Peace and Conflict Sensitive Programming

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Abstract: The paper discusses Peace and Conflict Sensitivity Programming and its relevance to programming of an intervention in conflict setting. The crux of the argument is Peace and Conflict Sensitive Programming (PCSP) is the only option for agencies operating in conflict regions to contribute to peacebuilding and to avoid exacerbating the violent conflict through their operations. This argument is premised on the notion that interventions in conflict areas are never neutral. Rather they have the potentials to exacerbate conflict or build peace. The paper advances three categories of preconditions for constructive interventions in conflict context. These include: institutional capacity for PCSP, peace and conflict sensitivity of the entire programming process, and external conditions. This provides a framework for evaluating the contributions of agencies working in conflict situations.

1. Introduction

The realization of the relationship between intervention and its context is not new in the literature. Scholars, practitioners, and donors alike have realized the need to ensure that intervention in conflict settings support peace rather than exacerbate conflict. The volume of scholarly works exploring the interaction of intervention programming and conflict context abound. This is because over the last decade there has been a growing realization that humanitarian assistance [and other intervention] sometimes feeds conflict rather than alleviates it, and that development aid sometimes exacerbates tensions. This has led to the development of tools to understand the relationship between programming and conflict.1 Hence the coining of terms such as 'conflict-sensitive' or 'conflict sensitivity' which has been popular in development practice since 1999 (Barbolet, et al,
The terms describe a methodology, framework, approach to mainstream concerns for peacebuilding and avoidance of conflict exacerbation through intervention initiatives in settings of open conflict involving the use of force. The term is traceable largely to literature and thinking on Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment—PCIA—(a term coined by Kenneth Bush in 1996) also Mary Anderson’s work, ‘Do No Harm’, the writing of Jonathan Goodhand and macro conflict assessment work undertaken by DFID, USAID, the World Bank and other donors.

Bush (1998) strongly argues that in conflict settings, development [and by extension, other forms of intervention] does not necessarily translate to peace. According to him, development introduces new dynamics into the conflict environment. These dynamics can either support or oppose conflict or peace. In the event that the dynamics support conflict, the consequence is triggering, exacerbating, or escalating conflict. The probability of interventions to support conflict is seen in its potential to challenge traditional values or authority structures, to disrupt gender, or other socially determined roles, and to raise the stakes of economic competition, creating “winners” and “losers.” He argues further that the politics of project sitting, selection of beneficiaries and the whole process of project planning, implementation and monitoring has serious implications for peace and conflict dynamics in a community experiencing violent conflict. A well-conceived, innocently executed intervention can tilt the scale of events in favor of conflict in a given locale. The mild outcome of this could be the strengthening of feelings of hatred, suspicion, prejudice, marginalization, superiority, inferiority among groups. A more serious outcome could be violent or armed conflict. Apart from its potential to support conflict, interventions can have peace building impacts in an environment. This is possible when such initiatives diffuse inter group tension through encouraging positive behaviors among groups. For instance, initiatives may foster actions or projects that are inclusive of hostile groups. Alternatively, it may include
actions that are exclusively building peace. But unless there is a systematic way of measuring such impacts such positive contributions may be unavailable to inform future interventions.

Several other terms have been used to describe similar methodologies, frameworks, approaches or a set of tools to Bush’s PCIA and Barbolet, *et al’s* Conflict Sensitivity. Such terminologies include Conflict Impact Assessment; Conflict Sensitive Programming; Peace and Conflict Development Analysis; Conflict Impact Assessment System; Conflict Sensitive Approaches; Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) –“Do no Harm”; Conflict Assessment; Conflict Risk Analysis; Peace & Conflict Assessment Model (PCA); Strategic Conflict Assessment; and Conflict Development Analysis

Although “...all users and promoters of the various concepts and terminologies have their own opinions” and probably biases as well (Barbolet *et al*, 2005). The guiding principles and concerns expounded by these methodologies are essentially the same. Their overarching objective is the need to program intervention in a violence-prone area in a way that the intervention reduces, rather than exacerbates, the violence on one hand. The other side of the coin of this objective is the need to program their intervention in a way that the intervention builds upon, rather than weakens or destroys, the existing fragile peace in the conflict setting. This was informed by the appreciation of the interaction of intervention and conflict context.

The assumptions of such frameworks are that intervention in conflict situations is never neutral; rather they have measurable impacts on the structures and processes of peace and conflict of the context. Also the context impacts the programming of the intervention. These bi-directional intervention-context interactions can either be negative, conflict exacerbating impacts or positive, peacebuilding impacts. Hence the need to be sensitive to peace and conflict issues in programming intervention in conflict-prone setting. This is peace and conflict sensitive programming. Bush’s PCIA and its derivatives (including Barbolet, *et al’s* Conflict Sensitivity) may then be seen as

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1 Bush, 2005
methods, means, or approaches of achieving peace and conflict sensitive programming.

Barbolet, et al, describe conflict sensitivity as the capacity of an organization to understand the [conflict] context in which it operates; understand the interaction between its operations and the [conflict] context; and act upon this understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on the (conflict) context (Resource Pack, 2004). However, I prefer the term peace and conflict sensitivity which was also used by Bush (2005: 18) to conflict sensitivity because the phrasing of the latter seems to give more attention to conflict than peace. This sentiment informed my use of the term “peace and conflict sensitive programming” in this article. I do not intend to create yet another terminology in addition to the plethora of terminologies already available. Peace and conflict sensitive programming, thus, is the programming of an intervention in a way that is sensitive to the potential but inevitable interaction between an intervention and its context. It goes beyond mere sensitivity to programming the intervention in a way to support peace (positive impact) rather than exacerbate conflict (negative impact).

The paper is organized into five parts. Firstly, it traces the origin and introduces peace and conflict sensitive programming. Part two explores the interaction between conflict contexts and interventions, moving on to the preconditions for constructively intervening in a conflict zone (i.e. the PCSP Framework). While the fourth part discusses threats to mainstreaming peace and conflict sensitive programming in interventions. The final part offers some concluding comments.

2. Conflict Contexts and Intervention

Conflict context refers to the operating environment, i.e. geographical or social environment where conflict exists. It ranges from the micro, meso and macro level, e.g. community, district/province, region, country. A conflict context comprises of actors, causes, profile and dynamics (The Resource Pack, 2004). A context has three elements namely, actors, causes, profile and dynamics. Actors refer to individuals, groups, institutions who contribute to conflict,
who are affected by conflict (positively or negatively), and/or involved in dealing with conflict. Interests, goals, positions, capacities and relationships with other actors differentiate actors from one another. Causes of conflict refer to factors that contribute to people’s grievances. These may be structural, proximate or triggers. Structural factors are those pervasive factors that have been built into the policies, structures and fabric of a society and which may increase the likelihood of violence. Proximate factors are those that make for an atmosphere conducive for violent conflict or its escalation. While triggers are single acts, events, or their anticipation that sets off or escalate violent conflict. Conflict profile is a brief characterization of the context in which an intervention will be situated. Including its, political, economic, socio-cultural context, emergent issues, and history of conflict. Conflict dynamics refer to the interaction between conflict causes, actors and profile. It includes current conflict trends, windows of opportunity and scenarios that can be developed from the analyses of the causes, actors and profile of conflict (The Resource Pack, 2004).

Intervention as used here refers to a range of deliberate initiatives or activities, which aim at positively influencing a conflict situation to forestall exacerbation of conflict and bring about a reduction in violent conflict behaviors. In other words, an intervention has the inherent goal of influencing the conflict situation positively, to build peace and deescalate violent conflict. Hence peacebuilding and conflict transformation are critical goals of intervention in settings characterized by violent conflict. An intervention may be developmental, peacebuilding, or humanitarian which may be very small, very large, at project level or structural level. Development intervention is seen as 'long-term efforts aimed at bringing improvements in the economic, political, and social status, environmental stability and quality of life of the population especially the poor and disadvantaged.'

Humanitarian assistance on the other hand refers to 'activities designed to rapidly reduce human suffering in emergency situations, especially when local authorities are unable or unwilling to provide relief. While

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1 Resource Pack, 2004
2 Resource Pack, 2004
peacebuilding interventions are measures designed to consolidate peaceful relations and strengthen viable political, socio-economic, and cultural institutions capable of mediating conflict, as well as strengthen other mechanisms that will either create or support the creation of necessary conditions for sustained peace.\footnote{Resource Pack, 2004} Whichever form it takes, an intervention has three distinct stages—planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Traditional planning means the process through which problems are identified, their causal linkages identified and analyzed, and effective solutions developed. Planning usually inform development of a program with predefined objectives, activities, implementation process and verifiable indicators of progress. Traditional implementation refers to the ‘...process of realizing objectives by enacting the activities designed in the planning process...’ \footnote{Introduction to the Resource Pact, 2004: 4} that is, the operationalisation of the proposal. It involves regular progress reviews to enable plans to be adjusted if necessary. Traditional monitoring examines a project’s actual outputs and impacts at the implementation stage. It provides project team with information to assess progress in meeting project objectives, and adjust implementation activities if need be. Data generated at monitoring stage can be useful during project evaluation. Traditional evaluation is a one-off assessment, which usually takes place at the end of a project, although it can be undertaken to review a project mid-way. It uses systematically applied objective criteria to assess an ongoing or completed project, its design, implementation and overall results in the light of its stated goals and objectives.

Every stage of an intervention (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) interacts with each element (actors, causes, profile and dynamics) of its contexts, and vice versa. This means that a bi-directional relationship exists between a stage of the intervention and an element of the context in which it is situated\footnote{.}. These bi-directional interactions between each of the three stages of the
intervention and each of the four basic elements of conflict context are captured in the conceptual framework below.

**MATRIX OF POTENTIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN AN INTERVENTION AND ITS CONTEXT**

It is in this emergent loop of multi-layered bi-directional interactions (in the conceptual framework above) that an intervention’s potential to support peace (positive impact) or conflict (negative impact) in a conflict setting lies. This is the dilemma of intervention in conflict situation. Each of the elements of the context can impact and be impacted, positively or negatively, by each stage of the process of the intervention. From the framework, there are twenty-four possible interactions between intervention and conflict context. This is shown in the matrices below.

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<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Planning Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
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<td>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>PA—AP MEA—AME PC—CP PPr—PrP MEP—PME PD—DP MED—DME</td>
<td>IA—AI IC—CI IPr—PrI ID—DI</td>
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<td>Implementation</td>
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During the planning stage of an intervention, the planning may impact on the actors (PA) and the actors may also impact on the planning (AP). PA may be positive or negative, same goes for AP. In essence, in planning—actors interaction, there are four potential impacts: positive planning—actors (+PA) impact; positive actors—planning (+AP) impact; negative planning—actors impact (-PA); and negative actors—planning (-AP) impact. +PA describes a situation where the planning of an intervention has a positive impact on the actors in a conflict; while +AP is a situation where the actors impact positively on the planning of an intervention. Both –PA and -AP and all other interactions are similarly explained.

Based on this model, the planning stage of an intervention has sixteen potential impacts between planning and actors. These potential impacts have equal number (eight each) of both positive and negative charges. Similar case can be made for other stages (implementation and monitoring and evaluation) as well, bringing the total number of potential impacts between intervention and contexts to forty-eight—twenty four potential positive and twenty-four potential negative impacts. The implication of this is that an intervention carries equal potential to contribute positively or negatively to a given conflict context. However, unlike pure mathematical equation, this does not make an intervention neutral. Similarly, unlike mathematical rules, two negative impacts do not result in a positive impact; rather it may be a squared negative. Also, a negative and positive impact do not automatically become a negative impact (comforting), the outcome may be positive or negative.

As argued by Bush, the most important thing in intervening in conflict situation is the how of an intervention, rather than the what or even the who. If the how is peace and conflict sensitive (which significantly derives from the peace and conflict capacities of the who—agencies and its staff and its operations), then the potential interactions will likely be more positive than negative. The potential of intervention to either support peace building or exacerbate conflicts in conflict settings has implications for the policy and practice of interventions in conflict-affected settings.
Therefore this should be taken into consideration when planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating interventions. I suggest that all the stages of a project should be peace and conflict sensitive in order to ensure positive contributions of such intervention to the context. This may be the only way an agency can ensure that it does some good and does no harm with its intervention. The relationship between interventions and conflict context implies that agencies intervening in conflict context have the potential to either support peace or conflict. However, for an agency to contribute positively to the conflict situation, it must be peace and conflict sensitive itself and in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its interventions. The next section discusses what mainstreaming peace and conflict sensitive programming may be.

3. Mainstreaming Peace and Conflict Sensitivity

An organization or agency (government, donor, or civil society) intervening in a conflict setting, must mainstream peace and conflict sensitivity within its organizational structure or institutional context and the programming of its intervention. Barbolet, et al (2005: 6) propose that mainstreaming peace and conflict sensitivity in institutional context means “...integrating the appropriate attitudes, approaches, tools and expertise into the organization’s culture, systems, processes and work, such that conflict sensitivity is applied not just to isolated projects but becomes an entire organizational ethos.” A five-pillar framework for mainstreaming peace and conflict sensitivity in agencies working in conflict areas includes: institutional commitment; willingness to make changes in organizational culture and institutional structure; support for capacity development; conducive external relationships; and accountability mechanisms (Lange 2004). However, such an organization may need to gain a right perspective of its essence before it may be able to mainstream peace and conflict sensitivity in its culture and structure. This means realizing that it is...

1 Barbolet, et al
working in a life and death situation where its decisions, indecisions, actions and inactions may have grievous consequences. Once an intervening agency gains this perspective of its role in the conflict context and commits to it, its ultimate goal then almost naturally becomes increasing the chances for life and reducing the likelihood of death. That is, it becomes genuinely inspired to commit to contributing positively to the conflict situation. Its commitment must be to transform the conflict and build peace in the context of its intervention. The kind of commitment required is comparable to that epitomized by two institutions working in life and/or death situation, namely medical institutions fighting an epidemic and military forces in an armed conflict or war situation. PCSP requires that agencies working in conflict zones demonstrate the commitment of armed forces to successful military campaign and that of a health organization to eradicating an epidemic. Transforming conflict and building peace through intervention (a peace venture) should be taken as seriously as war ventures. Anything short of that is not good enough. Constructive conflict transformation and peacebuilding are the ultimate goal—the ‘victory’—of an agency intervening in conflict. Peace and conflict sensitive intervention projects and associated activities (dialogue, problem-solving workshop, mediation, negotiation, conflict analysis workshop, and the like) are the ‘weapons’ in the arsenal for prosecuting its campaign. After gaining this perspective, an agency may then see the need and become genuinely willing to make necessary changes in its organizational culture and institutional structure to mainstream peace and conflict sensitivity.

Gaining a right perspective and commitment to its essence may inspire organizational ‘re-culturing’ as well as restructuring for a more effective and efficient peace and conflict sensitive service delivery. Support for capacity development for peace and conflict sensitive programming becomes the next step. This may call for training its staff specialized areas of peace and conflict sensitive programming. High specialization is not uncommon for similar institution—the military and health workers—working in life and death situations. Galtung also has drawn similarities between peace workers and traditional or
cultural humanitarian service providers like social workers, religious leaders, mothers, fathers, teachers, etc. He argues further that if peace workers demonstrate similar commitment, discipline and focus as military personnel in war ventures the chances of building peace is significantly increased. Furthermore, an agency working in conflict zone must strive to maintain conducive external relationships with all stakeholders in the conflict. A central concern here is relating with all stakeholders in such a way to be seen as professional, multipartial and thus earn their trust and respect. Closely linked to this is a transparent and adequate accountability mechanism for organization. It is essential that an agency intervening in conflict have transparent accountability mechanism because resources naturally breed contentions. Since intervention is basically about allocation of resources, therefore, contentions for resources become acute in the context of conflict. Hence, accountability that reduces suspicions, mistrust, and distrust among conflict parties and other stakeholders in the context is a critical component of the framework for mainstreaming peace and conflict sensitivity. Once an organization has the culture of transparent accountability, it has the moral right to expect and demand same from the beneficiaries of its initiatives.

Having satisfied the above conditions, an organization is said to have mainstreamed peace and conflict sensitivity into its structure and institutional culture. Hence it now has a capacity for PCSP. This will reflect in peace and conflict sensitivity of institutional custom, policy and a framework for peace and conflict sensitive programming for its field operations. The capacity will also be seen in a resonance between its policy and field practice and a monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that the policy and framework are strictly complied with. Bush (2005) argues for the need to develop the institutional capacity of an organization working in conflict. This is essential because this capacity has a direct bearing on the programming of intervention. ‘Out-sourcing’ peace and conflict sensitive programming short-circuits the development of necessary capacities to integrate peace and conflict sensitivity into the project cycle, he insists. Bush discusses some of the
problems associated with reliance on external expertise for peace and conflict sensitive programming. First, the transactional cash-for-product relationship between the agency (buyer) and consultant peace and conflict sensitive programmer (seller) may dampen the impact on critical findings. Thereby inhibiting changes that may be necessary to genuinely mainstream PCSP in the entire intervention (if it is a peace and conflict sensitive planning or implementation) or unable to inform future intervention (peace and conflict sensitive evaluation). Second, it gives project or program managers an opportunity to deny or bury any negative assessments or evaluation of an intervention. Furthermore, it inhibits the development of peace and conflict sensitivity capacity within an organization and its partners; and finally, ‘…it excludes genuine participation of those affected by the interventions being evaluated’ (Bush 2005:10).

Having mainstreamed peace and conflict sensitivity in its institutional context, an organization working in conflict must also mainstream it in the programming of its intervention. Peace and conflict sensitive programming is to understand the context for which intervention is planned, understand the interactions between its intervention processes and conflict context, and act upon this understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts through peace and conflict sensitive planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Barbolet, et al. (2005). In other words, peace and conflict sensitive programming is integrating peace and conflict sensitivity into each stage of an intervention. For instance, traditional planning becomes a peace and conflict sensitive planning when it incorporates conflict analyses—causes, actors, profile, and dynamics (The Resource Pack, 2004). Traditional implementation becomes peace and conflict sensitive when it has a goal of maximizing positive and reducing negative impacts on the context by closely scrutinizing the context through regular updating of the conflict analyses. Traditional monitoring becomes peace and conflict sensitive when it incorporates an understanding of the elements of conflict context into its processes and activities. The goal is to better understand the context and the intervention and the interactions between them with the intent of maximizing the positive and reducing the negative
impacts of the intervention on the conflict dynamics. Peace and conflict sensitive monitoring may therefore inform changes or adjustments to intervention activities. A peace and conflict sensitive evaluation, however, ‘...incorporates a detailed understanding of the operating context in terms of historical, actual or potential conflict into traditional evaluation activities and processes.’ \(^1\) It seeks ‘...to understand the overall impact a given intervention has had on this context, and the context on the intervention. These evaluations can then be used to adjust subsequent phases of an ongoing initiative, or gain lessons for future initiatives.’ (Introduction to the Resource Pact, 2004: 4).

Conflict analysis is a central issue in PCSP. The analysis of conflict is not a one-time event, but an ongoing activity through the life cycle of conflict and the programming cycle of the intervention. The knowledge gained through analyses constitutes the benchmark upon which the operations of the agency are based. It is when this is done that an agency could be said to have a capacity for peace and conflict sensitive programming. Peace and conflict sensitive programming understands that an intervention can impact on its context by affecting the structures and dynamics of peace on one hand and the structures and dynamics of conflict on the other hand. These impacts can be either negative or positive. An intervention has negative impact when it supports the dynamics and structures of violent conflict and exacerbates conflict on one hand and weakens the dynamics and structures of peace on the other hand. Exacerbation of conflict \textit{in a locale} may include increases in frustration, tension, ill feelings, and the chances that conflict will be resolved through violence. Weakening of peace would be undermining, or destroying, what fragile peace exists within the locale. An intervention has positive impacts when it supports the dynamics and structure of peace and weakens the dynamics and structures of violent conflict. Supporting the dynamics of peace includes harnessing or exploiting what cultural or contemporary opportunities exist for peacebuilding and involves efforts directed at actively defusing tension, ill feeling, frustration (emotions increasing the likelihood of violence), among

\(^1\) Introduction to the Resource Pact, 2004: 4
conflict parties. Thus the balance of a conflict situation is tilted in favour of peace, whether by directly supporting peace and/or by reducing the likelihood of violent conflict is the aim. Weakening of the dynamics and structures of violence involves deconstructing violence in the minds of men and in the community.

As hinted above the principles guiding the process of peace and conflict sensitive programming are different from those guiding traditional programming. For instance, while traditional intervention may aim at neutrality, PCSP rather aims at multipartiality. As a precondition, PCSP must be multipartial rather than impartial or neutral. Multipartiality is a ‘...principle of mediation that defines a particular mode of engagement with conflict parties or key stakeholders based on understanding and identifying with a diversity of opposing positions and standpoints, without seeming to favour one of these above the other.’

1 Multipartiality is a precondition for the agency to win the trust of stakeholders, earn credibility and restore trust among the stakeholders. It gives parties the confidence that their interests are protected and taken care of by the intervention, so they trust in the intervention process perceive it credible. This is important because stakeholders’ perspectives are very critical in intervention in conflict setting. As the saying goes ‘perception is everything, reality may be nothing.’ Hence conflict can be triggered or exacerbated based on perception. However, multipartiality helps an agency to maintain good working relationships with all stakeholders in the environment of intervention. While maintaining this balance, the agency must guard its independence and professionalism. PCSP must be sensitive and sympathetic to the plight of the disadvantaged. It therefore cannot afford to be neutral. To be neutral is to stay aloof and allow the intervention to drive itself or be driven by the parties. Multipartiality is to ensure parties get what they deserve, given their condition. It must actively seek the socio-economic empowerment of the disempowered. It, therefore, upholds equity, rather than equality. Multipartiality must be met at every stage of programming—planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Areas in which an agency must ensure political

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1 Glossary: Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies
multipartiality includes selection of participants in project planning workshops, selection of beneficiaries of intervention, sitting of projects. Patience, time, and empathy with the needs and fears of all stakeholders may be required to achieve multipartiality.

In addition, PCSP processes must be participatory. That is, inclusive of actors, issues, and perceptions. Community and external stakeholders—actors in conflict, consultants, field implementers—active participation is critical to PCSP. This must be from the conflict analysis stage where issues, interests, perspectives, grievances (most importantly of the parties to the conflict) are factored in the preparatory plans for the intervention. Participation of the community stakeholders is essential because, as argued by Bush (2005), community stakeholders provide ‘...the political context, the grounded analysis, the historical nuance and so on.’ I argue that it is paramount that the people that are directly affected by the conflict actively participate in the process of the intervention in order to ensure ownership and participation in solutions to violent conflict. This argument is supported by Barbolet, et al, who say:

A conflict-sensitive approach must engage project participants or beneficiaries—at a minimum in the analysis and implementation phases—to ensure the intervention considers and addresses conflict in all its nuances and intricacies.

Barbolet et al continue to say that when community people are involved, they begin to link how their own actions (to people with different ethnic, religious, social, economic, cultural or linguistic communities) contribute to what they previously understood as disconnected macro political issues. A participatory process ensures ‘...mutual learning or ownership with those directly affected by the conflict in relation to its strategy and programming.’

In consonance with this view, Bush emphasizes the centrality of involving the people affected by the conflict in programming an intervention in a peace and conflict sensitive manner. This

1 Ibid.
he argues will build their capacity for conflict resolution, transformation and peace building. Also, their active participation could be an opportunity to transform their relationships as they are provided with a platform to dialogue and see things from the perspectives of their opponents. During conflict analysis meeting or workshop, parties to a conflict see how their actions and/or inactions have contributed to the conflict situation—both negatively and positively. Ultimately, therefore, the meeting becomes a platform for empowerment as parties acquire the skills, and have the opportunity to contribute positively to resolving the conflict at hand and better handle their conflicts in the future. However, community people participation must be representative of all stakeholders. Community people involvement must not be seen to serve a group at the expense of other(s) in the community. Such perception will harm any good or positive impact the agency may want its program to have in the context. Representative participation of stakeholders also empowers external stakeholders (agency staff, consultants) too. They gain better insights into the conflict situation and new experiences in the nature of violent conflict.

Moreover, PCSP emphasizes transparency (in selection of beneficiary, participants, accountability). Stakeholders must perceive the activities of the agency as transparent. Transparency ensures that no essential information is hidden from any of the parties, that none of the parties has access to privileged information, and that no party, at any stage is systematically excluded from information about the intervention. Of critical importance is that transparency ensures that multipartiality and thus, credibility of the organization (which is critical) is not undermined. Hence, an intervening agency has a burden of proof for transparency. Accountability of the intervening agency and of the beneficiaries is also very critical at every stage of the programming. Proponents of peace and conflict sensitivity agree that intervening agencies must be accountable to the beneficiaries and demand same from the beneficiaries. It achieves the latter by building mechanisms for accountability into the intervention. That is, mechanisms

1 Ibid.
that ensures the accountability of beneficiaries to the agency. Accountability of beneficiaries will enhance the sustainability of the projects. And sustainability is critical since the projects are to improve or forestall deterioration of a situation—causes of the conflict. If the solution is unsustainable, therefore, there is the danger of return to the former situation, thus increasing the chances of the outbreak of violent conflict. By being accountable to the beneficiaries and demanding same from them, the agency increases the chances of sustainability of the intervention and hence contributes to peace.

Furthermore, there is need to sustain the confidence of the beneficiaries in the intervention. A good way to do this is for an agency to map and report the progress of its intervention. It must be willing to monitor the progress being made inch by inch and inform the beneficiaries as success jointly achieved. This should not be confused with propaganda. Stories about successful stakeholders meeting, conflict analysis and planning workshop should be reported in the beneficiary communities and region. This bolsters participants' and beneficiaries' confidence in the intervention and reduces the likelihood of violence. Monitoring and reporting of indicators of success or deliverables is closely linked with information management in PCSP. Management of information about the program is significant. Suspicions, rumor mongering have the potential to turn the tides of events against peaceful resolution. To this end, PCSP requires an inbuilt mechanism of information dissemination throughout the lifecycle of the intervention. Timely and adequate information defuse tension caused by suspicions, mistrusts, distrusts that fuel conflict situations. An intervening agency must therefore design a framework for information management that involves all stakeholders in the conflict.

Also, it must complement and ‘tie together’ with other programs by other agencies working in the same context. An intervening agency must be willing to partner and coordinate its activities with similar agencies working in the zone. Its activities must not inadvertently undermine the efforts of similar organizations working in the region. Timeliness is another essential characteristic of PCSP (Resource Pack, 2004). That is, through dynamic analysis of the conflict
situation, the intervention must be time-conscious, taking timely advantage of 'windows of opportunities' to exert maximum positive impacts on the context.

However beyond an organizational capacity for PCSP and peace and conflict sensitivity of its intervention, factors external to the organization and its programming may influence the contribution of an intervening agency to the context of its intervention. These refer to the category of conditions which, as it were, are more or less external to the intervention but have significant impact on the intervention to a greater or lesser extent. These conditions include the enabling Act or Instrument establishing such governmental agency; wider geo-political context; and prevalent political will. The enabling law, the processes and machineries of government put in place for the purpose of the agency, and the political climate under which it operates must also be peace and conflict sensitive. In other words, the enabling instrument and the process of distributing resources from all necessary quarters must be sensitive to the dynamics of peace and conflict in the context. All it requires to do this is to reduce government or political interference to the barest minimum, allowing the peace professionals to do their job. Hence, the government must ensure that its necessary involvement, direct or indirect, in the activities of the agency must contribute positively to the conflict situation. This said, the institutional capacity for peace and conflict sensitivity of an agency and peace and conflict sensitivity of its intervention will have the strongest influence on the contributions an agency and its intervention will make to a conflict context. Obviously, mainstreaming PCSP in such agency and the wider geo-political context of its operations is, though challenging, howbeit not insurmountable. An agency intervening in a conflict context exerts a strong influence on the context—actors, causes and dynamics. This is consequent on its role as a “distributor” of much-needed resources. This vantage position may be utilized to bring about positive changes in a conflict zone. I therefore argue that whether an intervention will contribute positively or negatively to a conflict situation is largely a function of the intervening agency's capacity for peace and conflict sensitive programming.
4. Challenges to Mainstreaming Peace and Conflict Sensitivity

Irrespective of the nature or category of an intervening agency—governmental, intergovernmental, or nongovernmental—there are challenges to mainstreaming PCSP. A principal challenge is the pervasive underestimation of the nexus between intervention, peace and conflict in conflict setting by intervening agencies or governments setting them up. The multi-layered and dual-impact complex potential interactions between the stages of intervention and elements of the context were not understood. Until recently, it was generally assumed that intervention will naturally contribute positively to the conflict setting. However, an appreciation of this interaction has significantly, especially among nongovernmental intervening and donor agencies. This has resulted in the proliferation of methodologies, approaches, and frameworks for ensuring positive contributions of interventions. However, there is still discordant gap between most of these methodologies and actual field practice. This may be most conspicuous in governmental intervention agencies, like the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC in Nigeria.

Since intervention is inherently political, political interference may make the attainment of requisite altruism of the intervening agencies almost impracticable. This in a sense is an offshoot of the attitude towards peace works—an attitude that relegates peace. If peace ventures enjoy the same status in our culture as war and health ventures, then partisan political interference may be reduced to the barest minimum. In developing countries, where intervention in conflict is most acute, partisan politics, prebendalism, lack of political will may plaque mainstreaming PCSP right from the enabling instrument of a government intervention agency or the operations of nongovernmental or international nongovernmental agencies.

Looking at the case of Nigeria, the political terrain might make the altruism (a prerequisite for peace and conflict sensitive programming) of the government intervening agency in the Niger Delta conflict—NDDC—difficult. This is consequent on some characteristic features of the socio-political environment of Nigeria. Prebendalism is
one such notable feature. A prebend is the "right of member of chapter to his share in the revenues of a cathedral." Within the context of Nigerian politics, Joseph (1996) argues, "[a]ccording to the theory of prebendalism, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by officeholders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups..."

Prebendalism is a bane of Nigeria’s socio-political environment. This form of institutionalized patronage is a supportive framework for systemic corruption, which undermines policies of the Nigerian government. This has made the polity to be skeptical and suspicious of government initiatives. The comment of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in reference to creation of the Ministry of the Niger Delta is reflective of the attitude of the citizens, particularly the Niger Deltans: “[t]he people of the region should receive this latest dish with apprehension. It will be yet another avenue for corruption and political favoritism.” Generally, government initiatives are viewed with such skepticism. Without gainsay, this has serious implications for the NDDC. “Corruption and political favoritism” are big challenges to mainstreaming peace and conflict sensitive programming in the NDDC.

In addition, the enabling document—the NDDC Act 2000—provides several opportunities for patronage and prebendalism within the institutional and operational framework of the Commission. For instance, the appointment of the Chairman and members of the governing Board of the Commission, the managing director and two executive directors, and the Monitoring Committee is vested in the Nigeria President. Apart from listing some general personal qualities of such appointees, no measure is put in place to check the use of such appointments against patronage or rewards for political party supporters. In a political environment notorious for corruption, the NDDC thus becomes yet another huge public investment with a potential to cater to personal interests—interests defined through the yardstick of partisan politics. In summary, therefore, the whole mandate of the NDDC is prey to politicization. Politicization of social benefits is essentially a

1 International Crisis Group, 2009.
form of marginalization as it creates winners and losers, first-class and second-class citizens, within a polity. Satisfying the members of a political group and their associates, therefore, becomes a priority superseding any consideration for peace and conflict issues.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored the interaction between an intervention and its context. It has shown the potential of an intervention to contribute both positively and negatively to its contexts. The three stages of intervention—planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation—and the four elements of a conflict context—actors, causes, dynamics, and profile—interact. This generates twenty-four interactions with potential to be either negative or positive. The complexity of this interactions demands mainstreaming peace and conflict sensitivity into the organizational structure and culture the agencies and in the programming of its intervention activities. This will increase the agency’s chances of making positive rather than negative contributions to the conflict situation. To mainstream peace and conflict sensitivity in itself, the organization must gain a right perspective of its essence, show institutional commitment, willingness to make necessary changes in its structure and culture, develop the capacity of its staff for PCSP, build conducive external relations and mechanisms for accountability. Mainstreaming PCSP in its programming means understanding the context for which intervention is planned, understanding the interactions between its interventions and conflict context, and act upon this understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts through peace and conflict sensitive planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. That is, ensuring that all stages of its programming are peace and conflict sensitive. PCSP will involve active participation of community and external stakeholders in the programming, from the conflict analysis stage; transparency;
accountability; multipartiality; program information management; internal coherence of program design and complementary with other programs.

Although the contributions an agency will make to a conflict situation is also influenced by external conditions like the wider geopolitical context, enabling instrument, and prevalent political will. However, this paper has argued that the first two conditions—mainstreaming PCSP in an agency and its intervention are the most significant factors for ‘victory’ of intervention in conflict zone. Hence the onus is on the intervening agency to ensure that its interventions are peace and conflict sensitive in order that it contributes positively and avoid negative contributions to the conflict situation in which it is intervening. This is the acid test of the professionalism of agencies intervening in a conflict region.

In many of its publications, Johan Galtung—one of the founding fathers of Peace Studies—has compared peace work and peace workers to health workers, social workers and other professionals in humanitarian services. Hence the prevailing socio-political condition of its operating environment will be a feeble excuse for an agency’s inability to deliver on its vision and mission. Unflinching commitment to Peace and Conflict Sensitive Programming will help an agency adhere to the tenets of professionalism of agencies intervening in conflict context. As one of such agencies, Peace and Conflict Sensitive Programming is not a luxury but a necessity such agencies must afford.
References


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