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GUIDANCE NOTE #3:

CONFLICT-SENSITIVE PROCUREMENT, RECRUITMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN LEBANON

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Conflict-Sensitive Procurement, Recruitment and Accountability in Lebanon

This guidance note aims to provide partner humanitarian & stabilization organizations in Lebanon with conflict-sensitive learning and tools to be applied to procurement of supplies and services, hiring of staff, and accountability systems within the organization. It is part of a series of three guidance notes developed in 2021.

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

How to use this guidance note

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

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 Therefore, some details will vary in your local context and/or eventually go out of date.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

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

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

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

1.What is Conflict Sensitivity?

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

The active practice of conflict sensitivity can help your organization to pursue the ethic of 'doing no harm.' Conflict sensitivity provides processes and tools to help you do three things:[1]

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

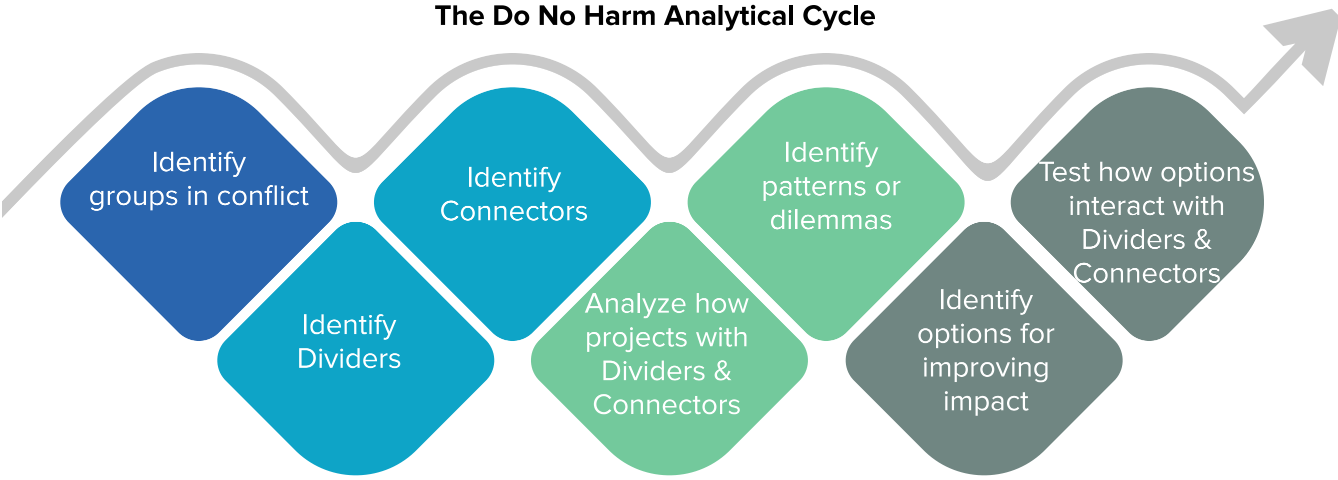
Conflict sensitivity is a cross-cutting approach that applies to all programs operating in conflict zones. It is related to - yet distinct from - other cross-cutting program quality approaches such as gender responsiveness and anti-corruption mainstreaming.

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

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

1. Identify which groups are in conflict or tension with each other. (If there are many inter-group conflicts, then focus on the one most likely to lead to violence or destructive behavior.)
2. What **Dividers** (or sources of tension) exist between the groups?
3. What **Connectors** (or factors that bring people together) exist between the groups?
4. How do the elements of your project interact with the Dividers and Connectors?
5. What patterns or **dilemmas** are evident in this interaction?
6. What are the **options** for improving your impact on social stability by...
   - decreasing the negative effects of our program and increasing its positive effects?
   - weakening Dividers and strengthening Connectors?
7. Think and test: How do these new options affect the existing Dividers and Connectors?

The Do No Harm Analytical Cycle



1 Adapted from International Alert et al. 2004. 'Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack.'

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

2. Understand the Interaction and then Act

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

- **Distribution effect:** When an inter-group relationship is already tense, and then one group is perceived to be unfairly receiving more aid allocation than another, the level of tension often increases.
- **Theft or diversion effect:** When the use of stolen goods strengthens a conflict actor, or when an influential actor redirects selection processes in ways that favor one social group and bypass others, the level of tension often increases.
- **Legitimization effect:** When a partner implies the acceptability of a conflict actor by publicly working with them, inter-group tension often increases.
- **Market effect:** Aid spending influences local markets, which sometimes distorts market structures and incentives in ways that increase tensions or reward violence. This also further increases the perceptions of aid bias.

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

- **Exclusion** or **discrimination** on the basis of social background;
- **Unfairness or inequity** in how people of different social groups are treated;
- **Lack of transparency** about information that candidates and communities believe should be shared; and
- **Powerlessness** in which partner staff decline to take active responsibility for the problems their work may unintentionally cause.

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

Understanding 'corruption.' Discussions of procurement, recruitment and accountability in Lebanon often involve the theme of 'corruption.' Indeed, the Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Lebanon as significantly corrupt and declining,[3] and corruption is a major theme of political debate. But what does this really mean?

Corruption is best understood as a complex adaptive governance system that endures because it serves certain political and economic functions.[4] Corruption exists in every society on earth, though the types and levels of corruption vary widely. For conflict sensitivity purposes, the question is: how does it relate to inter-group conflict?

In Lebanon, corruption relates to inter-group conflict in at least two significant ways:

1. *Distribution (or diversion) of opportunities along sectarian lines.* The divided political system, in which sectarian priorities are at the core, leads to the practice of distributing opportunities through favoritism or through nepotistic connections or networks to people of one's own sect. People of other sects tend to be excluded, which increases horizontal inter-group tensions. Aid can provoke the same effect if it is not conflict-sensitive.
2. *Perception of elite corruption.* Governmental elites of all sects are seen as engaging in corrupt and self-serving practices. The desire to hold the government (especially national government) accountable is a major driver of the current vertical protest movement. If partners appear to 'prop up' the government, or to engage uncritically with the government, this will be perceived by everyday citizens as reinforcing corruption. On the other hand, engaging constructively with the government on the basis of clear accountability measures can help to improve its relationship with citizens.

In a related sense, corruption matters in community relations, due to the widespread perception of aid bias. Concurrently, 38% of Lebanese and 47% of the Syrian populations agree with the statement that "International aid/assistance goes to the people who most deserve it."[5]

Preparing for action. What all of this means is that partner decisions and processes around procurement, recruitment and accountability can make a very real difference to inter-group relations and social stability within Lebanon. The specifics are summarized below, in the form of frequent dilemmas and options for addressing them to improve your impact on social stability.

Many of the options will require good communication and collaboration between your local office and headquarters, and also between your programs, finance and human resources teams. If such collaboration is a challenge for your organization – as it is for many partners – then it is well worth spending time on teambuilding to enable conflict-sensitive procurement and recruitment.

2.1. Procurement of Supplies and Services

Procurement efforts focus on obtaining the supplies and services that an organization needs to do its work, through bidding and contracting. Those supplies and services may include things like facilities rental, humanitarian commodities, construction supplies or external consultant technical support. The procurement mechanism also applies to contracting local implementing partner organizations as described in section 3.1.c.

2.1.a. Improving policies and procedures

Challenge: Many organizations experience a disconnect between the staff responsible for procurement and the programs/operations staff who observe firsthand the use of many of those goods and services that have been procured and hear the reactions and feedback of people in the community. This increases the likelihood that procurement decisions will have unintended effects.

Conflict-sensitive **options:**

- If your organization is international, ensure that policies developed at headquarters are adapted and contextualized for the current context of Lebanon. This is extremely important in light of the currency and liquidity aspects of the current financial crisis. Flexible policies can help ensure that payments are made using currencies and mechanisms that maximize the benefit to the payee, and avoid disproportionate losses to one social group over another.
- Develop your procurement unit's conflict sensitivity capacities, and include a representative of that team whenever you conduct a conflict sensitivity analysis, monitoring review or reflection exercise.

3 Transparency International. 2020. Corruption Perceptions Index 2020.
4 Chigas, D. and Scharbatke-Church, C. 11 July 2019. 'Top Three Challenges and Good Practices in Anti- Corruption' in the Corruption in Fragile States blog. Tufts University. For more on corruption in humanitarian aid see also: Ewins, P. *et al.* 2006. 'Mapping the Risks of Corruption in Humanitarian Action.' Humanitarian Policy Group, Transparency International and U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center.

5 ARK/UNDP. 2021. Perception Survey Wave 9 - January 2021.

- Orient your programs team to your conflict-sensitive procurement and finance policies including fraud and corruption prevention and identification, so that they can identify and report any problems that they observe.

Partner example: One partner's global policy required a certain level of cost-sharing from the municipality when carrying out a project with them. However, given that the municipal budget is in Lebanese pound while they bidders usually present their bids in USD, with the changing economic situation, the municipalities were not able to meet the cost-sharing requirement.

To address the issue, the partner was able to get approval from their headquarters to remove the cost-sharing requirement.

- Different goods and services present different risks. Therefore assess the relationship of the item(s) being procured to the local conflict economy, in terms of both Distribution Effects and Market Effects.

- In the case of high-value items procured frequently, consider also scanning the entire supply chain to identify any vendors that are affiliated with armed groups, or engaged in conflictual practices such as systemic discrimination, human rights violations, smuggling, weapons sales, etc.

Partner example: One partner organization realized that their procurement team had purchased disposable COVID-19 masks from a large industrial supplier, while their program team was simultaneously supporting grassroots female producers of reusable masks. This internal communication gap led to a missed opportunity to support local suppliers. For conflict sensitive procurement there should be closer coordination between procurement and programme.

- Procurements done under emergency conditions tend to fail in their conflict sensitivity checks where pressures to achieve rapid results can raise risks. Plan in advance to select which conflict sensitivity checks are non-negotiable, and embed them in your emergency response procedure. For example, some partners indicate that interviews are non-negotiable (but their number can be reduced), and background checks are non-negotiable.

Dilemma: Staff involved in procurement may be pressured to accept bribes from external actors to divert resources or opportunities, often in ways that benefit a particular social group.

Options for improving impact:

- Separate the staff responsibilities along the supply chain, by assigning different tasks and process checks to different individuals. In that way, one staff member is very likely to detect any irregularities introduced intentionally or unintentionally by a colleague.

- Document the interactions with suppliers and potential suppliers in the presence of more than one individual. Make this a requirement.

- If your organization is large, establish an independent internal audit position or team within your organization to investigate any irregularities or whistle-blowing complaints. An internal auditor should have no operational responsibilities, and should report directly to the organization's highest executive and/or accountability body. If your organization is small, rotate the staff responsible for procurement decisions or spot-checks, and consider asking a program team member to join the procurement staff when meeting with vendors.

- Consider alternating vendors to disrupt any potential improprieties in the system, and also to distribute the benefits more broadly to other vendors.

- As a monitoring mechanism, consider taking a random sample of beneficiaries and comparing it to the original selection criteria, to determine whether there is alignment.

2.1.b. Sourcing, screening and selecting bidders

Many LCRP partners have excellent procedures for evaluating bidders' technical qualifications and screening their legality. However, there are also important conflict sensitivity issues to be considered. Organizational due diligence requires business units to undertake a review of the entity's profile, including background, financial reports, annual statements, etc., and to confirm business registration with government authorities.

Dilemma: Focusing only on technical requirements when screening and selecting bidders often leads to an imbalance in the social identities of contractors, benefitting large vendors from central cities and excluding small local vendors with extensive experience in the operating context.

Options for improving impact:

- Scan your criteria for factors that unnecessarily exclude small local vendors. For example, over-emphasizing criteria such as language requirements, number of clients, or number of years in business can unintentionally screen out some local vendors who are well able to do the job. Eliminate or adapt those criteria as needed to ensure elimination of unfair restriction in the pool of potential suppliers.

- Consider adding a criterion on knowledge and experience of the local operating context, which is essential for contractors in many fields of work, yet often overlooked when screening vendors

- Consider substitute products or services that would meet the same need. In some cases, this will allow sourcing from more competitive markets and the involvement of a larger number of suppliers.

Dilemma: Some large vendors are linked to particular sectarian networks or political parties, and therefore not perceived as neutral. This can cause community members to believe that your organization has 'taken sides' among Lebanese sectarian sub-groups. Further, if you award a contract to a vendor that is directly affiliated with an armed actor, it can strengthen the influence of that armed actor.

Options for improving impact:

- Vet the candidates with great care. This is a complex process, so LCRP partners recommend prioritizing the variables as follows:
  - Always, without exception, check the vendor's government-issued registration documents.
  - To the highest extent possible, conduct background and reference checks. If it's not possible to do this in all cases, then establish thresholds based on the value of the contract or pre-identified risk factors.
  - Other recommended steps include vendor questionnaires that feature questions on conflict sensitivity issues, inspections of physical premises, Inspection & Test Plan compliance checks in the construction sector, and ownership checks. Ownership checks are not yet commonly practiced among LCRP partners – yet they are considered a powerful tool for revealing who ultimately owns a bidding company.
  - Keep this information regularly updated for vendors who are already in your system. Consider a periodic meta-analysis of this information to help identify trends and patterns within your procurement system.
  - Ensure adequate analysis of the supply market, organizational requirements, and stakeholder needs and issues. This guarantees a large pool of competitive suppliers and avoid waiver cases, especially on a 'sole sourcing' basis. In many supply markets, there may be limited sources, a risk factor that necessitates careful supply market analysis that should be well documented and provided to the procurement review committees for scrutiny.

- Prize diversity of social backgrounds among your local vendors. Consider granting special consideration to candidates whose business model or supply chain intentionally engages people of different backgrounds in order to be inclusive.

- Identify and communicate the ethical principles that guide your procurement system – such as fairness, transparency, diversity, equity, anti-corruption and traceability.[6] Communicate also the policies and criteria used in each particular selection process. Be transparent about any ways in which the procurement system currently falls short and explain how you are working to improve it.

- Publicly share procurement schedules and plans, solicitations and contract awards.

- When different suppliers have the same owners or are otherwise associated, competition may not be meaningful. Limited invitations increase exposure to this risk since the suppliers could act as a cartel to affect pricing or decisions. Ensure that you do a thorough background check of all the suppliers.

- Consider involving a representative committee in developing selection criteria and running the selection process. The committee itself must be carefully composed and monitored to avoid bias and protected from vendor pressures.

Partner example: Some LCRP partners have experienced a range of contracting pushback including: polite expressions of disagreement, threatening phone calls, theft or kidnapping against the winning contractor, ultimatums that communicate 'either you contract our group or you don't contract anyone.'

Dilemma: Local community members and/or authorities may expect contracting to benefit certain types of people, such as relatives or people from the same social background. This may conflict with your organization's goals for ensuring diversity among contractors. Less commonly, it may also lead to threats or violent pushback when a local stakeholder's contracting expectations are not met.

Options for improving impact:

- When you are asked or pressured to contract someone, encourage the vendor to bid, and provide access to the necessary weblinks or documents. Explain that the person will be considered alongside all the other bidders, and selections will be made based on the criteria transparently communicated in the opportunity announcement and terms of reference. If appropriate, mention any mechanisms that the organization has in place to support local or minority-owned businesses in acquiring the necessary qualifications.
- Reinforce ethical behaviour as directed by the policies, supported by adequate training and advice on ethical dilemmas.
- If the pressure seems unusually tense or concerning, engage your security team to proactively minimize the risk of threats or violence.
- As a last resort, withdraw from the area rather than submitting to pressures that benefit one social group over another.
- Document the interactions with suppliers and potential suppliers in the presence of more than one individual. Make this a requirement and avoid at all cost information sharing to favour a particular supplier.

Dilemma: LCRP partners affirm that procuring goods and services within the local program operating zone can boost conflict sensitivity. Prioritizing local procurement addresses the community's rightful expectation to benefit collectively from the presence of an aid organization, and it can empower the grassroots rather than enriching the elite. At the same time, some goods and services can be quite difficult to procure locally.

6 Adapted from: Swisspeace. Organizational-level conflict sensitivity worksheet.

Options for improving impact:

- Recognize that 'local' is a relative term, and interpretations may vary. So, if you are not sure what community members consider to be 'local,' ask them during your participatory planning or monitoring processes.
- During the **strategy development phase**, ensure adequate and unbiased supply market research to avoid limiting sourcing to products or suppliers. Examples include terms of reference or/and technical specification fair competition.
- Scan your criteria for factors that unintentionally exclude local vendors. For example, screening by the number of years in business, or by the number of employees, may unnecessarily screen out some local vendors who are well able to do the job. Eliminate or adapt the criteria as needed.
- Insist that all vendors hold government registration documents, and practice proper financial controls. These steps are a 'win' for all involved. At the same time, recognize that this is difficult for small, local vendors! Help them to get set up by offering access to 'how-to' information, technical support and/or short grace periods where appropriate.
- For local vendors that do not have US dollar or 'fresh' bank accounts, develop temporary coping mechanisms to help them get paid despite the obstacles of the current currency and liquidity crisis. Current coping mechanisms include: making small payments from petty cash, giving the vendor a bank 'letter of payment' in place of a check, or transferring the funds from your organization's international headquarters rather than your local bank. (Also, be alert to the risks of staff carrying more cash than usual to complete local payments. Review and update security mechanisms accordingly).
- Even after taking all the above steps, if there are certain types of goods and services that remain difficult to procure locally, it helps to acknowledge that reality transparently. You might broaden the search for those particular goods and services, without sacrificing your commitment to local procurement of the rest.
- While local procurement is desirable, be aware that it can also harm local consumers. Aid organization demand for a particular service - say taxi transport – can breed resentment by driving up prices and reducing the availability of rides for local residents. Be alert to this possibility and, if you see negative 'market effects' begin to arise, shift your procurement pattern accordingly.

Dilemma: Bidders who are not selected will naturally be disappointed, and potentially tempted to criticize your organization within their social group. A small minority may resort to threats, or to making stronger use of their network to try to secure a more favorable result in the next round of procurement. In addition to encouraging corruption, this can worsen inter-group tensions.

Options for improving impact:

- Provide a prompt, transparent notification to each bidder who was not selected. Restate the criteria that were used in selection. Wherever possible, make those bidder notifications individualized, and encourage each individual to bid again.
- Avoid the widespread practice of providing responses only to short-listed bidders. That practice does save time in the short term. However it also sends an implicit message of disrespect, which is generally harmful to community relations, and may also be interpreted as a disrespect motivated by national or confessional identity.
- Provide feedback to rejected bidders who request it. This needs to be done carefully, in alignment with the overall guidance of your legal team. However, it is a positive way to support local, minority- and women-owned companies, and boost community relations in general.

Once you select your vendor, there are many additional conflict sensitivity considerations to be considered in developing the legal contract, and in ongoing contact management and follow-up. Those are covered below in Section 3.3. on Accountability Mechanisms, below.

2.1.c. Selecting and Contracting Implementing Partners

Selecting an implementing partner organization is not just a contracting issue. It is a very programmatic issue, because the implementing partner will be representing your organization in face-to-face interactions with the community.

At minimum, your implementing partners should be:

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

Preferably, your implementing partner should also share your organizational core values, and bring strong experience in conflict sensitivity and participatory, empowering facilitation methodologies.

Dilemma: Some small, local potential implementing partners may not have all the technical qualifications or experience that you desire.

Options for improving impact:

- Offer your local implementing partners on-the-job training in the skill sets that may be lacking, including conflict-sensitivity activity design, participatory facilitation and/or other skill sets that are important in maintaining good relationships. This may not only improve your project, but also strengthen Lebanese civil society.

Dilemma: Your implementing partner organization may not have conflict-sensitive procurement, hiring and compensation policies, and so may unintentionally worsen inter-group tensions in the community.

Options for improving impact:

- Vet the implementing partner's procurement, hiring and compensation policies, and if necessary support them in making those policies conflict-sensitive. In cases of time pressure, a heavier-handed yet faster alternative is to simply insist that the implementing partner follow your policies.

2.2 Recruitment and Orientation of Staff and Volunteers

Many LCRP partners pride themselves on hiring solely on the basis of technical qualifications, without considering the question of social background. This reflects a very positive intention to demonstrate non-discrimination! However, the reality is that discrimination is already an integral factor in the cultural systems within which partners operate. Therefore you must consider the issue of social background to ensure that discrimination has no place in your hiring system.

Conflict sensitivity analysis tells us that competition for access to jobs is currently very divisive in Lebanon. It is important to maintain an awareness of how the demographics of your staff compare to the demographics of the operating area in which you are working, and to consider what this means for your organization's reputation and effectiveness. Additionally, the way that staff conduct themselves can also have a significant effect on inter-group relations in the community. The dilemmas and options below address those themes.

Volunteers are included because LCRP partners indicate that the risk posed of poor selection or conduct by volunteers is as nearly as high as the risk posed by staff or contractors. Yet partners find it more difficult to manage volunteers and hold them accountable. This guide encourages selectively applying similar recruitment and accountability measures to volunteers as to staff. The considerations below can be applied to either staff or volunteers – with some adaptations - unless otherwise noted.

2.2.a. Improving policies and procedures

Dilemma: Hiring policies and procedures that fail to consider the question of social background often end up giving a consistent advantage to candidates from central cities, and limiting the job access of diverse local people.

Options for improving impact:

- Prioritize local hiring wherever possible, to ensure a rich knowledge of the local context, and to bring added benefit to the communities in which the organization operates.
- Make it a priority to encourage local applicants of different social groups and genders, to benefit from the richness of the diversity in the local area.
- In developing your benefits systems, prioritize the benefits most needed and preferred by locals. Benefits do not necessarily need to be equal (identical) for all staff, but they do need to be perceived and experienced as equitable (fair).
- If your organization does not have a policy on working with volunteers - who are usually local - then develop such a policy. This policy can emphasize the value of volunteers, and establish ways to reward their efforts, all of which is good for community relations. Additionally, this policy can establish orientation and accountability requirements for volunteers that are similar to those of staff.

2.2.b. Sourcing, screening and selecting candidates

Dilemma: For some positions, candidates are hard to find! A limited candidate pool can make it very difficult to hire locals for specific technical positions.

Options for improving impact: Identify and address the specific obstacles that are limiting the size and diversity of your candidate pools.

- Assess your outreach and advertising mechanisms, both formal and informal. Do they reach people of all backgrounds equally? Is anyone being missed? It may require significant effort to uncover the hidden, unintentional biases in your outreach system. Key signs of risk include: outreach being conducted by human resources staff who all hail from central cities, staff who have disproportionately graduated from the same university, etc. For a tool to help you dig deep in this assessment, see the critical details worksheet in guidance note #3 on the Conflict-Sensitive Project Design Cycle, section 3.3.b.
- Find strategic recruitment partners to help you get the word out about job openings. For example, some partners find that working through Social Development Centers can help to increase the number and diversity of candidates. (However, assess your situation carefully, because there are a minority of SDCs that advocate biased hiring practices, so the effect could be the opposite of what you are seeking).
- Examine your pay scale to determine whether low salaries are preventing candidates of certain social backgrounds from applying. Adapt as needed to ensure that humanitarian aid is a viable employment option for a wide swathe of the population.
- Scan your qualification criteria for factors that unnecessarily exclude applicants of certain backgrounds. Is a degree from a particular university really required for this job? Is English language fluency truly required? Eliminate or adapt the criteria as needed.
- Consider adding a criterion on knowledge and experience of the local operating context, which is essential for staff in many fields of work, yet often overlooked when screening candidates.
- If candidates from a particular social background lack a certain skill set that is key to getting hired, provide on-the-job training to allow them to develop that skill set during the first few months of their employment.

Partner example: A partner reports trying to hire a female driver, and finding it very difficult because few women have the number of years of driving experience required within the job description. In this case, one potential alternative might be to hire her on the basis of skills demonstrated through enhanced testing, and then provide on-the-job supervised mentorship.

- Ensure that locals are being considered not only for entry-level jobs, but also for management positions. If this seems impossible, revisit your criteria and on-the-job training mechanisms as described above.
- If your organization is affiliated with a particular religious tradition, be particularly intentional about communicating and demonstrating your inclusive hiring policies. Otherwise, potential candidates may assume that you only hire people who share your religious background. In addition to limiting your candidate pool, this could worsen inter-group tensions within the community.
- Consider whether the length of your hiring processes might be causing some candidates to drop out, particularly candidates from certain social groups. If so, do what you can to speed things up, without sacrificing your local hiring, diversity and accountability objectives.

Dilemma: Local community members and/ or authorities may push/ call for contracting certain types of people, such as people from the same background. This may conflict with your organization's goals for pursuing diversity among your local staff.

Options for improving impact:

- When you are asked or pressured to hire someone, encourage the candidate to apply, and provide access to the necessary weblinks or documents. Explain that that the person will be considered alongside all the other applicants, and selections will be made based on the criteria transparently communicated in the position announcement and job description.
- If a municipality insists on hiring certain unsuitable individuals as a condition for working in that area, be prepared for the decision on whether or not you will continue to work in that area.

Dilemma: Some applicants may carry strong hidden biases, or values that are not compatible with the values of the organization.

Options for improving impact:

- Design the interview process to explore and reveal an applicant's values, and values-driven behaviors. For example:
    - When interviewing for staff positions, include both direct questions on the applicant's experience in collaborating with people of other social groups, and revealing indirect questions such as their views on the biggest humanitarian challenges facing Lebanon.
    - When recruiting volunteers, consider an extended group interview composed of applicants with mixed and highly diverse backgrounds. Create some intentional delays or 'lag time' during which you are not actively directing the interviewees' activities. Observe how they interact with each other before, during and after the interview.
    - For any type of interview, pose a stressful scenario that involves tensions between social groups in a community or office setting. Ask the applicant how they would respond, and why.
- Make very strong use of reference checks. Take note of the social identity of the referees. Ask specifically about the applicant's relationships and/or reputation with people of other social groups.

2.2.c. Emphasizing induction and orientation

Conflict-sensitive **options:**

- Provide a strong general orientation process including:
    - The organization's mission and purpose. This is obviously important for practical reasons – and it can also serve as a potential unifier, bringing diverse staff together for a cause that inspires and motivates them.
    - The organization's code of conduct and values, safeguarding policies, and what to do if you observe wrongdoing. (Ensure that the key accountability documents are signed. For more information, see Section 3.3 on Accountability Mechanisms).
    - For international staff, a robust orientation to the local context, culture and conflict-peace dynamics.
    - For local staff new to the humanitarian (or development or peacebuilding) sector, some orientation to the key ethical principles and debates within that sector.
    - Resources and access points on labor rights, staff care, grievance, and conflict resolution mechanisms within the organization.
- Ensure conflict sensitivity training for all staff members and volunteers. The length and objectives of the training vary greatly depending on a person's job description. For example:
    - *Every staff member* needs a simple but powerful conflict sensitivity lens for viewing their work. That means an awareness of the key Dividers and Connectors within the context, and an understanding that their actions and words impact inter-group relationships.
    - A front-liner needs to apply that conflict sensitivity lens in all daily decisions, and recognize and respond appropriately if tensions escalate.
    - A program officer needs to ensure that a conflict analysis was conducted and applied to the project design in an adequate and sensible way, and that the monitoring plan includes the tracking of Dividers and Connectors.
    - An executive needs to make conflict-sensitive decisions, and promote the importance of conflict sensitivity to multiple stakeholders.

    Note that optional conflict sensitivity training can also be offered to contractors, particularly if it helps local, minority- or women-led contractors to qualify for service.

2.2.d. Developing constructive relationships among staff

A solid orientation is an excellent first step. It should be followed by an intentional ongoing process of staff formation, cultivating inclusive mindsets and constructive relationships within your teams.

Dilemma: Inequities, or perceived inequities, in the organization's compensation or treatment of staff or volunteers from different social groups may increase inter-group tension, and also damage the reputation of the organization within some social groups.

Options for improving impact:

- Establish and monitor organizational policies on equitable pay, working conditions, promotion opportunities and access to grievance procedures.[7] The details do not necessarily need to be equal (identical) for all staff, but they do need to be perceived and experienced as equitable (fair) to all staff.
- Establish a clear and transparent salary scale that is based on equitably-framed technical and experience requirements,

7 For useful resources see: The Equity Index.

so that each staff member can see clearly where they fit.

- Discuss compensation with peer NGOs, and even consider the possibility of roughly harmonizing your compensation scales, to avoid disputes or competitions.

- Ensure that capacity building and networking opportunities, such as trips, trainings and conferences, are equitably available to staff of all levels and backgrounds.

Partner example: One partner organization has realized that its Palestinian and Syrian personnel cannot open bank accounts. If the organization pays via bank transfer to the Lebanese volunteers and pays in cash to the Palestinian or Syrian personnel, the Lebanese will feel treated unfairly due to the deduction of banking fees. Likewise paying one group in Lebanese pounds and the other in US dollars would result in serious inequities. Therefore the organization decided to pay in cash only using the same currency all across Lebanon.

- If staff from a particular social group lack a particular skill set that is key to promotion and advancement, consider providing on-the-job training to allow them to develop and use that skill set within the organization.

- Be aware that some staff members, or volunteers with stipends or reimbursements, may encounter banking difficulties similar to those experienced by contractors due to the currency and liquidity aspects of the current financial crisis. Be transparent about these challenges during the hiring process, in order to manage expectations.

Dilemma: Some level of inter-group tension is likely among staff and volunteers of different national and confessional backgrounds, and it could become destructive or problematic.

Options for improving impact:

- Use staff gatherings as an opportunity to discuss and demonstrate what the organization values: diversity, equity, inclusion, team unity through shared purpose, etc. Encourage a healthy environment of talking openly and sensitively about the relationships between different social groups within the organization, rather than avoiding the topic as an 'unmentionable.'

- Find creative ways to foster interaction between staff who might not otherwise meet each other – such as staff based in different locations, staff who work in very different departments, etc.

- Provide staff with basic training in interpersonal conflict resolution and nonviolent communication. This is a way of acknowledging that it's not always easy to work together across social groups, that we are all learning, and that help is available.

- Plan periodic team-building events and activities that are built around celebrating unity in diversity.

- Commission a diverse, representative team to conduct periodic 'Do No Harm' analyses within the organization, and brief management on their recommendations for weakening Dividers and strengthening Connectors.

- Because a high percentage of people in conflict zones have experienced trauma, make psycho-social support resources available to staff and develop internal staff care policies.

2.3 Ensuring Accountability.

Strong accountability systems are needed in managing contractors, staff and sometimes even volunteers, to ensure that they use their influence in ways that promote healthy inter-group relationships and social stability. The considerations below can be applied to contractors, staff or volunteers – with some adaptations - unless otherwise noted.

Dilemma: Some contractors, staff or volunteers may practice discrimination, giving preferential treatment or benefit to one social group over another. This can happen either intentionally or unintentionally.

- Embed in contracts a statement that harassment or abuse on the basis of nationality, gender, race etc., is grounds for unconditional contract termination or dismissal.

- Ask all contractors, staff and volunteers to sign a code of conduct that acknowledges the relevant core principles of the organization, such as inclusion, equity, transparency, accountability, participation, doing no harm and/or 'leaving no one behind.' The code of conduct should also include a commitment to practice specific inclusive behaviors that are valued within the organization, including PSEA.

- Embed conflict-sensitive procurement, hiring and compensation policy requirements in the contracts of contractors.

- Embed conflict sensitivity analysis requirements in the job descriptions of relevant staff, and the contracts of contractors implementing projects. Be specific, stating what conflict sensitivity analysis actions are to be taken, and how often.

- In the case of contractors who work directly with communities, particularly in a resource distribution role, embed in their contract a focused conflict sensitivity monitoring of their efforts and results, as described in guidance note #3 on the Conflict-Sensitive Project Design Cycle, section 3.4.

- Include conflict sensitivity concerns responsibilities in the performance review system of staff and volunteers. Be sure that your explicit and implicit incentives encourage staff to take some time for conflict sensitivity and other program ethics concerns, rather than simply doing everything fast.

- Establish a channel for reporting conflict sensitivity concerns outside of the operations line management structure of your organization or your implementing partner's organization. When a front-line staff member or volunteer sees that an activity is worsening inter-group tensions, it may be difficult to communicate this to their immediate supervisor. Identify a consistent and easily accessible alternative point of contact.

Partner example: One partner learned that the taxi company they had contracted employed drivers who regularly made negative comments about passengers who were refugees. There was no clause in the contract that permitted cancellation for this cause. As an alternative, the organization issued a warning to the taxi company and established new rules to address the problem.

Dilemma: Contractors, staff and potentially volunteers may be tempted by bribery, theft, fraud, diversion, or other financial improprieties. In addition to causing financial and legal problems, this type of behavior can channel resources and opportunities towards one social group and away from others, increasing inter-group tensions.

Options for improving impact:

- Embed in contracts that evidence of bribery, theft, fraud, diversion or other financial improprieties are grounds for immediate and unconditional termination of contract or employment.

- Embed in contracts the right to audit contractor finances, or to make random unannounced field visits. Conduct such audits and visits on a semi-regular basis.
- Include in your code of conduct a commitment to anti-bribery and corruption practices. Ask all staff, contactors and volunteers to sign it.
- Provide staff with anti-corruption training that focuses on identifying and responding to risks. For example, what should I do when someone tries to bribe me?
- Encourage community members to report any potential incidents of bribery of financial impropriety using your urgent complaints mechanisms.
- Make selective use of a full range of accountability tools including: verbal reprimand, written reprimand with action plan for improvement, employment termination or contract cancellation, blacklisting, financial penalties and lawsuits.
- Engage your legal and security teams to proactively minimize the risk of threats or violence in response to a termination. If your small organization does not have an in-house lawyer, try to secure an external lawyer, or a partnership with an NGO that provides reduced-cost legal services.

Dilemma: Staff and volunteers may be reluctant to report cases of financial impropriety, for various reasons. This happens for a variety of reasons. Some individuals stay quiet because they are benefitting from the violations. Most often, staff and volunteers do not report violations because they fear reprisals that could put their livelihood and security at risk, and/or they do not trust the whistleblowing process to produce a worthwhile result. Among international staff, some may not understand the context deeply enough to identify or notice violations when they happen.

Options for improving impact:

- Encourage and protect 'whistleblowers.' Whistleblowing is "the disclosure of information about a perceived wrongdoing in an organization, or the risk thereof, to individuals or entities believed to be able to effect action."[8] It is a key tool for preventing corruption, or detecting it in early stages so that it can be addressed. Establish an organizational policy that articulates zero tolerance for corruption, encourages whistleblowing, and does everything possible to minimize the risk to the whistleblower. Protective steps include providing several alternative channels for reporting either verbally or in writing, plus the important option of anonymous reporting and identity protection.[9]
- Demonstrate decisive action. When a concern is reported, investigate it promptly, and take decisive disciplinary action, including termination of contract or employment, if that is warranted. It is essential that you communicate this disciplinary action within the organization – without disclosing the name of the individual(s) involved - so that potential future whistleblowers will know that their efforts do matter. Take that opportunity to remind staff and volunteers about the importance of reporting wrongdoing, and the safe mechanisms for doing so.
- Ensure that the assignments of international staff are long enough to develop an understanding of the context. (On the other hand, obligatory breaks from service can help disrupt the process of an international staff member setting up a corrupt mechanism to benefit him or herself).
- When international staff work in management roles, consider pairing international and local co-managers as a team, so they can complement each other's strengths and limitations in areas including the identification and reporting of violations.
- Engage your security team to proactively minimize the risk of threats or violence in response to a termination.

8 Transparency International. 2009. 'Recommended draft principles for whistleblowing legislation.'
9 For more see: Transparency International. 2015. 'Speaking up Safely: Civil Society Guide to Whistleblowing, Middle East and North Africa Region.'

Annex A: Resources for Further Learning

On conflict sensitivity by LCRP partners

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

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

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

On other related conflict sensitivity tools

Check out the online library at conflictsensitivity.org, or the selected core documents below.

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

Communities of practice

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

Annex B: Background & Methodology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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