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## GUIDANCE NOTE

# Integrating peace outcomes into development programming

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# Introduction

In 2021, International Alert gathered evidence on how development programmes (implicitly or explicitly) generated peace outcomes. Case studies showed how interventions across economic growth, governance, and service delivery sectors can also address conflict. This guidance note draws on this learning to outline how peace outcomes can be integrated across the programming cycle, in line with the evidence-based approach to implementation of the UK government's 2021 Integrated Review (IR) of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.<sup>1</sup>

Aimed at portfolio leads, including in economic growth, human development and governance, this guidance will help portfolio managers / senior responsible officers (SROs) and implementing partners know where and how to integrate peace outcomes across the programme cycle. It highlights best practice and signposts, for non-conflict experts, the steps necessary for conflict- and gender-sensitive approaches to sectoral programming to contribute to peace outcomes.

The programmatic case studies reviewed integrated peace outcomes into their development programming in five ways by:

- Integrating peace outcomes from the start, embracing complexity and working across silos;
- Regularly analysing the programme's interaction with conflict dynamics and adjusting interventions in response to contextual changes and learning, ensuring there is the funding (and other) flexibility to ensure adaptive management approaches;
- Ensuring peacebuilding, gender, and social inclusion approaches and strategies interlink and reinforce one another;

- Strengthening capacities across teams through training, mentoring, and building a community of practice; and
- Creating incentives to integrate peace outcomes, including through adding peace-oriented outcome harvesting into the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) strategy and framework.

## Why be conflict sensitive?

Conflict and fragility are the biggest blockers to development.<sup>2</sup> Extreme poverty is concentrated in the world's most fragile places. Conflict can quickly undo years of development progress. Ethiopia, until recently, was making impressive progress on poverty reduction and economic growth, but unresolved dynamics which manifested as violent conflict in 2021 undermined this progress. We know that when responses to disasters and humanitarian emergencies are uninformed by awareness of the conflict dynamics with which they are interacting, they can fuel further instability around issues such as who gets aid and how it is delivered. This occurs because the aid is often delivered within systems of political, social and economic inequality, and can, therefore, become a victim of elite capture. Significant social and economic changes can cause or exacerbate conflict dynamics. If insufficient attention is paid to fragility lines and underlying conflict drivers that can skew power in particular ways to particular groups, such changes can entrench these powers. Conflicts risk becoming violent if risks are not identified, managed and well mitigated.

Building peace outcomes into humanitarian and development programming is a crucial tool in a world where fragility holds back progress and traps communities in poverty. When this is prioritised by donors, its impact can be significant. As

## What is conflict sensitivity?

Any initiative in a conflict-affected area will interact with that conflict, with consequences that positively or negatively affect conflict dynamics.

Conflict sensitivity means the ability of you / your organisation to:

- **Understand the context in which you operate**  
*How?* Conduct analyses/assessments to know conflict profile, actors, history and dynamics
- **Understand the interaction between your intervention and the context**  
*How?* Use project, conflict, and interaction indicators to assess positive and negative impacts of interventions
- **Act upon the understanding of this interaction to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts**  
*How?* Design programme adjustment strategies (based on interaction indicators) to tailor your programme to the shifting conflict context

highlighted by the Department for International Development (DFID), now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in its guidance, *Working Effectively in Conflict-affected and Fragile Situations*,<sup>3</sup> when faced with such challenges, conventional approaches to aid delivery can often be inadequate. At best, poorly delivered aid will have no impact, at worst it can fuel conflict.

Conflict sensitivity is an approach that applies to all interventions. Beyond not unintentionally fuelling conflict, programmes need to be designed, implemented, and monitored to make positive contributions to peacebuilding efforts to address underlying conflict and fragility which impacts on development progress and poverty reduction. With declining Official Development Assistance (ODA), it is more important than ever that the FCDO maximises its resources if the ambitions under the IR are to be achieved. This means becoming more deliberate and systematic in integrating peace outcomes across all the assistance it, and its cross-government partners, provide in conflict-affected contexts.

### What peace are we building?

Peace is not just the absence of war, but the ability of people to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. International Alert adopted its programming framework to evaluate the peace outcomes of the case studies reviewed for the GSRA grant (Programmes reviewed for the GSRA grant area: Partnership for Resilience & Social Cohesion in Diffa (PRSCD); Rural Resilience Activity (RRA);

Joint Programme on Local Governance (JPLG) and Peacebuilding Education and Advocacy (PBEA)). This programming framework states that peace occurs by addressing the root causes of conflict and through the achievement of five core factors: *power, income/assets, law/justice, safety, and wellbeing*.<sup>4</sup>

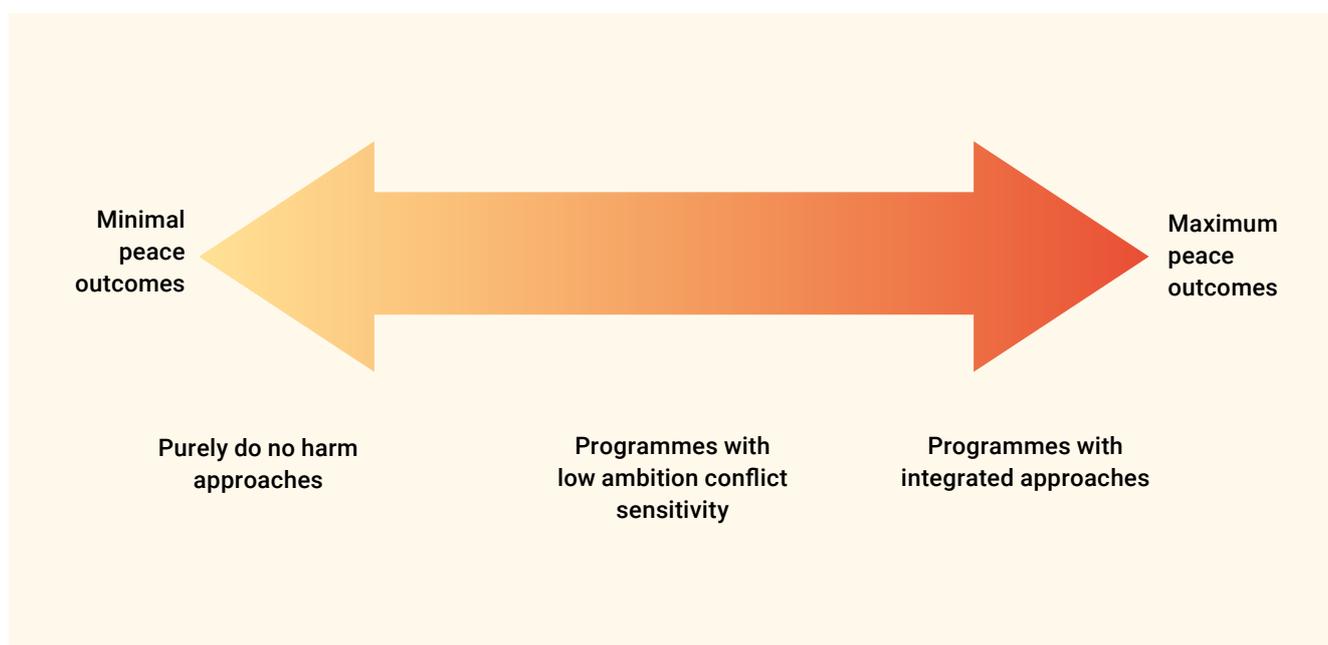
The four development programmes covered by this research were found to promote peace outcomes by:

- Creating political spaces for women and young people in governance processes (power);
- Ensuring economic opportunities for marginalised and vulnerable groups (income/assets);
- Facilitating citizen access to service delivery (law and justice);
- Contributing to inter-and intra-communal conflict reduction (safety); and
- Fostering strong ties between communities in conflict (wellbeing).

### What does conflict sensitivity look like?

There are a broad range of conflict sensitive approaches that contribute to peace outcomes. Starting with a minimalist do no harm approach that focuses on minimising negative impacts on conflict dynamics, the range extends to the maximalist transformational position that identifies opportunities to build peace and integrates conflict prevention and stability into programme design, delivery and outcomes.

**Figure 1: Conflict sensitive approaches to development and humanitarian programming**



## The conflict sensitive programme cycle

The case studies found evidence of both minimal and maximum peace outcomes depending on the type and number of conflict sensitive approaches adopted by the programmes. There is a strong positive correlation between the depth of the conflict sensitivity and the peace outcomes achieved. This guidance highlights some specific ways that these programmes are generating peace outcomes across the FCDO programme system. The note signposts how programmes integrate their conflict sensitive approaches from the position of the donor and that of the implementing partner, and offers clear actions for integrating conflict sensitivity throughout the four stages of the programme cycle: definition and prepositioning; mobilisation and bid writing; delivery; and closure.

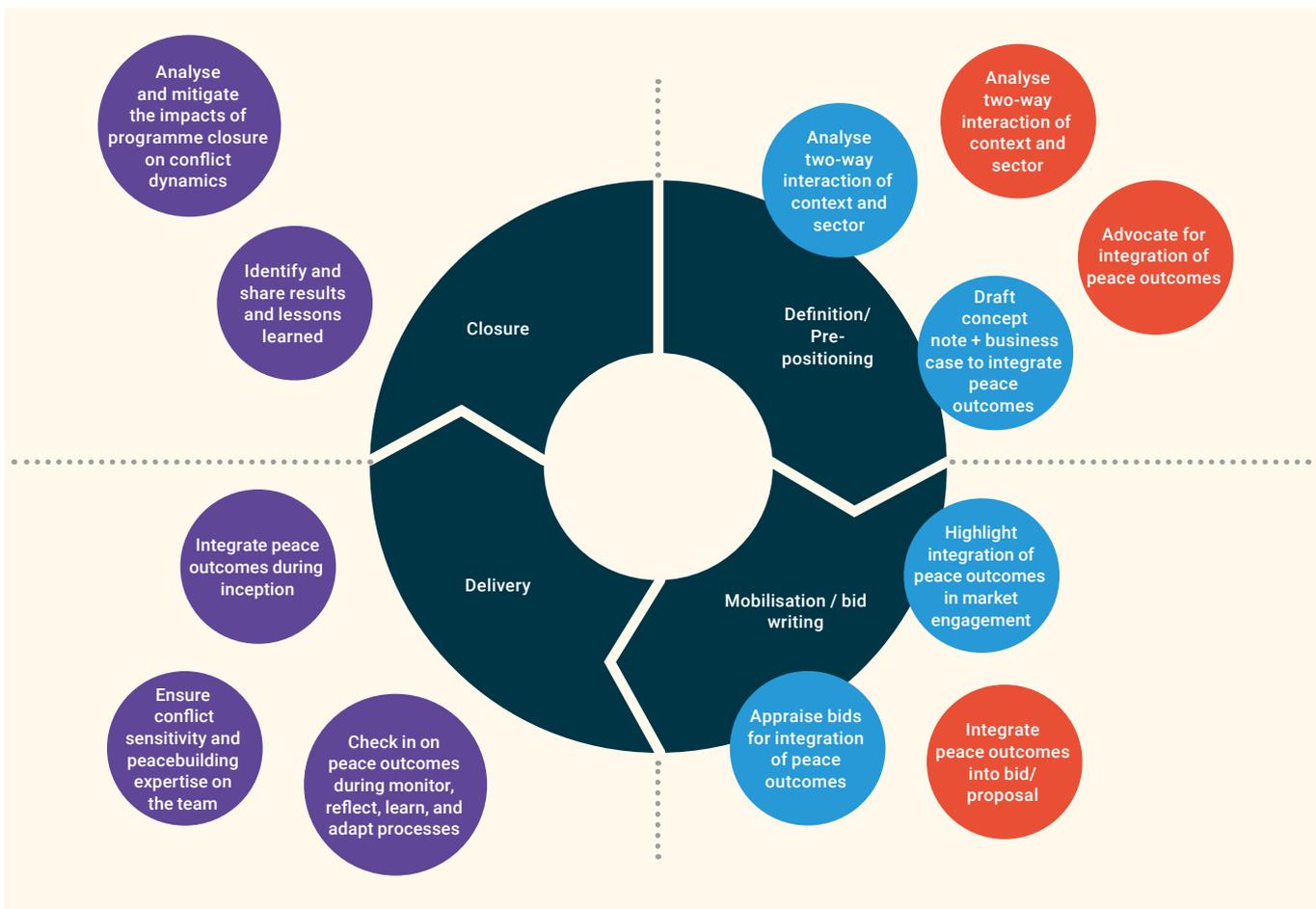
Figure 2 shows the programme cycle broken down into its component stages with recommendation circles for donors (in blue), implementing organisations (in red), and both donors and implementing organisations working together (in purple) aligned with each phase.

## Definition and pre-positioning

The research showed that it is imperative for donors to consciously integrate peace opportunities into the initial steps of a programme's design. The case studies revealed that where donors supported the integration of conflict sensitive approaches including analysis of conflict drivers, as a requirement for implementing partners, programmes had greater awareness of conflict dynamics and were, therefore, better able to respond and adapt.

- ▶ Both donors and organisations planning to submit a bid or proposal should **consult on and analyse the two-way interaction between the relevant sector and conflict dynamics** via the following actions:
  - **Seek the advice of relevant colleagues** For the FCDO, sources of advice are the country or regional Conflict Adviser, members of the Conflict Stability and Security Fund team, other colleagues working on conflict, peace and security, or development partners with dedicated peace and conflict capacities. For implementing organisations, colleagues and partners who work on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding can advise.

**Figure 2: Conflict sensitivity across the programme cycle**



- **Review conflict research** For the FCDO, the country or regional Joint Analysis on Conflict and Stability (JACS) may be a useful resource.
- **Consult conflict analysts and peacebuilders** These conversations will improve understanding of relevant conflict dynamics, the interaction of the proposed programme with them, the work already being done in this geographical area or on these issues, and how to build on this work. In order not to be extractive, a participatory approach that creates linkages among actors such as a focus group, community of practice, or a series of participatory workshops is preferred. It is critical to speak with gender and social inclusion (GESI) experts and with women, young people, representatives of ethnic, livelihood, religious, and other minorities, and other socially excluded groups to elicit their analysis and realities and understand the interactions between conflict, gender, social exclusion, and the relevant sector.
- **Conduct a conflict analysis or integrate conflict dynamics into research commissioned and gather lessons on the integration of peace outcomes** Drawing on consultations and a literature review, develop a conflict analysis of dynamics related to the relevant sector and take opportunities to fill gaps in understanding.

► The SRO should **draft the concept note and business case** to:

- **Reflect in the analysis section the interaction of the proposed programme with conflict dynamics.** For example, the UN Joint Programme on Local

Governance and Decentralised Service Delivery addressed conflict drivers in Somalia and Somaliland including the poor performance of local governance, poor/non-existent service delivery, and inequitable representation in governance. Through addressing institutional performance challenges and greater local governance transparency, inclusivity, representativeness, and accountability, JPLG aimed to enable greater confidence in and credibility of the state in Somalia and Somaliland and enhance the social contract between citizens and the state. See Box 1 for more information.

- **Outline how the programme will contribute to peace outcomes** In the concept note and business case, specify how the programme will contribute to peace outcomes, paying attention to how conflict drivers will be targeted by particular interventions and how the programme understands the interaction between its activities and those dynamics. For example, the rationale of the PBEA was that, when delivered equitably and effectively, education and other social services can strengthen capacities to manage conflict shocks and stresses and promote peace while sustaining long-term development opportunities for children, young people and their supportive communities. It provided an opportunity to test whether a social service such as education can be successfully harnessed to promote peace. See Box 2 for more information.
- **Commit to using the mechanisms needed to integrate peace outcomes** These mechanisms include undertaking and updating conflict and

## **Box 1: Programme mobilisation that enables peace outcomes through addressing conflict drivers**

The UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralised Service Delivery (JPLG) was designed to improve how government was run at the city and state levels to support economic development and governance improvements in Somalia and Somaliland through systems building and strengthening. Five agencies worked together to combine their technical expertise (UNDP, UNCDF, UNHABITAT, UNICEF, and ILO). As the attraction of non-state armed actors was related to their ability to deliver basic services, JPLG understood that if it strengthened local government to be the service provider of choice that supported all groups without bias, it would facilitate accountability that undermined the pull of non-state armed actors, thereby reducing support for and recruitment into these groups. This had been the goal of JPLG since its first iteration in 2008 and again under the second phase of JPLG between 2013 and 2017. However, while JPLG I and II were focused on incentivising good governance reform for service delivery to contribute to state-building, sustaining peace and governance reform, the current phase of JPLG III, focused on reaching all areas of Somalia and Somaliland with the end objective of creating an enabling environment for improved service delivery and greater stability. These adapted variations of JPLG were directly linked to reflections of how the programme met its development goals directly, but also contributed to peace outcomes indirectly.

## Box 2: Programme design that enables peace outcomes through harnessing social services

The Peacebuilding Education Advocacy Programme (PBEA) (2012–2016), implemented by UNICEF and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aimed to strengthen policies and practices in education for peacebuilding across 14 countries. In Myanmar's Rakhine State, international assistance was perceived as favouring Muslim internally displaced groups, leading to further rifts in already fragile horizontal cohesion. In response, UNICEF adapted the programme to strengthen coordination with partners on supply distribution and launched a state-wide communication strategy that advocated for the whole of Rakhine, the second poorest state in Myanmar. A subsequent external evaluation found that the earlier perception of international assistance was no longer widespread and that, while broadening access to education remained the primary objective, implementing in a conflict sensitive manner had helped address these conflict dynamics. Moreover, given the important gendered dimensions identified in the conflict analysis conducted, PBEA included gender transformative interventions. Curriculum development and teacher training promoted 'positive masculinity.' Recruitment of women teachers in communities hosting internally displaced people increased following awareness sessions and targeted recruitment efforts.

GESI analysis, embedding peacebuilding technical expertise, and building on the work done by peacebuilding actors, especially focused on existing gaps to maximise impact. They also include ensuring adaptive programming, iterative approaches, budget flexibility, and integration into the theory of change, indicators, and monitoring, evaluation and learning framework.

The SRO may wish to ask their conflict colleagues to review the concept note and business case.

- ▶ Concurrently, implementing organisations should **advocate for integration of peace outcomes** in their conversations with the FCDO. They can do so by sharing any conflict analyses, research, and lessons learned documents they have produced and highlighting the importance of flexibility, adaptive programming, and responsiveness to conflict dynamics in their discussions. For example, Mercy Corps in Nigeria shared results of conflict research in northern Nigeria with USAID and successfully advocated for the integration of peace outcomes in USAID's subsequent Request for Applications for its economic growth focused Rural Resilience Activity. See Box 3 for more information.

### Mobilisation and bid writing

The research showed that when donors and implementing partners built the integration of peace outcomes into the bid process, the programme designed had a greater awareness of conflict dynamics. Conflict dynamics were accounted for

when the programme designed peace opportunities into its theory of change at the outcome level. As a result, reporting and measuring the peace outcomes generated became easier for those programmes to demonstrate to the donor.

- ▶ The SRO should **highlight the integration of peace outcomes in market engagement**. The request for bids should summarise the proposed approach to peace outcome integration and state that bids will be appraised with this integration in mind. This message should be reinforced during any individual or group conversations with organisations that may apply.
- ▶ Implementers should **integrate peace outcomes in their bids** via these actions:
  - **Address conflict and its interaction with the programme** Clearly address this interaction and how conflict and GESI are interlinked in the problem statement.
  - **Present how the programme will integrate first order and second order peace outcomes into the theory of change, at the (at least) outcome level, and the activities that flow** For example, by strengthening the government's ability to deliver services, the programme can address poor governance as a driver of conflict (first order) and by supporting a diverse range of actors to come together to advocate for better services, the programme can increase positive interactions between groups with a history of tensions (second order). Also, clearly indicate in the proposal/bid how peacebuilding and GESI outcomes interlink, for example by addressing the social exclusion that young pastoralist women face.

- **Outline how the programme will measure peace outcomes** In addition to indicators that measure outcomes in, for example, education, health or economic development, include conflict and interaction indicators into the MEL framework. These indicators ensure the programme captures how it is affecting conflict dynamics and contribute to outcome harvesting<sup>5</sup> the peace outcomes as second order programmatic impacts.
- **Prioritise conflict and GESI analysis and expertise in team composition and budgets** Commit to undertaking conflict and GESI analyses at inception and at regular points and making adaptations as a result. Recruit a designated Peacebuilding and GESI Adviser, at least during an initial 12–18 months of the programme with the mandate of strengthening team capacities and embedding approaches.<sup>6</sup>

- ▶ Then, SROs and others involved should **appraise bids for their integration of peace outcomes**. Have clear peacebuilding criteria (including in the scoring around the technical team delivering peacebuilding and GESI), ensure there is sufficient budget for conflict and GESI analyses and embedded Advisers, and ask the peacebuilding expert to be present during interview to discuss the proposed approach. The SRO may also wish to seek the input of conflict colleagues in the appraisal process.

## Delivery

The research showed that donors and implementing partners that actively wove peace outcomes into the programme cycle learned more about the impact they were having on the conflict context. Specifically, analysis that was at the forefront of the programme, regularly updated, enabled programmes to make conscious shifts to respond to changes in the conflict context and to better maximise peace outcomes.

- ▶ Donors and implementers should **weave peace outcomes through the programme at inception** via the following actions:
  - **Initiate a collaborative process of discussion, analysis and learning** The research found that open conversations in the spirit of mutual learning and support were key for peace outcomes. The SRO should connect those working in the programme and for the FCDO on conflict, GESI, and peacebuilding and, together with the SRO and Programme Manager, form an implementing partner / FCDO working group

to discuss initial results, challenges, and adaptations required.

- **Conduct conflict and GESI analyses and develop related strategies that interlink and mutually reinforce** Our research found that some programmes continued to wait until midway through the programme cycle to undertake conflict and/or gender and social inclusion analyses, by which point often only minor changes can be made. Include conflict, gender and social inclusion analyses as one of the cornerstones of the inception period to inform programme development and adaptation. Localise these analyses at the different sub-national and community levels where the programme operates (analysis can be lighter touch or more in-depth in areas depending on conflict dynamics at play). In the case of PBEA, UNICEF adapted the programme after learning that perceptions of development assistance in Myanmar were favouring certain groups, coordinating more closely on supply and distribution and advocating for the programme to cover the whole of Rakhine state. See Text Box 2 for more information. Further, clearly elaborate the links between conflict and GESI and implications for the programme at this stage to inform the development of peacebuilding and GESI strategies. For example, the conflict analysis conducted by the PBEA identified the exclusion and marginalisation of ethnic minorities and restriction of the use of mother tongue languages in classroom instruction in Myanmar as a critical area to address. As a result, the PBEA undertook dialogues between the government and citizens and enabled the development of a Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education approach in Mon State. This work contributed to the passage of 2015 legislation which allowed for the use of Mon language in state-run schools for the first time in more than 50 years.
- **Build in peace-oriented outcome harvesting into the MEL strategy and framework** Create proxy indicators around peace factors such as power, income/assets, law/justice, safety, and wellbeing. Adapt tools to measure these indicators to suit the context rather than applying universally. Dedicate reflection periods within the learning agenda in the MEL strategy and framework to discuss the sustainability of the peace outcomes generated. For example, the theory of change of the Rural Resilience Activity (RRA) had conflict sensitive intermediary results linked to its highest-level goals, with relevant indicators including percentage of people who recognise the benefits of cooperating with the conflicting community; and

percentage of community members with a positive perception of 'others'. Given measurement of impact can be difficult and the need to look across the results chain, the RRA also engaged in outcome harvesting on conflict mitigation and transformation. This integration into MEL frameworks and processes both incentivised interventions towards achieving these results and ensured their measurement. The RRA Year 3 workplan also committed to a specific learning agenda theme around the links between market systems / household resilience and peacebuilding / reduction in conflict. See Box 3 for more information.

► Donors and implementers should **ensure conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding technical expertise on the team**, a requisite to delivery of peace outcomes, in the following ways:

- **Embed a Conflict/Peacebuilding Adviser at the start of the programme** The research showed that simply assuming this expertise exists or allocating this role to a colleague with multiple responsibilities does not work as effectively and can mean peacebuilding is deprioritised. Moreover, given the need for conflict analysis and capacity strengthening of colleagues, having a Conflict/Peacebuilding Adviser in post, at least for an initial 12–18 months with lighter touch support thereafter, constitutes good value for money.

- **Strengthen conflict sensitivity capacities across the whole team** Strengthen capacity via workshops as well as continued mentoring and accompaniment, as conflict sensitivity requires ongoing knowledge acquisition, resource sharing, and training opportunities in addition to learning through practice. Ensure capacities are strengthened across the organisation, including with administrative, finance, and human resources colleagues, given conflict sensitivity is linked to organisational policies and practices in addition to programmatic interventions.

- **Build an internal community of practice** Create spaces for colleagues to reflect and learn what works and what does not, support one another to deepen learning, and facilitate decisions about programmatic changes as part of a broader MEL strategy.

► Donors and implementers should **oversee the integration of peace outcomes during monitoring, reflection, learning, and adaptation processes** via the following actions:

- **Conduct a light touch conflict analysis update and peace outcomes review at regular intervals** Do this analysis every three to six months (depending on how dynamic the conflict context) to inform programmers of possible implications for the programme and adaptations needed.

### Box 3: Programme delivery that enables peace outcomes through market systems

The Rural Resilience Activity (RRA) (2019–2024), implemented by Mercy Corps, International Fertiliser Development Centre, and Save the Children, and funded by USAID's Feed the Future initiative, aims to facilitate and protect economic recovery and growth in vulnerable, conflict-affected areas in northeast Nigeria and sustainably move people out of chronic vulnerability and poverty through expanded economic opportunities. Its peace and conflict approach has the following aims:

1. Ensure markets system development is conflict sensitive via engagement with investors, civil society, and other partners on conflict sensitivity in business practices and planning.
2. Strengthen conflict management for market conflicts by supporting existing resolution and management mechanisms and linking with other peacebuilding efforts.
3. Strengthen market actors' capacity to cope with and adapt to insecurity so actors continue supplying goods and services and people better cope with the effects of conflict.
4. Undertake broad and targeted inclusion based on hypotheses that:
  - a) market systems exclusion decreases livelihood options and incomes and increases vulnerabilities to shocks which reinforce tensions around economic marginalisation and likelihood of involvement in and acceptance of violence and
  - b) certain groups, perceived as linked to the conflict, are socially excluded and failure to deliberately ensure they are not left behind or missed can worsen tensions, drive grievances, and miss opportunities to mitigate tensions.

- **Document and report results and discuss adaptations necessary** Reflect the analysis and the measurement of peace outcomes through outcome harvesting in quarterly reports to discuss adaptations to FCDO and ensure these are reflected on and discussed in the implementing partner / FCDO working group.
- **Revise and update the conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding strategy on an annual basis** Conduct this revision and update as part of wider programme processes. Ensure responsiveness to contextual changes, be as inclusive as possible (for example including key programme team members such as those working in affected communities who may not be at senior levels but have first-hand experience of strategy implementation) and build on programmatic learning.
- **Check how the programme integrates peace outcomes into annual reviews** Consider how the programme uses its conflict analyses and makes adaptations accordingly and annex evidence of peace outcomes in annual reviews.

## Closure

The research from all case studies showed that during the programme closure period, capturing learning about how closure could impact on conflict dynamics and programmatic peace outcomes is essential to any consideration of redesign.

- ▶ Donors and implementers should **analyse the impacts of programme closure on conflict dynamics to mitigate the risk of inadvertent negative impact or damaging the peace outcomes achieved**
- ▶ Donors and implementers should **identify and share the lessons learned** on integration of peace outcomes by documenting results, reviewing lessons learned (what worked, what did not, and why), and developing recommendations for internal learning and to inform future programming. Share these results and lessons internally and with others in the country context and in the relevant sector globally.

## Acknowledgements

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This guidance note was informed by research conducted by International Alert under the FCDO's Global Security Rapid Analysis (GSRA) on how development programming can address underlying drivers of conflict and contribute to peace. It was written by Chitra Nagarajan and Kimairis Toogood, based on research they did with Monica Llamazares, supported by Anthony Pemberton, Babagana Ferobe Isa, and Franklin Opuko. For more information, please contact [conflict-hub@international-alert.org](mailto:conflict-hub@international-alert.org).

## Endnotes

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- 1 The Integrated Review (IR) is a comprehensive strategy framework that charts a new course for the newly formed FCDO. Alongside maintaining the UK commitment to reducing poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the IR remains committed to reducing conflict frequency and intensity as well as addressing non-traditional security challenges such as climate change, education and health.
- 2 According to the 2020 OECD States in Fragility report, fragility poses a major global threat to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and for sustaining peace, especially now that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to lead to rising inequality. Today, fragile contexts are home to 23 percent (1.8 billion people) of the world's population, but 76.5 percent of the total number of people living in extreme poverty. If no action is taken to address fragility and its root causes, 2.2 billion people risk being left behind in these contexts by 2030. Focusing on fragility now is imperative for people, planet, prosperity, and peace. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/conflict-fragility/>.
- 3 Available here: [www.gsdr.org/docs/open/con84.pdf](http://www.gsdr.org/docs/open/con84.pdf).
- 4 [https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ProgrammingFramework\\_EN\\_2017.pdf](https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ProgrammingFramework_EN_2017.pdf).
- 5 Outcome harvesting collects evidence of what has changed, then works backwards to determine if and how an intervention contributed to this change. It is particularly useful in dynamic, uncertain, and complex contexts where it is not possible for outcomes to be specific or measurable during intervention design, and to uncover learning about programming effectiveness and what was achieved and how.
- 6 While having such peacebuilding technical expertise throughout the programme's lifetime would be ideal, trade-offs around costs and other resources may mean doing so is not possible. In such cases, having a Peacebuilding Adviser or equivalent for the initial programme stage can ensure systems, mechanisms, and capacities are embedded across the programme so that working towards peace outcomes continues to be prioritised and incentivised.

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