though it also presents those who find it useful with a broader challenge linked to the complexity of institutional change processes. The framework intentionally links internal organisational change processes to the developmental agenda itself. If these internal change processes can become part of the broader planning process then the Conflict Sensitivity Framework would provide a useful shared point of reference for encapsulating the range of issues that need to be considered as part of a conflict sensitive approach.

The value of the framework rests on the dialogue processes that it has the ability to generate and is perhaps overly reliant on the self-reflective capacity that it requires in order to really make a difference. This ability to reflect on practice requires some degree of honesty and openness, which is often missing at an institutional level. The pressures of time and limited resources are likely to influence practitioners to cover up examples of poor practice. This limits the ability of institutions to learn from themselves.

As with all tools the value of the conflict sensitivity framework is also dependent partly on how it is applied in practice. Goddard points out the dangers of models that seek to provide solutions that can be applied across several contexts. Goddard argues that,

“There is no formulaic approach to using any tool. A tool cannot substitute for knowledge or thinking, but it is something a thinking person uses to do better work.” (Goddard, 2009, 5)

This general insight applies equally to the potential value and limitations of the Conflict Sensitivity Framework. As such it serves only to provide additional areas of focus in the consideration of what a more conflict sensitive, more transformative approach to development might entail.

Conclusion

In the efforts to present a theoretical framework for conflict sensitivity that integrates an alternative developmental paradigm with conflict theory this contribution has set out to begin a debate that will need to continue beyond the confines of this paper.

The intention of the framework is to integrate conflict and development thinking at the theoretical level while simultaneously presenting a graphic model that has value in its application as a dialogue catalyst.

As trainers and dialogue facilitators work with development practitioners to initiate and stimulate deeper conversations about the nexus between conflict and development new insights and ideas will emerge. The framework presented here will be discussed in more detail within the Modus Operandi collaboration and will inevitably be strengthened and sharpened as a result.

As it is discussed and debated in other forums gaps in its thinking and flaws in the conceptual base on which it is founded will no doubt be uncovered. This ongoing development of the framework itself, and the value it has as a tool that can be applied is both expected and welcomed.

In keeping with the praxis cycle approach to learning outlined earlier in this paper it is hoped that practitioners and academics alike will seek ways of improving, critiquing and utilising the alternative forms of thinking and action that it seeks to promote.

Indeed it is this process that lies at the heart of what is most required in the reflective learning environment that is so central to a more conflict sensitive alternative paradigm for development and social transformation.

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Conceptual Framework for Planning a Proactive Intervention - Beyond Analysis

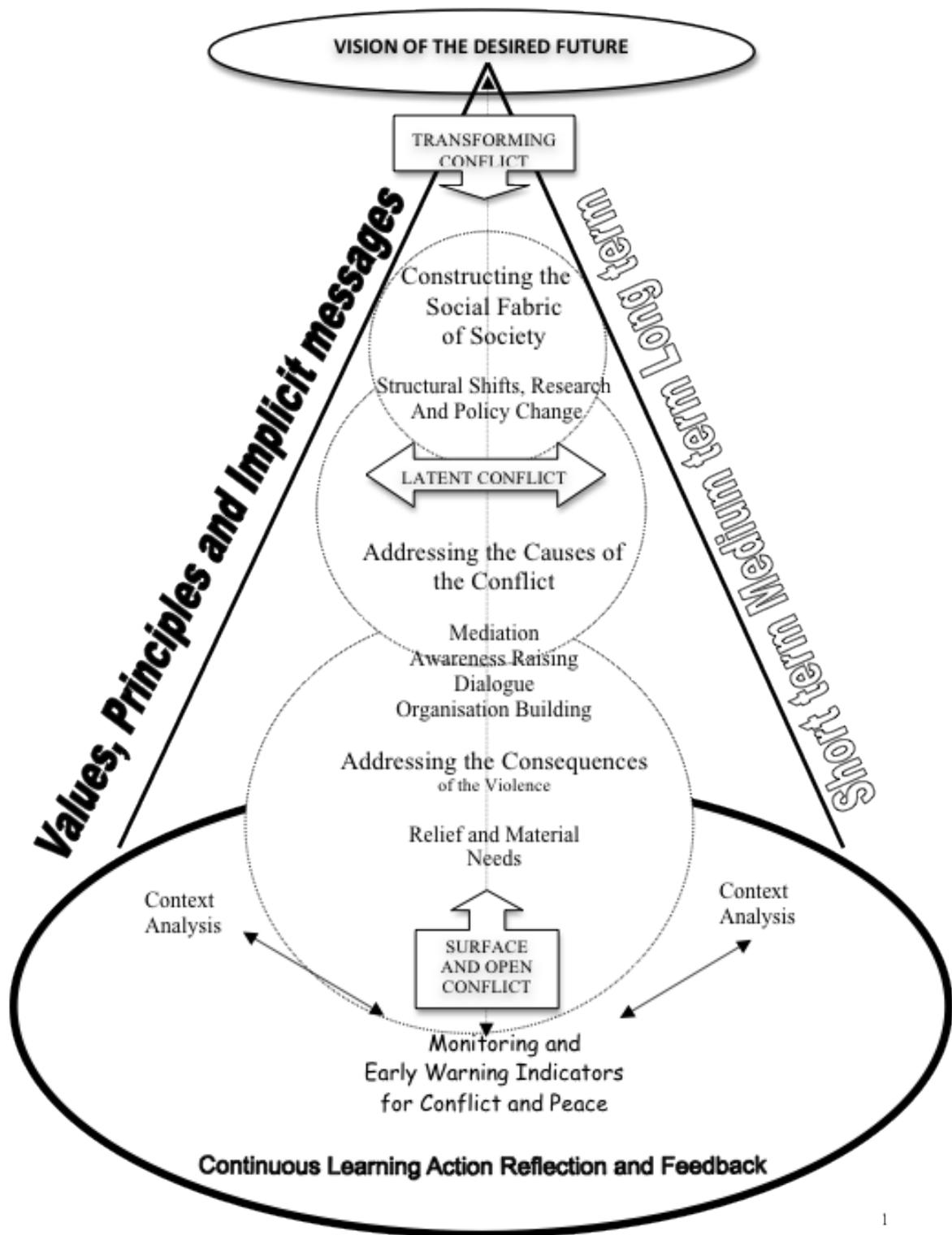


Figure 1 CONFLICT SENSITIVITY FRAMEWORK