LESSONS LEARNED

Conflict and Gender Sensitive Programming in Fragile and Conflict Affected Contexts

The Case of NSRP

Introduction and Background

Integrating conflict and gender sensitive approaches into all programmes operating in fragile and conflict-affected contexts is essential to ensuring such interventions 'do no harm'.[1,2] Research and theory has documented the importance of these approaches, which are participatory, inclusive, and flexible, in contexts emerging from violent conflict or in a state of post-conflict transition. In spite of this evidence, however, conflict- and gender-blind programming has historically been commonplace.

Donors such as the Department for International Development (DFID) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) increasingly require implementing partners to operate in a conflict and gender sensitive manner, regardless of the sector.[3] Relevant UK policies include the International Development Gender Equality Act[4] and DFID's Strategic Vision for Women and Girls[5], while international policies include the OECD Development Assistance Committee principles[6], and UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and other related UNSCRs[7]. Such policies recognise that conflict-blind programmes can exacerbate or generate new grievances among beneficiaries, and gender-blind programming can miss opportunities to promote gender equality and at worst, perpetuate inequality and violence.

> 'We need to monitor to ensure we are avoiding doing any inadvertent harm through our interventions – for example ensuring that humanitarian or service delivery programmes do not undermine longer term objectives for strengthening state-society relations, or that any intervention does not exacerbate existing patterns of exclusion.' DFID (2010) Interim Guidance Note – *Measuring and managing for results in fragile and conflict-affected states and situation.*

The United Kingdom is committed to helping Nigeria tackle its issue of mounting national insecurity. As part of this commitment, DFID launched the Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) in 2012, which aimed to reduce violent conflict in eight of Nigeria's most conflict prone states. The focus states of Borno, Bayelsa, Delta, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Rivers and Yobe were selected based on the following criteria:

- If the state had high levels of conflict, yet also opportunities and local capacities that NSRP could help scale up and strengthen;
- If the state had high levels of conflict, yet also shared a border with states that lacked resilience to the risk of conflict in the primary state;

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1 **Do No Harm** is derived from the Hippocratic Oath that medical professionals take before treating patients, which commits the individual to avoiding harm. In the development sector, do not harm was adopted as a motto or slogan to remind programmes to avoid making the situation worse than when they found it. Do No Harm now constitutes a critical element of both gender and conflict sensitive programming.

2 J. Putzel, Do No Harm: International support for statebuilding, Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2010; see also Homepage, Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, http://www.conflictsensitivity.org, accessed April 2, 2016; Goddard, Nicole. The Do No Harm Chain: Linking Analysis to Action using both DNH Frameworks. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2013

3 OECD DAC principles, 1991; DFID Building Stability Overseas, 2011.

4 International (Gender Equality) Act, 2014, http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/internationaldevelopmentgenderequality.html

5 DFID's Strategic Vision for Women and Girls, 2011

6 Ibid

7 http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml

- If the state has a high concentration of other DFID-supported programmes that could benefit from NSRP's peacebuilding approach and conflict sensitivity services.

In order to address conflict dynamics without 'doing harm', and recognising the different and disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls, DFID requested NSRP take a conflict and gender sensitive approach. This included providing programmatic and operational support to core staff, implementing partners and strategic partners within Nigerian institutions.

Conflict and Gender Inequality in Nigeria

Nigeria is an extremely diverse country, with 64 percent of its population living in poverty despite considerable oil wealth. Divisions tend to fall along geographic fault lines – north and south – which also correlate to religious and ethnic groupings. This context presents challenges for Nigeria's stability, as its large population and diverse groupings have led to constant contestation for political, social and economic power. Both individual and group grievances are linked to an overall weak system of governance, with institutions dictated by systems of patronage politics and corruption. This breakdown in democratic governance is further complicated by a security sector that lacks citizen respect, enabling and fostering a culture of impunity.[8] Poor governance with systemic inequalities related to structural and cultural violence[9], unequal representation among decision makers, and violent resolution of conflict due to poor conflict management mechanisms, have all contributed to Nigeria's failure to achieve its post-independence development objectives. A DFID Policy Development Forum Programme study on Private Sector Strategy Development highlighted the impact of insecurity on Nigeria's economic growth, through lost employment, business closures, abandonment of farms, forced migration, and destruction of private and public property.[10]

Nigeria's policy on conflict prevention and stabilisation remains weakly articulated notwithstanding the Presidential commitments under former President Goodluck Jonathan to address insecurity and prioritise conflict prevention dating back to the draft National Peace Policy in 2002. As a result, Nigeria finds itself facing significant levels of instability, currently the worst the country has faced since the civil war of 1967-70.[11] The Fund for Peace 'Failed State Index' has repeatedly ranked Nigeria as 'alarming', the second-worst category, most recently ranked as number 17 out of 177 countries.[12]

The Nigerian context is also extremely challenging from a gender perspective. The government has committed to, and made progress towards achieving, key international protocols on gender: Nigeria is a signatory to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and launched its National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in 2013 with NSRP support. (The refreshed NAP was launched in 2017 and will run until 2020). However, Nigeria continues to be classified by the UN Human Development Report as having 'Low Development' in relation to gender, and ranked 118 of 144 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2016 Global Gender Gap

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8 See DFID's Strategic Conflict Assessment (2008), Conflict Audit (2010), Country Governance Analysis (2008), and Nigeria Drivers of Change Analysis (2005)

9 See Galtung on Structural and Cultural Violence

10 *http://www.enterprise-development.org/wp-content/uploads/DFID-Private-Sector-development-strategy.pdf*

11 Journal of the Center for Complex Operations. PRISM Challenges and Opportunities. Vol5, No 2. 2015. Lessons from Colombia for Curtailing the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria, pg. 95

12 Inequality has risen in Nigeria even as poverty has fallen with growth. Measured by the Gini coefficient, inequality has been rising across all Nigeria's six geo-political zones since 1985 and particularly from 1996-2004 (the last year for which data is available). Source: Aigbokhan, Ben, E. 'Growth, Inequality and Poverty in Nigeria' (2008) Prepared for United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. See World Bank Governance Index (2010), Failed State index (2012 and 2014)

Report.[13,14] Entrenched social norms perpetuate gender inequality, and women and girls are consistently denied equal opportunities in virtually all areas of social, economic and political life. This deep-rooted inequality underpins and perpetuates nationally high rates of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Formal mechanisms for preventing and responding to VAWG remain weak, and the 'culture of silence' that exists around VAWG and discrimination makes it difficult to understand and address the issue effectively.

What is a Conflict and Gender Sensitive Approach?

Conflict sensitive implementation involves scrutinising the operational context through regularly updated conflict analysis; linking this understanding of the context to the objective and process of achieving the activities; and adjusting these activities accordingly. Understanding the difference between *conflict* as a productive and healthy part of human interaction in societies, and *violent conflict* which can lead to death and destruction, is important for all actors working in the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding sectors. Conflict sensitive approaches assume that any initiative conducted in a conflict-affected area will interact with that conflict, and that such interaction will have consequences that may have positive or negative effects on the conflict itself.

Steps of Conflict Sensitivity	How a Programme Can be Conflict Sensitive
1. Understand the conflict context in which you are operating	Conduct Regular and up-to-date Conflict Analysis
2. Understand the mutual interaction between one's own interventions and the context	Conduct Impact Assessments (Intended and Unintended)
3. Act in a way to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive ones	Design Programme Adjustment strategies (with interaction indicators)

A gender sensitive approach recognises that the lived experiences of experiences of women and girls is different to that of men and boys; recognises the vulnerabilities and barriers to participation that women and girls face as a result of their gender; and where possible, seeks to reduce these vulnerabilities and barriers through programme activities. These gendered differences are particularly acute in conflict-affected contexts, as women and girls experience conflict differently to men and boys, their vulnerability and ability to respond to conflict is different, and instability and rapidly changing contextual factors can make those differences difficult to track and respond to effectively.

Conflict sensitivity and gender sensitivity are mutually reinforcing. Interventions that aim to warn against, reduce or respond to conflict are at risk of either limiting their impact or exacerbating the negative effects of conflict if they are not cognisant of gender differences. Both gender and conflict sensitivity require implementers to prioritise developing a deep understanding of the context and the two-way interaction between programme activities and the context, and act to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts. Truly gender and conflict sensitive programmes are socially inclusive, analyse (and integrate) how gender norms drive conflict, and understand the different impacts of conflict on women and men.

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13 Human Development Index: United Nations Development Programme, 2016, p. 216
14 Global Gender Gap Report Rankings, World Economic Forum, 2015

NSRP's Approach to Conflict and Gender Sensitive Programming

NSRP's approach to embedding conflict and gender sensitivity is covered in detail in the Lessons Learnt section below. Across the programme, the following strategies were intended to support conflict and gender sensitive programming throughout design and implementation:

- **Understanding the context**. NSRP aimed to achieve this through conducting regular conflict analysis in each focus state, in the form of quarterly Conflict Briefing Notes. These included a gender focus, and were used to regularly update the programme's baseline conflict and gender analysis that was conducted during the design phase.

- **Understand the interaction between interventions and analysis**. Partners were required to address conflict and gender dynamics in grant proposals and subsequent programming, and were evaluated and trained on conflict and gender sensitivity throughout implementation.

- **Implement flexible programming to reflect changing dynamics.** Quarterly meetings where partners reported on their activities from a conflict and gender perspective contributed to NSRP's up to date understanding of conflict and gender dynamics, and provided a forum for adapting programming according to emergent issues and trends.

- **Embed technical assistance within the core programme team.** Using consortium partners SDDirect and International Alert, international technical advisers were embedded full time from the design phase to Year 3. These advisers provided real-time support to staff and implementing partners on gender sensitivity and conflict sensitivity respectively, including through regular training and capacity building. NSRP also embedded national conflict advisers in the four main regions of the programme (NE, NW, Middle Belt and Niger Delta).

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Explicit commitment **to conflict and gender sensitivity is important, particularly from donors, and can be effective in positively influencing other programmes where there is a mandate to do so.**

DFID Nigeria was proactive in ensuring NSRP was designed to be *explicitly* conflict and gender sensitive. Senior staff within DFID Nigeria made commitments to the broader UK agenda for greater conflict sensitivity. DFID leadership in the early phases of the programme was essential in supporting the programme to allocate resources (financial and technical) to implement and learn lessons from implementing gender and conflict sensitive activities.

Supporting this explicit gender and conflict sensitive approach, DFID played an active role in linking NSRP with other DFID-funded programmes working in Nigeria. This included the provision of technical assistance on conflict and gender sensitivity to other programmes, which was a major component of NSRP's Output 4. Support was provided with the aim of encouraging

> **Working with DFID to adapt to changing conflict dynamics:**
> It was initially planned that Community Peace Partnerships would be established in 3 Local Government Authorities across the north-east. However, limited access due to instability and insecurity made this extremely risky. NSRP staff therefore liaised with DFID to update output plans, to establish the CPPs in Maiduguri rather than the 3 target LGAs. Through this process, and through cooperation with DFID, NSRP was able to continue working to achieve desired outcomes, without being penalised for failing to meet logframe targets that were no longer viable due to the changing context.

and equipping programme teams, partners, government and private sector counterparts to take proactive steps to integrate conflict sensitivity in DFID-funded activities and beyond. NSRP provided tailor-made presentations on the importance of conflict and gender sensitivity to numerous programmes, including the State Voice and Accountability Initiative, the State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability, Voices for Change, and the Nigeria Infrastructure Advisory Facility. Recipient programmes were appreciative of technical support from NSRP and praised NSRP for provision of an accessible framework for conceptualising conflict and gender sensitivity and 'do no harm' approaches.

'These [concepts] were not necessarily new but it was getting the formal framework from NSRP – new ideas, new approaches to conflict sensitivity – that has been greatly beneficial' – Key informant interview, DFID Programme

Embedding **technical capacity from the very beginning (design phase) and then throughout the lifecycle is an effective means of promoting conflict and gender sensitivity across a programme.**

Having an embedded conflict and gender adviser from NSRP's design phase was critical in ensuring gender and conflict sensitivity concepts, language and considerations were central to the approaches and activities in each of NSRP's four outputs *right from the start*. In particular, these advisers were responsible for leading the development of conflict and gender strategies, which were treated on a level with strategies covering areas such as security and partnership agreements as guiding documents during implementation.

During implementation, this in-house technical capacity allowed NSRP to continually learn and improve on its approach to conflict and gender sensitive programming. Advisers were on hand to

**Promoting gender sensitivity on other DFID programmes:**
Following technical assistance from NSRP in developing a gender and social inclusion (GESI) strategy, the Nigeria Infrastructure Advisory Facility (NIAF) hired a dedicated gender advisor to capture lessons learned and provide recommendations for DFID and the commercial contractor on how an infrastructure programme can be gender sensitive. The Gender Adviser was also able to use the GESI strategy to influence NIAF's own programme wide sector strategy document format, which now includes 'gender and social impacts/social inclusion'. This enables the infrastructure programme to report on the impact on gender equity and conflict sensitivity in each of its six sector documents.

update initial conflict and gender exclusion analyses; gather data on local conflicts that would not otherwise have been gathered; and assess and build the capacity of staff and partners on an ad hoc and needs-driven basis. This not only encouraged real-time adaptation of programme activities, but offered strong value for money to DFID, as it removed the cost and delay of outsourcing technical expertise. Advisers built meaningful relationships with staff and partners in a way that would not have been possible for 'fly in, fly out' consultants. Moreover, as staff members of consortium organisations, the advisers were able to feedback their ongoing analysis of gender and conflict considerations into wider programme re-design, implementation and learning.

Any programme that aims to be conflict or gender sensitive needs to have the systems in place to not only gather and analyse information, but to apply it to ongoing activities in a timely manner; and to assess the extent to which gender and conflict sensitive strategies are being implemented. The presence of full time conflict and gender advisers from NSRP's outset, and the support they received from state-level conflict advisers, was critical for information collection and analysis. Similarly, training provided to staff and partners allowed

for a degree of real-time programme adaptation (see case study on the Niger Delta in the Partners Training section, below).

NSRP could nevertheless have gone further in developing systems with appropriate *incentives* to adapt programming to emergent issues. This could in part be achieved through including gender and conflict sensitivity in core programme documents, such as the logframe and results framework. This was not the case with NSRP but could help to motivate staff and partners to constantly consider whether they could be doing more to use the information available to improve gender and conflict sensitivity. Incentives could be strengthened by better integrating gender and conflict expertise into the leadership of a programme, as while the NSRP consortium included expertise on conflict and gender sensitivity, this was provided by subcontracted organisations who were not fully involved in the management provided by the consortium lead. NSRP went some way towards overcoming this through providing training to staff members on gender and conflict sensitivity (see below).

Consistency, as well as efficiency, needs to be considered when designing capacity building of staff and partners in gender and conflict. Diagram 1 shows the NSRP approach to training, whereby the embedded advisers trained NSRP partners and staff, and then partners also received training – informed but not directly designed by – a number of programme-wide capacity building experts. This created confusion at points, as the training delivered by the conflict and gender adviser was not always aligned with that of the capacity building experts (who understood but were not experts in gender or conflict). Similarly, exchange of information between partners (trained by capacity building experts) and staff (trained by conflict and gender advisers) created further confusion.
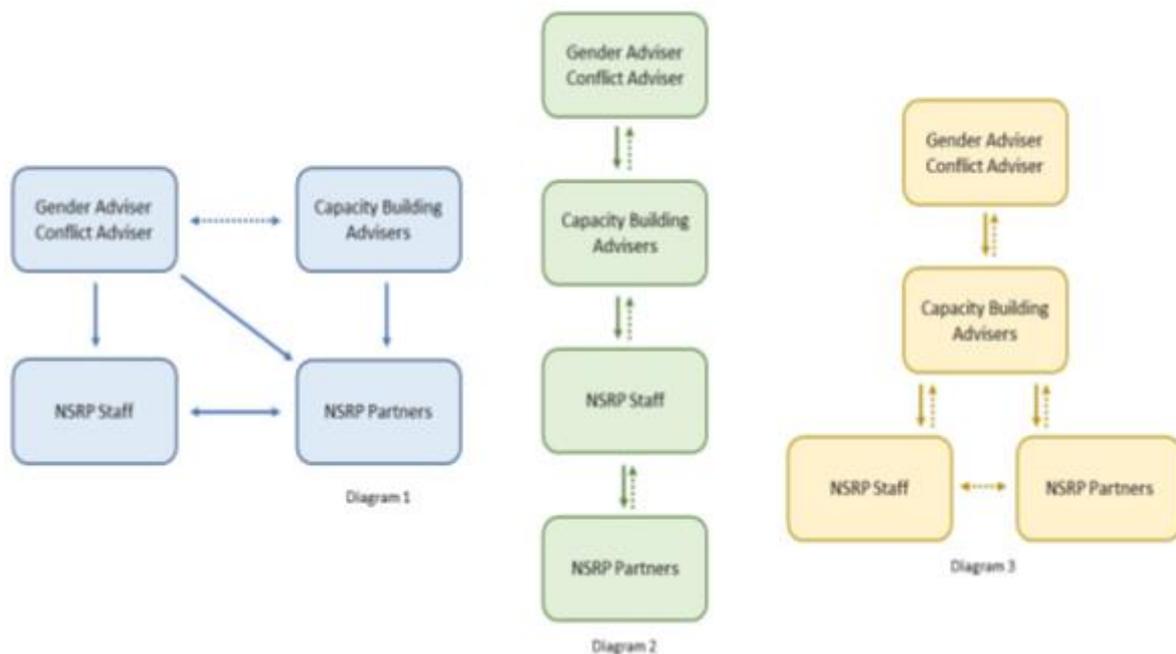
A more effective approach could be taken by following the structures followed in either Diagram 2 or 3. This would allow for development and dissemination of a clearer curriculum on gender and conflict sensitivity. It would also allow capacity building experts to take ownership over all training, thereby allowing the embedded advisers more time to support response programming.

Building the capacity of all NSRP staff in gender and conflict sensitivity provided significant returns through influencing and cascading of concepts and requirements.

All aspects of implementation (activities, staffing, information networks, finances etc) are critical to ensuring a programme is gender and conflict sensitive. NSRP programmatic and operations teams completed conflict and gender sensitivity organisational assessments during Inception, and on a regular basis throughout implementation. This gave a candid analysis of each staff member's capacity, and a programme-wide average on areas such as policies and strategies, human resources including staff competencies, skills and understanding, and learning and knowledge management around conflict and gender sensitivity.

Based on these assessments, all NSRP staff received training in gender and conflict sensitivity as part of their induction, and on a regular basis thereafter. As a result of this training, the programme was able to use the programme's gender and conflict strategies to identify key tasks and assign responsibility to individual staff members along with agreed timelines for delivery. The training also made it easier to integrate conflict and gender sensitivity into performance and programme management cycles, including coverage in quarterly planning meetings, mid-term evaluations and annual reviews; reviews of federal and state engagement strategies; assessments of large and small grants; and the closeout and evaluation of large and small grants.

In 2014, a conflict and gender organisational assessment highlighted gaps in staff knowledge on gender and conflict analysis tools. A gender and conflict sensitivity training was launched in early 2015, and a variety of conflict and gender analysis models and tools that are typically used in gender and conflict sensitive programming were taught to the *entire* NSRP team. During this three-day training, the team learnt the three main conflict analysis models, and were able to practically apply these in small group exercises.

The training was designed in recognition of the fact that NSRP staff did not implement any activities directly, but rather played an influencing and guiding role with project partners. It therefore included a Training of Trainers component, which was designed to equip staff with the knowledge and skills to disseminate gender and conflict learning to partners and throughout activities. This included training on delivering a simple and concise presentation on conflict and gender sensitivity, which was designed by the NSRP conflict and gender advisers. All staff were then in a stronger position to monitor and provide support on partner activities from a gender and conflict perspective.

The impact of the capacity building efforts on raising staff awareness and understanding of gender and conflict sensitivity was clear. Staff became increasingly comfortable using gender and conflict sensitive language in their interactions with partners, and in supporting partners to implement gender and conflict sensitive activities. NSRP also held quarterly senior management meetings, where all field project team members and headquarters staff would discuss opportunities and challenges to programme implementation, including dedicated time for discussion and light-touch training on gender and conflict sensitive programming. Embedded advisers also convened a brown bag series for headquarters staff on conflict and gender sensitive programming, and provided information to field staff via powerpoint to disseminate knowledge beyond Abuja.

'The training was invaluable in allowing us to take gender beyond being about numbers and women. We learnt that gender is men and women, that attendance does not always mean meaningful participation.' – Interview with NSRP staff member, May 2017

NSRP staff feedback highlighted how the annual training they received was useful, but could be more regularly provided. The embedded advisers introduced a hybrid model of training plus accompaniment to Regional managers from the end of year 1 on a quarterly basis, via email and field visits. This addressed the issue of there being a lack of funding and time for all-staff training. However, the model required greater management support (both functionally or financially), and was halted after Year 4. Staff capacity could have been further built through providing ongoing training and systematically measuring change as a result of training. This would require an appropriate commitment of time and finances to support what can be a lengthy process if capacity is to be meaningfully built.

Building NSRP partner capacity in gender and conflict sensitivity resulted in increased understanding and improved programming, although practical and contextual factors often presented challenges.

Implementing partners were the backbone of NSRP, and solely responsible for implementation of activities. Their understanding of conflict and gender sensitive programming was therefore critical. NSRP worked to ensure partners were able to implement in a conflict and gender sensitive manner in three ways: assessing capability during the grant application assessment process; initial training on conflict and gender sensitivity after being awarded a grant (and subsequent 'top up' training during implementation); and quarterly reporting from partners on their activities from a gender and conflict perspective.

While applications were assessed on the basis that grantees would receive training on gender and conflict sensitive programming, applicants were nevertheless required to demonstrate their theoretical and practical understanding of these issues. In a number of cases, applications were rejected due to weaknesses in this area, while in some cases applicants who demonstrated strong knowledge of one area but not the other were recommended to apply for funding under a different output (see case study on Bayelsa state).

Recognising Potential and Building Capacity in Bayelsa State

One CSO operating in Bayelsa and Rivers states applied for a small grant under Output 3, the Women and Girls workstream. Following internal assessment, it was decided that the CSO lacked the necessary understanding of gender and gender sensitive programming. However, having demonstrated an extremely sound knowledge of conflict and conflict sensitive programming, the CSO was recommended to apply for funding under Output 1. The CSO went on to be awarded 3 grants – 2 small, 1 large – under Output 1. As an NSRP grantee, the CSO participated in multiple training sessions on both gender and conflict sensitive programming.

During implementation, the CSO made a concerted effort to promote equal participation of men and women in their community peacebuilding activities. In Sabama LGA, Rivers State, the CSO worked to create a process for feeding community voices upwards to state government. As part of this process, the CSO created its 'cross-border peace initiative', which brought together women from across different communities in women-only groups to participate alongside the Community Peace Partnerships and Community Development Committees as part of a three-pronged mechanism for channeling citizen voices to LGA platforms. A representative from the CSO noted that this recognition of the need to amplify women's voices in such processes was a departure from the CSO's previous approach: 'we were gender neutral. We didn't think about gender as related to conflict. Now, everything we implement we first think about gender, and how to equal the gender balance.'

Once selected, all partners received training on conflict and gender sensitivity as soon as they formally engaged with NSRP. The training aimed to support partners to understand the concepts of peace, conflict, fragility, violence and resilience in the Nigerian context; demonstrate an understanding of conflict sensitivity (definition, concepts, principles, application); explain the relationship between conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity; assess the conflict sensitivity of interventions; and design indicators and adjustment strategies for interventions. Regarding gender sensitivity, the training explained the concepts of gender and gender sensitivity; situated these concepts within the contexts of conflict, instability, and Nigeria; examined the relationship between gender and gender sensitivity; and introduced tools for implementing gender sensitive programming.

> **NSRP Northwest training, June 2015**
> '[Conflict analysis] engages to streamline your thoughts into one area-to help you be more specific"
>
> '[Conflict analysis] helps you know when and how you can intervene, i.e. the appropriateness of your intervention'

Throughout implementation, partners provided updates on their activities at Quarterly Partner Coordination Meetings; these sessions included a dedicated section on how they were demonstrating gender sensitivity in, or promoting gender equality through, their work. Partners also received 'top-up' gender training at these sessions, which was primarily delivered by the gender adviser but could also be delivered by all staff members due to their

> **NSRP Niger Delta Grantee Training, May, 2015**
> 'I can now identify actual peace and pre-conflict early warning through indicators that I have tended to overlook'
>
> 'Before now, I always assumed that violence was only physical. Now I know about structural and cultural violence'
>
> 'More members of grantee organizations should be trained in order to raise awareness on conflict sensitivity in programmes and improve outcomes'

own training. Specifically, the training focused on using current NSRP interventions to help partners prepare adjustment strategies for their interventions based on the analysis of the conflict context, or the linking the conflict analysis to the programming cycle.

Pre and post training evaluation marks for partners who were trained on conflict sensitivity in the Middle Belt in March 2015 indicate strongly increased understanding around conflict, violence and peace. This was borne out by the ways in which partners repeatedly demonstrated the extent to which NSRP support had improved their ability to programme in a gender and conflict sensitive manner. This is likely to have an impact even after the closure of NSRP: as one CSO representative under Output 1 noted, 'we have changed the way we work now. Gender is at the heart of all of our activities, whereas before we never paid much attention to it.'

> **NSRP Middle Belt training, March 215**
> 'Applying conflict analysis at all stages of the implementation of a project to be prepared for adjustments if necessary to come was very useful'
>
> 'This training helps a programme to forecast unintended possibilities coming up in the course of programme implementation'

There were limitations to building partners' capacity, however. The issue of the channels through which training was provided, primarily but not entirely through capacity building experts, has been explored above. A further challenge was the frequent turnover of staff within partner organisations, which made it difficult to build capacity in a cumulative manner. Progressing partners beyond the basics of conflict and gender sensitivity was therefore extremely challenging.

> 'Until I attended the NSRP training, I thought gender meant women. Until NSRP we only worked with women, but now we involve men in all of our programmes. We have even started working to improve the gender balance of our own staff, who have always been women until now.' **Peace Club-convening CSO, Borno State**

An additional challenge related to the ability of partners to implement gender and conflict sensitive activities in contexts within which they operated. For example, sustained effort was needed to encourage certain official bodies to include women in their meetings; in many cases, CSO's failed in their efforts. This issue was particularly prevalent in activities involving the military and police; as an Output 1 partner put it, 'women are chronically underrepresented in the armed forces. We can try, but that will not change in one day. I think trying is better than nothing.'

Adapting programming in line with regular conflict analysis is crucial – but often entails additional transaction costs. Programmes need to build in extra resources to accommodate these costs.

Conflict analysis is a critical tool for allowing development actors to diagnose or understand, the dynamics of conflict, peace, violence and instability, and is critical to conflict sensitive programming. Conflict analysis helps programmes to consider risk, through focusing on political, economic, social and security factors in a given context. Conflict analysis allows a programme to understand three things: the grievances expressed by society, composed of both citizens and representatives of the state; the key resiliencies that are maintaining peace at community, state and federal levels; and the key actors and key mobilisers that can exacerbate conflict towards peace and/or violence.

NSRP embedded conflict analysis in two ways. First, the programme conducted quarterly participatory conflict analysis with implementing partners, in order to immediately link the analysis with ongoing and upcoming activities. Second, the programme hired regional and state-based conflict analysts to write monthly Conflict Briefing Notes. These reports provided real-time information on conflict dynamics, conflict actors and peacebuilding efforts in each of the eight states to a wide audience ranging from implementers to funders. These two mechanisms created a process through which, in theory, partner activities could be adapted in light of up to date analyses in a timely and effective manner.

The trade-offs of flexible programming: small grants in north-east Nigeria

Following a call for proposals under Output 1, and subsequent assessment by the conflict and gender advisers, it was recognised that the overall capacity of CSOs in Borno and Yobe was far lower than in other states. This factor, alongside the difficulty of closely monitoring implementation in these states due to the ongoing conflict, led to NSRP adapting its approach to awarding grants. Rather than awarding both large and small grants, as in other focus states, Borno and Yobe CSOs were awarded only small grants, which totalled no more than N7 million, thereby reducing the risk of financial mismanagement.

The disadvantage of only awarding smaller grants in these states was that the time limit for implementation was also reduced, to a maximum of 6 months. This had implications for the potential impact and sustainability of activities, and for the extent to which partner capacity could be meaningfully built over the implementation period. The unintended consequences of flexible programming therefore need to be carefully considered as part of a programme's risk monitoring, so that the adaptation of activities does inadvertently undermine overall impact.

Effective conflict analysis generates a significant volume of useful information, which can be challenging to effectively utilise in a timely manner. The time and resources committed to generating in-depth conflict analysis from each of NSRP's 8 states, in addition to gathering updates from partners, meant that the project had a considerable amount of information from which it could adjust its programming. However, in spite of its system for gathering and disseminating information from/to partners in real time, utilising that information to adapt programming in a timely manner remained a challenge.

Adapting programming to emerging conflict dynamics in the Niger Delta

A CSO partner had planned to hold a Town Hall meeting in August 2014, as part of the Community Peace Partnership initiative under Output 1. However, the meeting was scheduled to take place shortly after the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, and the arrival of the virus into Nigeria. The CSO recognised this as a risk to the success of the meeting, based its ongoing conflict analysis. The CSO approached the NSRP conflict adviser, who provided light-touch support to the CSO in following the steps taught at conflict sensitivity training sessions:

Activity → Risks → Mitigating actions → Revised activity

Through following this process, the CSO was able to adapt the format and focus of the meeting to ensure sufficient levels of participation and address participants' concerns about the nature of the Ebola virus.

Fully applying a gender and conflict sensitive approach requires an adaptable, flexible, innovative approach to programming, as has been discussed throughout this paper. Taking such an approach often requires deviation from programme plans, and the disruption of forecasts and budgets, as activities may need to be accelerated or decelerated to adapt to changing contexts. In order to effectively make use of analysis gathered, it is necessary to think through the extent to and process through which such analysis can be applied in practice, as this will likely impact on the programme's design far beyond (important) measures such as embedding technical experts and building staff and partners' capacity.