



DOING NO HARM & DOING MORE GOOD:
STORIES OF APPLYING
CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AT HELVETAS

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Conflicts linked to the distribution of resources are especially relevant in projects that work on land and water issues.

1

HELVETAS AND CONFLICT SENSITIVITY: APPROACH AND LESSONS LEARNED

Conflict sensitivity is about being aware that our work, presence, and behaviour can have potential negative or positive effects on tensions and conflicts in contexts where we are working. It is also about taking actions to avoid these negative effects and to reinforce the positive effects.

The purpose of this publication is to illustrate what conflict sensitivity looks like in practice. It presents a collection of experiences from Helvetas staff around the world. The 39 examples from 15 countries cover all Helvetas' working areas.¹ They illustrate the different ways in which our interventions can have unintended effects in the social contexts in which we operate and how staff acted to prevent potential negative impacts of our work or adapted when tensions did arise.

The publication is organized into three chapters:

- This first chapter gives a short overview of Helvetas' approach to conflict sensitivity and summarizes the lessons learned from our experiences of applying conflict sensitivity.
- The second chapter focuses on different kinds of unintended consequences of our actions.
- The third chapter focuses on the important role of behaviour, i.e. the way in which we carry out our activities.

Readers can navigate the publication in two ways. First, by reading straight through, following the given structure of the publication. This offers an overview and illustration of the different ways in which our presence, activities and behaviour can affect the contexts in which we operate. Alternatively, the publication can be browsed as a small database of stories of how Helvetas staff implemented conflict sensitivity. Each example is tagged to indicate the relevant working area, country and relevant cross-cutting themes such as advocacy, partnership, inclusive systems, gender and social equity, urban engagement, and youth. To find the relevant examples for each category of interest, it is easiest to first consult the cross-reference index.

“Conflict sensitivity requires us to take time: time to listen, observe and understand, time to discuss and reflect, time to plan and adapt. It’s time well spent that helps us to anticipate, spot, and address problems before they escalate.”



Owen Frazer,
Senior Advisor Conflict Transformation

1.1 THE 3-STEP APPROACH TO CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

Helvetas' approach to conflict sensitivity has been guided by the manual [3 Steps for Working in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations](#) (see Figure 1). Conflict sensitivity is defined as the ability of an organization to 1) understand the context in which it is operating (including intergroup tensions, the divisive issues and those that have the potential to strengthen social cohesion); 2) understand the interaction between its intervention and that context; 3) act on that understanding to avoid exacerbating a fragile and conflict situation and instead strengthen local capacities for peace.²

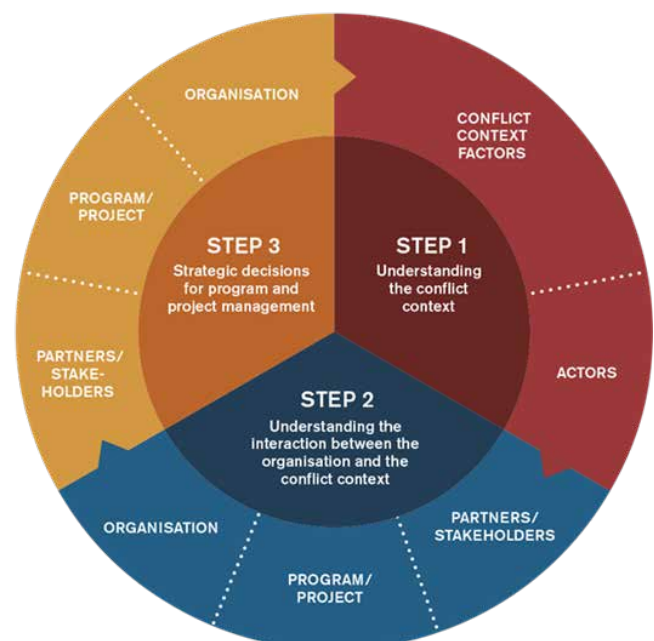


Figure 1.
Conflict Sensitive Project and Programme Management (Helvetas)

This publication mainly focuses on Steps 2 and 3 of the 3-Step approach. It explains, and illustrates with examples, how our interventions' interaction with the context may unintentionally contribute to conflicts and tensions and what adaptations can be made to avoid such consequences.

1.2 ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

There are two main ways in which humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions can affect the contexts in which they take place. These have been summarized in the phrase “actions and behaviours have consequences”. They concern the “what” and “how” of interventions.³

THE “WHAT”

An organization's actions can have an impact on the context through bringing in resources from the outside and introducing them into a local context. Resources can be tangible, such as goods and money, or intangible, such as services, opportunities and systemic improvements. The way in which goods and services are introduced can affect the context and lead to an increase or decrease in social tensions. Such unintended consequences of bringing in goods and services are known in conflict sensitivity jargon as “resource transfer effects”.⁴

The different ways in which the transfer of resources can do harm are explained and illustrated in Section 2.

THE “HOW”

Equally important as the introduction and distribution of resources, are the ways in which organizations, their staff and partners behave and how they are perceived. This includes the ways in which staff interact with each other, with partners and other stakeholders and, most importantly, with local people. Through their behaviour staff send messages about the intentions, values, and goals of an organization. The different ways in which behaviour can influence conflict are explained and illustrated in Section 3.⁵

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“We need to try to understand even better, because the real insights often only emerge when you dig deeper.”



Regula Gattiker,
Senior Advisor Conflict Transformation

.....

1.3 LESSONS LEARNED

7 important lessons emerge from the examples and case studies presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

1. Conflict sensitivity is relevant in all contexts and especially in fragile contexts

The examples demonstrate that conflict sensitivity is important in all settings, not only those suffering from armed conflict. Tensions and conflict are present in every society. Nevertheless, the risks of doing harm are particularly pronounced in situations of fragility and violent conflict. As the proportion of its operations in such contexts has increased, conflict sensitivity has become even more important for Helvetas. The unintended effects of our actions become especially visible in humanitarian interventions. Due to the nature of the issues and processes, the interventions and their effects become more immediately visible than in longer-term development interventions. Due to the time pressure involved, the difficult balancing act between analysis and action also increases the challenge of acting conflict sensitively.

2. Conflict sensitivity starts with awareness

Awareness of the context, and of the potential unintended consequences of our actions, is the starting point for conflict sensitivity. This means our staff is trained to always have their “antennae” out, ready to gather information about actual and potential tensions. This information informs our analysis. What emerges from many of the examples is that a strong analysis, especially of the involved stakeholders, is

essential to avoid creating tensions. With a strong analysis, actions and behaviours can be adapted appropriately to avoid contributing to actual and potential tensions.

3. Conflict sensitive behaviour is everyone's responsibility

While Helvetas' 3-step approach to conflict sensitivity emphasizes Conflict Sensitive Project Management (CSPM), conflict sensitivity is first and foremost about individuals. Our behaviour as individuals matters. The case studies highlight the importance of showing respect for differences in culture and value systems. Respectful behaviour is often rooted in self-awareness and reflections upon questions of positionality (our relationship to actors in the context).⁶ Being fair often means making an extra personal effort, for example, to ensure broad inclusion, particularly of marginalized people. Often, we have to find a balance between showing respect for local cultures and values and honouring commitments to organizational values and international human rights principles such as inclusion and gender equity. Similarly, accountability and transparency are not only rooted in organizational policies and processes, but also in individual behaviour. When it comes to accountability, taking time to listen and respond to the concerns of local stakeholders is key. Transparent communication is important when it comes to avoiding misunderstandings or selecting target groups or locations for our projects. As individuals we are ambassadors for the organization and its activities, and we all have a primary role to play in communication.

“Helvetas is made up of people, so we all have an individual role and responsibility when it comes to being conflict sensitive.”



Riccardo Riccardi,
Regional Director for Central America

“I realized that conflict analysis is as important as risk analysis in project design.”



Sulhiya Khaidarova,
Country Representative Tajikistan

4. Conflict sensitivity is proactive as well as reactive

Many projects and programmes are good at the reactive part of conflict sensitivity; they find creative ways of adapting when problems arise. However, sometimes this reactivity is focused on problems that arise for project implementation, or that relate to the security of staff and partners. Less attention is given to how our interventions might be creating problems in the context. By being proactive in our application of conflict sensitivity, we can anticipate issues before they arise and be more alert to problems we may create in the context, even when this does not have immediate consequences for us.

5. Conflict sensitivity requires special attention to distribution and legitimization effects

The examples suggest that the two most frequently encountered ways how we unintentionally affect the social context in which we operate are through the distribution of resources and through legitimizing certain actors. This is in line with the experience of other organizations.⁷ Conflicts related to the distribution of resources are especially relevant for projects that work on land and water issues. The risks of negative effects through unintentionally legitimizing certain actors are especially salient in Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion projects and those with an advocacy component.⁸

6. Conflict sensitivity and security management are interdependent

Being conflict sensitive helps to reduce security risks by contributing to our positive reputation and helping to increase our acceptance. Conversely, good security management helps to ensure we can

continue implementing our projects in a sustainable manner. This mitigates the risk that we contribute to tensions by unexpectedly suspending projects. Because both conflict sensitivity and safety and security risk management depend on a strong context analysis and actor mapping, there are important synergies between the two approaches.

7. Conflict sensitivity depends on good communication

Transparent communication is central to conflict sensitivity. It helps to prevent tensions from arising and to mitigate tensions once they do arise. Language is always a sensitive issue, and conflict sensitive communication requires being aware of how particular words and phrases are likely to be interpreted and how they can legitimize certain discourses and actors and delegitimize others. Even the term “conflict sensitivity” itself can be sensitive. In some contexts, programmes have preferred to speak of “context sensitivity”. Particularly in authoritarian contexts, where political sensitivities are high, this term is often used instead of “conflict sensitivity”.

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“Conflict sensitivity must be part of our daily lives. We are not isolated; we are part of the context.”



Modibo Ouedraogo,
Conflict Sensitivity Focal Point Burkina Faso

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One kind of possible effect of our actions are market effects. These occur when activities lead to changes in incomes, wages, profits, or prices in local markets, potentially sparking or aggravating tensions.

2

WHAT WE DO: THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF OUR ACTIONS

All aid and development operations transfer resources into a context. These resources can be tangible, such as money, goods, food, vehicles, and shelter. They can also be intangible, such as skills training and advocacy support.⁹ These resources always have an impact on the context. What is critical is to understand how these resources affect social dynamics. Resources represent power and wealth and can be used to increase power and wealth. Therefore, they have an important impact on existing power structures, either reinforcing or changing them. In contexts of fragility and violent conflict, where power structures are being contested, the different ways in which the introduction of new resources can impact a conflict become especially relevant.¹⁰ As explained in the text box “resource transfer effects”, there are five main ways in which resource transfers can have unintended consequences: theft and diversion, market effects, distribution effects, substitution effects, and legitimization effects. This section presents examples of these effects encountered during Helvetas work around the world.

RESOURCE TRANSFER EFFECTS¹¹

1. THEFT AND DIVERSION

When resources are stolen or diverted and used for conflict-related ends, including by armed groups.

2. MARKET EFFECTS

When activities lead to changes in incomes, wages, profits, or prices in local markets, potentially sparking or aggravating tensions.

3. DISTRIBUTION EFFECTS

When activities or resources are distributed in perceived, or actually, unfair or biased manners to local people and groups.

4. SUBSTITUTION EFFECTS

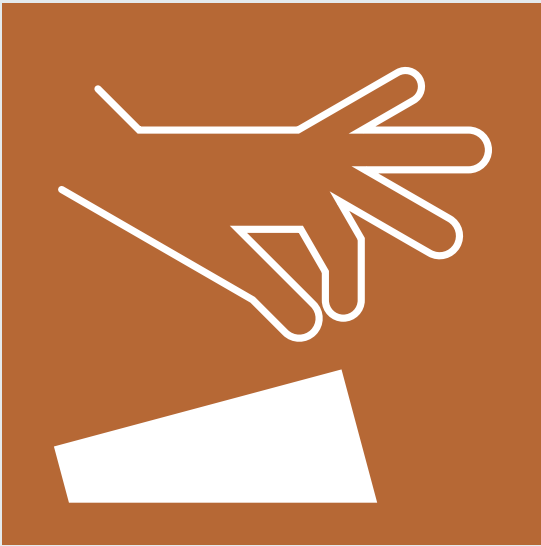
When activities replace local capacities they can delegitimize those actors who previously were responsible for delivering particular goods and services, or also free up resources of some actors to pursue violent conflict.

5. LEGITIMIZATION EFFECTS

When organizations, by collaborating with certain actors, bestow legitimacy on them, and/or by not collaborating with other actors, delegitimize them.

All these effects become especially salient when the line between those who benefit from our presence and projects, and those who don't, runs along existing divisions in a community. Depending on the context this can include political, ethnic, religious, class, caste, gender, age, and other social divisions.

2.1 BEING SENSITIVE TO THE DIVERSION OF RESOURCES



Theft or diversion of resources occurs when resources are taken from the organization or used for purposes other than those for which they were intended.¹² Theft, diversion and corruption are common risks an organization pays attention to and tries to avoid. Even in contexts without conflict, diversion can damage the sense of security in communities, undermine trust and ultimately undermine effectiveness. Moreover, theft can also turn into a security risk, as staff could be harmed during the theft, such as in car-jacking or armed robberies.

In contexts of violent conflict, the dangers theft poses gain significance. Stolen resources can directly fuel conflict if they are stolen by, or end up in the hands of, violent groups. These stolen resources can include goods or money. Both can also be diverted and taken away in the form of “taxes” imposed by both governmental and non-governmental armed actors to fund ongoing fighting.¹³

Helvetas’ experiences with theft and diversion offer some important lessons:

- Thanks to creative thinking and quick action by local staff, theft and diversion which could have further fuelled the conflicts could be avoided (Examples 1 and 3).
- Being proactive, trying to avoid situations where resources could be stolen, can be much easier than being reactive, trying to retrieve stolen resources (Examples 1 and 3).
- A frequently occurring problem in violent conflicts with non-state armed actors is the demand to pay “taxes” to them, which is difficult to decline due to security considerations (Example 2).
- Having to work with a local partner engaging in corruption poses specific difficulties. Having good relationships with other local stakeholders is of importance in order to take action to prevent further corrupt behaviour (Example 4).

1. Vehicles are a resource that is vulnerable to diversion

Helvetas had several ongoing projects in the Amhara region in Ethiopia when the war broke out between Ethiopian government forces on one side, and Tigray defence forces on the other side. When the government forces moved deeper into the Amhara region, they took vehicles that belonged to Helvetas, in order to use them in the war effort. A member of local Helvetas staff managed to discuss the issue with them and the government forces released the vehicles.

#Ethiopia

2. Armed groups' demands for "taxes" must be delicately navigated

In a country in conflict, Helvetas collaborated with local business partners. These were faced with many challenges because they operated in a region where various ethnic armed groups were active. The armed groups demanded that the local business partners pay "taxes" to them. The local business partners were threatened with violence if these were not paid. Sometimes, the armed groups also demanded a hiding place or food. This put Helvetas' local business partners at risk from other competing armed groups who might deem them partial to one armed group.

Much discussion went into how to ensure the safety of the local partner, without paying the "taxes" demanded by the armed groups and thereby indirectly giving money for potential arms procurement and fuelling of the violent conflict. Some strategies employed by the local business partners proved to be partially successful. Namely, they tried to negotiate the amount of the taxes down. The armed groups usually said they were collecting money for the good of the village and villagers. Helvetas' local business partners then argued that they were already donating a lot and contributing a lot to village development. This worked, and they only had to pay a small amount, while trying to make sure this money was used for village development and not for other ends.

3. The nature of the resource affects its vulnerability to theft and diversion

In a country where Helvetas was active, there was a long running insurgency against the government. While a peace treaty was signed between the insurgents and the government, some underground insurgent groups remained active, engaging in recruitment and extracting money and goods from people living in the region.

In one project, sometimes Helvetas staff needed to send training modules to a local partner in a district where underground insurgent groups were active. It had happened that members of those groups had come to check if there were any items such as food that they could steal. Helvetas staff, aware of the risk of theft, were careful not to send goods that could be of value to armed groups. However, they correctly calculated that the training modules were too heavy to be stolen and so could continue to supply them to the local partner. If in this case goods had been stolen by the armed groups, this could have posed a problem in the cooperation with the government, which could have accused the project of supporting the insurgency.

4. Good relationships with local stakeholders help to manage a corrupt partner

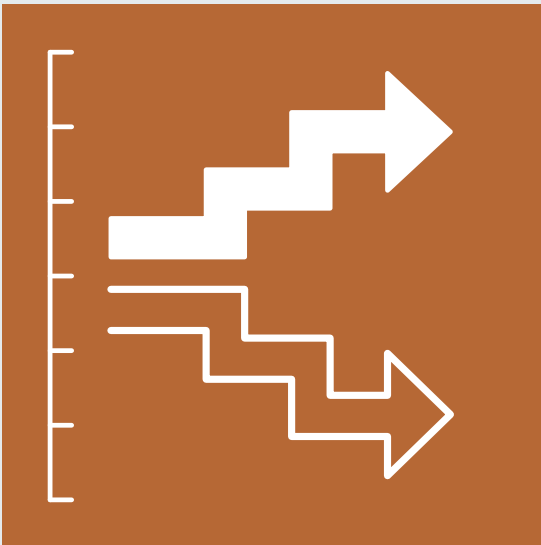
In a nutrition project in Bangladesh's Hill Tracts region, Helvetas was part of a consortium with six partners. For the project implementation, local partners were involved. In Bangladesh, each development project which receives foreign funding should receive prior approval from the NGO Affairs Bureau. For any project planned for the Hill districts the NGO Affairs Bureau seeks the consent of the Regional Hill District Council before approving the project. The Regional Hill District Council always prefers to engage local organisations, which have their origins in the Hill district and are managed by people from the indigenous Hill community. Therefore, the consortium included one local Hill organisation in the project as part of building local capacity and respecting the preferences of the local authority.

In the third year of the project, it became apparent that staff members of one of the local partners were involved in misappropriating project funds. All the consortium partners discussed together and communicated with the local partner, making it clear that this behaviour should stop. The corrupt behaviour however continued.

For a number of reasons it was not possible to simply exclude the partner from the project, the consortium partners developed a special operating system, which allowed for the continuation of work with the local partner in question, but where the organization of budgets was put in the hands of someone else. The local partner complained to the local government that they could not work with the consortium. However, Helvetas staff had a good relationship with the local government representatives and were able to ensure their support for the continuation of the project in the adapted set-up.

#Bangladesh #WaterFoodClimate #Partnership

2.2 BEING SENSITIVE TO HARMFUL EFFECTS ON LOCAL MARKETS



The introduction of new resources into a context can change local incentive structures and patterns of opportunity such as incomes, wages, profits, and prices. These changes to local markets in turn change the actual balance of who the economic winners and losers are, or perceptions people have of this. This becomes problematic if some people or groups are, or are perceived to be, favoured. It can increase tensions between those who (supposedly) gained from an intervention and those who lost, or those whose economic situation remained the same.¹⁴

In contexts of violent conflict, market effects that make some forms of livelihoods untenable can further fuel violent conflicts by making it necessary for some people to seek alternative employment, which in some cases can be provided by state and non-state armed groups. Furthermore, changes in prices, wages and profits can further fuel conflict by reinforcing the war economy through making war-related activities even more lucrative, and some war-related actors even richer.¹⁵

Helvetas' experiences with unintended effects on local markets offer some important lessons:

- Coordinating humanitarian action is key to avoid or mitigate an often-occurring problem in humanitarian interventions: while one intervention alone, such as Helvetas' intervention in Ethiopia's northern war affected region, would not have caused inflation, it acted in concert with many other interventions that distributed cash and ultimately led to inflation (Example 5)
- Sometimes, project successes can lead to conflict (Examples 6 and 9). For instance, as a result of more efficient water management, the demand for water decreased, which led to tensions with the water provider. In this case, a problem-solving dialogue with all involved stakeholders turned the situation from conflict into a win-win situation (Example 6).
- Transparent communication can be essential for mitigating tensions caused by (mis)perceptions (Example 7 and 8).
- Considering all different actors that could be affected by an action is key to avoid unforeseen consequences (Example 9).

5. Uncoordinated cash assistance leads to inflation

Following the eruption of violent conflict between Ethiopian government forces and Tigray defence forces in 2020, many people were forced to flee. Before the war broke out around 75'000 people used to live in Bahir Dar, the capital city of Ethiopia's Amhara region. With the outbreak of the conflict, around 150'000 internally displaced people (IDP) came to the city.

Immediately after the outbreak of the war, Helvetas joined a consortium project to address the humanitarian needs in the area. It also worked closely with other actors in the area to avoid a duplication of efforts and conflicts. As part of the project, the organizations distributed cash to IDPs. However, they were not the only ones. Many international and local organizations, as well as volunteers, were distributing cash. The large influx of cash into the local market caused prices to rise significantly. This price inflation contributed to tensions between IDPs and host communities, because IDPs were seen as the cause of inflation, which had made host communities who had no access to humanitarian aid poorer in real terms.

All humanitarian actors were part of the incident command post which was led by the department of disaster risk reduction. In this forum, the inflation problem was discussed, and a consensus was reached that the amount of cash distributed should only cover basic needs such as oil, salt, flour and medication. Discussions with IDP representatives were also conducted and the government had meetings with local suppliers in order to avoid a further escalation of prices.

#Ethiopia #Humanitarian #Partnership

6. Increased efficiencies have an unintended effect on demand

In Tajikistan, Helvetas engaged in a water productivity project which aimed at increasing water efficiency and food production in rice and cotton commodity value chains through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Water, which in some parts of the country is scarce, is often a source of conflicts and disputes on the community level, and also between neighbouring nations.

As part of the project, Helvetas developed the capacities of water user associations through technical support in creating digital maps and provision of portable devices to measure water, as well as training on conflict sensitivity and financial management. The water user associations were comprised of farmers representatives, who managed the distribution of water for the farmers in a specific area. Once a year the water user associations ordered water for the whole of the following year from the water provider. Due to the capacity development, water user associations started to order different amounts of water, which were more in line with their actual needs. Very often, this meant that the water user associations ordered smaller amounts of water than they used to order because they became better at estimating the amount of water they needed. This led to conflicts between the water user associations and the water provider because the interest of the water provider was to sell as much water as possible to make more money.

As these conflicts arose, Helvetas staff organized multi-stakeholder workshops where both members of water user associations and the water provider participated. Using a participatory approach, they tried to find common ground. It turned out, that the water providers faced a frequent problem that farmers or water user associations did not pay for water that they did not actually need – even if it was ordered. If water orders were aligned with actual needs this occurred far less frequently. Moreover, it became apparent that there often was not enough water in the system, so if water user associations ordered less water, the water providers had more water that they could sell to others.

#Tajikistan #WaterFoodClimate

7. A principled stand is undermined by the policies of other actors

In Burkina Faso, Helvetas implements road construction projects to improve access in rural areas. Project partners are trained in the “HIMO” (“Haute Intensité de Main d’Oeuvre”), or High Labour Intensity, method, which relies more on manual labour than machines. There was quite some frustration in the team with Helvetas’ policy of not paying per diems to workshop participants. This was seen as creating a barrier to getting key actors to participate in important project workshops as there was an expectation amongst actors to receive a per diem because many other international non-governmental organizations paid per diems. Helvetas’ policy of not paying per diems was an attempt to avoid creating false incentives for workshop participation. In this case, it was undermined by other organizations which did pay per-diems. However, the policy, which was intended to “do no harm” actually created other problems for Helvetas.

“It was agreed there was a need to harmonize approaches with other organizations to ensure Helvetas did not continue to be ‘outbid’ and lose collaboration opportunities with important stakeholders.” Adjustments were made, but Helvetas’ principle remained: there is no need to collaborate with partners who come to the workshops just to take compensation. To minimize disgruntlement during the workshops, it was decided to specify in all the terms of reference of the workshops organized by Helvetas the conditions of payment and to mention clearly that Helvetas does not pay for participants who live in the workshop areas. Thanks to some major communication efforts, the local partners in Burkina Faso started to accept the policy.

#Burkina Faso #WaterFoodClimate

8. Communication is key in counteracting perceived exclusion from a project

In Pakistan, Helvetas worked on a market system development project for medical and aromatic plants in a mountainous region. The project facilitated the creation of interest groups at the village level and associations at the valley level for collectors of medical and aromatic plants. The interest groups and associations were trained in pre- and post-harvest management and bargaining skills. They were also exposed to potential markets for medical and aromatic plants in different parts of the country and linked with relevant service providers.

Meanwhile, though the project was also working with local traders with the same objectives, the local traders assumed that the project was excluding them as middlemen from the market chain by empowering the collectors. So, the local traders started behaving in a hostile way towards the collectors. They also limited their cooperation in the value chain development for medical and aromatic plants.

Contrary to the traders’ perception, the project was being implemented with a holistic approach aimed to improve the overall market without eliminating any specific actors from the chain. As the project proceeded, clear communication of the project objectives, its inclusive approach, appropriate engagement of the local traders through several capacity-building initiatives, development of market linkages, and networking, resulted in the local traders feeling included and restarting cooperation within the market system for medical and aromatic plants.

#Pakistan #SkillsJobsIncome

9. An inclusive systems approach helps to transform conflict

In a village in northern Pakistan, Helvetas staff implementing a livelihoods project noticed that farmers purchased potato seeds from local traders, but at a high price and low quality. Helvetas staff linked the farmers with a seed corporation which provided them with high-quality potato seeds at a low cost.

While this action brought benefits for the farmers it had a negative impact on the local traders. It therefore created tensions between the traders and the farmers, as well as between the traders and the project.

Over time, project staff helped the local traders to connect with the better-quality seed companies, adopt their standards, act as an integral part of the market chain, and provide the farmers with good quality seeds themselves. This not only increased the earnings of the local traders but also restored their relationships with the farmers and the project.

#Pakistan #SkillsJobsIncome #InclusiveSystems

2.3 BEING SENSITIVE TO UNFAIR DISTRIBUTIONS



How resources are distributed can create conflict or exacerbate existing tensions if people perceive an organization to be biased in favour of, or against, a specific group. This is referred to as a “distribution effect”.¹⁶ Depending on the context, the relevant groups can be formed along ethnic, political, class, gender, religion, caste, etc. lines. The distribution of resources happens at various points in any project or programme. Key moments when distribution effects need to be considered include the selection of project participants and recipients of resources, the hiring of staff, and the selection of local partner organizations.

Distribution effects become especially problematic if resources are distributed along the dividing lines of an existing violent conflict. This becomes difficult to navigate, especially in post-conflict settings where everyone might have needs, but the losing side might have more than the winning side. Similarly, if the most-affected people after a natural disaster all belong to one group, this creates difficulties. Another issue that has high potential to incite conflict is the management of shared resources such as water, forests, or land. Furthermore, problems can arise if some people are easier to reach than others and therefore gain access to resources introduced by an intervention, or if social and economic criteria for the selection of project participants are too rigidly applied, thereby limiting an organization to only work with a specific subset of people.¹⁷

Helvetas’ experiences of the challenges of fairly distributing resources offer some important lessons:

- Distribution effects, and related tensions, occur very frequently in Helvetas’ work. Two main aspects of Helvetas’ activities emerge as prone to creating tensions: the selection of project participants and recipients of resources, and projects involving shared resources such as land or water.
- The selection of participants or beneficiaries is an important part of almost any project and prone to creating tensions. Using our antennae to grasp potentials for tension is key in order to take action to avoid causing or increasing conflicts. Sometimes, extensive, and previously unplanned measures have to be taken or procedures created to avert these tensions (Examples 10, 11).
- Often, transparent communication is key to avert or mitigate tensions arising from negative distribution effects (Examples 10, 14, 17)
- Conflict-sensitive adaptation measures may not only help to avoid or mitigate tensions but may also enhance social cohesion (Example 12).
- It is of great importance that Helvetas local partners are also conflict sensitive (Examples 10, 11, 12).
- Projects involving shared resources, most commonly land or water, have a high potential to increase existing tensions or become sources of new tensions (Examples 13, 14, 15, 16). Participatory processes are often central to resolving disputes over land or water use (Examples 13, 16, 17).

10. Transparent communication helps manage tensions around selection of project participants

In Burkina Faso, Helvetas implemented a project on youth employment and entrepreneurship. In Burkina Faso, people younger than 35 years old make up more than 77.9 % of the population. The project targeted 2,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years. The goal was to provide vocational training and accompany the young people until they found employment or became entrepreneurs themselves.

The project sparked a lot of excitement and interest among the population, which made the selection of the 2,000 youths very difficult. In fact, people started to take interest in the selection, talk about it, and many different rumours and interpretations of how the selection was done started to spread. Many young people thought that Helvetas would give them money after the selection, others thought that they would get material for free and so Helvetas ended up with a large crowd of young people who wanted to be registered. The project team realized that this had the potential to spark many kinds of tensions. For example, if a family had several children who were eligible to participate in the project, but only one would get accepted, this could spark tensions between the siblings, or between the not selected siblings and parents. Parents might search for faults in those children who were not admitted to the programme. Tensions could also arise between families where no member was selected and families where someone was selected for the training. Furthermore, polygamous marriages in Burkina Faso with one husband having several wives are frequent. Selecting just one of the eligible wives for the project could lead to tensions between the wives but also to tensions between the husband and the not-selected wife.

In order to avoid causing tensions the project team analysed the context to be aware of what kind of tensions could be sparked and why. Based on the analysis, they decided that a big awareness-raising campaign was necessary before beginning with the selection process, although this was not initially planned as an essential activity. Consequently, the whole project team was trained in conflict sensitive project management. Then the project partners went to all areas targeted by the project and organized information events where they told people what the selection criteria were,

how the selection process would work and what the general approach of the project was. They also worked directly with village leaders and influential figures to spread the word. The information on the project and selection process was also spread through interactive radio shows, radio being a very popular medium in Burkina Faso. To reach even more people, information about the project and selection process was also spread at village markets, which are a meeting point for many people. Only after project staff was certain that people understood the selection criteria and process, they started with the actual selection of youths. Moreover, Helvetas staff decided to make another change to the project. While they were still only able to train 2,000 selected participants, they decided to make those 2,000 sign an agreement stating that each one of them will actively share their knowledge gained with at least ten other people. Project staff also decided to organize events where they invited those who were not selected and those above 35 years to explain to them the project goals, but also tell them about how one can become an entrepreneur and what the opportunities to become an entrepreneur are. All these measures taken have greatly contributed to calming the environment of the project. The project was ultimately well known by all and the selection process was done without raising discontent and tensions.

#Burkina Faso #SkillsJobsIncome #Youth

11. Clear criteria and data verification help to avoid nepotism

In Tanzania, Helvetas is engaged in a project to empower and improve the living conditions of economically- and socially-disadvantaged youth through skills development and gainful employment. There are many people with needs, but the project is not in a position to support everyone. Therefore, selection criteria have been created to select those young people for participation in the project who were most in need. In this selection process, the local government helped staff to identify those youth who were from the poorest households.

Unfortunately, some local government officials selected their relatives to participate in the training claiming that they came from a poor family, although they did not actually belong to those groups with the greatest needs. This led to some tensions with the community.

To prevent this from happening, Helvetas staff has introduced an application form that every applicant has to fill out and which includes questions regarding their economic background. This form is distributed by the local government. However, it remains possible to fill in the form with incorrect information. To verify the information, interviews are then conducted with the participants.

#Tanzania #SkillsJobsIncome #Youth

12. Mixed teams help to increase trust in areas with strong identity divisions

Covid-19 started spreading widely in Sri Lanka in mid-2020. During this period, misinformation and disinformation regarding Covid-19 spread, some of it targeting certain ethnic communities. Tensions were on the rise due to several Covid-19 regulations such as the mandatory cremation of Covid-19-related deaths, which was in contradiction to the burial ritual of Muslim communities.

In 2021 Helvetas was engaged in a project on humanitarian response and emergency support for communities in need. Part of the project was the distribution of dry rations and sanitary kits to communities affected by Covid-19 and extreme weather across 15 districts.

Helvetas staff were well aware that they had to make sure to support people from both Muslim and Sinhalese communities in order avoid further fuelling disinformation and tensions. To do so they worked with the local government and ensured that the selection criteria were communicated very transparently.

In order to distribute the food, local Muslim, Sinhalese and Tamil youth networks were involved. However, some communities were not open to youth volunteers from another ethnicity coming and working in their area. Those communities were only open to youth from their own ethnicity coming and distributing food.

Helvetas staff decided to group Sinhalese and Muslim youths together and send them to communities together. This meant that Muslim youths were distributing food in Sinhalese communities, together with Sinhalese colleagues, and vice versa. This successfully allowed them to build trust amongst each other and with Sinhalese and Muslim communities.

#Sri Lanka #Humanitarian #Youth

13. Unintended consequences require involving additional stakeholders

Helvetas has been active on agriculture in Laos for twenty years. The Lao Uplands Rural Advisory Service project supports, amongst other things, the scaling up of sustainable agriculture by facilitating socio-ecological learning processes with farmers and business start-ups for young agripreneurs. The project led to a big success in supporting the production of high-quality coffee in one village. The coffee was internationally recognized for its quality and won a prize after being 'cupped' by experts in the United States.

Due to the success, and possibility to earn more money, farmers of the project village went deeper into the forest to clear the undergrowth and plant more coffee there. This led to tensions with villagers in a neighbouring village who claimed that the forest was theirs and that they should get the earnings for the coffee plantation.

Helvetas staff decided to consult with the government in order to begin a participatory process of demarcating clear borders in the forest between the villages. Together with GPS technology and border markers a commonly agreed upon boundary was established. Similar problems were experienced in other villages where farmers supported by the project were harvesting wild tea from the forest. The same solution – mapping of boundaries – was being implemented. As a result, Helvetas staff realized that participatory land use planning needed to be done in all communities they were working with. The mapping of land boundaries hence became an important tool to prevent and deal with conflicts arising from the expansion of agricultural activities.

#Laos #WaterFoodClimate #SkillsJobsIncome

14. Local political allegiances affect perceptions of community development projects

The KALAI Water Project in Mozambique promoted water supply and sanitation for rural and peri-urban communities through, among other things, constructing boreholes and constructing water supply systems.

Before installing a water pump system, a Helvetas subcontractor would conduct technical studies to find where the water came from. In some cases, the studies concluded that there were not suitable water reservoirs in the area and that the project had to move on to another area. Sometimes, the local community then got frustrated and angry and accused Helvetas staff of implementing the project elsewhere because they favoured another ethnic group or political party. Where this happened, project coordinators and local officials went to listen to the community and explain why the project could not be implemented there.

In other cases, project activities led to tensions within communities. When constructing boreholes in a new area, Helvetas staff also supported the establishment of water and sanitation committees which were then responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructure. These were usually made up of six men and six women who were elected by their community for one or two years. The establishment of these water and sanitation committees sometimes led to tensions within the community because some people were not happy when they did not get elected to the committee. In villages where people belonged to different political parties, it also happened that people refused to use the water because they perceived it as coming from the other political party. In both cases Helvetas staff then facilitated meetings focusing on communicating that the water and sanitation committee membership would change again in a year or two and that the water does not come from one political party but is there for everyone to use. Ideally such tensions can be avoided in advance by an in-depth context analysis that identifies dividing lines within the community and establishes participation criteria to ensure a fair representation of different groups in the water and sanitation committees.

#Mozambique #WaterFoodClimate

15. Competition between levels of local government affects project site selection

Helvetas was active in Haiti on a project which aimed at reinforcing local governance of drinking water and sanitation. In Haiti, each commune is administered by a “mairie” (municipal council). An administrative level below are the community sections, which are administered by an executive body called “CASEC” (community council). In order to decide where to construct water systems, areas with the biggest needs had to be prioritized over others. These decisions were taken together with the “mairie”. However, the priority for the “mairie” was often to implement project in towns, where the “mairie” could gain more political visibility than through projects that were implemented in remote areas. During the project, Helvetas staff learned that it was very important to not only involve the “mairie”, but also the “CASEC”, because it was closer to, and better at managing, the community sections. Moreover, an actor that intervened in their realm of responsibility without their involvement risked being forbidden to undertake any further action. The “CASEC” usually wanted the project to be implemented in their community sections, rather than in the towns favoured by the “mairie”.

In order to navigate these tensions, Helvetas staff established objective criteria based on needs. However, the biggest needs were often found in rural communities. In one of the communities, the project was blocked by the “mairie”. A solution was found when it was agreed that some of the project activities would also take place in the town of this community, such as the construction of a sanitary block at the public market.

#Haiti #WaterFoodClimate #Water

16. Use of common pool resources requires dialogue involving all stakeholders

In the West of Burkina Faso, Helvetas was engaged in a project aimed at sustainably improving income, food and food security of rural youth, their families, and communities. There was a small lake in one village where Helvetas was active. Water from this lake was used for agriculture to water vegetable gardens but the lake was also used for fish farming. Staff working on the project remarked that there was conflict in this village between the farmers and fishers due to different interests. The farmers claimed that the fishers were blocking their access to the water. They did not want to open the water up for other usage because they claimed it disturbed the fish farming.

Staff decided to make sure that the project also supported the development of fish farming in order to avoid causing further tensions. Project staff organized a roundtable discussion with local authorities, technical services, the fish farmers and the vegetable gardeners. They facilitated a discussion on the water usage problem and ultimately a solution was found that was acceptable to all parties. A plan was designed of when and how water will be released from the lake for the vegetable farmers. The stakeholders defined good times for water use by fish farmers and good times for water use by market gardeners. In the end both sides were able to be more productive and the conflict over water between vegetable farmers and fish farmers was largely resolved.

#Burkina Faso #WaterFoodClimate

17. Competing claims require the facilitation of an inclusive negotiation process

In Pakistan, Helvetas was working on a project on water and livelihoods, including the planning of drinking water supply schemes. In one case, the planning of a drinking water supply scheme further aggravated already existing tension over a water source between two religious groups, namely Sunni and Ismaili. Both parties claimed sole ownership and the exclusive right of use of the water source.

The project was also helping to develop and empower the water users association, which then played a key role in the resolution of the conflict through negotiation and inclusion of all concerned in the scheme design. As a result, through the proper engagement of the whole community, and working with a participatory approach and clear communication, the scheme not only provided clean drinking water to all, but also further strengthened social relations between the two religious groups.

#Pakistan #WaterFoodClimate

2.4 BEING SENSITIVE TO UNDERMINING LOCAL CAPACITIES



Another way through which the introduction of resources can cause, or exacerbate, tensions is by replacing local efforts and competencies and thus undermining local capacities. These substitution effects are a much-discussed challenge for international development organizations and are relevant beyond conflict sensitivity considerations. In some cases, external organizations may believe that things will be delivered with higher quality or more efficiently, at least in the short term, if they do them directly. However, such interventions risk undermining local capacities and efforts, and contradict the assumption that local people are ultimately responsible, and local solutions and local governance is the aim. This calls for a careful balancing act in any context.¹⁸

In situations of conflict, substitution effects can have additional negative consequences. First, the substitution of certain resources, processes or services can free up local resources which can be used to further fuel the conflict. Second, substituting capacities of local authorities may weaken their ability to respond to and manage conflicts. Third, taking over responsibilities, which were previously assumed by local authority structures, can lead to the delegitimization of those authority structures in the eyes of the citizens. Strong and legitimate structures and actors are key for sustainable development and conflict prevention.¹⁹

The examples below of being sensitive to local capacities offer some important lessons:

- An in-depth analysis of all relevant actors and governance structures is key to involving the right stakeholders (Examples 18 and 19).
- When supporting voices of local communities to be heard, making use of government approved civic spaces can avoid substitution effects or accusations of substituting government capacities (Examples 18).
- Conflict sensitivity is not conflict avoidance. Many projects with a rights-based approach involve supporting people to claim their rights. This can lead to confrontations with authorities. The importance is to be aware of this and already build into these interventions elements that support such interactions taking place in a non-violent, constructive way (Example 18).
- Sometimes the accusation of “substitution” might be used to discourage or forbid Helvetas to work on sensitive issues. However, transparent communication not only offers the possibility to create understanding for the project, but to actually empower others to also work on a topic and to bring in a wider range of perspectives. This shows the importance of thinking each case through in detail and not to be overly risk-averse or overreact when accused of “substitution” or some other negative effect (Example 19).

18. Supporting people to voice demands requires also engaging constructively with authorities

In Bangladesh, Helvetas was working on a project on climate governance. When Helvetas submitted the project proposal the government was sceptical why Helvetas was interested in working on issues such as gender responsiveness and smart governance because these were issues which fell under the responsibility of local government structures.

In a first phase of the project, Helvetas worked on the capacity building of local community members in order to raise their voices. This was done through creating community-based organizations. From past experiences, Helvetas staff knew that government bodies did not like this empowerment work because political demands could be voiced, or people might take up positions or join political groups not in line with the ruling party. To avoid conflicts between Helvetas and local government institutions, and between local community members and government institutions, several steps were taken. First, in addition to training local community members on their rights they also received training in how to voice demands in non-aggressive ways. Second, it was decided that the community-based organizations would participate in civic spaces that were endorsed by the government. Third, local elective bodies were also trained in their rights and responsibilities, so that a constructive dialogue between government and civil society became possible.

#Bangladesh #WaterFoodClimate #Advocacy

19. A multi-stakeholder approach widens perceptions of roles and responsibilities

Another area Helvetas worked on in Bangladesh was the prevention of violent extremism. The problem arose that government entities, and especially law enforcement agencies, were very sensitive to issues relating to the prevention of violent extremism. In their understanding, it was exclusively their responsibility to work on these issues. Even local community members shared this understanding.

Therefore, Helvetas and their local partner decided to apply a multi-stakeholder approach. In each project location committees were formed consisting of 20 people such as religious leaders, civil society representatives, parents, teachers, youth, and lawyers. Helvetas and their partner transparently shared the project objectives with the committee representatives, explaining why and how community involvement is important to prevent radicalization that leads to violent extremism. The project organized meetings with law enforcement and government stakeholders and arranged orientations for the committee members on the basic understanding of violent extremism and signs of radicalization as prevention measures in ten northern districts of Bangladesh. The project also supported local civil society organizations to organize prevention of violent extremism activities for the community and youth through culture, sports, inter-faith and inter-generational dialogue.

This strategy enabled the project to reach its goal of mobilizing and capacitating various stakeholders to understand the context and signs of radicalization as well as to work collectively with government entities to prevent violent extremism.

#Bangladesh #VoiceInclusionCohesion

2.5 BEING SENSITIVE TO TAKING SIDES



To implement any project an organization must cooperate with various stakeholders. This can include working together with local partner organizations, formal and informal governance institutions at the national or local level, as well as civil society groups. By working with one group or leader, the organization implies that this is a respectable and legitimate partner. Since resources such as money, food, training or mobility are involved in this cooperation, the organization can be perceived as using its resources to support a specific governing authority, political group or social group. If the actor turns out not to be trustworthy, or even engages in illicit activities, the impact of such a collaboration can be very negative. The legitimization of one actor over another can contribute to tensions. The same holds true for the opposite: by not working with an actor, this actor can be delegitimized. These impacts are referred to as “legitimization effects”.²⁰ In cases of violent conflict, the legitimization of violent actors and delegitimization of non-violent actors becomes especially problematic as it fuels conflict escalation and undermines possibilities for peaceful resolution.²¹

Helvetas’ experiences with legitimization effects offer some important lessons:

- Difficult questions around avoiding taking sides are frequently encountered in Helvetas’ work. This often involves navigating tricky political situations where no blue-print solutions are available. Teams must balance the achievement of project goals, the ability to remain operational in a country, or security considerations, with the need to be impartial and avoid being instrumentalized by politically-savvy actors (Example 21, 22, 23, 24).
- Many interventions explicitly legitimize certain actors, for example through activities to empower civil society. This is not necessarily bad and is often the explicit goal of some projects. The question is whether this is likely to fuel conflict and how such conflict will be expressed (Example 23). Conflicts can arise when existing power structures are challenged. Youth and women’s empowerment projects, which challenge patriarchal power structures, can produce a backlash and, in some cases, violent oppression (Example 20).
- Sometimes, the negative consequences of potential legitimization effects are too big, and cooperation with a certain actor is simply stopped (Examples 21, 22).
- Language is also of central importance when it comes to questions of legitimization. Power relations are often reflected in the language that is used. In situations of conflict, labels and framings are often disputed (e.g. “conflict” or “terrorist”). When an organization adopts the same language as that used by a conflict party, this can be perceived as not only legitimizing the language but also the actor using it. Outsiders also need to be careful not to enter a context and label certain actors or situations in ways that contradict the local understanding of them (Example 25).

20. Empowering women and youth involves also engaging with other stakeholders

In Kyrgyzstan, Helvetas worked on a project supporting the development of the tourism sector. One component of the project focused on the establishment of a women's cooperative whose members then produced and sold local handicrafts. This gave the women a new and independent source of income. This increase in monetary power also led to a change in their availability for care work and to a change in the power dynamics of patriarchal families. In some cases, this led to domestic violence. The team invited the men to an information meeting to discuss the project, informing them of the benefits the project would have for their families. A majority of men then accepted that their women participate in the project.

#Kyrgyzstan #SkillsJobsIncome #Gender

Another project Helvetas was working on in Kyrgyzstan aimed at empowering youth and preventing extremist rhetoric. From the very beginning of the project, Helvetas staff made sure to also include older community members in the project in order to avoid a situation where youth felt empowered to speak their mind, only for them to be put in their traditional place again by older community members who did not assent to lowering the power asymmetry between them. Helvetas staff not only did project activities with young people but also chose older key community members as mentors and ambassadors for the young people.

#Kyrgyzstan #VoiceInclusionCohesion #Youth

21. Extra communication efforts to avoid perceptions of partiality

The KALAI Water Project in Mozambique promoted water supply and sanitation for rural and peri-urban communities by constructing new water holes, rehabilitating damaged bore holes, and placing them under local management through supporting the formation of water and sanitation committees.

In one instance, the administrator of a district in Cabo Delgado asked Helvetas to work on the provision of water in a specific municipality. In the past, the lack of clean water provision contributed

to an outbreak of cholera in this municipality. Helvetas therefore agreed to work there, supporting water supply systems and latrine construction.

The district administrator in question belonged to one specific political party. The municipality, in which Helvetas was asked to work, however, was led by people belonging to the other main political party. In the past, the armed wings of the main political parties fought against each other in a protracted civil war from 1977 to 1992.

After Helvetas worked in the assigned municipality for some time, it became clear that the administrator tried to make it seem as if the water systems Helvetas was working on were provided by the political party he belonged to in order to gain votes with the local people. This in turn sometimes led to tensions with the people living in the municipality in question, who accused staff of working together with this political party.

In order to defuse the tensions, staff took time to talk to the people living in the municipality and the two political parties. They communicated that Helvetas was working with people and not with political parties. Ultimately however, Helvetas decided to discontinue work in the municipality in the next project cycle.

#Mozambique #WaterFoodClimate

22. No engagement as a means to avoid legitimizing

In a country where Helvetas was active, a coup happened where the military took over government institutions. Widespread protests and repression followed. Following the coup, Helvetas decided to stop doing any advocacy work directed towards government and desisted from any official engagement with the self-appointed authorities, in order to avoid legitimizing the military regime. The only cooperation with the self-appointed authorities continued to take place on the local administrative level in order to keep operations in the country running.

#Advocacy

23. Conflict implies reputational and security risks for both project implementer and participants

In the same country that had experienced a military coup, Helvetas had been supporting an arts and culture project. The coup changed the situation and security considerations. Engaging with artists in this new situation brought many risks for them and for organizations engaging with them. The main risk was that support to artists could be perceived as legitimizing artists opposed to the regime.

To avoid being perceived as legitimizing the artists Helvetas made clear their support to artists was emergency support due to Covid's impact on the creative sector. The financial support to artists was, for this project, independent of any social engagement, and in this way different from earlier arts projects of Helvetas which had aimed at contributing to social cohesion and a pluralistic society. Helvetas also took precautions to ensure information about the artists that were being supported was treated very carefully and not shared with any partner organizations.

Helvetas and its partners continued to organize joint exhibitions, bringing together artists who got grants from their two arts projects. The aim was to create a safe space for artists to meet and help them to continue their artwork in this difficult time. The exhibition took place in a rural area, without any public announcement and no media and turned into a recreational village, where some artists stayed even after the exhibition had finished, to keep working together in a safe space.

#VoiceInclusionCohesion

24. Political polarization makes impartial governance work challenging

The political context of Albania has been highly polarized for years. The transition to democracy, which started in the early 1990s, was characterized by the competition between two major political parties. This led to high polarization and little space for cooperation, reforms and democratic development. The difficult relationship between the ruling party and the opposition party became visible at the local level in the case of the local

governance association. This association was supposed to advocate on behalf of all its members belonging to both political parties. However, the association split along political party lines.

Helvetas was working on a project focusing on decentralization and local development. The local governance association was an essential partner for this project. However, as it split, the question arose whether Helvetas should continue working with partisan associations. This question was also posed by other organizations. Initially, international organizations and NGOs boycotted the partisan associations. Because no change happened and an important interlocutor was lost, with time, Helvetas and others started to support partisan associations on a technical level in cases where they acted together.

A similar question arose several years later when the opposition boycotted elections and gave up their parliamentary mandates, which effectively turned government structures into partisan structures. At the core of Helvetas project was supporting local democracy and pluralism. Because this pluralism was now absent in governmental structures, the question arose, whether to continue working with them.

Helvetas staff decided to take the risk, arguing that it was more important to remain within the system and attempt to change it from within. In addition, they started looking for instruments and ways to act in a bipartisan way. One of these ways was women elected in local councils who created a bipartisan alliance by inviting civil society representatives and former council members from the opposition (despite not being part of the formal forums) to join efforts and bring the voice of the community and particularly vulnerable groups into the decision-making process. The democratic deficit was to a certain extent recovered through a focus on such inclusive actions.

#Albania #VoiceInclusionCohesion

25. Choosing our words carefully

Even before the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, terms such as “peace”, “democracy” or “human rights” were very sensitive, and the authorities did not welcome international NGOs working on these issues. As a large part of the population supports the protests against the military regime, many civilians also oppose some notions of “peace” and “social cohesion”. Helvetas staff is therefore extremely careful with their terminology, in order to avoid security risks. Helvetas continues with its arts projects and cultural events that bring people together but is careful to avoid using the politically-sensitive term “social cohesion” in connection with such activities.

#Myanmar #VoiceInclusionCohesion

Between 1983 and 2009, Sri Lanka faced a violent civil war fuelled by ethnic tensions between the majority Sinhala community and minority Tamil community. Despite the end of the civil war in 2009, root causes that led to the conflict remain unresolved.

As part of a project on social cohesion in Sri Lanka, Helvetas staff set up “incubator spaces” for students to engage in media activities in two predominantly Sinhala-populated and one predominantly Tamil-populated universities. To do this, contracts had to be signed with the universities. One clause in the contract stipulated that the incubator space and the media equipment should not be used for terrorist financing and terrorist activities. The Sinhala universities had no problem with this clause. The predominantly Tamil university in the Northern Province raised concerns over this clause because they understood this wording to imply that they were promoting terrorism. During the civil war between the Sri Lankan Government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) there was a tendency to label Tamil communities from the war-affected North-East as “terrorists” and the very harsh Sri Lankan Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) continues to be enforced in the North, stifling freedom of expression among Tamil communities. Under this Act, “terrorism” was defined as any act that goes against the government and due to its enforcement in the North, the University asked Helvetas about the definition of terrorism and requested the removal of the clause from the agreement.

Staff members asked headquarters for clarification. Headquarters advised sticking to the word-

ing as this was part of the standard contract and required by the donor. Eventually, Helvetas Sri Lanka team used the Swiss definition for terrorism, which took a less intimidating stance, and revised the clause. The University agreed to the clause and the agreement was signed

#Sri Lanka #VoiceInclusionCohesion

As part of a consortium, Helvetas implemented the project Access to Justice in Tajikistan. While translating the English project documents into Russian, the term “public dialogue” was translated into “political dialogue”, because there is no exactly corresponding word. The responsible government ministry which read the project document was alarmed by this term and raised many questions about what kind of political dialogue this would be. The wording meant that the government misunderstood the intention of the project. Afterwards, a more fitting translation was found. The term “public dialogue” was translated into “societal dialogue”, which better conveyed the intended meaning and to which the government had no objections or concerns.

#Tajikistan #VoiceInclusionCohesion #Advocacy



One key principle that should guide our behaviour is fairness. Fairness means recognizing the value of all members of a community and ensuring that not only the concerns and interests of powerful groups or individuals are heard and acted upon.

3

HOW WE DO IT: THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR BEHAVIOUR

Just as important as what humanitarian and development organizations do, is the way in which they do it. We can have an intended, or unintended, impact on the social context in which we operate, not only through bringing in resources from the outside, but also through our behaviour. This often comes down to individual behaviours but can also be shaped by the way projects and programmes are designed and by organizational policies. The way in which we behave communicates implicit or explicit messages that can have an effect on the context.²² Behaviour sends messages about values and intentions, which can contribute to peaceful coexistence or social conflict.²³

If we observe four key principles our behaviour is more likely to contribute to social cohesion and to prevent tensions from arising. These principles are respect, accountability, fairness and transparency.²⁴ If any or all are absent, we risk contributing to tensions or exacerbating existing conflicts. Moreover, respecting these principles is also key for gaining acceptance with the communities we work with. Acceptance is essential to reduce security risks.²⁵

BEHAVIOUR ²⁶

1. RESPECT

Interactions with other people are calm, collaborative, trusting, and sensitive to local concerns.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

Is displayed through taking action, taking responsibility for mistakes, abiding by the rule of law and through being responsive to local concerns.

3. FAIRNESS

Recognizing the value of all members of a community and ensuring that concerns and interests of groups or individuals, particularly the marginalized, are heard and acted upon.

4. TRANSPARENCY

Being clear and open about who we are, the aims of an intervention, and decision-making processes.

3.1 RESPECT



Respect is an essential element of all successful human interactions. Showing respect towards someone means to pay positive social attention towards them.²⁷ Respect can be expressed implicitly and explicitly and is often found in small acts such as really listening to someone, and trying to see things from their perspective, or small courtesies, such as standing up when someone enters the room or polite formulations in emails. Trust, calmness, the willingness to listen as well as collaboration and cooperation can be expressions of respect.²⁸ A lack of respect can result in hostile competition instead of cooperation and collaboration, suspicion instead of trust, indifference instead of listening to people's concerns, as well as angry or aggressive behaviour instead of calmness.²⁹

The examples below of the importance of respect offer some important lessons:

- A key part of respect is the appreciation of differences in culture and value systems. This does not only occur between internationals and locals. There are often cultural differences between staff and partners and local populations (Examples 26, 27, 28).
- Being respectful does not mean we have to agree with other perspectives and ways of doing things. It means we take them seriously and recognize that there may be differences, which have to be jointly negotiated. Taking the time for this can be challenging in the rush to deliver on project objectives (Example 28).
- Respect is deeply rooted in individual self-reflection and individual behaviour (Example 26).

26. Reflecting on our individual-level awareness

“The way we speak, and approach people is so important. If I go to a rural community for example, I don't wear tight pants but a long skirt. Because in the rural communities in Ethiopia, women are expected to dress properly, which means to cover their body in a way that does not show its shape.”

#Ethiopia

“The conflict sensitivity training helped me to realize that we do, and understand, many things unconsciously, but it helps to have a structure and consciously use my conflict antennae to anticipate conflicts and put myself in the shoes of others.”

#Tajikistan

“I am always aware that this is a post-conflict context where many people suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Sometimes people react in seemingly unreasonable emotional ways to very simple situations. So, I need to be aware of this.”

#Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I work with many different people as a project manager: with project partners, colleagues, officials, and beneficiaries. Not talking too much myself but actively listening to others is very helpful.”

#Mozambique

“A lot of self-reflection is needed, to know what I am sensitive about and what my surrounding is more sensitive about or more negligent about than me.”

#Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I am from another ethnicity than many of the people I work with, but we are all human. I mix with them from my heart, participate in their different occasions, invite them to some of my occasions and try to understand them.”

#Bangladesh

27. Cultural and religious differences have practical consequences

In Sri Lanka, anti-Muslim rhetoric, disinformation, and instances of violence against Muslim communities have increased due to a few incidents of extreme violence in the country, including the Easter Sunday attack in 2019. As part of a project on preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka, an annual forum was to be organized bringing all participants and stakeholders together. One of the partner organizations had a Muslim director who refused categorically that the forum could take place in April when Ramadan was or on Friday which is the mosque day. The staff member in charge noticed that she was getting frustrated with this attitude, because Christians participants were okay with participating in the forum on a Sunday.

#Sri Lanka #VoiceInclusionCohesion

28. Respectfully communicating and negotiating when there are differences of belief

In Mozambique, Helvetas was working on constructing water boreholes. It happened sometimes that the borehole did not work and either no, or too much, water came out of it. Sometimes the community then put traditional objects, believed to be imbued with magical powers, in the borehole to make it work again. These objects, however, often contributed to making the technical situation worse.

Project staff understood that they could not just take these objects away because they were very important to the community. Instead, they went to the local leaders and community to discuss the situation. They explained why the technical problems existed and asked people to stop throwing such items into the holes.

#Mozambique #WaterFoodClimate

3.2 ACCOUNTABILITY



Accountability towards donors, both institutional and private, is important. Equally important, and central for conflict sensitive interventions, is accountability towards local communities and local concerns. At the core of accountability as an element of conflict sensitivity is the establishment of mechanisms for listening and responding to the concerns of local stakeholders. A lack of accountability means that grievances go unheard, which can fuel conflict and animosity towards intervenors. Intervenors may be unaware of the harm they are causing, which is why accountability is also closely linked to monitoring and learning. Accountability can be displayed both by organizations and by individual staff members.

Being accountable also means taking responsibility for mistakes, instead of pushing responsibility away and displaying an attitude of impunity. It also means adopting an attitude that positive action is possible and that a way forward can be found even in very difficult situations, instead of showcasing an attitude of powerlessness. Lastly, being accountable can also mean relying on the rule of law rather than on force and the exercise of power. Accountability is therefore an integral part of establishing and upholding trust.³⁰

Helvetas' experiences related to accountability offer some important lessons:

- Often consideration and care can be necessary to establish an inclusive mechanism for listening and responding to the concerns of very diverse local stakeholders (Example 29).
- Ensuring accountability towards local stakeholders also means their involvement in the monitoring process (Example 29).
- Sometimes we learn too late about grievances because no accountability mechanism has been established. In the worst case the resulting tensions can make it impossible to continue with a project (Example 30).
- Listening to, and involving, all stakeholders in a project is crucial to establish accountability (Examples 29, 30, 31).
- Accountable behaviour can be formalized through processes such as complaint handling committees (Example 32).

29. Inclusive participatory planning and monitoring takes time and effort

Helvetas Laos has long worked on inclusive and pluralistic climate resilient extension system development, as well as fair agribusiness and entrepreneurship, and organic value chains. When engaging with a new community a lot of attention and time is dedicated to participatory and inclusive planning and monitoring.

The LEAP project established many good practices, which other projects have since adopted and adapted. To design one of its sub-projects, the LEAP team spent several days on participatory planning processes. First a presentation explaining the objectives of the consultations was given to the local community, including local authorities, ensuring inclusive representation of women, youth, elders, people with disabilities, etc. Secondly, the larger community group was split in sub-groups (men, women, youth, elders) which were all asked the same questions regarding their needs and priorities, following an integrated livelihoods framework. These were then discussed and further prioritized in the respective subgroups. Subsequently, the respective priorities were presented in plenary, showcasing their similarities and differences. This helped to build shared priorities and see possibilities for issues that were perceived differently across different groups. These issues were further prioritized, first within the subgroups, and then jointly with the whole community: Priorities the local community could address on their own or contribute to, priorities local authorities could support, priorities that the project could support, and priorities that could not be covered within the scope of this intervention were identified in this way. This contributed not only to social cohesion and the development of a common vision, but also to joint ownership, in a very transparent and mutually accountable way. This helped to mitigate potential tensions that could arise along gender, social or economic lines, and to mitigate the potential that someone or one group would capture the project and reap the benefits.

The local community was also part of the monitoring system. Based on the log frame that Helvetas staff must report on vis-à-vis the donor, staff talked to the community members and local authorities about which milestones were important to them. These included things such as an increase in income, productivity, successful implementation of

internal control systems, inclusive service delivery, capacity development, and meetings with local government officials. Furthermore, project budget spending was made visible to everyone as part of mid and end of year review and planning sessions with the community and local authorities.

#Laos #WaterFoodClimate #Gender #Youth

30. Failure to consult all involved stakeholders leads to conflict

In Pakistan in 2010, a flood destroyed almost all water sources for drinking and other domestic uses in a town in the Swat district. Sanitation became a very serious threat to the health of the whole community. Water had to be transported from the sources in the neighbouring areas. Helvetas was already active in that area and, on demand of the affected community, facilitated the planning of a very big emergency project for the whole town.³¹ Quick consultations with the communities, elected representatives and local authorities were organized. Access to a huge water spring was donated by a resident of the town for the emergency project.

A significant amount of time and money was invested in physical and demographic assessments, and the designing of the scheme to cover more than 50,000 people. Once everything was ready to go for the physical execution of the scheme, a group of farmers using the spring water for irrigation downstream objected to the scheme and filed a legal suit against the owner of the spring and the staff of a local facilitating organization.

Meanwhile, the Helvetas team realized that, although it was an emergency scheme, they should have comprehensively probed into the ownership and right-of-use facts prior to the investment in the project. Helvetas and its local partner then engaged with the community to try and find an amicable solution to the issues. However, this failed and finally the project was abandoned to avoid any further escalation.

#Pakistan #Humanitarian #WaterFoodClimate

31. Inclusion of authorities requires taking account of all relevant levels of government

Helvetas supported a project in Haiti which aimed at reinforcing local governance of drinking water and sanitation. At the beginning of the project, an interviewer was chosen together with the “mairie” (municipal council), to conduct the project baseline study. It turned out that the “CASEC” (communal council), the administrative level below the “mairie”, of this commune blocked any further work of the project and refused to cooperate with the interviewer because they were not involved in the selection process of the interviewer. In response to this, Helvetas staff acknowledged that a mistake was made in not involving “CASEC” representatives and then corrected it by involving “CASEC” representatives in choosing a second interviewer. Ultimately, it was decided to involve two interviewers. The one who was selected without “CASEC” involvement, and one who was selected together with the “CASEC”.

#Haiti #WaterFoodClimate

32. A complaints handling committee helps to be responsive to local needs

Together with a consortium of other organizations, Helvetas was involved in responding to humanitarian needs that arose due to the war in Ethiopia. In order to be more responsive to local needs, Helvetas and its partners adopted a community-led crisis response approach. Apart from unconditional cash transfers, the distribution of cash through community-based organizations was introduced. In a first step, community-based organizations were identified. In a second step, these organizations came up with proposals for projects that were then co-funded by the consortium. For example, women trade associations came up with a project proposal on identifying internally-displaced women with prior experience and then engaging them in trade in the IDP camps.

In order to also be more responsive to local needs when it came to cash transfers, a complaints handling committee was established. The members of this committee were selected by IDP communities and were tasked with verifying complaints. For example, one selection criterion to qualify for benefits was that no previous assistance should have been received. If a complaint was made that someone had received benefits but already had previously received assistance, the committee would then investigate it.

#Ethiopia #Humanitarian #Gender

3.3 FAIRNESS



At the core of fair behaviour is the recognition of the value of inputs from all members of a community and not only those with power and influence.³² This includes treating people as equals to oneself. A challenge here is that what is considered to be fair or unfair varies between cultures. In order to act in a fair manner, gaining an understanding of, and respecting, local rules and communal processes is essential. Moreover, fairness does not necessarily mean distributing resources or access equally among different community members as not everyone has the same needs or advantages. Unfairness can be demonstrated by interveners when they show that they believe one group is superior to another, or through not taking local rules and processes into account.³³

The following examples highlight the challenge of being fair and offer some important lessons:

- Fairness often means making an extra effort to include marginalized people. Different situations of different communities mean that the means of engaging them need to be adapted in order to ensure they have a genuine opportunity to participate (Examples 33, 34).
- Sometimes, opposition to the inclusion of certain groups or individuals can emerge. This often involves navigating the tensions between respecting local cultures and values on the one hand, and commitment to values of inclusion and fairness, on the other hand. Different gender norms and values represent a frequent stumbling block. Navigating this tension requires a lot of communication and negotiation (Examples 33, 35, 36).

33. Ensuring inclusivity requires creativity and persistence

Since 1975, the government of Laos has engaged in a policy that oftentimes amounts to forced resettlement of remote communities to places closer to government services, and infrastructure of lowland fields. People who are resettled in this way often belong to ethnic minorities and suffer in various ways from the resettlement such as from malaria and higher mortality rates. Another objective behind the resettlement is for the government to be better able to control these populations. There is suspicion towards these populations stemming from language barriers, their remote location, and the civil war. Government officials who belong to the Lao ethnic majority group usually don't speak one of the over 80 languages spoken by various ethnic minorities in Laos. Due to the remoteness and difficulty to access mountainous territory, it is difficult to obtain information what goes on in remote villages. Laos experienced a civil war between 1959 and 1975, from which the communist party emerged as a victor and rules until today. Distrust towards some communities who fought on the other side persists. In some cases, physical resettling took place, in other cases existing villages were administratively pooled together into cluster villages.

When working on agricultural projects in Laos, Helvetas often focuses on farmer groups and supports the creation of farmer organizations. Members of these organizations receive resources and trainings, which can empower them to capture what those left outside these organizations were previously equally entitled to. When choosing which villagers to work with, it is difficult to avoid working with those easiest to contact, who are often the ones already experienced in dealing with outsiders.

As part of the Lao Uplands Rural Advisory Service Project, Helvetas staff decided to work with a village on climate adaptation activities. This village was in fact an administrative unit made up of two cluster villages. At the beginning of the project, Helvetas staff went to the village meeting house to start the engagement process with the villagers. Staff noticed that only villagers belonging to the Lao ethnic group were present, although half of the population belonged to the Hmong ethnic group. It turned out that the village meeting house was in the Lao part of the village, and people from the Hmong part of the village did not really go

there. Later on, it also became clear that the local government officials arranged the meeting only with the Lao village population because they also only spoke Lao.

Helvetas staff said that in order to proceed, Hmong men and women had to be present. Three men from the Hmong turned up but said that all women were busy and would not attend. Ultimately, Helvetas staff decided to hold a second meeting with the Hmong women in the other part of the village. As a result, Helvetas staff decided to only work with intrinsic communities in the future and not administrative units constructed by the government.

#Laos #WaterFoodClimate #GenderSocialEquity

34. Ensuring language is not a barrier to inclusion

Since Kosovo's independence in 2008, Serbia does not recognize the Kosovar state and often operates parallel governance structures to those of the Kosovar state. Helvetas was active in Kosovo on a project which aimed to improve local governance. This was done for example through awarding money to municipalities based on their performance on a range of indicators. One Serb municipality initially did not respond to the invitation to participate in the project.

Participation was entirely voluntary. Instead of leaving it at the invitation, Helvetas staff decided to make an extra effort, to ensure fairness, and proactively engaged with the Serb minority community in Kosovo in order not to leave them behind and further exclude them. They decided that either a member of Helvetas staff who spoke Serbian, or a Serb consultant would go to the municipalities and explain the project to them in person. Having Serb consultants, or speaking Serbian, often helped in the past with building trust. If this was not possible, translation in Serbian was always provided in order not to exclude anyone.

#Kosovo #VoiceInclusionCohesion

Another Helvetas project in Kosovo focused on enhancing youth employment. As part of the project, training in pastry-making was provided to women. As the majority of the population in Kosovo

vo is Kosovar and Albanian speaking, the trainings were given in Albanian. In one case, the project wanted to include members of the Serbian speaking population. This did not happen because the women refused to participate in an Albanian training saying they did not speak Albanian. Project staff therefore organized an additional training in Serbian, supported the training provider in advertising the training in Serbian, and collaborated with a local Serbian NGO to advertise it and reach out to the Serbian speaking population.

#Kosovo #SkillsJobsIncome #Youth #Gender-SocialEquity

35. Tailored communication with men facilitates women's participation

In Burkina Faso, Helvetas supported a project on youth employment and entrepreneurship. Helvetas was only able to work with 2,000 selected youths between 18 and 35 years old. The goal was to provide trainings to the youths and accompany them until they found employment or became entrepreneurs themselves. There were many more people interested to participate than the 2,000 participants foreseen by the project.

There was one instance where a woman got selected for the programme but did not inform her husband about it. When she wanted to go to the first training session, the husband protested and said that he did not know anything about this, that he did not understand what this was about, and he forbade her to go.

Project staff learned of this because the woman told the local partner that she would not be able to participate because her husband forbade it. The local partner was trained in conflict sensitivity and instead of just giving her place in the training to someone else, the local partner went to this household to present the project to the husband and to show him that his contribution and his wife's participation is important to the project. The husband then changed his mind and agreed that his wife participate in the project. On the day of the next training session, he brought his wife on his motorcycle to the place where the training session took place and came back for his wife at the end of the training.

#Burkina Faso #SkillsJobsIncome #Gender #Youth

36. Creative solutions to navigating gender norms

A Helvetas humanitarian project in Sri Lanka involved the setting up of a cash and voucher assistance scheme. In the initial phase of the project an assessment visit to the southern part of Sri Lanka was conducted. Staff members went door-to-door to see beneficiaries and assess their needs. It was understood that a blanket approach to all households would aggravate the risk of conflict, especially in the domestic sphere. In one particular case, staff came across a household of a woman in severe need of financial assistance whose husband was away from home at the given moment. The woman explained that it would be difficult for her to receive the money because her husband didn't like her handling money. Helvetas staff members realized that giving cash assistance could be problematic for this household and others like it, as it could create domestic tensions.

The first solution they thought of was to hand out food baskets in cases such as this. However, it was understood that this woman was in need of money for medical expenses for her child. Ultimately, they decided that they would open a bank account in the wife's mother's name and deposit the money to this account, so she was able to spend the money on behalf of her daughter and grandchild for medical needs.

#Sri Lanka #Humanitarian #Gender

3.4 TRANSPARENCY



Transparency is an essential element of all the other patterns of behaviour. Communicating openly about the aims and reasons for an intervention shows respect. Being open about mistakes that have been made is part of being accountable. Providing enough information about the intervention to communities allows them to evaluate whether an organization is living up to its principles and values. Sharing knowledge about how interventions and behaviours impact different groups of people demonstrates that an organization cares about fairness. Being transparent can include sharing information about all elements of an intervention, whereby important elements are selection criteria, project goals, project timeframes and funding allocations. Transparency is important because it allows people to understand how and why decisions are made and find entry points for their voices in decision-making processes. Transparency also contributes to a sense of connectedness.³⁴

Helvetas' experiences with transparency offer some important lessons:

- Particularly in conflict situations, actions and behaviour are very susceptible to misinterpretation. Preventive and transparent communication is thereby a key strategy to avoid misunderstandings (Example 38). Sometimes, being transparent about who we are can mean “showing our face” in a very literal way (Example 39).
- Sometimes project activities must be stopped because, due to the conflict environment, transparency cannot be guaranteed. In the absence of transparency certain project activities could be misinterpreted and fuel conflict (Example 37).
- In some cases, Helvetas needs to bring in help from outside and be aware of its own limitations. For instance, it might be necessary to bring in the donor to discuss sensitive things with government agencies. While transparency requires being open and honest in communication, it is still necessary to pay attention to the way in which issues are communicated (Example 37).
- Transparency is closely connected to gaining the acceptance of local communities. Often, cooperation with people that are already accepted by the local community helps to gain trust (Example 38).
- Transparent communication is also a key strategy in counteracting perceived or actual distribution effects, as was illustrated by the examples in section 2.1.

37. When suspension of activities is the best option, careful communication is essential

In the summer of 2022, violent clashes erupted between Kyrgyz and Tajik border guards, leading to deaths and displacement in the disputed border region. These cross-border tensions were linked to disputed border demarcations and water issues. Helvetas was working in those border areas in Tajikistan on water resource management, including the renovation of irrigation infrastructure, introducing water-efficient agricultural techniques, and assisting water user associations in providing adequate services.

Helvetas staff discussed how to stay engaged and keep working on some issues but also how to make sure that their project actions would not accidentally trigger any further clashes. However, it was very difficult to predict what potentially could trigger any further clashes. It was decided that non-visible activities such as research could continue, while visible activities, such as the construction of infrastructure, had to be halted for as long as the situation remained fragile. The renovation of irrigation infrastructure on the Tajik side of the border could, for example, be misinterpreted by the Kyrgyz authorities as construction of a dam which potentially redirects water away from Kyrgyzstan. It was decided that any activities that could potentially be interpreted as hostile from the other side would have to be halted for the moment. Because even if an activity would be authorized by one government, it could always be misinterpreted by the other side. However, ceasing construction work meant that Helvetas staff had to say no to the relevant Tajik government agency which wanted work to continue. Refusing the request of a government agency brought political risks for Helvetas in Tajikistan. However, continuing the project would also have had a negative impact on the Helvetas programme in Kyrgyzstan. In order to decline such a request in a conflict sensitive manner, Helvetas staff had to find the right channel and manner. They decided to bring in the donor, who was then able to discuss the issue with the Tajik government on the level of equals.

#Tajikistan #VoiceInclusionCohesion

38. Extensive communication indispensable before a sensitive activity

As part of a project on local governance in Ethiopia, Helvetas staff members were supposed to go to a very rural area and do drone recordings. Due to the ongoing war between government forces and Tigray defence forces, people were in general very suspicious of outsiders, suspecting them of being rebels or spies. Moreover, light-skinned outsiders and drones were never seen in this area before, and Helvetas' videographer was white. In order to avoid creating tensions, Helvetas local staff went to the area two weeks ahead of the drone recordings. Together with local police and government officials they talked to people explaining what it all was about and prepared the ground for a smooth visit of the camera team.

#Ethiopia #VoiceInclusionCohesion

39. Special transparency measures needed to maintain trust in conflict areas

One of Myanmar's largest ethnic minorities, the Kayin, live in Kayin state. Since 1949 there is an armed conflict between Myanmar's military and Kayin armed groups. In 2012 and 2015 ceasefires were signed. However, violence resumed, and significantly increased, following the military coup in 2021. Helvetas had a project in this region on education and employment opportunities for conflict-affected youth. In the inception phase, it was important for Helvetas staff and local partners to build relationships with ethnic organizations in the area. Local leaders often asked whether Helvetas cooperates with the military, Helvetas staff explained that they had a "no engagement" policy towards the military. In order to visit local leaders in the first place, several measures were taken to avoid arousing suspicion in an area where armed clashes were ongoing. It was decided that only one Helvetas member at a time would go, always together with a member of a local partner organization who spoke the local language and that, when travelling on a motor bike to the area, the Helvetas staff member would not wear a helmet so that people could see their face.

#Myanmar #SkillsJobsIncome

CROSS-REFERENCE INDEX

Example (no. and title)	Country	Working Area	Cross-cutting topics
1. Vehicles are a resource that is vulnerable to diversion	Ethiopia		
2. Armed groups' demands for "taxes" must be delicately navigated	Not specified		
3. The nature of the resource affects its vulnerability to theft and diversion	Not specified	Water Food Climate	
4. Good relationships with local stakeholders help to manage a corrupt partner	Bangladesh	Water Food Climate	Partnership
5. Uncoordinated cash assistance leads to inflation	Ethiopia		Partnership Humanitarian
6. Increased efficiencies have an unintended effect on demand	Tajikistan	Water Food Climate	
7. A principled stand is undermined by the policies of other actors	Burkina Faso	Water Food Climate	
8. Communication is key in counteracting perceived exclusion from a project	Pakistan	Skills Jobs Income	
9. An inclusive systems approach helps to transform conflict	Pakistan	Skills Jobs Income	Inclusive Systems
10. Transparent communication helps manage tensions around selection of project participants	Burkina Faso	Skills Jobs Income	Youth
11. Clear criteria and data verification help to avoid nepotism	Tanzania	Skills Jobs Income	Youth
12. Mixed teams help to increase trust in areas with strong identity divisions	Sri Lanka		Humanitarian Youth
13. Unintended consequences require involving additional stakeholders	Laos	Water Food Climate Skills Jobs Income	
14. Local political allegiances affect perceptions of community development projects	Mozambique	Water Food Climate	
15. Competition between levels of local government affects project site selection	Haiti	Water Food Climate	
16. Use of common pool resources requires dialogue involving all stakeholders	Burkina Faso	Water Food Climate	
17. Competing claims require the facilitation of an inclusive negotiation process	Pakistan	Water Food Climate	
18. Supporting people to voice demands requires also engaging constructively with authorities	Bangladesh	Water Food Climate	Advocacy
19. A multi-stakeholder approach widens perceptions of roles and responsibilities	Bangladesh	Voice Inclusion Cohesion	
20. Empowering women and youth involves also engaging with other stakeholders	Kyrgyzstan	Voice Inclusion Cohesion Skills Jobs Income	Gender Youth
21. Extra communication efforts to avoid perceptions of partiality	Mozambique	Water Food Climate	

Example (no. and title)	Country	Working Area	Cross-cutting topics
22. No engagement as a means to avoid legitimizing	Not specified		Advocacy
23. Conflict implies reputational and security risks for both project implementer and participants	Not specified	Voice Inclusion Cohesion	
24. Political polarization makes impartial governance work challenging	Albania	Voice Inclusion Cohesion	
25. Choosing our words carefully	Myanmar Sri Lanka Tajikistan	Voice Inclusion Cohesion	Advocacy
26. Reflecting on our individual-level awareness	Ethiopia Tajikistan Bosnia & Herzegovina Mozambique Bangladesh		
27. Cultural and religious differences have practical consequences	Sri Lanka	Voice Inclusion Cohesion	
28. Respectfully communicating and negotiating when there are differences of belief	Mozambique	Water Food Climate	
29. Inclusive participatory planning and monitoring takes time and effort	Laos	Water Food Climate	Gender Youth
30. Failure to consult all involved stakeholders leads to conflict	Pakistan	Water Food Climate	Humanitarian
31. Inclusion of authorities requires taking account of all relevant levels of government	Haiti	Water Food Climate	
32. A complaints handling committee helps to be responsive to local needs	Ethiopia		Humanitarian Gender
33. Ensuring inclusivity requires creativity and persistence	Laos	Water Food Climate	Gender Social Equity
34. Ensuring language is not a barrier to inclusion	Kosovo	Voice Inclusion Cohesion Skills Jobs Income	Youth Gender Social Equity
35. Tailored communication with men facilitates women's participation	Burkina Faso	Skills Jobs Income	Gender Youth
36. Creative solutions to navigating gender norms	Sri Lanka		Gender Humanitarian
37. When suspension of activities is the best option, careful communication is essential	Tajikistan	Voice Inclusion Cohesion	
38. Extensive communication indispensable before a sensitive activity	Ethiopia	Voice Inclusion Cohesion	
39. Special transparency measures needed to maintain trust in conflict areas	Myanmar	Skills Jobs Income	

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Conflict Sensitivity Community Hub: <https://www.conflictsensitivityhub.net/>

Conflict Sensitivity at SDC: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/themes-sdc/fragile-contexts-and-prevention/preventing-recurrent-cycles-violent-conflicts/conflict-sensitive-programme-management.html>

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Helvetas' work is divided into three working areas: "Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion", "Skills, Jobs and Income" and "Water, Food and Climate".
- 2 Helvetas' approach to conflict sensitivity builds on the "Do No Harm" approach developed by CDA. The expression "do no harm" can be misleading as conflict sensitivity is not only about avoiding negative consequences, but also about the potential of humanitarian and development interventions to strengthen capacities for peace through their positive effects on conflict contexts.
- 3 CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2016. <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Do-No-Harm-DNH-Trainers-Manual-2016.pdf>, pages 11 and 42.
- 4 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 61.
- 5 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 84.
- 6 For an in-depth discussion of the topic see Gattiker, Regula. "It's not just how, it's also who", à propos The KOFF Peacebuilding Magazine, N°177 (September 2022): <https://www.swisspeace.ch/apropos/september-2022/>.
- 7 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 62.
- 8 The "Voice, Inclusion and Cohesion" working areas includes the working fields of Governance, Migration and Conflict Transformation.
- 9 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 61.
- 10 In Helvetas Political Economy & Power Analysis (PEPA) tool, one of the six standard analytical factors focuses on resource flows. Another focuses on power actors and structures (See: Helvetas. Political Economy and Power Analysis (PEPA) Manual. Zürich: Helvetas, 2021.)
- 11 Conflict Sensitivity is rooted in CDA's Do No Harm approach and a large part of the terminology, such as "resource transfer effects", is adapted from it. Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 62.
- 12 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 73.
- 13 CDA, "Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual", page 43.
- 14 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 69.
- 15 CDA, "Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual", page 43.
- 16 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", pages 63–65.
- 17 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 78.
- 18 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", pages 71–72.
- 19 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 78.
- 20 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", pages 67–68.
- 21 CDA, "Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual", page 43.
- 22 In the original Do No Harm approach these behaviours are referred to as "implicit ethical messages". The Helvetas 'Manual: 3 Steps for Working in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations (WFCS)' uses the same term and also adds "communication and information gathering/sharing". However, as the Do No Harm methodology was further developed, this was simplified and summarized under the term "behaviour".
- 23 CDA, "Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual", page 45.
- 24 These four terms, also referred to as RAFT, originally come from 'Getting it Right: Making Corporate-Community Relations Work' but have than been adopted by the Do No Harm methodology. Originally the four categories were employed to show how corporate behaviour affects social factors. (See: Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 80.)
- 25 See: Helvetas, Security and Safety Risk Management (SSRM) Concept Paper, Page 3.
- 26 CDA, "Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual", page 45–46.
- 27 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 85.
- 28 CDA, "Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual", page 45.
- 29 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 86.
- 30 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 93–94.
- 31 Helvetas Human Rights based approach also focuses on participation, representation and accountability in the humanitarian-peace-development nexus (See: Helvetas. Human Rights Based Approach. https://pamoja.helvetas.org/display/advisory/VIC+Toolbox?pre-view=/47808980/184910313/Human%20Rights%20Based%20Approach_A4.pdf (internal only)
- 32 CDA, "Do No Harm Workshop Trainer's Manual", page 46.
- 33 Wallace, "From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm", page 100.
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