PRACTICAL LEARNING for INTERNATIONAL ACTION

DO NO HARM: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION FROM CDA

Do No Harm is a leading tool for the application of conflict sensitivity. **Conflict sensitivity** recognizes that aid, whether development, peacebuilding, or humanitarian assistance, has the potential to support either conflict or peace. Practicing conflict sensitivity enables an organization to:[*]

- Understand the context in which it is operating
- Understand the interaction between the intervention and the context, and
- Act upon that understanding, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on the conflict.[†]

Conflict sensitivity does not require that all organizations focus on conflict and peace issues. Rather, it insists that all organizations and actors consider the **unintended consequences** of their programs on the relationships between groups of people in the context, and act to address those consequences.
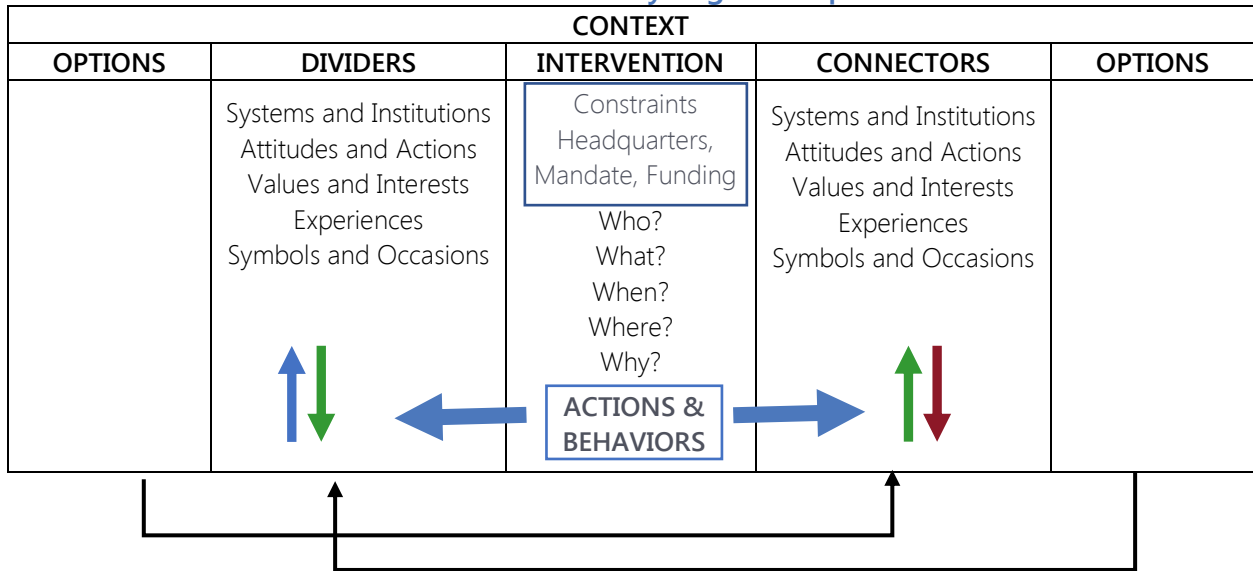

The Six Lessons of Do No Harm

The Do No Harm Project was a collaborative learning effort led by *CDA Collaborative Learning Projects*. Thousands of aid workers, donors and communities shared their experiences of aid in conflict. Based on collective experience, the following six lessons were seen to be universal:

1. When an intervention of any kind enters a context, it becomes part of that context.
2. All contexts are characterized by Dividers and Connectors.
3. All interventions will interact with both Dividers and Connectors, making them better or worse.
4. Interventions interact with Dividers and Connectors through their organizational Actions and the Behavior of staff.
5. The details of an intervention are the source of its impacts.
6. There are always Options.

Applying Do No Harm helps organizations to become more effective, accountable and efficient. It supports **effectiveness** by encouraging organizations to tailor their interventions to the specific contexts in which they are implemented. It supports **accountability** by requiring that an organization respond to any unintentional negative impacts created by its intervention, and by encouraging local voices and priorities in programming. It supports **efficiency** by helping implementers to foresee and prevent unintended negative impacts, so that plans can be implemented more smoothly, and with more support from local communities.

Do No Harm uses the straightforward concept of **Dividers** and **Connectors** to analyze the inter-group relationships in the context where an intervention is implemented. Dividers are factors that create division or tension. Connectors are factors that pull groups together, or help them to coexist in constructive ways. In contexts of intense conflict, Connectors are sometimes difficult to see – and yet they always exist.

The Do No Harm Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Aid on Conflict

CONTEXT				
OPTIONS	**DIVIDERS**	**INTERVENTION**	**CONNECTORS**	**OPTIONS**
	Systems and Institutions Attitudes and Actions Values and Interests Experiences Symbols and Occasions	Constraints Headquarters, Mandate, Funding Who? What? When? Where? Why? ACTIONS & BEHAVIORS	Systems and Institutions Attitudes and Actions Values and Interests Experiences Symbols and Occasions	

Do No Harm also analyzes how an intervention affects the Dividers and Connectors, yielding predictable patterns of impact through **Actions** (of organizations) and **Behaviors** (of staff). Finally, DNH recognizes that there are always **Options** for adapting a program to improve its impact on conflict. Most often, small changes can be made to program details, without jeopardizing the mission and mandate of the organization, or the goals of the intervention.

CDA continues to explore **new applications** for conflict-sensitivity, including monitoring and evaluation, and sector-specific tools. We collaborate with organizations and experts to learn how organizations and individuals learn, think about, apply and spread Do No Harm.

For more resources, feedback and questions, please visit:
cdacollaborative.org/what-we-do/conflict-sensitivity

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[*] *Definition adapted from International Alert et al. (2004), 'Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack.'*