# USAID Office of Food for Peace Strategy Consultations
## Conflict Sensitive Programming
## February 11, 2015

*Disclaimer: These notes do not necessarily reflect the views of the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP) or The TOPS Program. Various stakeholders' views are reflected in the notes.*

There are a number of issues FFP is looking at in terms of how food security and nutrition work can be approached in the future. FFP is reassessing the degree to which certain root causes of food insecurity can be addressed through their strategy revision process. Conflict sensitive programming may address one of these root causes, and therefore was added as the third topic in a series of consultations to gather input from the PVO community for FFP's strategy revision process.

We are working in a different world today than we were 10 years ago when FFP's previous strategy was implemented. We no longer can ignore the impact and effects of conflict. The strategy revision process provides an opportune time to take a fresh look at our role when food insecurity and conflict intersect. At this third consultation, the discussion focused on what it will take to get the community to the point where food security and conflict can be managed well. We want to be open to dialogue and input, especially from the organizations that are actually implementing in the world we live in and work in.

The discussion was facilitated by the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) in partnership with FFP. CMM's new project, Fragility and Conflict Technical Research Services (FACTRS), aims to gather initial feedback from implementers on how the intersection of food security and conflict might be implemented. FACTRS plans to help FFP to determine the right way to move forward and how to instill better skills in FFP staff and better approaches in FFP programming.

## Introduction: Joe Hewitt, CMM

Our job is to support USAID in implementing programs in fragile environments and be responsive to conflict and fragility. FACTRS is a project that looks to develop tools that will be used by FFP colleagues and implementers to help them do their work more efficiently. These tools might be checklists or indicators, but the goal is that these tools are very practical and easy to use.

Conflict does not exist in one form; it varies, and this impacts how we design programs. What are the implications of these different contexts for the work that you do? What is possible and impossible? What matters the most from one place to another? The intention is to understand your reactions to three typologies to be presented and what it means for your work.

According to the CMM, right now 50 countries are affected by conflict. 24 countries are currently in the midst of active conflict. 26 conflicts have recently terminated, though conflict dynamics are still present even though actual conflict has halted. Almost all of the countries that have conflicts going on today had an active conflict in the past decade.

One way of typing conflict is to delineate it as internal conflict, a civil war with external forces involved (which complicates war), and multiple conflicts. However, there is another typology (definitions and data came from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program).

- Active conflict is defined as a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related fatalities in 1 calendar year.

- Post-conflict or conflict vulnerable countries are those in which an active armed conflict has taken place in the past 10 years (but, does not produce more than 25 battle-related fatalities).

- Conflict-vulnerable countries are those demonstrating fragility.

Fragility is defined as state and population related. We are concerned about legitimate and effective outcomes that are inclusive. The society should provide goods to their people (healthcare, for example). Any country demonstrating fragility has issues with legitimacy and effectiveness. Those that are conflict vulnerable exhibit fragility (see slide show for list of countries).

Do these typologies makes sense for the work you do? Should further gradations be made? For example, places like DRC and Somalia are all defined as "active conflict," but they have very different conflicts. What are the reactions to this typology?

**Audience Response**

- **Audience:** These are useful typologies, but more gradation is needed. For example, Ukraine and Kenya have active conflicts in certain parts, but other parts of the countries are safe.

  Answer: Kenya does not have an insurgent group. However, conflict can be localized, so we should revisit this theme.

- **Audience:** If we are talking about conflict-vulnerable states, then one of the actors needs to be the state. If conflict involves access to public natural resources, the state is not necessarily involved, but these resources could be managed/controlled by the state.

  Answer: Intra-communal conflict leaves the government out. This is another type of conflict that matters and could exist over scarce resources.

- **Audience:** All typologies have purpose, strengths, and weaknesses. Could there be a number of shared characteristics around causal and conflict dynamics? In terms of field programming, the way one would position activities would be related to these specific characteristics. If one could tease out the driving root causes and the accelerants of conflict, one might see different patterns grouping compared to this typology. For example, if someone had a fever then was defined as post-fever, we would not necessarily learn how to treat the fever because we would not know the root cause. If we had some other dynamics involved we could be more prescriptive in our response.

  Answer: These typologies are rooted in the status of the conflict and not the cause. Knowing what drives the conflict will help with programming. When we know the factors encouraging or mitigating conflict we can align our programs, which will determine what tools to use.

- **Audience:** We need to be very thoughtful about how we type these conflicts because this impacts how countries are viewed and their economic stability.

  Answer: There are stigmas around conflict. Some countries are OK with self-identifying as fragile to donors. There are 20 self-identifiers. The others tend to be middle-income countries (Kenya is one). The G7+ countries are self-identifiers in this new deal. These self-identifiers can help to assess dynamics and make improvements.

- **Audience:** From the practical PVO perspective, there is the funding perspective.

- **Audience:** Central American countries have high levels of violence, but they are not part of these typologies. However, many of issues around impunity, etc. play into violence. How can these types of violence be added to these typologies, since they impact programming?

  Answer: CMM has been wondering how criminality makes fragility worse. There may be a vicious circle, and CMM is doing more research on this. There is a degradation of perceptions of the government's response. Does this, in turn, increase conflict? How can we program within that? Even though the countries are not on these lists, we do want to consider how criminality influences programming in these countries and their fragility.

- **Audience:** Countries move from one category to another. For example, FFP programming may be a development, but then it shifts to emergency programming.

- **Audience:** What is the role of government? Governments are involved at different levels. Can we look at public investment and its relation to conflict?

  Answer: The state-society backbone of our typologies is really important. When it is healthy it enables the well-being of its citizens and lessens the risk of conflict.

- **Audience:** There are five countries with development food assistance programs and about the same number post conflict. There may be only two or three that are not on either list, which means that in just about every place we are bringing programming where we are either dealing with a very fragile situation or deterioration is taking place, but there could be conflict still active in the country.

## Framing the Conversation: Nicole Goddard, FACTRS (see slides)

What is conflict sensitivity, and how are we engaging? Aid is never neutral. It will have an impact on the relationships of people and resources. After the Rwandan genocide, researchers began examining approaches and three methodologies were identified: conflict impact assessment, do no harm, and peace and conflict assessment methodology. These approaches could help organizations understand the context, how actors interact, and mitigate issues and maximize effects (see handout). The do no harm framework helps to understand what the conflict is about (dividers, connectors), how a program is sending messages to bring together those in conflict, and how to minimize dividers and multiply connectors. USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework looks at the Conflict Intervention Spectrum:

- Avoiding negative effects: the implementation of basic conflict sensitivity with the aim of reducing negative impacts of programming (conflict sensitivity)

- Building on positive effects: reinforce positive factors in society, reduce divisions, and seek to enhance positive impacts of operations on the overall situation (leveraging programming to bring people together, conflict sensitivity)

- Contributing to peace: address and engage key drivers of conflict at local and/or macro levels (peace building)

## Group Activity

*Where are implementers working and where do programs fall into this spectrum of no conflict response, avoiding negative effects, building on positive effects, or contributing to peace? What have been the successes? What have been the obstacles and how have implementers responded?*

**Summary of Responses**

Successes identified included strengthening the enabling environment through looking at systems and stakeholders. It is important to understand power dynamics and much is needed to maintain balance. Flexibility and adaptability are other factors for success. Communication, transparency, and accountability between stakeholders and projects is key, using participatory approaches to create ownership by the beneficiaries (of all ages and backgrounds). Building community cohesion is critical as activities can build rather than divide communities (e.g., village savings and loans, school activities that help build stability). Building infrastructure can build stability and reduce drivers to conflict. However, sometimes conflict needs to be addressed prior to undertaking infrastructure projects (such as land issues). It is important to build capacity among those affected by conflict rather than facilitate a temporary intervention fulfilled by those involved in implementation. Also, national peacekeeping strategies are important beyond the activities of NGOs.

The obstacles challenge program success. Beneficiaries need to be reached, but we need to address multiple concerns, which can be difficult. Internally displaced persons can impact local frameworks of authority, which can be challenging. There are language and communication issues. Community trust can be built in a conflict zone, but it can be challenging, especially given the short timeframes of programs. Increases in insecurity in programming can prevent activities from being implemented or staff reaching program sites. Large resource allocations can be prepositioned, therefore some of those funds cannot be moved. There is little attention paid to building staff capacity for conflict management and mitigation. There also is very little M&E around impacts of peacekeeping and building. Indicators are lacking, as are measures of drivers of conflict.

Innovative ways of working need to be examined. A good analysis that is done early and is participatory is needed. In terms of resource availability, linking it to other thematic areas would be helpful. The theory of change needs to be examined on an ongoing basis to ensure the program is adapting to change. Resource leveraging is important. Mutually aligned expectations are needed in peacebuilding.

## Plenary Discussion

- *In the future, where could/should FFP operate on the conflict response and peacebuilding spectrum?*
- *How can this work be supported in the future? (FFP processes, Missions, INGOs, guidance, general capacities)*

We should avoid doing harm; this is the minimum. However, we are missing opportunities if we just do this as a minimum. Striving to avoid negative effects can be incredibly challenging. Being reasonable is not the equivalent to being easy. Because a lot of emergency response is driven by urgent best intentions it is easy to believe that negative effects will not result. What becomes the practice standard for the implementing community used as a screen for the interventions? What tool informs us that we will not have negative effects? What is the context? Who is responding? Every organization should not figure out context on their own. We should be coming together for efficiency. Humanitarian response organizations and multi-response organizations have different understandings of the context. In building on positive effects, it would be good to have an understanding of what has worked. Is there a strategy that focuses on conflict mitigation? If yes, it is best to coordinate and support it. This would be broader than just FFP (this in lieu of doing various things within different technical sectors). In summary, it would be good to share information during these short programming periods to leverage what we are doing.

So much is relevant to context. We should be scanning the environment for potential opportunities and identifying red flags. This is ongoing analysis. Protracted emergencies perhaps have more opportunity to use conflict mitigation elements. The resilience movement should bridge the emergency and development responses. Mechanisms could be put in to prevent disasters from occurring.

In discussing protracted emergencies, there are various reasons why the Syrian program is mostly a voucher program rather than giving out food. Refugees were creating pressure on local systems, and if they used vouchers they were seen as customers to local economies. There are other factors, but this was a conscious decision. Some of the desired effect has been seen in Jordan and Lebanon, but it is not alleviating all tension. The large number of refugees in Lebanon creates different cultural stresses. It is difficult to analyze impacts given the length of the refugee situation and the strain in the host environment. Messaging is so important because people will have their own viewpoints about what is going on and misinformation needs to be clarified. What is the role of technology in communication and transparency?

FFP works with multiple players in emergency environments. In looking at food distribution, what are some of the other possibilities to build social cohesion?

Getting the children involved brings in parents and they become more receptive to social cohesion. There are also child-centered spaces where children come together and play during or after the conflict to build social cohesion. We also should look at the different ways organizations and communities are bonded. We are using social cohesion to describe some sense that conflict will decrease between groups and that government is somehow is involved. In emergency situations, something about the government is not functioning. In the development context, we do not do as much with governance building because these are fairly stable environments. Social protection programs cannot occur without social accountability, and this is key to social cohesion.

Building positive effects often is conflated with building peace. In talking about fragility as an enabling factor for conflict and the relationship between state and society, any activity improving that relationship and behavior (legitimacy and effectiveness) is doing something to tackle fragility and building positive effects.

But what does one mean by positive effects? Most targets are about economic growth. Some may be benefitting more than others, therefore impacting cohesion negatively. So much development money

has been wasted as the result of conflict. We need to reexamine what positive effects we seek. Rather than saying we should address conflict mitigation, we should build strengths. This is a more appreciative approach.

The analysis of a situation needs to be ongoing. Some components of the analysis and the process identified or recommended include the following.

- Capacity building and organization is needed to do on-going analysis.

- What parties are drawn into conflicts? People who may not be interested in getting involved in conflict and remained neutral for some time are sometimes forced to choose sides, drawing them into the conflict.

- Displacement and access to resources should be analyzed.

- There is no consensus on what we mean by or measure in terms of conflict sensitivity. It should be in our reporting and planning and should be a lens of how we see our programs. A lot of funds do not need to be included, but perhaps just asking key questions could go a long way in assessing how we have exacerbated conflict or promoted peace.

- The political economy matters. It should be taken in as a design factor.

- Consistent management and analysis needs to be ongoing. For example, ten questions that could be asked by staff on a consistent basis (once per month) can provide an assessment and allow us to reflect.

## Concluding Remarks: Joe Hewitt, CMM

We wanted to help you reflect on your work and how it engaged conflict (i.e., negative effects, peacebuilding). We have a lot to think about and debrief. We will be doing more events that FACTRS produces. FACTRS will be helping FFP on conflict-sensitive work and will be reaching out for more information from implementers. The intention is to create tools to help implementers and USAID do their work.