



THE CAPABLE PARTNERS PROGRAM (CAP) *“Strengthening Local NGOs and Networks”*

Conflict-Sensitive Programming through Monitoring and Evaluation

**A Report from USAID’s
Conflict-Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop**

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFR	Bureau for Africa
CBLP	Community-based Leadership Program
CMM	Conflict Management and Mitigation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
IMF	International Monetary Fund
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PVO	Private voluntary organization
SEEP	Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (Network)
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WARP	West Africa Regional Program

I. OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP

With funding from USAID/DCHA/PVC-ASHA and USAID/AFR, and in coordination with USAID/WARP and USAID/CMM, the Capable Partners Program (CAP) designed and facilitated a four-day pilot workshop to explore the relationship between conflict-sensitive programming and monitoring and evaluation. The workshop was held November 15–18, 2004, in Accra, Ghana, with participants representing three stakeholders groups: USAID mission staff, international PVOs, and local NGOs.

A. Regional and Policy Context

Few regions of the world have been more devastated by violence than West Africa. With the recent civil conflicts occurring in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote D'Ivoire, as well as less-known violent conflicts in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Nigeria, the fifteen ECOWAS countries are characterized by fragile, weak, failed, and recovering states. As these societies have torn themselves apart, the human toll in deaths, displacement, and physical destruction—as well as in increased disease, poverty, social trauma, and alienation—has been immense. The gains from painstaking development efforts completed over many years have been lost in a matter of weeks. Underlying ethnic and religious tensions and open conflicts also have had enormous cross-border impacts due to porous borders, proliferation of small arms, and legions of disenfranchised youth. As West Africa Regional Program Director Carleene Dei asserted in opening the workshop, “The impact of these conflicts on the programs of WARP is massive and measurable.”

As the conflicts throughout West Africa have proliferated, their impact on development projects has become more apparent. USAID and other donors have had to come to terms with the fundamental questions of whether and how their development programs can play a role in mitigating conflicts or preventing them, and whether development assistance sometimes unintentionally worsens conflicts. In the development field as a whole, this subject is widely discussed under the rubric of improving the “conflict sensitivity” of development programs. Conflict sensitivity involves the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development and humanitarian relief programs so they are better adapted to unstable environments and also can have some ameliorative impacts on them, or at least, not worsen them. It concerns the ability of aid programs to work more effectively not only “in” and “around” conflicts, but also “on” them.

A direct and practical way to tackle these priorities is to explore the specific interactions that occur between current aid programs and the unstable, conflict environments in which they sometimes operate. Such a review can alert practitioners more acutely to the threat that conflicts represent to development and also help them ensure that their programs are having the desired positive effects in these environments—not only in terms of particular sectoral objectives, but also in terms of conflict mitigation and peace building. A starting point for identifying these interactions is to look through a “conflict lens” at the M&E procedures used. This approach can uncover how programs have sought to adapt within their environments and where they may need to be modified to be more conflict-sensitive.

B. Aims and Focus of the Workshop

The workshop explored the results criteria, methods, and procedures in use and how they relate to their conflict contexts, and in what respects they might be changed to improve program performance in conflict settings. Under the Capable Partners Program, USAID held a pilot workshop in Accra, to bring together staff from USAID, PVOs, and local NGOs to discuss conflict-sensitive M&E. The purpose of this pilot workshop was to explore the ways that M&E can improve the effectiveness of development, humanitarian, and peace-building programs in environments affected by various degrees of conflict. In particular, the workshop sought to:

1. expand the participants' understanding of how working in conflict environments affects programs, and how these programs can affect conflicts;
2. increase participants' appreciation of the value of doing conflict-sensitive M&E to inform ongoing program design and implementation;
3. identify ways that organizations can design and implement conflict-sensitive M&E plans and develop strategic partnerships through the use of monitoring and evaluation; and
4. examine how M&E can contribute to organizational learning and capacity building through incorporating lessons from experience.

The focus of the workshop was how USAID and its partners might become more sensitive to, and thus effective in, conflict environments. As reflected in the expectations for the workshop that participants expressed at the outset, this raises issues at several policy and operational levels:

- How can we better understand the sources and dynamics of conflicts?
- How can assistance programs be designed so they reduce violence and destructive conflict?
- How can programs avoid creating new conflicts?
- How do we integrate conflict-analysis and conflict-management objectives into sectoral activities, such as agricultural development, food security, and other assistance? What is the relationship, for example, between economic reconstruction and peace building? Microfinance and conflict prevention?
- How can program designs and implementation be adapted to constantly changing and evolving conflict environments?

The workshop was designed to bring together several stakeholder levels. Mission staff, PVO staff, and local NGOs were engaged in presentations, discussions, and interactive exercises to share methods of looking at conflict sources and of doing analysis relevant to program design and planning. Participants were selected on the basis of both their strong interest in these issues *and* their experience in dealing with the issues in the field.

The participants came from Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone in West Africa, plus Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Great Lakes area of central Africa. Thus, they face very

different degrees, scales, and phases of conflict. These range from unstable peace without any open violence to open extensive physical hostilities, from local- to national-level civil wars, and from incipient armed conflicts to post-violence conditions. The participants also were involved in a diverse range of programs, including food security, health, education, microfinance, conflict resolution, and peace building.

Further, the mix of staff from USAID West African country missions, international PVOs, and local NGOs (as well as USAID Washington staff) reflected their different roles, responsibilities, and perspectives. This composition reflected the often-differing needs and constraints that their organizations and levels of operation face regarding M&E, as well as to develop a shared understanding of their common stakes in effective M&E. In sum, the workshop examined the intersection of M&E methodology; the phenomena of conflict and peace; and the evaluation processes now operating among USAID global, regional, and country mission staff, PVO staff, and local NGOs.

C. The Nexus Between M&E and Conflict

The utility of modifying programming to be more sensitive to conflict environments is manifold. By the same token, the stakes of not taking into account conflict dynamics, impact analysis, and environmental threats, as well as opportunities, are significant:

- First, if unanticipated, conflicts may blindside programs through the destruction they wreak. The undermining of previous program investments can be significant.
- Second, conflict-blind programs may contribute to the outbreak or perpetuation of conflict, such as through mal-apportioned benefits, poor timing, and other facets of design and implementation. Obviously, development practitioners do not want to thwart progress by unintentional actions that further destabilize the societies in which they work.
- Finally, development and humanitarian programs, as well as deliberate peace-building programs, clearly have and can make specific, positive contributions to peace by adopting approaches that reduce the sources of conflict and strengthen a society's capacities for managing tensions constructively. Unlike the destruction from the recent tsunami in south Asia, much of the destruction arising from social conflicts, as well as inadvertent harm caused by development, can be avoided because programming choices are within human control.

One of the most fruitful ways to do conflict-sensitive programming is to look at how M&E is done in conflict environments and how to fine-tune it to improve programming. Applying a conflict lens in M&E can improve the quality of programs so they are more effective at promoting peaceful development. That effort entails a number of specific technical and operational challenges. As noted by the workshop participants, some of these challenges include:

- How do we know the most important actions to take in a situation to promote peace?

- Which factors do we need to identify in order to be confident that our monitoring and evaluation is done correctly?
- What are appropriate performance indicators that can measure a reduction of conflict and effectiveness in peace building, particularly with differing problems and programs such as food practices and microfinance?
- In particular, how can we ascertain preventive impacts on conflicts to know if our efforts helped avert a crisis?
- When does monitoring start and who does it?
- How can we interpret inherently qualitative data, especially about peace-building effects and how can we best present that data?
- How do we redesign programs in a changing situation, and thus adapt program strategies and implementation to environments that are constantly fluid and evolving?
- How can we forge linkages with people working in conflict areas and become part of a network of conflict monitoring and evaluation experts that can share lessons?
- How can we strengthen our ongoing organizational capacities for integrating conflict analysis in cost-effective and time-efficient ways into program design, monitoring and evaluation?

USAID and its partners already have been quietly changing their procedures to deal with conflict. As highlighted in the following pages, the workshop discussion elicited examples of conflict-sensitive programs, useful indicators, data collection methods in conflict contexts, and so on. For example, many grassroots programs now aim explicitly at mitigating manifestations of conflict. USAID/OTI in Burundi manages a Community-Based Leadership Program (CBLP) that seeks to build the ability of local leaders and their communities to resolve local disputes together. Recognizing the spillover factors that have worsened conflicts in West Africa and the need to address conflicts regionally, WARP has sought out where cross-border activities are needed, even in areas that receive little attention, such as on the border between the Casamance area of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. In response to conflict generally, it has reset its timelines drastically, changed partners to those who are in a position to work more effectively, and, in extreme instances, cancelled programs or radically altered their objectives.

USAID/Washington is addressing conflicts more explicitly through the adoption of a conflict policy and providing technical leadership and field support through the CMM. Established in late 2002, CMM is developing an early warning capacity, sponsoring conflict assessments, supporting activity design and M&E through issue-specific toolkits, and managing a small fund to test innovative approaches.

II. BASIC COMPONENTS IN CONFLICT-SENSITIVE PROGRAMMING: TOOLS AND APPLICATIONS

To sort out the main tasks and challenges entailed in conflict-sensitive M&E, the workshop was structured around the key roles that analysis and M&E play at different points in the programming cycle.

Certain topics served as “anchors” to stimulate consideration and discussion of the participants’ individual programs as they reflected on key roles and challenges and how to improve practice in dealing with them. Each session introduced key concepts and tools that were then applied in small-group and other interactive exercises. The exercises encouraged the participants to look more deeply at the M&E methods that they use for program design and implementation.

A. Identifying Impacts of Programs on Conflict

The workshop began by looking at how existing programs may typically affect conflicts (“from the inside out”).

The programs that participants work with have diverse objectives, activities, and delivery systems and range across relief and development programs. These programs vary, for example, from physically rehabilitating health centers in Guinea-Bissau, to stimulating micro enterprises in Liberia, to providing legal assistance and care of refugees in Sierra Leone, to empowering traditional authorities to tackle local disputes. Most of these programs do not have conflict mitigation or peace building as explicit or even implicit objectives, although a few do. Instead, most approach conflict indirectly through targeting affected populations.

The workshop introduced a framework to identify typical positive and negative impacts that aid programs can have on conflicts and peace. In any conflict situation, aid can reduce the *dividers*, which are those factors that people are fighting about or that cause tensions; or it can expand the *connectors*, those factors that bring people together and/or tend to reduce tension. For example, a program may establish thriving new markets in which formerly estranged ethnic groups are engaged and mutually interdependent.

By the same token, however, aid can be harmful if it expands the dividers and reduces the connectors. For example, if programs only concentrate on their designated target groups, they may create inter-group resentment. Agencies that take care of refugees may not take into account the population outside a refugee camp. In one such case, an aid agency dealt with a cholera outbreak inside a refugee camp, but did nothing about the spread of the epidemic to the environs. Similarly, the DDR process in Liberia gave \$300 to ex-combatants to hand in their guns, but internally displaced persons were given only \$5 to return home. Unfortunately, the program design did not take into account the fact that some people became internally displaced because of the combatants; by differentially serving these two groups, the program divided them further.

Another way through which assistance produces either positive or negative impacts is through *resource transfers*. This sort of adverse impact is seen in the intervention of the UN peace mission in Burundi, which produced unintended but staggering economic consequences. The UN staff's high purchasing power had made prices skyrocket. The cost of living has gone up; a local person with a salary is unable to afford food. Rent is very high. The impacts of these types of resources are immense and often cause long-term impact on local abilities to absorb and respond to influxes of resources.

Aid can also have important positive or negative impacts by conveying *ethical messages*, which are implicitly communicated by *how* aid agencies carry out their tasks. Assistance inevitably becomes part of the conflict context and is not neutral. Its impacts can be intended or unintended, and positive or negative. In sum, it is crucial to examine the *what, why, who, by whom, when, where, and how* that are reflected in the operational details of assistance programs.

The workshop illustrated how M&E can use this framework to identify programs' impacts on conflict. In small groups, the participants conducted a quick analysis of the likely impacts of aid programs currently operating in conflict situations. So that participants would be relatively familiar with programs and contexts, the groups were organized by country. Each group first identified typical resource transfers and implicit ethical messages and then the positive or negative impacts that resulted.

Among the tangible resource transfers identified were employment opportunities, grants, food, equipment such as vehicles, materials such as seeds and tools, infrastructure, and lodging. Valuable intangible assets were also recognized, such as skills, knowledge, expertise, and information. On the positive side, the participants identified program resource transfers such as training in basic life skills, enhancing local capacities such as those of community groups and local/national institutions, and creating civil society networks. In desperate situations where survival is at risk, such as in post-conflict Liberia, participants mentioned programs that clearly have a positive impact through saving lives and giving employment.

On the negative side, the availability of resources from programs was observed to sometimes create unhealthy competition among local and international organizations and encourage dependency on assistance by not ensuring sustainability. A common observation among the participants was the unhealthy tendency for a program to support NGOs to such an extent that it undermines the strengthening of local governance structures.

Among the implicit ethical messages in programs, participants noted features such as the fairness with which grants or employment awards were decided, whether one group was empowered at the expense of others, and the extent of coverage that programs provide. Positive messages included the ways that some programs treat everyone as important, such as the inclusion of refugee women in the distribution of food. Negative messages are communicated if programs create an elite group. Other programs made conspicuous the disparity between USAID monetary resources and what they give to particular

individuals or communities. Women's empowerment programs were seen sometimes to marginalize men. The wider geo-political context can also shape the messages received through development programs. In northern Nigeria, for example, negative perceptions of current U.S. foreign policy are tarnishing USAID's development programs.

B. Assessing Sources of Conflict and Peace Capacities

After looking for impacts in familiar existing programs, the workshop focused on the stages involved in a complete process of conflict-sensitive programming ("from the outside in"). This process starts with problem assessment and ends with evaluation and feedback. M&E procedures play a role in each stage. The conflict-sensitive programming process thus corresponds to the stages in the development programming cycle generally recognized by USAID and other donors, although they may use different terms. Indeed, it is the *same* process, except that conflict-sensitive content and criteria are infused into the process.

A crucial first step is to assess the conflict and peace capacities to determine whether any programs are having positive or negative impacts on the conflict settings in which they operate, and possibly to redesign them to be more effective in those contexts. Entirely new programs may also be added. Such assessments analyze the sources of conflict—as well as the capacities of peace—in the areas where the programs operate and which those programs *might be* influencing one way or the other. This analysis helps to define the basic conflict problem at which programs might or should be aimed, and thus impacts that can be achieved more effectively. These impact areas might then constitute entry points for program activities. The conflict vulnerability assessments conducted by many USAID missions include this kind of analysis.

Drawing on CMM's and others' tools to assess conflict, a workshop session presented research that summarizes typical short-, medium- and long-term sources of conflict, as well as capacities for peace. Programs should reduce the sources of conflict and increase the capacity for peace. Sources of conflict are usefully divided into structural, enabling, and triggering factors:

- *Structural sources* are underlying, pervasive conditions that affect large numbers of people over a long time but do not themselves cause violence. Examples are resource scarcity, pervasive unemployment, and historical group divisions such as when people with differing religions and languages live in separate locations that the state governs differentially. Such divisions themselves do not cause conflict, but they make mobilizing groups easier when crises and grievances arise.
- *Enabling sources* are political processes and institutions that mobilize or add fuel to the underlying structural factors so they take the form of violent or divisive policies or actions. Examples include weak government, discriminatory laws and practices (e.g., colonial privileges bestowed on one ethnic group), and diamonds that can pay for insurgencies and guns.

- *Triggering sources* are provocative actions or destabilizing events that may prompt violence or increase hostility. Examples include bombings, assassination of key figures, provocative speech, and high-stakes events such as elections. These triggering sources often lead to escalation of disputes and tensions into even more violent conflict through a cycle of action and reaction. The higher the escalation, the more that the parties to a conflict become polarized, physically separate, dehumanize each other through using stereotypes, and invite allies to join their opposing sides.

Escalation of underlying structural problems or of open tensions and disputes into destructive violence is by no means inevitable. In fact, in most cases, communities and states already have mechanisms for managing disputes and regulating contentious behavior that threatens to break out into violence. Thus, it is equally important in doing a conflict assessment to look for existing *capacities for peace*. These may be cultural institutions, customs and rituals, modern institutions such as legislatures, or specific conciliatory actions, all of which can restrain the open expression of conflicts through violence and help to channel differences into peaceful, constructive ways to deal with them.

Every society has such “brakes” on conflict, at least at their incipient stages. Other examples are *lingua franca* that enable communication across ethnic lines, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms that prevent divisive national-level politicians from exploiting local tensions, and religious or other leaders who command wide respect. Even factors that in the long run are not desirable—such as black markets that provide income and thus take the edge off utter poverty and help in daily survival—may act in the short run as useful safety valves.

It is especially important that a context analysis take into explicit account whether local communities (or states) have developed their own initiatives for peace or could with some assistance. For example, in a neighborhood in Monrovia, residents had developed their own initiative to address a potentially violent situation. When a local NGO that had not done an analysis decided to conduct a peace-building workshop there, the leaders rebuffed the NGO, informing it that the community did not need the workshop.

When such mechanisms do not exist or they break down, however, violent escalations can still be pre-empted. Outside third parties can support robust and effective peaceful interventions that turn conflicts into productive, peaceful interactions. The accumulating experience in preventing such escalation underscores the importance of addressing conflicts before they reach the point of armed activity and killing, and thus the all-out stage of violence or war.

Generally, the more that triggers are evident, the more open and violent a conflict is, and the more difficult it is to influence. The immediate behavior and events become the most critical problem areas to attack. Addressing structural sources of conflict at this late stage may be ineffective or even counter-productive, and the triggers—such as how the other side behaves—become the main drivers. Basic development improvement is likely to be

less effective at this point to mitigate conflict, if it can be done at all. However, the underlying sources of conflict also need attention if and when any peace processes begin.

Perhaps because applying programs to reduce conflicts and reinforce peace is still relatively new, agencies and partners that are carrying out programs in conflict zones often have not done a conflict analysis before designing their programs. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to know whether the programs are having positive or negative impacts.

To illustrate how to do a conflict assessment, the participants applied conflict and peace factors to familiar cases. Each small group brought back to the plenary its most interesting insights. The participants' accounts brought out specific sources of conflict in particular contexts, as well as local capacities for peace, including the following examples:

- In Guinea, the underlying and more immediate sources of conflict were identified as local civil defense forces, banditry, non-application of laws, controversial political relationships with neighboring countries, disputes over land and agriculture, ethnic tensions, and religious differences. Countervailing capacities for peace were identified as the Mano River Union, certain religious leaders, a national sense of solidarity in the face of a common enemy, the role of Guinean women, and the work of certain local and international organizations and ECOWAS.
- In Nigeria, important sources of conflict include the mal-distribution and exclusive management of natural resources (especially oil in the south), ethnic and religious tension, high unemployment among a large youth population, poverty, poor governance and political leadership, perceived historic “injustices,” and elections. Its capacities for peace include nationally organized civil society organizations such as labor union and professional associations, independent and assertive media, a capacity for forgiveness and reconciliation stemming from the 1967–1970 civil war, the transition from military to civilian rule, and abundant resources and potential for food self-sufficiency.
- In northern Ghana, structural sources of the low-level conflict include the economic deprivation in the area and the mal-distribution of social amenities, youth unemployment, limited education that leads to migration, and historical differences resulting in settlers and land disputes. Enabling factors include central government policy failure, weak traditional authority, arms proliferation, and a weak legal system. Triggering factors include violent acts, such as the assassination of a king, the celebration of a fire festival, and the upcoming elections.

Identifying sources of conflicts and their escalation in a particular context alerts program practitioners of the risk that may be involved in working in an area and the threat that major violent conflict may pose to achieving any meaningful results other than alleviating the war victims' suffering and hardship. But assuming that the conflict is not so pervasive and destructive as to preclude working in an area altogether, the most important function

of this conflict assessment is to provide clues to development programmers about the most promising “entry points” to target in program planning and design. Unfortunately, the conflict diagnosis sections of USAID’s conflict vulnerability assessments are not usually shared with its NGO partners so that they might benefit from the information and analysis.

One crucial task in conflict-sensitive programming is translating the findings of a conflict assessment into the implications of what particular programs should do. Using an analytic tool in a particular context, programmers can uncover the points of leverage that their programs might use to influence the direction of the conflict in positive ways. They can then see whether their current programs address those conflict sources within their abilities, in view of conflict drivers and the stage at which a conflict is operating.

The workshop participants suggested several promising entry points. For example, the Vocational Skills Training program in Burundi targets the severe shortage of land and subsequent competition, which are structural factors contributing to conflict. By providing training in skills to generate non-agricultural revenues, the program seeks to reduce dependency on land as a sole source of income, thus relieving some of the pressure on that scarce resource. In addition, the program engages specific groups potentially in competition with each other, such as ex-combatants, repatriates, and local residents, together in common activities. This creates a *connector* for groups who would otherwise be divided. The program also has the potential to reduce the distrust among competing groups. Such perceptions and attitudes are among the more immediate cognitive and emotional factors that can perpetuate conflicts—even when their structural basis may have been reduced.

C. Improving Current Practices: Conflict-Sensitive Program Review and Design

As mentioned, the main point of a conflict analysis is to provide a basis for deciding a development organization’s objectives and intervention methods. Ideally, an analysis of the conflict dimensions and peace capacities should precede a new program. But it is also possible to change existing programs to eliminate their negative impacts (i.e., in increasing conflict), as well as improve their positive contributions to peace.

A second section of the workshop discussed how to check if an existing program—or an organization’s or mission’s portfolio of programs—is optimally designed and targeted to reduce the particular sources of conflict and/or to strengthen capacities of peace that the assessment identified. The small groups met to suggest improvements in their individual programs. This time, the groups were organized around types of programs, rather than by countries.

To illustrate, the group engaged in community development and health programs decided that typical sources of conflict and peace capacities in their area could be addressed more effectively if they targeted where they worked based on a clearer notion of the communities facing the greatest degree of conflict. The group also observed that the relationship between the NGOs and local and national government authorities in their

changing environment was creating estrangement and tension. The capacity of local authorities was very weak, but nothing was being done to address this institutional fragility. Thus, the participants judged that their programs should devote more explicit attention to reinforcing local responsibility and accountability and avoid undermining the responsibility and accountability that governments owe their constituents. They also suggested earlier and increased local involvement in program design, and better analysis to target the most vulnerable communities. Donor coordination also needs to improve.

The group noted a more localized, ground-truth, and area-specific approach requires that NGOs and PVOs maintain a significant level of independence in the decision-making process that leads to selection of partners and the conduct of M&E. But such efforts to exercise their discretion to change or redesign programs in response to local analyses can run up against constraints in existing procedures and relationships, besides the perennial problems of limited resources and the difficulties in donor coordination. For example, donors may wish to specify target areas, and they may restrict partners from working with governments. It is important to engage governments and have them show political will in the designing of policies. This raised the crucial question of how much “playing politics” is needed, and the right balance between an organization’s core work and coping with political realities.

Other participants are working in programs that explicitly address conflict and peace building. This group decided it needed to reinforce the idea of doing conflict assessments before deciding on and designing interventions, ensure that the voices of different stakeholders in the conflict are heard in assessments, train upcoming leaders in the new approach, link training to incumbent community leaders, and focus on promoting the democratization of existing social organizations and political parties.

One example of the process of moving from assessment to program redesign was illustrated by a peace-building project in Mali that seeks to improve the management of natural resources in order to reduce inter-communal violence and pastoral conflicts. Religion is a source of conflict, but capacities for peace exist in civil society through traditional, community-based conflict management processes. The group decided that an entry point that needed emphasis is to help the local authorities plan, reinforce their existing capacity for conflict management, and advocate for specific solutions, such as NGOs signing accords with local authorities.

The group working in youth programs identified important sources of conflict as the lack of sufficient formal and informal training and lack of leadership. Yet, capacities for peace exist in the degree to which formal and informal education and youth have been integrated into political and social life. To redesign programs, they pinpointed the need to include media programs to create more awareness among youth, to link training more closely to available jobs, and to involve youth in program design process as well as national decision-making.

The group also noted constraints. Government youth ministries tend to concentrate on sports and neglect other needs, and the budgets allocated to other ministries for youth

programs are very low. While sports are very good connectors for youth, governments sometimes manipulate these programs for political and party purposes, and thus they can become potential dividers. This insight exemplified the difference between conflict-sensitive program design and normal sector-driven program design.

The group working with refugees and displaced people, such as in the Casamance area of southern Senegal, identified illiteracy and lack of educational opportunities as serious problems. They called for more educational programs within the encampments. This requires filling program gaps such as teachers, budget, and advocacy, as well as more collaboration among local partners providing refugee services.

The refugee group also cited the lack of dignity and safety for unprotected women as a source of conflict. This is not only a humanitarian problem, but also a conflict-sensitive issue. Vulnerable people such as unprotected women can be magnets for conflict by presenting tempting targets for men who can act with impunity because unstable situations lack society's normal restraints. Their actions then may cause violent reactions. Thus, in part to create more deterrents against violence, the group urged greater protection for refugee women in particular. The existing organizations running refugee camps or other organizations could identify especially vulnerable women for whom to provide psychosocial counseling and health care, provide skills training in self sufficiency, and offer legal support.

D. Developing Multi-Actor Strategies through Collaborative M&E

The examples above of the refugee group's recognition of the need for collaboration in refugee camps illustrates how M&E tasks can engage partners together to develop multi-pronged strategies, linkages, and networks. Thus, a workshop session was devoted to strengthening programs by linking them to other work in progress and monitoring those linkages.

Research on conflict prevention and management has strongly confirmed that effective reversal of conflict drivers requires several actors using several kinds of program interventions. Effective leverage has to be focused on the most significant sources of conflict and peace capacities present in specific conflict contexts. As noted above, for example, if underlying factors are addressed in an already high-level conflict situation, but the immediate triggering factors driving the conflict are not, the programs may either be seriously constrained by security threats, and thus hampered from even operating, much less be effective, or they may even be destroyed. By the same token, if at incipient stages of conflict, only the surface manifestations of conflict are treated temporarily, then the conflict is likely to re-emerge in the near future because no one has addressed the underlying problems.

A possible assumption behind training NGOs and other actors in conflict-sensitive M&E is that if each such organization did an analysis about its own program to adapt it to the conflict environment, the result would be greater overall effectiveness against a conflict. This may happen in some unknowable way, but it might lead simply to a plethora of

differing interpretations of the situation and separate decisions that duplicate programming, on the one hand, and leave huge gaps in programming, on the other. Also, the mandates of some organizations in such settings, such as human rights advocacy groups, may contradict the efforts of conflict resolution groups that are trying to achieve a reduction of violence through reducing the climate of tension and confrontation.

Consequently, organizations seeking peace in an area must work together to develop a conflict and peace-building strategy. Wherever possible, duplication should be minimized and collective effort maximized to increase impact. Individual organizations can increase their leverage, and public advocacy can become more possible and effective. This does not mean that organizations need to cooperate closely on every aspect of the strategy, which is unrealistic and unnecessary. But as a workshop speaker pointed out, because conflict is political, NGOs and their partners must think of themselves as part of a political movement in their countries and the region with the goal of partisanship—not partisanship on behalf of particular sides in a conflict, but rather on behalf of conflict management and peace building.

In sum, many actors are usually needed to address various causes of conflict. Linkages and coalitions can increase the impact of individual programs, such as through multiplier effects. But this requires deliberate efforts across several problem or issue areas, and at local, national, and possibly international levels. There are five main reasons or bases for forming such linkages:

- functional practicality, such as when one organization can do a conflict assessment or has access to information that may be able to be applied and used for program needs;
- communication and coordination, such as exchanging information to avoid duplicating efforts;
- exertion of effective influence, such as through combining the voices of NGOs to represent the views of civil society;
- conceptual reasons, such as to form a nucleus of activity behind a certain objective; and
- strategic reasons, such as to form a multi-pronged set of activities that one organization alone cannot provide.

While remaining focused, interventions need to be conceived holistically. Linkages need to be found vertically and horizontally, as well as between the present and the future. For example, micro enterprise programs to increase employment need to seek out and cultivate linkages to get products to markets. Although necessary, the actual engendering of cooperation among NGOs, much less between governments and NGOs, or any other set of organizations, is rare or notoriously difficult. One speaker mentioned that in Northern Ireland, each NGO thought its work was the most important and so they competed with each other. Others present noted that getting NGOs to collaborate is like “herding cats.” Given the few incentives to achieve such collaboration, donors must harmonize and coordinate their policies to have more positive rather than negative impacts. Their differences in policies bring about unhealthy competition among the various partners of these funders. Rather than help the communities in which they are working, they may end up aggravating the already volatile situation.

How can M&E be used to create these networks? Besides role-modeling, incentives can be created by fostering a common understanding of the overall conflict situation shared by different organizations. This diagnosis can implicitly inform and guide the decisions of separate organizations. Inter-organizational research suggests that the chance that organizations will collaborate increases if they share some understanding at the outset of a common problem. Here is where the tools of M&E can play a role.

Some donors and NGOs in Africa and elsewhere have engaged actors in formal or informal “peace and conflict impact assessment” exercises that involve joint conflict assessment and mutual strategy development. In other words, several organizations conduct the conflict assessment and program review process together. Following the assessment, an inventory is done of who is doing what with regard to the main conflict drivers and peace capacities identified. The basic question is: are all the important bases covered?

This matching of the range of activities against the conflict analysis will likely uncover some sources of conflict that are oversubscribed and others that are totally neglected. Thus, the process will show the duplications and gaps, leading to a consideration of what else is needed. Although some key policies need to be harmonized, it is unwieldy to harmonize across the board.

An assessment tool was presented to assist programmers in identifying the gaps in more comprehensive anti-conflict strategies. The grid below can “map” existing programs in a national or local conflict area and thus see where connections between programs and gaps may exist, i.e., problem areas that are not getting sufficient attention.

**Grid for Placing Your Program within an Overall Strategy:
Types of Work, Levels, and Target Groups**

TYPE OF WORK → LEVEL/ TARGET GROUPS ↓	ANALYZING LAWS AND PRACTICES	ANALYZING SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES	LOBBYING FOR POLICY CHANGE	POPULAR EDUCATION MATERIALS	NETWORKING & COALITION BUILDING	CAPACITY BUILDING
INTER-GOVERNMENTAL						
GOVERNMENT			OUR PROGRAM			
PROVINCIAL						
POLITICAL PARTIES						
BUSINESS SECTOR						
EMPLOYMENT COOPERATIVES						
COMMUNITY GROUPS						

Fostering joint assessment and M&E efforts also requires active networking and coalition-building. Because no one organization can bring peace in a situation, one must promote a normative culture or ideology of collegiality and contribution towards an overall peace process and work toward building effective peace coalitions. Of course, networking comes with its own challenges including coordination, joint resource management, collaborative program selection, and an agreed-upon code of conduct.

The workshop also discussed how to evaluate such efforts. To ascertain whether collaboration has hit the right targets, linkage questions such as the following can be asked:

1. What needs to happen in order for our program to be more effective?
2. Have we created links to ensure that these things are happening?
3. Are these things happening?
4. Are they helping our program to be more effective?
5. What local capacities for peace can we identify? Can we support them?
6. Have we created links to support local capacities for peace?
7. Are they becoming active forces for peace?
8. Is this having an impact on the situation?
9. What links with other levels or sectors would make our program more strategic or effective?
10. Have we built these links?
11. Are they helping our program to be more strategic or effective?

A further tool for evaluating joint efforts is to draw on research that has examined success stories. A list of their elements of success can be used as a checklist to see whether key elements are in place, or missing, in a new setting. For example, to stimulate discussion, a video was shown at the workshop about the activities of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee in northern Kenya.

A “Success Story” from Wajir, Kenya

The Wajir Peace and Development Committee has been widely praised by observers and evaluators as having unusual success in dealing with local conflicts in northern Kenya. A response to escalating violence among local tribes over cattle rustling offenses, this project was a local initiative in the first stage: the initiators wanted the communities to own the process since they best understood the situation, and external funding might mean deadlines to assess impact. A few of the lessons that emerged from the Wajir experience:

-Participation of all sectors of the society in the strategic planning led to high impact because the spirit of ownership was high, and it elicited a strong contribution to the peace process. Local traditional elders, businessmen and professionals, women, youth, police, government authorities, and the area’s MP to the Parliament were all involved at one level or the other.

-Local capacity in peace building renders the process sustainable. Sometimes, it is also good to integrate foreign capacity, but not at the expense of overlooking local capacity.

-It is important to know what the society considers as indicators of progress against conflict. It is therefore crucial to engage the society in planning and monitoring.

-At the same time, the interventions involved risks. The local women who were the prime movers took many risks and were conscious of them.

(continued)

- Youth cannot be sidelined if the peace process is sustainable since they are key stakeholders.
- The use of culture through singing during peace time and wartime helped to interpret and portray the evolving situation. Such local traditions can be extremely useful in the implementation of programs.

The Wajir effort was effective to a large extent because the violence was localized, and the capacities for peace could “overpower” the conflict factors. Conflicts on a larger scale, such as national civil wars, obviously require many more actors using even more powerful carrots and sticks. Thus, the workshop also provided participants with a checklist of factors derived from research about success stories at the national level, specifically with respect to preventing violent conflicts from arising out of political tensions and disputes. Such a checklist could help guide the formulation of national-level strategies.

E. Building Conflict-Sensitive M&E into Program Implementation and Operations

Once programs are designed or redesigned in response to a conflict assessment, they are deployed and implemented in the field. The role of conflict-sensitive M&E at this stage is to track the results and compare them with intended objectives to assess the program performance. M&E identifies why programs met their objectives, fell short, or worsened the situation. One implementation challenge subject to conflict-sensitive M&E, for example, is whether programs took place at the right time. In post-conflict situations such as Liberia, development agencies have rushed to put facilities in place that they deem as connectors, such as markets, schools, and health centers. Instead of achieving the objectives, however, they aggravated the situation because the communities were still too estranged to participate in common endeavors. The activity was premature.

Thus, the final sessions of the workshop addressed challenges and methods in carrying out programs in conflict situations, while also monitoring their implementation processes and evolving impacts on those situations. Prior provision is needed for ongoing monitoring and eventual evaluation. M&E criteria need to be defined that deal with ethical messages, resource transfers, and the other impacts that programs have on the deep and structural, as well as more manifest, aspects of conflict. The conflict may be escalating or diminishing, thus calling for rethinking about which underlying conditions or more immediate behaviors are the most needed entry points for gaining the most leverage in moving toward a sustainable peace. Data collection procedures need to be integrated into program implementation and operations, and the feasibility in a turbulent situation of data availability and various methods of collection has to be addressed. These steps are needed also to consider whether the basic objectives and methods of intervention—as well as the daily operational practices that may be sending out certain ethical messages—need to be modified in order to continually “update” the program’s conflict sensitivity in response to a still changing environment.

To integrate M&E into program implementation, methodological challenges arise such as:

- establishing a baseline for determining the status of the situation before a program was put into effect
- defining appropriate impact criteria
- finding appropriate indicators to responsibly measure impact
- collecting reliable data in environments that may be insecure or at least are highly politicized and thus subject to serious information distortions
- deciding whom to involve in designing M&E plans
- adjusting the definition of program objectives or even the nature of the intervention in response to change in the environment, and thus the criteria for measuring impacts and deciding when monitoring leaves off and evaluation begins
- covering enough sites to draw valid generalizations
- interpreting the qualitative data that may be all one can obtain in conflict environments
- locating comparison or “control” sites, or those where a program was not active, to see if differing impacts were obtained
- attributing responsibility for results found to a given program.

These methodological challenges are often related to practical challenges such as:

- lack of funding and support for M&E
- insecurity that poses threats to clients and staff
- a shifting population that is supposed to benefit from a program but is leaving or moving about in reaction to the conflict
- a changing, largely unpredictable political and military context
- cultural and language barriers that affect both access to information and its meaning.

All these challenges present themselves to varying degrees, depending largely on the level of open violence. The level of violence tends to shape many other factors. In unstable conditions that have not yet seen open violence, conflict-sensitive M&E may be relatively more feasible through conventional procedures than it is in highly threatening active or post-conflict environments.

To introduce this set of issues, key terms used in M&E were reviewed. These included:

- Indicators vs. outputs
- Activities vs. inputs
- Impacts vs. outcomes
- Outcomes vs. results
- Results frameworks, performance monitoring and implementation plans
- Indications vs. indicators
- Process indicators

Monitoring is a process through which practitioners continuously track and appraise the effectiveness of the implementation of a program/project. It is an ongoing, methodical process of data collection and information gathering throughout the life of a project/program so that adjustments can be made while the work is still going on.

Evaluation is a less frequent and more systematic and objective assessment of the design, implementation, and outcome of an ongoing or completed intervention. It is conducted at some point when the program has been operating long enough to be producing expected impacts and outcomes. Once programs have been in effect for a period of time that is judged sufficient to show intended effects, this kind of more deliberate and thorough impact assessment can be carried out. It is the procedure by which practitioners are able to measure, through retrospective analysis, the change brought about and experience in the conditions and conflict dynamics within communities.

Ideally, evaluation uses baseline information (i.e., information collected at the very beginning of the project/program against which progress can be measured) and a control group (areas where the intervention has not been carried out), although both are often lacking. Evaluation should serve as a learning and management tool by using what has been learned to guide future work. Thus, it is also important to carefully specify the nature and elements of the intervention being evaluated. That way, a knowledge base of hypotheses can be built up, continuously tested, and refined examining the relationship among different kinds of interventions, types of results, and conditions.

Participants discussed a few of these challenges at some length. One crucial topic is the kind of criteria or measures by which to judge the conflict and peace performance of a program: that is, with respect to conflict mitigation and peace building. A presentation laid out basic criteria by which to evaluate many different programs. Of course, these generic questions have to be contextualized for each situation.

Criteria of Effectiveness: A Worksheet

Rating: 0 = no impact on this factor; 5 = major impact on this factor
Big/Fast/Sustained: Mark Y/N and why

	Criterion	Rating	Big enough?	Fast enough?	Impact sustained?	Level of impact: Linkages?	Locally Specific Indicators
<i>Addresses Basic Causes of Conflict</i>							
1.	The effort contributes to stopping a key driving factor of the conflict or tensions	0 1 2 3 4 5					
2.	The effort results in the creation or reform of institutions or mechanisms that address the specific grievances or injustices that fuel the conflict	0 1 2 3 4 5					

3.	The effort causes participants and communities to develop independent initiatives that decrease dividers, increase connectors or address causes of conflict	0 1 2 3 4 5					
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<i>Interrupts Self-perpetuating Aspects of Violence</i>							
4.	The effort prompts people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence	0 1 2 3 4 5					
5.	The effort results in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security	0 1 2 3 4 5					

A fundamental issue for M&E in conflict settings is the tension that exists between the need to be flexible both in program design and M&E due to the volatile environment, and the more static criteria that conventional M&E relies on. One speaker mentioned how a program that provided an anti-tick solution for cattle brought together the members of warring tribes and helped to create a more peaceful relationship. But though it helped to make peace, the donor cancelled the project because of other considerations. Seeing the project only through the lens of its sectoral objectives, the donor failed to grasp its payoff in conflict and peace terms.

In other situations, there may be a need to involve rebels, including killers, in a peace or reconciliation process promoted by a project because they are “more key” than other stakeholders. Funders may block such actions, however, because of legal restrictions or moral apprehensions. In sum, what is required for peace may not fall within the usual parameters of program regulations. This affects M&E because responding to such situations by being flexible may require changing the very objectives of a program, and thus the criteria used to measure impacts and outcomes. It may even call for changing the program activities, or the basic technique of intervention. For example, it may mean switching to a new benefit such as housing rather than medicine, because housing represents more of an incentive to engage in a peace process for a party to a conflict.

But even if flexibility makes sense in a fluid situation in order to be effective, it may go against the grain of more conventional M&E practices. Conventionally, a refugee program may have as one criterion the changing numbers of refugees served over time as a proportion of the numbers in need in a given catchment area. But using refugee camps as a peace-building intervention may require doing something that does not increase the numbers served, but addresses a different dimension such as improving protection of women. Yet its success in adjusting to what is called for by the situation may fly in the face of a donor's definition of the purpose of the program and thus of “success.”

The difficulty in collecting data that provides reliable information about a program's impacts is often endemic to conflict environments. Instead of using investigative

instruments such as surveys, focus group meetings, or even interviews, monitoring may need to be achieved through meetings, consultations, frequent field visits for direct observation, and proxy indicators. Participatory monitoring methods might help overcome difficulties of obtaining reliable data in insecure and volatile contexts.

Finally, the workshop participants discussed the need to institutionalize M&E in an organization's standard procedures as ongoing learning tools. M&E needs more emphasis, but unfortunately most programs do not have this luxury. A full-blown learning function based on M&E may not always be feasible for small organizations, but it can be done cost-effectively at more aggregated levels. As described below, cost-effective ways and efforts to collect and disseminate the lessons from interventions have been fostered through networks and coalitions. Lateral learning, known as "peer learning," occurs where NGOs share experiences to build their own institutional capacities. Networks or coalitions can provide a space for exchange of experiences among NGOs. When formalized, these networks themselves become NGOs that must operate efficiently to provide services to its members, such as policy advocacy or M&E.

The Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP) Network provides a good example of lateral learning. Country-wide networks of microfinance NGOs are connected through this global network. Providing opportunities for members to share experiences has resulted in, for example, the Azerbaijan network learning about effective policy advocacy from the Uganda network. In addition, SEEP has created a network capacity assessment tool to measure the effectiveness and capacity of the networks in six areas: governance, human resources, service delivery, operations, financial sustainability, and external relations.

III. WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

The workshop showed how closer links need to and can be made between conflict environments and program objectives and impacts, so that development programs can be more effective in mitigating conflict, or at least not worsening it. For most participants, the pilot workshop was the first time these issues were brought together and presented systematically. The participants could reflect on and share their experiences with practitioners in similar circumstances. The workshop brought out several key points:

- Many assistance programs in these contexts cannot by their mere operation reduce conflict or bolster capacities for peace. The workshop amply demonstrated that critical elements in M&E are handled differently in a conflict-affected environment. M&E in areas of conflict may use similar methods as standard M&E, but the specific procedures and substance of the analysis differ.
- Peace building involves processes and pays attention to good project design and implementation, which cannot be achieved in isolation from monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, it is important to integrate conflict-sensitive M&E in all stages, steps, or phases of program/project planning, design, and implementation. Careful analysis about the nature and aspects of conflict the programs are facing, and specific review and redesign of program details and effects, need to be carried out.
- This process of conflict assessment, monitoring, and evaluation is best done as a collaboration with multiple donors, their partners, and other actors. Individual programs, even if found to perform well in terms of their specific indicators, need to add up to an effective strategy that addresses the manifold dimensions of the conflict.
- The adaptation of M&E methods to conflict environments holds major implications for USAID staff and international and local NGO staff in the design and oversight of their programs.

Over the course of the four days and in the final session, the participants generated a number of suggestions and recommendations that they emphasized were critical to making M&E more conflict sensitive and thus contribute to more effective programming:

1. Contextualizing intervention based on a rigorous conflict assessment tool is crucial. Participants felt that some World Bank and IMF program designs, for example, seem to be homogeneous tools applied to all countries regardless of context. It is important to alert these agencies that different societies differ in their needs. USAID-funded NGOs also have typically not preceded their designs with a conflict and peace capacities assessment. In part, this happens because donors often do not require them. Fortunately, the World Bank now has a conflict assessment methodology it is using before giving grants, in which it conducts

- thorough studies of the context to ensure the relevance and feasibility of a proposed project.
2. It is imperative to integrate M&E into programs and ongoing program planning, especially in conflict situations where the environment keeps changing.
 3. In program designs, it is crucial to build local capacities. In particular, it is important to involve business men and women in peace building because they are a critical set of stakeholders in conflicts, since they experience change anytime there is a conflict.
 4. It is also crucial to find ways to link up with political society in solving conflicts and not to circumvent or sideline local and national authorities. Strategies need to engage them to be more effective.
 5. Because monitoring is usually looked at as an activity done later in the program, indicators and objectives must be made clear at the onset of a program or it is difficult to do M&E.
 6. In conflict environments, close monitoring can help readjust the program and indicators when the need arises. There is no M&E blueprint, but clear benchmarks can be set with indicators useful for close monitoring. Monitoring will show if the indicators have to be changed or modified.
 7. Donors should be more flexible when it comes to indicators and impact measurement, as well as program redesign. Most often, donors are fixed on the indicators set at the beginning of the project and conduct the evaluation based on them.
 8. The implicit messages in programs are often neglected, but need to be taken into account in measuring impacts.
 9. To have reliable results in conflict environments, M&E must be participatory wherever possible.
 10. It is important to mainstream the results of conflict analysis and M&E into future programs by placing an ongoing monitoring capacity within an organization.
 11. It is important to identify multi-pronged strategies for implementation. More partnership and networking can avoid duplication and increase impact.

Finally, as done in this workshop, it is important to demonstrate the reasons to constantly monitor and adjust in situations where the dynamics are constantly changing and where impacts may shift significantly over the course of an intervention. These issues should be highlighted for more discussion by the PVO and NGO community and presented in formats that encourage input, discussion, and analysis.

IV. WORKSHOP RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT WWW.NGOCONNECT.NET

- Conflict-Sensitive Monitoring & Evaluation PowerPoint Presentation (English and French version)
- Cote D'Ivoire PowerPoint Presentation (English and French versions)
- Criteria of Effectiveness Worksheet (English and French versions)
- Do No Harm Framework (English and French versions)
- Reflecting on Peace Practice Handouts (English and French versions)
- Seven Major Lessons from “Do No Harm” PowerPoint Presentation