CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
Do No Harm / DNH[1]

> *To understand the interaction between programme and conflict situation.*
> *To raise awareness for implicit and explicit consequences of programme activities and their possible (positive and negative) impact on the conflict.*
> *To anticipate conflicts and measures to transform them into dialogue and negotiation.*

1. Description and Background

Cooperation agencies and donors must examine how their aid increases or promotes divisions in a society. The instrument DNH sharpens the eye towards the linkage between development cooperation and conflict dynamics.

When analysing the impact of donor assistance provided in conflict zones we have to take into account the following aspects:

- International foreign aid is not neutral, but becomes a part of the context it's provided in. Aid given in conflict settings does therefore not have a neutral impact on the conflicts.
- The resources provided by donors, and the manner in which these resources are organized and delivered, play into and reinforce the relationships between contending groups in recipient societies.
- In any conflict environment there are two different realities: **dividers** and **connectors.** Dividers are those factors that people are fighting about or cause tension, connectors bring people together and/or tend to reduce tension. Groups in contention are both 'divided' by some factors (such as contending interests, competition over limited resources, historical issues, etc.) and 'connected' by other factors (shared interests and values, interdependent structures, common infrastructures, etc.)
- The impacts of donor assistance on conflicts occur as the resources provided (and the systems of provision) either reinforce and exacerbate the dividers between groups or lessen dividers. Likewise, impacts are either negative if donors ignore, undermine and weaken the connectors or positive if they recognize, build on and reinforce the connectors.
- The details of donor programmes matter: what, why, who, by whom, when, where, and how.
- There are always options for changing donor programmes to eliminate negative impacts (increased conflict) or to improve positive contributions to peace.

The notion behind the DNH approach for development practitioners is that harm can be done in the long run. To this point, five lessons can be drawn from the DNH approach:

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[1] Mary B. Anderson, 1999: Do No Harm. How Aid Can Support Peace - or War. London 1999.

(i) Conflicts occur for 'good' and for 'bad' reasons. A 'good' reason for violent conflict would be if physical confrontation is the only way of achieving liberation or opposing a repressive regime. On the other hand, a 'bad' reason would be the intention to suppress another group.

(ii) People differ in the way they are committed to conflict: While the leaders may be strongly committed, the majority of members of society may be against it. If the people feel manipulated by their leaders in times of conflict, they are more open to external interventions. On the other hand, deep ideological commitment hinders helpful assistance. Practitioners must therefore find ways to assess the level of commitment in order to find out whether violent conflicts can be prevented.

(iii) More people *do not* engage in violent conflicts than *do*. A vast majority of countries encumbered by problems and reasons that could lead to war do not end up in violent conflict. In other words, barriers to violent conflict do exist.

(iv) Outsiders *do* have influence on conflict situations. Similarly, development agencies have an impact on the likelihood of warfare, intentionally or unintentionally. If a society is conflict-prone, our assistance or lack there of will have an effect. To withdraw from an area or to stay has a major influence on the conflict situation.

(v) In every society there are institutions, systems, and processes that link people across sub-group divisions (such as shared interests and common practice). We then talk of *functional harmony*.
On the other hand, there are also shared systems and processes that divide people. International assistance affects both, the aspects that divide and the aspects that connect people, particularly in a situation where conflict has already begun. Shared benefits, in fact, should be the bedrock of conflict prevention language, instead of emphasizing one side over the other. Development programmes must come to a better understanding of the aspects that connect and divide in a particular society. Generally, analysts were so aware of the complexities and problems behind a conflict that they could not see the positives, or connectors, which readily exist.

International assistance influences connectors and dividers in several important ways. First, there are *distribution effects*. In a situation in which groups are pitted against one another, the question of "who we give what" is tremendously important. Second, there are *marking effects*. Assistance has influence on wages, prices, and profits and can increase the incentives for people to dominate each other. Third, there are *substitution effects*. If donors assume responsibility for institutions and services, they free up local populations to concentrate on warfare or mechanisms of conflict. 'International caretaking' liberates time and resources for conflict. Fourth, there are *legitimisation effects*. International assistance can legitimize war leaders, bandits, institutions of war, and war mechanisms.

Examples:
Connectors can be shared values, common experiences and language, or shared symbols and occasions.
Health services can be a connector. Health workers often cross lines of conflict and have the freedom to operate on different sides.
Connectors are often not seen as such by the actors involved. Electricity grids, for example, are out of necessity shared by two sides in conflict, therefore they should be seen as connectors.
A caste system is a divider. On the other hand, negative connectors do exist, like mafias. Obviously, donors need to be careful about supporting negative connectors.

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2. Didactical steps (methodology example)

Approx. time allocation	Process	Visual / technical aids	Learning outcome
10 minutes	**1. Introduction** • Facilitator: introduces purpose of module and explains the basic principles of DNH. • Participants: identify and share examples of harmful international assistance.	• Pinboard • Powerpoint slides	• Participants are aware of purpose of the module. • Participants learn about DNH-principles.
20 minutes	**2. Dividers and connectors** • Facilitator: presents and explains with examples the concept of dividers and connectors; questions and answers on the matrix established by the participants. • Participants: identify and share real examples of dividers and connectors in the context of the programme.	• Pinboard with matrix of dividers and connectors	• Participants apply the concept in their context.
45 minutes	**3. Group work** • Facilitator: Explains the task: (i) Concentrate on one project or programme component, (ii) Identify factors (not actors or stakeholders!) that influence the conflict as dividers and connectors, (iii) Think about the objectives, the mode of operation and the overall influence of the project or programme on these factors, (iv) Present, share and evaluate the insights. • Participants: divide into groups and elaborate the matrix following the instructions.	• Flip chart • Handout	• Participants identify and analyse dividers and connectors and discuss the relevance for the programme. • Participants think about ways of making the programme more conflict-sensitive.
15 minutes	**4. Conclusions** • Facilitator: writes down key questions to analyse: (i) What dividers / connectors are enforced by the project? (ii) How can we prevent from enforcing dividers that fuel the conflict? (iii) Where do we see a potential to	• Flip chart • Pinboard	• Participants share results and experiences. • Participants draw conclusions on further steps to incorporate DNH approach.

	enforce connectors? (iv) With whom and how can we share the DNH approach? • Plenary: Share results of group work and analyse further steps for application of DNH approach.		

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
The Gender Lens

> *To understand the interrelationship of gender equality issues, conflict and peace-building.*
>
> *To ensure that the specific needs and interests of women and men (girls and boys) are incorporated in conflict management and peace-building at all levels.*

1. Description and Background

Gender, as much as ethnicity, race, class, religion and socio-economic position is an important determinant of individual and group identities. If conflicts are about different needs, interests and perceptions of interests and needs, then gender becomes an important aspect of conflict.

Experiences in various countries of the world show that men and women (boys and girls) are affected differently by violent conflict and also respond in different ways; women and men do not have the same options, they have different capabilities in terms of coping strategies, well-being, social and organisational arrangements and access to knowledge, resources and public debate (Amartya Sen).

To identify and understand the gender dimensions of violent conflict and to strengthen our capacity to work in a gender-sensitive way, we look at violent conflict through the gender lens.

Gender-based violence
The term 'gender-based violence' is used to distinguish violence that targets individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender from other forms of violence. It includes violent acts such as rape, torture, mutilation, sexual slavery, forced impregnation and murder. When involving women, gender-based violence is violence directed against a woman or girl because she is female, or violence that affects women disproportionately.

During violent conflict, rape is sometimes seen as a stigma, degrading not only the victim, but also his or her entire family or community. In such cases, the focus is usually on concealing the assault, rather than bringing the culprits to justice. This is especially true in societies in which men's domination of women is culturally imbedded.

In addition to the effect of multiple physical injuries, gender-based violence can have an enormous impact on the mental health. Anxiety, post- traumatic stress disorders, depression and suicide are the most common.

Sexual exploitation and gender-based violence is a serious public health issue that violates human rights and demands intervention to effectively manage the needs of victims and survivors (e.g. psychosocial support in coping with traumas related to gender-based violence).

Patriarchal gender relations

War of all types creates militarised societies, and in many cultural contexts, militarisation is linked with masculinity, not as a socio-biological attribution but as a cultural construction of manliness. During violent conflict, patriarchal gender relations are often reinforced and institutionalised, thereby resulting in deterioration in the status of women despite their 'emancipated' role within the conflict (e.g. taking on the traditional male responsibilities in the absence of the men or actually taking part in the conflict as combatants).

Men are often the primary combatants (either voluntarily or forced) and are seen as heroes whereas women are portrayed as defenceless victims in want of protection and as nurses.

Disempowerment of women (disempowering context)

The denial of access to and control over resources form a barrier that hinders especially women from participating in the social, political and commercial life of their community. This exclusion of women makes them more vulnerable to physical and psychological violence than men and prevents them from participating in the political arena.

Although women substantially contribute to the defence and survival of their communities during violent conflict, they are usually pushed back into the private space of the home during peace negotiations. Because peace negotiations are mostly conducted by men leaders of armed groups or their political branches they tend to focus on stabilisation issues rather than the civilian interests, needs and concerns of women and men affected by conflict.

Disintegration of family and social networks

During violent conflicts, families and communities are generally in crisis. Basic survival is paramount and gender relations can be subject to stress and change. The traditional division of labour within a family maybe under pressure. Survival strategies often necessitate change in the gender division of labour. Because of the economic conditions during or after violent conflicts, men might not be able to contribute to the household on a regular basis and feel undermined by the fact that the women are taking on their role. This often leads to frustration, greater drug consumption and violence against women. Men are thus especially vulnerable due to the loss of their traditional responsibilities. Men should be supported to let go of their aggressive behaviour and to reintegrate into family and civilian life.

Previous assumptions about who does what work or who has what responsibilities may no longer hold in times of conflict. By failing to consider gender relations and inequalities, organisations may overlook potential resources or possible tensions in reconstruction initiatives.

Unequal control over and access to resources (rights, opportunities, financial and natural resources, etc.)

Access to and control over resources largely depends on the existing distribution of power and ownership and is defined according to various exclusion criteria. One of these exclusion criteria is gender: rights of access to resources and ownership often discriminate against women.

Women's capacity to build peace

Women tend to be excluded from formal peace negotiations. Yet there is a long history of women's participation in efforts to minimise hostility and begin reconstruction. There are many examples of situations where women have intervened in conflict activities in order to create peace opportunities among warring factions of men (e.g. Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan). Other women were engaged in activities aimed at preserving the social fabric through different forms of community organisations and welfare provisions or openly stood up against war and destruction by opposing the regimes responsible for war (e.g. Yugoslavia).

Participation of women in the peace process can contribute significantly to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Without an explicit gender equality focus, post-conflict initiatives may fail to gain from women's contributions – both formal and informal – in the reconstruction of their societies.

Figure 1: The Gender Comb: dimensions of a gender sensitive view on conflict and peace
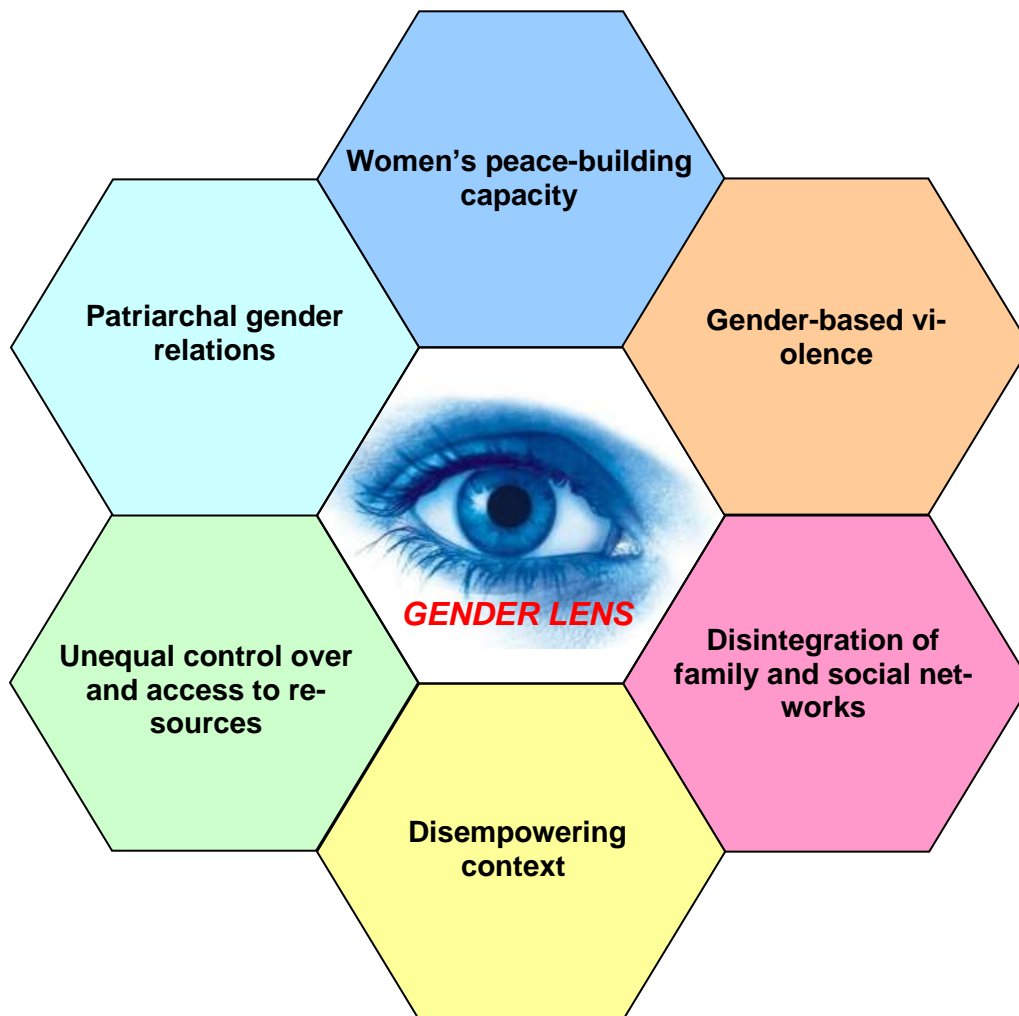
By using the gender lens we incorporate the gender issue into the assessment of a conflict environment and ensure that:

(i) **we consider conflict as a gendered activity – awareness building**

- we look at the possible impact of policies and programmes/projects on the everyday lives of men and women at all levels of society (individual, household, municiple/community, regional, national, international); both in the private and the public sphere;
- we acknowledge that people's coping strategies and the potential resources they have available (and obstacles) are different for different members of the community - and that one of the primary determining factors is gender;
- we distinguish between the security of women and men (as well as boys and girls) and ensure that everyone's security is enhanced;
- we recognise domestic violence as war-induced violence and the development of specific programs for the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence;
- we look at the extent to which women's social, political and economic marginalisation is increased during and after conflict, as well as whether there are opportunities for improving women's position as a result of the changing situation;
- we take into account that women (as well as men) have a fundamental stake in building peaceful communities. We encourage and support equal participation in peace processes;
- we scrutinise militarised gender roles and put up alternative gender roles for discussion;
- we recognise the need for psychosocial support for victims of gender-based violence; and
- we make an issue of the negative effects that the presence of 'internationals' in conflict areas may cause (e.g. sexual exploitation, prostitution).

(ii) **we integrate gender concerns in our programme strategy - operationalisation**

- we ensure that policy, programme and project planning addresses the specific needs of women and men (girls and boys) and benefits both women and men (girls and boys) in a conflict environment;
- we have specific gender equality objectives for the programme (in other words, gender equality issues should not be restricted to one component of a project, rather they should be part of and influence the primary direction of the programme); and
- we collaborate with local NGOs/networks of the women's and human rights movement, as well as with gender specialists and include their critical feedback in the earliest stage of the programme design.

(iii) **we improve the organisation's capacity to deal with gender differences and inequalities - capacity development**

- we offer gender-awareness training for all involved in conflict-sensitive operations;
- we support empowerment projects at different levels to combat exclusion mechanisms, gender-based violence and lack of access to resources;
- we impose and augment coping capacity to manage psychosocial deprivation; and
- we establish mechanisms to support women confronted with traumas of gender-based violence, the dilemmas of unwanted children, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, or being rejected by their community or husband.

2. *Didactical Steps (methodology example)*

Approx. time allocation	Process	Visual / technical aids	Learning outcome
10 minutes	**5. Introduction** • Facilitator: introduces purpose and structure of module; asks participants to share personal experiences of gender relevance in conflict (in the context of the programme) in plenary session; writes down key points of examples brought up by participants on cards and puts them on pin board. • Participants: identify and share examples of gender relevance in conflict.	• Pinboard	• Participants are aware of purpose of the module. • Participants are aware of gender in conflict and understand the importance of a gender perspective in the programme.
20 minutes	**6. Key Questions / Focus** • Facilitator: presents and explains key questions and main focus when analysing gender in conflict. • Participants: discuss key questions in small groups, write down additional questions on cards and put them on pin board.	• Powerpoint slides 1, 2 • Pinboard	• Participants share their points of interest, insecurities and wishes related to gender issues in conflict environments.
45 minutes	**7. Group work** • Facilitator: explains gender/conflict matrix; writes down guidance questions on flip chart "Does the matrix help us to better understand the inter-relation of gender issues, conflict and our programme? Would you use it in your work?"; distribution of handout as background information. • Participants: divide into groups and use matrix with guidance questions.	• Flip chart • Handout • Gender/conflict – matrix	• Participants identify and analyse the gender dimensions of conflict and discuss the relevance for the programme. • Participants think about ways of making the programme more gender-sensitive, respectively integrating gender components into their day-to-day work.
15 minutes	**8. Conclusions** • Facilitator: writes down results and opinions on cards and puts them on pin board. • Plenary: Share results and discuss further steps.	• Pinboard	• Participants share results and experiences. • Participants draw conclusions regarding the application of a gender sensitive approach.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
Structures, Actors and Dynamics of Conflict

To understand historical and structural antecedents of violent conflict and comprehend what converts latent conflict into open conflict or intensifies existing open conflict.

3.   Description and Background

When development programmes are continually confronted with latent or open conflicts, conflict-sensitive modes of operation become essential.
To be able to do the right thing in these circumstances, we have to understand structures, actors and dynamics of conflict.

1.1 Structures of conflict
Structures of conflict refer to the root causes underlying violent conflict (security, political, economic, social). In identifying and analysing these factors we can assess a country's vulnerability to outbreak or intensification of conflict. This involves identifying the key sources of tension that have led to, or are likely to lead to, open conflict.
As conflict can rarely be understood in terms of one simple cause, it is usually the result of complex combinations of factors that lead to conflict. The value of the analysis is in the process of recognising connections and overlaps between sources of tension in different sectors and at different levels.

Examples of root causes (incomplete list)

SECURITY
• Security forces have limited capacity and are weakly controlled
• Human rights abuses from security forces / armed groups
• Presence of non state military actors
• Poorly controlled / contested borders
• Unstable regional / international context (e.g. political changes in neighbouring
  countries)

POLITICAL
• Weakly institutionalised / unrepresentative political system
• Lack of independent judiciary, media and civil society
• Corruption
• Lack of civil participation and gender imbalance in political and
  governance processes

> • Weak and uncoordinated international engagement
> • Destabilising role of diaspora populations
>
> **ECONOMIC**
> • Economic decline: poverty, unemployment, inflation, food security,
>   access to social welfare
> • Widening economic disparities
> • Macro economic instability
> • Increasing competition over shared resources
> • Growth in grey markets and parallel economies
>
> **SOCIAL**
> • Social exclusion
> • Legacy of unresolved ethnic conflict
> • Absence of cross cutting social and civil society organisations
> • Tensions over language, religion, ethnicity

1.2 Actors of conflict

An analysis of the actors who influence or who are affected by conflict complements the structural analysis. Actors perceive and act upon the structures of conflict and draw resources from it. An actor-oriented analysis shows the relationships between actors, identifies power structures, and addresses their agendas and capacities. The focus lies on the shorter term incentives and interests which often cause latent conflict to become open violent conflict.

1.3 Dynamics of conflict

Based on the analysis of structures and actors, it should be possible to list relevant precursors of conflicts and assess the likelihood for conflict to increase, decrease or remain stable. Based on this, prediction of future conflict scenarios can be attempted.

However, it is difficult to predict the outbreak or escalation of particular conflicts, because structural tensions do not by themselves lead to violent conflict. The interaction between three factors is crucial: [2]

- A society's structural vulnerability to violent conflict.
- The opportunity to benefit from instability and violence by (elite) groups
  e.g. political benefits, pursuit of economic agendas.
- A society's capacity to manage or contain violent conflict. Weak fragile states lack the resources to contain conflict and are less likely to compromise or address the grievance of disaffected groups.

A conflict assessment can become a principal means for different alternatives to implement a best-fit set of conflict-sensitive management measures:

- **Adjusting the programme portfolio** by systematic integration of conflict-sensitive management measures to guarantee a coherent, overall strategy towards peace in a conflictive environment. – Examples: phasing out of projects that provide legitimacy and resources to conflict parties, withdraw from regions where open violent conflict affects project staff and partners, focus on projects that provide protection to most vulnerable people.

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[2] According to Strategic Conflict Assessments (SCAs) conducted by DFID

- **Integration of new components** of conflict-sensitive management into existing projects. – Examples: comprehensive staff training in DNH training, set-up of a project that provides advisory and training services in conflict-sensitive management skills to other projects of the Programme.

- **Development of new projects** directed explicitly towards conflict transformation and meaningful dialogue. – Example: set-up of a project that encourages, structure and facilitates dialogue between civil society groups, government and other parties in conflict.

When conducting conflict assessments the following three practical hints should be taken into account:

Multi-stakeholder-participation

In order to understand a crisis situation, the inclusion of the various actors is indispensable. Only in this way the different perceptions of people who influence or are affected by the conflict can be considered and understood.

Be aware of the consequences when you bring together opposing stakeholders in the same workshop. Check with different stakeholders the adequate setting and participation. Prevent from trial and error exercises. Be aware of what you can do and what you shouldn't do.

Separation of perspectives

Facts and observations should always be separated from the interpretation of these facts. Each group of involved actors sees different aspects of the conflict and judges it in the light of their own situation. Conflicts are about perceptions and the meanings that people attribute to events, institutions, and policies.

Do not impose your own view, wait, observe and listen. You can't understand different stakeholders' perspectives, if you mix them up in one group. First, work in more or less homogeneous groups. Thereby you can perceive different contrasting interests and interpretations.

Keep it simple

It is commonplace to say that a conflict is complex. A conflict assessment should be simple and tangible. It has a limited value, if it is not linked to the capacities and needs of the end user.

Do not let it become yet another academic exercise. Start with simple tools and straight forward questions. Complexity is free of charge, it arises when we share and discuss the issue. Reduce complexity and favour communication.

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2. Didactical Steps (methodology example)

Approx. time allocation	Process	Visual / technical aids	Learning outcome
15 minutes	**1. Introduction** • Facilitator: introduces purpose and structure of module, writes down kick-off question on flip chart "What are the root causes of the conflict?"; then writes down key words of participants' answers and puts on pin board. • Participants: Discussion in plenary session about possible root causes of the conflict.	• Flip chart • Pinboard	• Participants aware of purpose of the module. • Participants aware of multitude of root causes and complexity of conflict dynamics.
15 minutes	**2. Key Questions / Focus** • Facilitator: presents and explains key questions, writes down additional questions provided by participants on flip chart; explains what aspects to focus on when analysing conflicts. • Participants are asked to come up with additional questions, points of interest.	• Powerpoint slides 1, 2 • Flip chart	• Participants know what to focus on when analysing conflicts.
45 minutes	**3. Group work** • Facilitator: presents possible conflict analysis tools; writes down guidance questions on flip chart: (i) What aspects of conflict cannot be analysed using these tools? (ii) What more do we need to know to apply such instruments?; distributes handout as background information. • Participants: divide into groups and use tools to analyse conflict.	• Powerpoint slides 3-8 • Flip chart • Handout	• Participants are familiar with different conflict analysis tools and learn to use some of them. • Participants think and learn about different aspects of conflict.
15 minutes	**4. Conclusions** • Facilitator: writes down results, opinions on cards and puts them on pinboard. • Plenary: Discussion of results and further steps to incorporate instruments.	• Pinboard	• Participants share results and experiences. • Participants apply instruments to their situation and context. • Participants draw conclusions regarding the incorporation of instruments.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
The Spider Wheel

> *To analyse the impact of the conflict on the 'space for development'.*
>
> *To analyse the impact of the programme on the conflict situation.*

1. Description and Background

When working in conflict zones, there are two major questions which need to be assessed on a regular basis:

(i) How is our work affected by the conflict?
Conflicts have a strong impact on the day-to-day life in the affected areas. Where there is conflict, local people as well as foreign aid workers have to cope with risks and uncertainties. Hence, the conflict has an impact not just on the local communities but also on *the space for development.*

(ii) How is our work affecting the conflict?
International foreign assistance is not neutral, but becomes a part of the context it's provided in. Aid given in conflict settings does therefore have an effect on the conflict. This guiding question can also be linked up with the *Do No Harm* concept (= Module 01)

The *Spider Wheel* enables the operational team as well as the partners to get a sound assessment of these two questions by analysing various conflict relevant criteria. Using this instrument (see page 2, figure 1), we can consider up to eight criteria for our assessment, divided into four groups:

- ▪ Work environment
- ▪ Critical uncertainties and risks
- ▪ Working **in** conflict
- ▪ Working **on** conflict

Figure 1: The Spider Wheel (example)
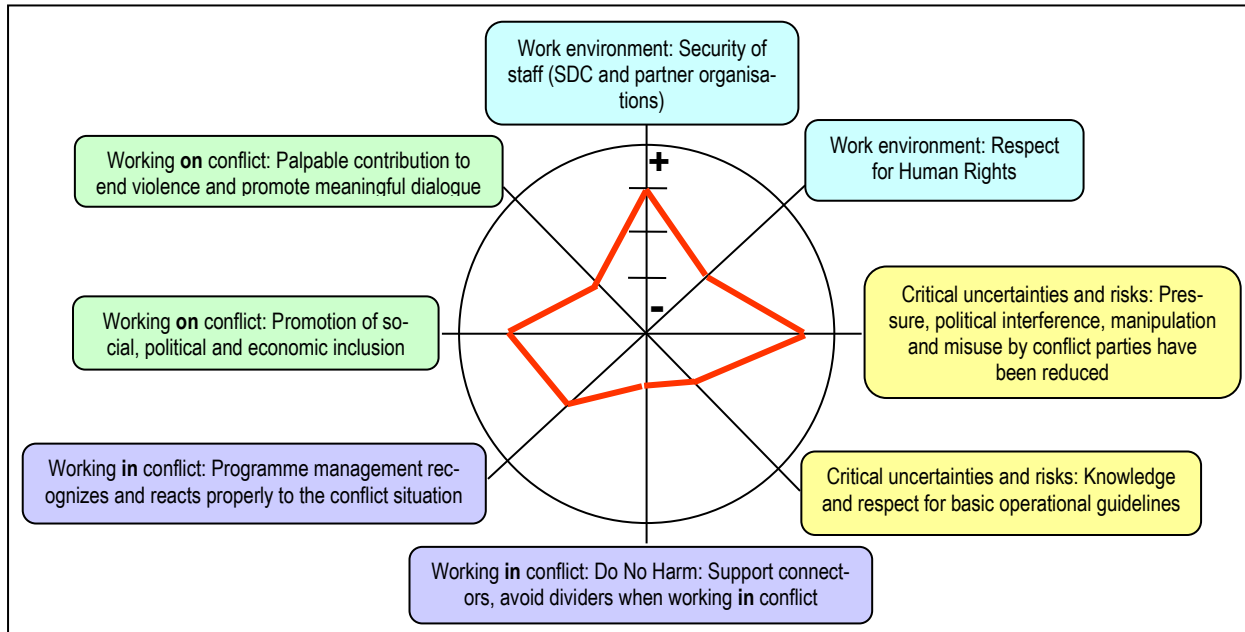
The tool can be used in various settings, because the **criteria can be changed**, simplified or made more complex. When the Spider Wheel is introduced for the first time, it is sensible to keep it simple and start with only four criteria. When the users are advanced, the number of criteria can be increased to enable a more detailed analysis of the interaction between the conflict and the programme.

There is also the possibility that each project - within the programme - is developing its own Spider Wheel, using it over a certain period of time to assess changing circumstances. This way, it becomes a valuable **monitoring tool** that allows the different actors to regularly and in a structured way reflect on conflict relevant aspects and adjust their strategies of assistance.

Introducing the Spider Wheel, it is essential to stress the fact that it is only reflecting **one perspective** of the interrelationship of conflict and international foreign assistance. Hence, when working in a group setting, the groups should be more or less homogeneous to bring out the different perceptions and perspectives that can be compared and discussed later on.

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2. Didactical steps (methodology example)

Approx. time allocation	Process	Visual / technical aids	Learning outcome
30 minutes	**9. Introduction** • Facilitator: introduces the instrument; selects and explains criteria. • Participants: Questions and answers to make sure that criteria are understood.	• Pinboard • Power-point slides	• Participants are familiar with the tool. • Participants have understood the criteria.
45 minutes	**10. Group work** • Facilitator: formation of work groups that reflect the different perspectives, e.g. operational participants, team of COOF, project partners, respresentatives of government institutions, etc.; explains task for group work. • Participants: (i) First round: validation of the criteria, (ii) Second round: Pin up cards with important real experiences that illustrate the criteria, (iii) Presentation and exchange of views.	• Flip chart for task • Pinboards for group work	• Participants learn to use the instrument Spider Wheel. • Participants have a better understanding of the interrelationship between conflict and the space for development.
15 minutes	**11. Conclusions** • Facilitator: writes down major conclusions that emerge from the presentations; guidance questions: (i) Where do the groups have different perceptions of the situation? (ii) What more would we need to know for a deeper analysis? (iii) What are our next steps? • Plenary: Draw conclusions on further steps of the application of the Spider Wheel, e.g. as a regular monitoring tool.	• Flip chart • Pinboard	• Participants draw conclusions on further steps to incorporate the instrument into their daily work.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
Storytelling

To capitalise on personal and project team experiences.

To complement analytical thinking by enabling people to imagine new perspectives and new worlds.

1. Description and Background

Everyone can and most people do tell stories to each other; but often they do it unconsciously. Storytelling is relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gesture. It has a long tradition in history for passing on values, experience and knowledge. With storytelling, the complexity of situations, problems and solutions can be shown in a simple way that reflects personal views, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes.

People act upon their world, their experience and perception. The concept of *reality* is a social construction, a mixture of personal experience, mindsets, cultural orientations and socio-economic position. As a social activity, storytelling creates a space for exchange - a space in which people can share experiences and perspectives which they feel may be of interest or practical value to others, in which they can share their life plans, anxieties and hopes.

In the context of organisations, story and narrative work is about creating a safe space in which the knowledge and experience of individuals is first valued, translated into a shared resource and then capitalised on. Stories can both evoke experience and contain knowledge.

Conflict situations produce stress and threats. Storytelling is both a source of wisdom and knowledge, and a method to provide security and cope with stress situations. Story telling is a participatory creative tool with a low entry barrier: everybody is able to tell a story. That is the reason why in some cultures such as Confucian Chinese, West African Bambara or Aymara of the Andes, story telling is a strong pillar of their culture: it serves to explore what is right and wrong, what we should preserve or change and how we can solve a dilemma situation?

The telling of stories in an organisational environment such as the setup of a cooperation programme:

- supplements analytical thinking by enabling people to imagine new perspectives and new worlds. It enables the individuals in an organisation to see themselves and the organisation in a different light, and accordingly take decisions and change their behaviour.

- slows things down, providing time and space to consider different points of view, retaining them in the context of particular experiences, so that their relevance in the new context can be accurately assessed.

- responds to particular patterns of human perception and represents other realities than the one captured by the classic reports.

- challenges the accepted power relations in an organisation (equality of contribution). A story is not more important because someone senior tells it. Coherent insights often come from the least powerful people in the organisation.

- brings out the 'why' and the 'how' behind the headlines, bullet points, reports and instructions.

- is a vital part in opening channels of communication between people from different regions, ranks, gender and cultural orientations.

Within an organisational environment, stories can be used for a variety of purposes: They can encourage good practice, teach, influence, warn or simply create a common ground for people from different cultures and socio-economic groups. Circumstances where one might use the method of storytelling include:[3]

- enabling organisations to capture, translate and value individual experiences into a shared resource (lessons learned);

- developing a culture which values rich, effective and meaningful dialogue both in conversation and in records;

- capitalising on project team experiences;

- exploring roles and relationships;

- using tangible objects to evoke and contain stories and provide meaningful 'hooks' stimulating the creation of new languages, meanings, communities and memories;

- generating, and regenerating the 'cultural glue', identity and purpose for communities and networks; and

- exploring the risks and opportunities presented by an episode in the past, present or future.

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[3] See Sparknow (2003): Telling tales: oral storytelling as an effective way to capitalise knowledge assets.

2. Practical Guide for Storytelling[4]

Step One: Individual reflection before you begin

Instruction: **Before telling your story, you need to be clear about: (i) your <u>audience</u> for your story; (ii) the <u>issue</u> you would like to highlight; (iii) your <u>intention</u>, i.e. what effect you want to have on your audience.**
You need to be clear about and reflect on the following:

> **Q: Who might be a good audience for your story? Why would you like to tell them your story?**
> *E.g. A good audience would be any new staff coming into my project. I would like them to hear my story because it would help them to get a deeper understanding of the environment we are working in. It would do this in a clear and meaningful way. My story is a good example of what works well or what doesn't.*

> **Q: What is the issue you would like to illustrate with your story?**
> *E.g. most important change in my life, tracks and footprints of conflict in my daily work, management relationships …*

> **Q: What is your intention? What would you like your audience to do/ think/ feel as a result of hearing your story?**
> E.g. *I would want new staff to learn from my experiences and to be better equipped to deal with our situation and our partners.*

Step Two: Choosing a Story and Finding the Turning Point

Instruction: *Individually, take time to recall an experience in which you learned a valuable lesson about the issue.*
Choose to tell a story about either:
a) a problematic/ bad experience that turned into a successful/ good one
OR
b) a successful/ good experience which turned into a problematic or bad one.

> *The story I have chosen to tell is about the time when…*

Many stories are likely to be complex and full of multiple and conflicting perspectives. To make it compelling, it helps to think about a specific defining moment, the point at which the issue changed (for better or worse).

Instruction: Close your eyes and take some time to reflect individually on the experience you want to tell. Remember all it's highs and lows, it's successes and failures, picture the key stages it moved through, the characters involved and finally the changes which occurred as a result of what happened.

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[4] According to Sparknow 2002: SDC Knowledge Management Workshops: 'Story Telling for Capitalising on Experience'.

Now think about one specific event of this issue, which will always stick in your mind as a defining moment.

> *At one point the issue changed, for better or for worse, it was when …*

Step Three: Setting the Scene

Instruction: *Before you tell your story, fill in the details below, just to set the scene:*

> **Context for the issue:**
> **People (internal and external) involved:**
> **Location for the story:**
> **Key dates:** (e.g. start of project, key milestones etc.)

Instruction: Write a headline to capture the essence of your story (in no more than one sentence) using the prompt below:

> ***This is about the time when …***

Instruction: Before you tell your story be clear about the change implicit in your story and fill it in below:

> **The story is about how the issue changed from ……………………………**
> **to ………………………………**

Instruction: **What would you change or do differently, if you could?**

> If I could turn back the clock and do things differently I would…

Step Four: Shaping a Good Story

Instruction: Have a conversation about each story and ask:
- Is it clear how and why the issue changed?
- Is it clear what factors made the issue succeed or fail?
- Is the story interesting, meaningful and simple enough to remember?
- Would anyone be able to understand the meaning of this story and tell it?

Remember to stick to the specific details in the stories, without abstracting and talking about wider issues.

Instruction: Now use the format 'postcard container' provided and fill in the details together. Fill in the final section in one sentence.

The 'Postcard Container'

Headline: This is a story about the time when …

Story (what happened?):

And the key message is …

Step Five: Sharing your Stories in small Groups

Instruction 1: Introducing yourself

Introduce yourself to each other and clarify your roles or relationships with SDC.

Instruction 2: Setting the scene

Spend 2 minutes setting the scene for each other, talking through your answers written in the handouts so far.

Instruction 3: Taking it in turns to tell the story

The first participant now introduces her/his story with the headline: This is a story about the time when …

- Take time to tell and time to listen. Remember to do your best to include all the details from steps 1 to 4 in order to communicate the essence.
- Do not analyse the story, just talk about the specific events and the moment at which things change. Concentrate on what happened and not why.
- Draw conclusions.
- Draw recommendations for action.
- Think about when and how you would use Storytelling.

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3. Didactical Steps (methodology example)

Approx. time allocation	Process	Visual / technical aids	Learning outcome
15 minutes	**12. Introduction** • Facilitator: introduces purpose and structure of module; writes down two kick-off questions on flip chart: (i) What was the last story I heard (private or work)? (ii) What is my story about a major change in my life?; writes down key words of examples from participants and puts on pin board. • Participants: take five minutes to think and share kick-off questions with their neighbours, then share examples in plenary session.	• Flip chart • Pinboard	• Participants are aware of purpose of the module. • Participants are aware of storytelling as a lively method to share and learn from personal experiences.
60 minutes	**13. Group work exercise** • Facilitator: provides instructions for storytelling (trigger questions, etc.), explains practical steps and distributes handout as background information; writes down guidance question on flip chart, e.g.: What changed in my work since I've been working in a conflict environment? • Participants: follow stepwise the instructions.	• Powerpoint slides 3-5 • Handout • Flip chart	• Participants elaborate a story and share in small groups. • Small group selects two stories that are presented later in plenary. • Participants learn how to tell their story and how to use storytelling as a knowledge management and personal coping tool.
30 minutes	**14. Exchange and discussion** • Facilitator: writes down key head line and key message of each story. • Participants: Listen in plenary session to the stories; draw conclusions.	• Flipchart • Pin board	• Participants share the stories and draw conclusions.
5 minutes	**15. Conclusions** • Facilitator: explains again key points of method. • Participants: discuss the application of storytelling.	• Powerpoint slides 1, 2	• Participants know where and how to use storytelling.

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