How to support conflict sensitive programming

Introduction

Development partners, such as the UK Government, have made strong policy commitments to help Nigerians tackle violent conflict. The UK Government's Building Stability Overseas Strategy, indicates that development, governance and/or economic programming in fragile and conflict affects states has exacerbated conflict tensions at the community, state and federal levels in certain countries such as Nigeria in the past. As such, DFID-funded programmes have performed several interventions to support communities (human development programming), make government more accountable (governance programming) and address economic inequalities (economic programming); however, not all of these efforts have been perceived as politically neutral. On the contrary, some cases have exacerbated conflict tensions at the community, state and federal levels in Nigeria, and there are many international examples of this as well.

NSRP Intervention

NSRP is a five-year programme aimed at supporting the initiatives of Nigerian actors and institutions to manage conflicts non-violently more often and reduce the impact of violent conflict on the most vulnerable part of the population. The programme supports interventions at federal level and in eight states (Borno, Yobe, Kano, Plateau, Kaduna, Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta). These states are in the four zones (North East, North West, Middle Belt and the Niger Delta) most affected by violent conflict in Nigeria. One of NSRP's core deliverables is the provision of conflict sensitivity as technical assistance to other DFID programmes to support stronger conflict and gender sensitive implementation in Nigeria.

The conflict sensitivity technical assistance is a major component for NSRP under output 4 along with research, strategic partnerships and media. Through this facility, NSRP provides technical assistance to DFID programmes to ensure the delivery of conflict and gender sensitive programming. This is because NSRP believes that above and beyond ensuring that humanitarian and development programmes do not unintentionally fuel conflict, all programmes need to be designed, implemented and monitored so that they can make a positive contribution to local peacebuilding efforts. This requires governments, organisations and business actors to take proactive, intentional steps to integrate conflict-sensitivity. NSRP's approach to conflict sensitivity services is based on the belief that governments, organisations and individuals can use conflict sensitivity as an opportunity to not just minimize the risks of doing harm, but also as an opportunity to maximize the potentials for peace. Alert understands the need for conflict sensitivity to be an integral part of the operations of organisations working in fragile and conflict affected countries, rather than an extra activity or a bureaucratic "box-ticking" exercise.

NSRP delivered conflict sensitivity to programmes using **three modalities:**

- **Analysis and Assessments**
- **Technical Accompaniment to Programme Cycle**
- **Capacity Building**

The table below indicates the DFID-funded programme which received each of the modalities of Conflict Sensitivity Technical Assistance from NSRP.

Modality 1 (M1): Analysis/Assessments	Modality 2 (M2): Technical Accompaniment	Modality 3 (M3): Capacity Building
V4C: Organizational Assessment	FOSTER: Support to JIV Workshop in Rivers State	SAVI/SPARC/MNCH2: Conflict Sensitivity Training for Staff in 10 states and Abuja HQ
ESSPIN: Review of Education and Conflict Report with Recommendations for Programme Adjustments	NIAF: Support drafting the Risk Register	NIAF: Support for Drafting the Gender Strategy
TDP: Design of Conflict Sensitive Teacher Training Programme		SPARC: Review of mid-term sector strategy documents (MTSS) and State Development Plans (SDPs) for five states (Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Yobe)

Given the diversity of the types of technical assistance provided, several types of impacts were noted. Specifically, using an adapted four-tiered impact methodology known as the 'Kirkpatrick model' which considers four levels of impact: **Reaction, Learning, Behavioural and Results.**

Defining Conflict Sensitivity

NSRP has a specific understanding of the concept of 'conflict sensitivity.' Conflict Sensitivity is defined as the approach to programming that prioritizes understanding the two-way interaction between activities and the context, and acting to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on interventions on conflict. Using this understanding, Conflict Sensitivity can be considered an approach to programming or a methodology for programme implementation.

Conflict Sensitivity is a fundamental principle of good and responsible practice that is applicable to all programmes in all contexts regardless of sector, program type, conflict phase or constituency. This is because Conflict Sensitivity assumes that any initiative or intervention conducted in a conflict-affected area will interact with that conflict and that such interactions will have consequences that may have positive or negative effects on that conflict. It means that organizations need to prioritize a deep understanding of the context, the two-way interaction between activities and the context, and act to minimize negative impact sand maximize positive impacts.

Methodology

Using an adapted version of the Kirkpatrick 4-L model, a rapid assessment was conducted between September and October 2016 using key informant interviews as primary data sources and project documents as secondary data sources. The classical interpretation of the Kirkpatrick 4-L model is used to assess the effectiveness and impact of trainings only. Therefore, Level 1 ("**Reaction**") refers to the degree to which participants react favourably to the learning event. Level 2 ("**Learning**") refers to the degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on their participation in the learning event. Level 3 ("**Behaviour**") or the degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job. Finally, Level 4 ("**Results**") refers to the degree to which targeted outcomes occur because of the learning event (s) and subsequent reinforcement.

The diagram below illustrates the four levels in the Kirkpatrick model.
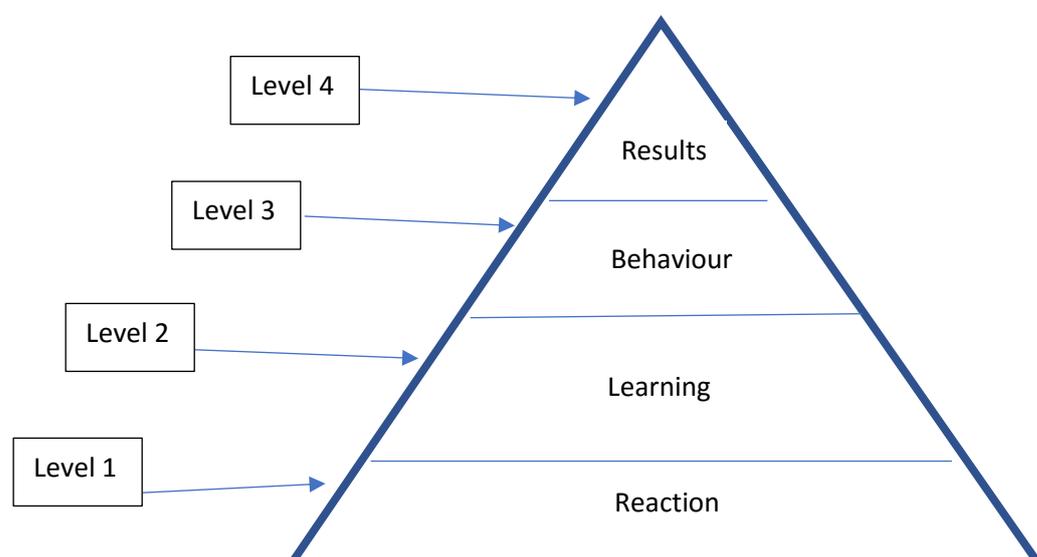
Through adapting this approach, the same four areas or levels were analysed not simply in terms of the training modality indicated above, but all three modalities: analysis and assessments, technical accompaniment and capacity building, as all three were ways in which technical assistance was provided under output 4, component 4.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

LESSON: Providing Programmes the Opportunity to receive technical assistance was well received

NSRP provided support to programmes such as SAVI, SPARC, V4C, NIAF, FOSTER, ESSPIN, PropCom Mai-karfi, Teacher Development Programme (TDP), GEM-3, M4D and MNCH2. Programmes that received conflict sensitivity technical assistance reacted favourably to the technical assistance (reaction) and indicated that they acquired the intended knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on their participation in the technical

assistance. This is because many programmes are operating in highly-volatile contexts in Nigeria and could immediately see the applicability of the conflict sensitivity framework, and understand how it could be useful to improving their operations.

As one manager of a programme indicated: "*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*" [KII, Donor Programme].

LESSON: If capacity is built around conflict sensitive programming at an appropriate time within the programme cycle, programmes will embed the learning in a more sustainable manner

Several programmes which received one modality, capacity building, experienced reaction, learning, behavioural and results impacts. This indicates that this modality is extremely effective when it comes to embedding conflict sensitive approaches with DFID-funded programmes. In addition to the reaction and learning highlighted above, behavioural impacts or the ways in which individuals apply the acquired learning when they leave the event and results impacts, or the degree to which targeted outcomes occur because of the event that are subsequently reinforced or embedded also occurred.

The primary examples of this are the State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) and the State Partnership for Accountable and Responsive Coordination (SPARC) programmes. SAVI and SPARC received capacity building support from NSRP through a two-day conflict sensitivity training in all ten states of operation between April and May 2015. A headquarter, senior-staff focused two-day training was also held in Abuja in August 2015. This resulted in sustained engagement with conflict sensitivity, including the embedding of conflict sensitive practices into the inception and implementation of the follow-on programme.

Example:

Level one (Reaction) **--**to the degree to which participants react favourably to the learning event.	During the training, all trainers indicated that 90% of the staff from SAVI and SPARC saw the relevance and importance of the topic vis-à-vis the contexts of the states they were working in.
Level two (Learning) -- the degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on their participation in the learning event	Pre and post training outcomes from April and May 2015 indicate an increase in knowledge, skills and abilities around conflict sensitivity resulted from the training.
Level three (Behaviour) -- the degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when	The Conflict Sensitivity training occurred at a time when the programme was nearing the end of its implementation cycle and was in the process of renegotiation with DFID to extend into another phase and therefore, the CS support shaped their engagement on key conflict ussies with DFID. SAVI state teams integrated conflict into PEA analysis conducted in 10 states (i.e. 10

they are back on the job	examples of conflict analysis embedded into PEA analysis).
Level four (Results) --the degree to which targeted outcomes occur because of the learning event (s) and subsequent reinforcement	The team translated this into a new programme with DFID and the result of that is that both DAI, the contractor that managed SPARC which is now ARC, and Palladium, the contractor that managed SAVI which is now ECP, engaged International Alert in the bid stage of the resubmission of their programme and won. Alert now has an embedded International Strategic Conflict Adviser and six national conflict advisers.

As the example above illustrates, the provision of training to staff led to all three levels of impact experienced by the programme. The SPARC Programme Manager Mark Walker suggested that the provision of capacity building support through training to SPARC by NSRP came at a "perfect time" because the technical assistance provided to the SPARC team enabled the SPARC team to "be ready and have processes in place at the time of re-bidding" for the next phase of the programme by both DAI and Palladium senior management teams in Abuja and London. The outcome of two-day training leading to an embedded conflict adviser in the next phase of the programme lifecycle is unique but important to document as they illustrate how level 3 (behavioural) and Level 4 (results) impacts were experienced by the programme. This assessment illustrates how now only does the management decision to take the recommendations on matter, but the phase within the programme cycle matters greatly for the programmes uptake of conflict sensitivity.

In conclusion, these examples show that it is not only the modality that makes a difference as to the level of impact, but also the timing of the programme in the programme cycle. In the case of SAVI and SPARC, the training was not only well received but the learning from it was also able to be immediately rolled into the re-design period for the next phase of their overall five-year programme. This created an additional incentive for the teams to engage and embrace the technical support from NSRP and led to the embedding of conflict sensitivity in the design, inception and implementation phases of the follow-on programme.

LESSON: Conflict Sensitivity Technical Assistance can lead to Gender Sensitivity support

Another example of the way in which capacity building support provided Level 1 through Level 4 impacts is that of NIAF. NIAF received capacity building technical support to their strategic programme documents which led to the embedding of a Gender Adviser to sustain the results from the technical support. In addition, the programme transferred the results from the engagement with NSRP to its sister programme, SOLAR.

Example:

Level one (Reaction) --to the degree to which participants react favourably to the learning event.	NIAF CS TA provided in Gender Strategy Drafted prior to NIAF 2015 annual review During the engagement, the KM Specialist and senior managers were supportive of the engagement. It was clear that the last annual review of NIAF had indicated that there was a gap in this area and the team was energetic to fill it.

Level two (Learning) -- the degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on their participation in the learning event	The core management team that was engaged with this was positive about the ways in which the consultation was structure with each of the work streams, and how each work stream was included in the strategy with clear and explicit "asks" and deliverables around gender sensitivity to mitigate and reduce violence against women and girls in Nigeria.
Level three (Behaviour) -- the degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job	The NIAF team made the Gender Strategy actionable by hiring and embedding a Gender Adviser into the programme through the closure period to deduce lessons learned and provide recommendations for DFID and ASI on how an infrastructure programme can be gender sensitive. The engagement with NIAF to develop the Gender strategy occurred at a time when the programme was nearing the end of its implementation cycle; however, unlike SAVI and SPARC, ASI was unclear of any future NIAF work and therefore, the learning was unable to be extended beyond the initial engagement. NIAF's Gender Adviser used the Gender Strategy to influence the NIAF programme wide sector strategy document format for NIAF which now includes "gender and social impacts/social inclusion". This enables NIAF to report on the impact on gender equity and conflict sensitivity in each of its sector documents (6 sectors in total). This resulted in the Gender Adviser building on the Gender Strategy and embedding it by workstream (6 workstreams in total). This resulted in changes in the sector strategy document format for NIAF which now includes gender and CS by sector. This means that NIAF is now able to report on the impact on gender equity and conflict sensitivity in each of its sector documents (6 sectors in total). NIAF created a gender support unit or team and invited the new Gender focal point and NSRP's Peacebuilding Adviser to be members of the Gender Support Team/unit for all the relevant NIAF workstreams. This unit continued to function and provide on-going support through the close of the NIAF programme in December 2015 NIAF has produced KM products documenting the ways in which infrastructure projects can account for gender and social inclusion. As a result of these, ASI/DFID has had requests from ODI and JICA to help them also learn from how to mainstream these aspects into infrastructure projects. This indicates the wide reach of CS TA to influencing other actors around difficult sectors such as infrastructure.
Level four (Results) --the degree to which targeted outcomes occur because of the learning event (s) and subsequent reinforcement	NIAF targeting the Ministry of Works and Power to embedded more understanding of social impacts of their work for women, men, boys, girls and vulnerable groups. Instead, the Ministry for Budget and Planning for Capital Projects has added a social impact aspect as a criteria on the multi-criteria screening process for all capital projects. This means that all Ministries that submit projects for budgeting to the Ministry for Budgetting will have to account for how it is addressing social impacts, will get "scored" on it and that score will contribute to how their project is funded. For example there are 7 pillars for screening capital projects and now social impact targeting is one of them. This includes the direct targeting of vulnerable groups, and the provision of facilities to enable them. Therefore, there is an incentive for being aware of and cognizant of conflict/social dynamics when proposing capital projects.

	Also, one of the workstream leaders who is seconded from Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) carried over the engagement with International Alert into another ASI programme called SOLAR. International Alert provided an inception period conflict assessment report for ASI because of the engagement with NIAF.

Unlike SAVI and SPARC, in the case of NIAF, the programme was in the same phase of closing out as SAVI and SPARC, but without a clear forward direction from DFID and therefore, it could be said that the uptick of the information was there, but not as strong as that of SAVI and SPARC due to the uncertain nature of the programme moving forward by ASI and DFID. However, ASI transferred the knowledge from NIAF to their new programme, SOLAR, and integrate conflict analysis as a key dynamic a conflict sensitive programme into the SOLAR programme in the inception period.

LESSON: Conflict Sensitivity Support to Governance Programmes can lead to learning being embedded within Nigerian MDAs

Like that of NIAF, SPARC also received support to specific programme documents. SPARC included mid-term sector strategy documents (MTSS) and state development plans (SDP) to be reviewed for design and inclusion of a conflict sensitivity checklist which went to Nigerian Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

Example:

Level one (Reaction) **--**to the degree to which participants react favourably to the learning event.	SPARC CS TA provided in the form of a brown bag workshop presentation to technical leads after reviewing key mid-term sector strategy documents (MTSS) for five states (Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Yobe) for two main sectors (health and education In this same brown bag, NSRP also presented on the state development plans as key strategy documents used for engagement with state officials in ten states.
Level two (Learning) -- the degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on their participation in the learning event	SPARC staff buy in on the importance of CS approaches to the MTSS in each of their states was a core deliverable. Because of this, John (SPARC lead on MTSS) requested NSRP to provide language into both SPARC "How to" guides on the MTSS for each Ministry for each State where SPARC is working (10 states in total) on integrating conflict into the decisions for budgeting on projects (titled MTSSs and Conflict Sensitivity, section 2.4). The MTSS documents added an annex on conflict sensitivity and SPARC staff at the state level rolled this out to their Ministerial counterparts for uptake. SPARC embedded a CS checklist to the SDPs for all ten states where they are working with key ministries. This component in the SDPs is in Annex C and was rolled out to the ministerial counterparts for all 10 states.
Level three (Behaviour) -- the degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job	Because of this, John (SPARC lead on MTSS) requested NSRP to provide language into both SPARC "How to" guides on the MTSS for each Ministry for each State where SPARC is working (10 states in total) on integrating conflict into the decisions for budgeting on projects (titled MTSSs and Conflict Sensitivity, section 2.4). SPARC embedded a CS checklist to the SDPs for all ten states where they are working with key ministries. This component in the SDPs is in Annex C and was rolled out to the ministerial counterparts for all 10 states.

	Also, because of the Conflict Sensitivity Strategic document support to SPARC, Barbara (SPARC GESI Focal Point) integrated CS language into on-going GESI work for SPARC as of January 2015.
Level four (Results) --the degree to which targeted outcomes occur because of the learning event (s) and subsequent reinforcement	The MTSS documents added an annex on conflict sensitivity and SPARC staff at the state level rolled this out to their Ministerial counterparts for uptake. SPARC is now ARC and has contracted Alert to provide on-going CS TA.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Firstly, NSRP provided three modalities of conflict sensitivity technical assistance to programmes in the form of analysis, accompaniment and capacity building. The programme review indicates that capacity building in the form of staff and partner training has the greatest depth of impact across the programmes that received it. This indicates that building capacity of programmes makes the most substantive impact for the way a programme can utilize the conflict sensitivity technical assistance. Of note, for each programme that received this support, senior management buy in for changing the "status quo" also reinforced the behavioural changes needed within the programming and therefore, conflict sensitivity technical assistance requires donor support, senior management of the commercial contracting agency buy in to have the greatest impact.

Secondly, NSRP provided the modalities of conflict sensitive technical assistance at different stages in the programme cycle- those starting, those in the midst of implementation and those closing or preparing to re-bid to the donor. A review of the technical assistance provided indicates that some modalities have been more successful than others and that success depends on several variables such as the phase within the programme cycle in which the implementing programme is currently situated and the support that the programme is getting from its senior management, and DFID for either the closure or redesign of the programme. For example, programmes which were in the midst of implementation were least likely to engage in any deep behavioural or results level impacts around conflict sensitivity. This suggested that where programmes are in the middle of the programme cycle, there appears to be less incentive to adjust its "status quo" operations unlike those at the beginning or end of the programme cycle. For example, programmes that were either closing and wanted a legacy (NIAF) or those that had confirmed guidance from DFID that there would be a follow-on phase of programming (SAVI, SPARC and FOSTER) were the most engaged in the support and illustrate all four levels of impact. This finding indicates that the donors pushing for greater conflict sensitivity should continue to stress the importance in the design and inception phases, but also conduct more outreach to programmes which are mid-implementation to ensure that they do not minimize the importance of engaging with conflict sensitivity. This reinforces the finding that timing matters. When programmes are provided tailored assistance from technical advisors on Conflict Sensitive programming at an opportune time in the programme cycle, they are able to translate this learning into the programme cycle in a more comprehensive and sustainable manner.

Continuing to provide technical assistance to programmes is important to sustain the results from the programmes. Three programmes have engaged with conflict and gender sensitivity support in their new phases- FOSTER, SAVI and SPARC (now joint programme called PERL). This suggests that the embedding of technical assistance is a model that has become adopted by other programmes as a result of NSRP's model of embedded technical advisers on conflict and gender sensitivity. These embedded support mechanisms from the inception period will enable the programme cycle-design, implementation and monitoring/evaluation- to entrench conflict and gender sensitive mechanisms into the technical and operational aspects of the programme in a more systematic manner.

In conclusion, NSRP's provision of Conflict Sensitivity technical assistance to DFID-funded programmes was deemed useful for all programmes which accessed the service**.** Therefore**,** NSRP has learned that regardless of the modality provided, programmes will benefit from conflict sensitivity technical assistance. The examples above illustrate two major findings for NSRP: **some modalities yield more sustainable and impact-driven results than others** and **timing in the programme cycle for the technical assistance matters.**

Therefore, it is recommended that conflict sensitive technical assistance is provided to DFID-funded programmes, that the modality of capacity building with embedded technical advisers is provided at the inception of the programme cycle (design and inception) of the programme, and that it is strongly advocated from the donor and commercial contracting agency which is implementing the programme to facilitate strong buy-in.