



DO NO HARM
STORIES FROM THE FIELD

June 2018

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INTRODUCTION

‘Any project set in a conflict-prone region will inevitably have an impact on the peace and conflict environment – positive or negative, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional.’¹

Aid in any context is not a neutral intervention. Aid, and how it is used, can build on connectors that bring children and their communities together to reduce divisions and sources of tension that can lead to destructive conflict. However, aid can also cause harm. In recognition of this, World Vision seeks to ensure that all of its outreach work benefitting the world’s most vulnerable children and their families integrates conflict sensitivity.

World Vision defines conflict sensitivity as the ability to understand the contexts in which we operate and the interactions between interventions and these contexts. World Vision’s decisions must be based on this understanding in order to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the positive for the children we serve.

In this short document, we share the stories of how four World Vision offices (Kenya, Indonesia, Lebanon and Afghanistan) were alerted to, dealt with and integrated issues of conflict sensitivity into specific projects.

We hope that by publishing our experiences and learnings we can contribute to a sector-wide evidence base of what does and does not work regarding conflict-sensitive project-level approaches. We are open to hearing other agencies’ stories and hope that this can be the start of further conversations about best practices.

¹ Kenneth Bush, *A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects in Conflict Zones* (1998).

Moving from analysis to action

Overview

A ‘do no harm’ (DNH) assessment conducted in Bunta, Indonesia in 2001 made recommendations on how to reduce tensions between Muslims and Christians within World Vision Indonesia’s programming.

The context

World Vision operates an area development programme (ADP) in Bunta, a sub-district in Luwuk Banggai, Indonesia. The neighbouring Poso district experienced violent conflict between Muslim and Christian groups between December 1998 and December 2001. Although this conflict officially ended in December 2001, tensions between the two groups remained high post-conflict.

Connectors

- similar ethnic origins (i.e. Luwuk Banggai)
- the establishment of an inter-religious forum just after the Poso conflict began
- the unifying and supportive role of Luwuk Banggai’s Head of District – who was aware of the possible impact of Poso’s conflict on their nearby district

Dividers

- suspicion of those from different religious groups as a result of the conflict
- differing values about a specific livestock animal (i.e. pigs), both economically and culturally, which increased perceived prejudices on both sides

World Vision's intervention

The project

Bunta ADP, in Luwuk Banggai district, uses a general self-help group (SHG) approach to work with Christian and Muslim community members, churches and community partners to indirectly benefit approximately 3,000 (95 per cent Christian, 5 per cent Muslim) children in the area.

SHGs enable communities to form groups and identify communal concerns. The Bunta SHG communicates and works on those priorities with World Vision to implement the most appropriate interventions within their district. The programme is ongoing, but the specific DNH assessment referred to here took place in 2001.

The reason

Bunta is considered to be one of the most vulnerable areas in Indonesia.

The background

World Vision introduced the SHG to the Bunta community after a Sunday church service. Meetings were held monthly at the local church, and each meeting began with a 'devotional'. As a result, tensions grew between the Muslim and Christian members of the SHGs as the community suspected that this activity was guise for proselytising.

In protest, several Muslim members stopped coming to the monthly meetings. This led the Christian representatives to think that the Muslim participants refused to attend because they were lazy.

World Vision's resolution

To counteract these misconceptions, World Vision's ADP team changed the devotional component of the SHG to an interfaith 'reflection' session and reintroduced the SHG to the community at an event at the local school's community hall together with village-level administration officials. The monthly meeting venue was also changed to a location outside the church compound so that Muslim members would be more comfortable attending.

A follow-up DNH assessment in 2002 showed a clearer understanding of the programme within the Muslim community. Over the course of the next two years, some of the neighbouring Muslim villages even requested World Vision to set up similar programmes in their villages.



Managing compromises for conflict sensitivity²

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Overview

World Vision Kenya successfully applied and integrated recommendations from a DNH assessment alongside their peacebuilding project in Kenya's Kegonga-Ntimaru ADP.

The context

Kuria district in Migori county in southwest Kenya is inhabited by the Kuria tribe, which is native to both Kenya and Tanzania. The tribe is made up of four clans, the largest ones being the Nyabasi and Bwirege. They have had intense historical differences rooted in competition over resources.

Connectors

- clans share similar traditional family living arrangements
- the local young people engage in common sports and activities
- there are shared markets and other public services within the community (e.g. schools, health clinics, church-based activities (including regular worship and inter-faith/inter-denominational events), cultural ceremonies, community events and shared resources)

Dividers

- cattle rustling and revenge attacks
- female genital mutilation and other negative cultural practices
- clan and tribal issues linked to party politics
- wider violence and illegal armed groups
- issues of religion tension, especially between Christians and Muslims
- corruption and tension between civil society and the government, resulting in a shrinking space for civil society (particularly non-governmental organisations)
- scarcity of land and resources and their allocation, leading to people being internally displaced
- illiteracy

² Nicole Goddard and Dilshan Annaraj, *Conflict Sensitivity Meta-Trends Analysis*, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and World Vision International (2017), Annex 2, p 29.

World Vision's intervention

The project

The Kegonga-Ntitaru ADP provided health, education and WASH services based on needs assessments, and it established a peacebuilding project to benefit the Nyabasi and Bwirege clans living in Kuria district in Migori county, Kenya. ADP staff recruited representatives from both clans and worked together to partner with the government and churches, as well as faith leaders across Christian denominations and other faiths, to directly implement this programme. The project is ongoing.

The reason

This region is prone inter-ethnic conflict, so World Vision Kenya chose to set up a peacebuilding project here to mitigate conflict and put in place systems to prevent conflict and encourage reconciliation.

The background

The clans' differences almost derailed programme implementation as they could not agree on the location of the programme's offices as they did not want them to be constructed on land belonging to the other clan. Thus, construction was delayed to appease both groups.

World Vision's resolution

Engaging both communities through the DNH assessment, the clans' representatives discussed and agreed upon a neutral office location hosted on church property. World Vision compromised on cost effectiveness in order to be sensitive to the debate within the tribes.

World Vision staff made other trade-offs to emphasise their conflict sensitivity. They chose to select an equal number of beneficiaries from both clans, regardless of where the greatest humanitarian need laid. Needs assessments on health, education and WASH showed that one clan was more in need of services than the other. However, to ensure that there was no bias, all projects were conducted equally between the two groups. Staff did not see any other way to resolve this tension without appearing partial, so they opted to use this method to appear conflict sensitive and continue project work.

The ADP concurrently conducted a peacebuilding project to enhance inter-ethnic conflict prevention, mitigation and reconciliation. This involved strengthening the community's capacity to promote a culture of peace and reconciliation by integrating peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity into the overall development process. The emphasis was on minimising the frequency and/or magnitude of conflicts between the two clans in order for them to effectively participate in and benefit from the programmes facilitated by World Vision Kenya.

Building on connectors

LEBANON



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Overview

World Vision Lebanon's Ain el Remmaneh ADP, now known as Beirut ADP, was the perfect opportunity to use results from a DNH assessment to design conflict-sensitive humanitarian responses and initiate peacebuilding programming.

The context

The Lebanese civil war raged for 15 years. After its conclusion in 1990, relationships remained tense between and within Christian and Muslim communities. In 2006, the July War, a 34-day military conflict in Lebanon, northern Israel and Golan Heights, broke out. World Vision had been operating in Lebanon for many years, but this war was a turning point for the organisation's work in Ain el Remmaneh ADP.

Connectors

- all communities were at risk of being killed or displaced as the war did not differentiate
- there are shared markets, schools and health facilities within the community
- the local young people engage in common sports and activities
- the older generations share memories of life before the Lebanese civil war

Dividers

- political affiliations, especially in relationship to religion and denomination
- political and security incidents
- negative war memories for the younger generations
- differing social traditions
- perception of some sides being the 'losers' of the civil war
- religious ideology

World Vision's intervention

The project

During and post-July War, World Vision Lebanon provided both a humanitarian and peacebuilding response and social events and sports activities (e.g. volleyball, football, basketball) for those living in the Ain el Remmaneh-Chiyah area.

In coordination with World Vision's ADP manager and Volunteer Unity Coordinator, volunteer teams from varying backgrounds and faiths worked together with schools, community and religious leaders from both sides of the conflict, children and young people, local partners and government officials, including municipality leaders and the Ministry of Local Affairs from both communities, to implement this project. Beneficiaries included Muslim internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had fled conflict areas as well as the Christian host communities who accommodated the IDPs. The project ended in 2006, and the Ain el Remmaneh ADP merged with the Beirut ADP.

The reason

The ADP where World Vision Lebanon operated for years was bombed, so staff responded to the immediate humanitarian needs of those affected. In doing so, they aimed to create links and connections and build relationships amongst the different communities.

The background

World Vision had been actively working in Ain el Remmaneh through the ADP for many years. However, they had faced challenges in their attempts to bring the communities together and witnessed the ongoing tensions. World Vision also struggled because of its Christian identity. The 2006 July War resulted in a change in the communities' attitude towards World Vision. The ADP was directly bombed, but World Vision's response also included IDPs. It supported 13,000 people, including a percentage of vulnerable Christian families as well as Muslim families directly affected by the conflict.

World Vision's resolution

In seeing that some communities felt marginalised, World Vision intentionally ensured that all activities were equally balanced and that the implementing staff equally represented both sides of the conflict. There were local partners and government representatives from both communities to increase the programme's sustainability and trust from both sides.

As a result of a DNH analysis and discussions with key stakeholders to understand and describe the community dynamics, the World Vision team decided to scale up its peacebuilding activities with activities that connected the communities.

World Vision also invested heavily in sports activities as a way to get young people to work and celebrate together, irrespective of their background. Equal numbers of volunteers from both communities supported the various projects. As a result of World Vision's intentional focus on the connectors, successful relationships were built across these groups that are still visible today, 13 years later. World Vision's sensitivity to the community's dynamics in the long term meant an increase in trust between the organisation and a willingness of the community members to participate in the social cohesion activities they offered.

Location matters

AFGHANISTAN



Overview

A question of which approach, the ‘top down’ or ‘bottom up’, is best suited for a programme is a continuous challenge for the actors committed to Afghanistan’s peace process. A DNH assessment helped World Vision Afghanistan staff and partners decide where to base a project to maximise its peacebuilding value.

The context

In Afghanistan, most peacebuilding efforts have been at a political level, where there are links to warlords, corruption and criminality. The capacity of Afghan communities to resolve their own disputes and build and sustain peace has largely been overlooked. Like other parts of the country, Ghor and Herat provinces experience insecurity and community divisions. Decades of war have undermined social cohesion and exacerbated poverty, an underlying cause of insecurity.

Connectors

- communities share common celebrations, customs and traditions
- there is a shared history of conflict and suffering
- the Afghan army is seen overall as a unifying institution in the country
- civil society organisations are seen by Afghans as players that want to serve all communities without hidden agendas
- the majority of Afghans believe in Islam

Dividers

- narcotics mafia and other illegal armed groups
- different ethnic groups
- powerbrokers (people who left the government and now oppose it)
- inter-religious groups (Shiaa and Sunni)
- language

World Vision's intervention

The project

World Vision Afghanistan set up a three-year project starting in March 2016 to support the in-country civil society actors in the Herat and Ghor provinces that are working towards conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis preparedness at the community level. The programme provides capacity building for these actors, including Sanayee Development Organization (SDO) in Herat, Noor Safa Coordination and Rehabilitation Organisation (NSCRO) in Ghor, High Peace Council and government entities, through campaigns and trainings.

Participants in these activities include women's shuras, school teachers, male and female community representatives, faith leaders, influential people, Afghanistan's Department of Women's Affairs (DoWA) staff and students. Fifteen people from these groups form a peace promotion task force (one from every district). Once formed and trained, the peace promotion task forces train 250 community members from every district on how to build a culture of peace, conduct peace campaigns, etc. This project will continue through February 2019.

The reason

World Vision Afghanistan is committed to this peacebuilding project in response to communities' and the government's wishes to rebuild a peaceful Afghanistan.

The background

Formation and training processes for these activities have clear selection criteria that were endorsed by the district-level governments in the provinces. The community members chosen to attend subsequent trainings are selected by the peace promotion task forces in collaboration with women's shuras.

In the initial stages of the project, it was decided that the trainings would take place at the village level. This caused a lot of anger because many community members did not understand why they were not chosen to participate in the project (despite the criteria being shared), and there was a perception that favouritism by village leaders and other powerful people influenced decisions such as these.

World Vision's resolution

To avoid further complications, World Vision's project partner conducted a rapid DNH analysis of the project. From this examination, a change in location from the villages to districts was recommended.

In alignment with the DNH recommendations, World Vision conducted trainings at the district level. This not only ensured that the project was supported and endorsed by the district government, but it also legitimised the participants selected, because the communities usually respect decisions made by the district. They also accepted the change in training location to the district seat because it is safer and accessible to all communities, regardless of ethnic background, etc.

Once this change was introduced, the communities were satisfied with the decision process and there were no further complaints about the community member selection during follow-up monitoring visits. World Vision Afghanistan acknowledged that, while it is important for the selection criteria to take place at district level to counteract these legitimate concerns, it is also important to involve as many people as possible from the target villages in the trainings to ensure that the programme is a success. They therefore implemented a 'training of trainers' aspect to guarantee that the largest number of people have access and opportunity to benefit from this project.

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World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religions, race, ethnicity or gender.

