# Workshop report: 'Conflict sensitive FNS programming in fragile settings'

**On 1 February 2018 The Broker, together with the Food & Business Knowledge Platform organised a workshop on conflict sensitivity in food and nutrition security (FNS) programming. This workshop, marking the end of The Broker's project on 'doing good' in fragile settings, was attended by a variety of practitioners, researchers as well as policymakers working on topics of food security in fragile settings. The workshop included three presentations followed by a thought provoking discussion, highlighting the need to operationalize the concept of 'stability', to better facilitate adaptive programme management – supported by monitoring & evaluation, and to gather lessons from practice on how FNS programming in fragile settings can be best utilized to move from humanitarian aid towards resilience and development, and when it can (and cannot) link up to private sector development in such precarious environments.**

Download the project report: 'Food security programming and stability: Exploring conflict sensitivity in Dutch FNS programming'.

Download the tool: 'Food security & stability: A tool for conflict sensitivity in FNS programming'.

Download print friendly version of the tool.

Download the accompanying checklist: 'Conflict sensitivity in Food & Nutrition security programming'.

## Presentation: Food security programming and stability at embassy level
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The afternoon began with a presentation of the project 'Food Security Programming and Stability', which was carried out by the Broker, supported by the F&BKP. The research focused on conflict sensitivity in the daily practice of Dutch embassies, aiming to draw lessons from and build on existing knowledge and experience. Based on interviews with professionals at the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Dutch embassies as well as supported FNS programmes, Yannicke Goris (The Broker) and Rojan Bolling  (The Broker/F&BKP) highlighted four key components that promote conflict sensitivity in the daily practice of FNS programming at embassy level:

**1) Personal experience**: The study showed that conflict sensitivity at the embassies relies, to a large degree, on the experience and know-how of staff members. Those that have worked in fragile settings for many years can be regarded as the 'champions' for conflict sensitive programming.
**2) Flexible approaches to programming:** Respondents invariable pointed out the importance of flexibility to ensure FNS interventions are and remain conflict sensitive. Especially in fragile settings, where circumstances can change quickly, such flexibility for embassy- as well as programme-staff is vital to adjust approaches where necessary.
**3) Finding complementarity and synergies in programming**: At a minimum, complementarity with other interventions means that programmes are not working against one another. More importantly, synergies enable programmes to achieve more with the same resources, fortify one's own results and increase the

likelihood of having a lasting, sustainable impact. By seeking synergies with other initiatives that explicitly work towards stability, FNS interventions can contribute to this goal as well.

**4) Building networks with and between stakeholders:** Interviewees indicated that including local stakeholders – and taking care that vulnerable actors are not left behind – in the different phases of FNS programming is important to ensure conflict sensitivity. Close relationships will not only provide up-to-date insight in development of local conflicts, it also increases the chance of sustainable stability.

(For more on these key components and the main findings of the project, download the full report here).

These four components were used as the foundation for a 'tool for conflict sensitivity'. This tool provides a method to integrate conflict sensitivity into the daily practice of FNS programming at embassy level and helps identify where FNS programmes can contribute to stability. As the study builds on the daily practice of conflict sensitivity at the embassy, the tool is tailored specifically to the realities of embassies' FNS programming cycle. It offers a method to help identify what can realistically be achieved by an FNS intervention with regards to contributing to stability. Additionally, it provides guidance on how to ensure the daily practice of programme management facilitates conflict sensitivity to maximum effect.

After discussing the tool and accompanying 'checklist for conflict sensitivity', key points from the discussion included:

- Choosing to focus on food security as a goal, or as a means to achieve stability is a choice many struggle with. Often the effects of food security on security is indirect.
- It is not always preferable that FNS programmes contribute to stability, sometimes change would lead to better outcomes (e.g. when landowners are causing food scarcity). However achieving peace is not within the means of FNS programming, creating conditions that are conducive to peace is - which often comes down to enhanced stability based on inclusion in a conflict sensitive manner. For example, work on land rights before improving land.
- In settings of high fragility it is important to work in a more flexible manner, with more attention for monitoring and adjustment. This is less necessary for more stable settings, yet the differences between status of conflict and post-conflict are not clear-cut. In many 'stable' settings conflict is latent and can surface very swiftly. To say that certain FNS interventions are more conflict sensitive than others therefore distracts from the real issue: context specificity based on awareness of conflict drivers. It is the environment in which an intervention takes place that determines what actions can achieve.
- Many of the issues highlighted in the tool and report can also be applied to other types of interventions, yet when taken as a whole they correspond to the specific options available and choices that must be made in FNS programming at embassy level.

## Presentation: Looking at Dutch Private Sector Development policies and instruments through a conflict lens

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The presentation by Mark van Dorp (consultant for SOMO) and Charlotte Vollaard (Oxfam Novib) addressed the conflict sensitivity of Private Sector Development (PSD) support instruments at the central

level. Due to their ongoing research, the presented outcomes were preliminary results and focused on key challenges and advantages of Dutch instruments in terms of conflict sensitivity.

The presenters highlighted the fact that SMEs and multinationals primarily view instability in terms of risk to their business which may result in aggravating conflicts by (accidental) exclusion, reinforcement of corruption or patronage systems. What often happens in PSD support is that ambitious proposals are submitted, but on the ground much more limited 'coping strategies' with negative side effects are employed so that businesses can continue to operate. Gains can be made by improving the coordination between embassies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and others as due to the multitude of support instrument and activities embassies do not always have the overview needed to identify opportunities - thereby maximizing positive impacts. Finally, the authors noted that while there is no hard evidence that PSD can positively affect conflict or stability, an explicit do-no-harm or conflict sensitive approach often still has a positive effect. Key points that emerged from the discussion included:

- Businesses cannot be expected to operate as conflict experts, so the question is what role policy support can and should play;
- It is also crucial to consider positive on the longer term. In Sudan companies in oil sector were shown to have some impact on stability but when these companies were replaced by Indian and Chinese companies effects were erased;
- The exact impact of PSD is very dependent on the context, donors must be realistic when setting goals. Many investors do not want to invest in fragile settings, are not necessarily looking for more soft loans but a better environment in which to do business. In PSD it is often about the enabling environment. If the environment is not conducive to business and market development, as is the case in many fragile settings, we should recognize that these types of interventions will have a high rate of failure;

## Presentation: Maji Ya Amani – Water for Peace in the Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu, DRC

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For the third presentation David Betge of ZOA presented his experiences with a programme that focused on securing land rights before upgrading an irrigation system in the Ruzizi Plain, Democratic Republic Congo (DRC). Its aims were to reduce conflict between competing ethnic groups by creating more equitable access to land and water for household and agricultural use, and improve governance around the management of these resources.

In this context there was enmity between community leaders, between farmers and pastoralists, as well as competition within these groups. Through a participatory mapping approach ownership of land and land use rights are being established. Communities are presented with proof of ownership that, very importantly, is supported by local and national government. In the second phase of the project the results are made publicly available so that any resulting conflicts can be resolved. Community leaders are on board and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between farmer and herder groups as well. Challenges to this process were found in fears relating to the technical process and how it will interact with local power structures. Corresponding to the earlier presentation on the project by The Broker, David highlighted the importance of partners' skills, strong coordination with partners for adaptive programming, as well as the need for budgetary flexibility to facilitate programme adjustment through conflict sensitive M&E. Key topics from the discussion that followed:

- Coordination of conflict sensitive M&E and adaptive programming is a big challenge. When working with three partners each has their own system, measures their own impacts and is responsible for their own budget.
- Inclusion of (large) landowners is still challenging as they have yet to start taking part in the conversations in these communities.
- A possible link to the root causes of migration can be made within such interventions. Direct beneficiaries are not mobile as they make use of the land. Yet there is much mobility in this area. When conditions improve, jobs can be created, which might draw young people to this area.

## Plenary discussion

In the plenary discussion, the audience highlighted several complex issues in conflict sensitive FNS programming. One of the core issues that the discussion revolved around was that 'stability' is still a contested concept. Gemma van der Haar (WUR) pointed out that to make practical observations, the term needs to be investigated further and be operationalized. How does FNS impact economic stability, or social stability? It is helpful to also recognize the different forms conflict sensitivity can take here. Interventions should limit themselves to what they can directly influence. In some cases this may mean that conflict sensitivity is limited to 'doing no harm'. It was also mentioned that the question of stability in the longer term needs to be addressed: does such stability favour the elites or the local population? Fia van der Klugt (MFA) and Corita Corbijn (ZOA) indicated that labeling stability is complex, because it is somewhere between humanitarian aid and development cooperation.

The discussion of what stability means, led to a conversation on whether conflict sensitive programming can create stability. The impact of programs is limited and there are many other intervening factors, therefore creating stability may go beyond the scope of what programmes can be expected to achieve by themselves. It was mentioned by Van der Klugt that eliminating poverty or hunger is no guarantee for eliminating conflict. Consequently, the discussion turned to M&E. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there is a new orientation towards root causes and conflict sensitive approaches will therefore need to be formally addressed in reports, even though the actual impact often only shows later. What indicators are available and to what extent is it possible to measure influence on stability and conflict? Corbijn noted that M&E is different in conflict sensitive programs because of the increased need for flexibility: the results are not what is expected at the start of the project and the project is modified as the local realities change.

Participants agreed that a high degree of trust between donor and implementer is needed to accommodate this type of programming. This could rely on a perception of expertise, as Frans Verberne (F&BKP) explained that - as came forward in the report - knowledge of the context and a high degree of expertise is how the most effective decisions are made on fundamental questions like when a project can or cannot focus on stability. Peter le Poole (EKN South Sudan) added that the relatively short periods in which embassy staff works in countries are a challenge in this regard. He further mentioned that working with NGOs rather than consultants can offer important benefits, as they are often more fine tuned to the settings in which they work. Procurement must also be conflict sensitive. Yet other challenges include a separation of budget lines between humanitarian and development aid. Few donors want to focus on the nexus between the two while humanitarian agencies also value their more neutral status. Even fewer are able to incorporate a link to private sector development in these environments.

Looking ahead, the discussion turned to concrete recommendations and ways to move ahead this practical discussion on conflict sensitivity and stability. Key points raised were:

- Translation from theory to practice remains a challenge. In proposals conflict analysis is often present, but translating this to work in the field remains difficult.
- Extra budget for flexibility is necessary for conflict sensitive FNS programming, both technical ánd conflict sensitivity trained staff are necessary.
- Stability remains a complex term that should be operationalized further, also in relation to food and nutrition security. Programmes working on the nexus between humanitarian aid and development offer an opportunity to do this.
- The limits of operating conflict sensitively must at all times be recognized. Although FNS programmes may have a positive impact on stability, their impact is often limited.
- To carry out M&E in these programs is crucial. However, knowledge lacks on what indicators could be used and how these indicators can reflect what the impact is on conflict and stability. This is important for managing programmes in an adaptive way.
- Fundamental questions on preconditions for interventions to work need to be studied. When focus on agribusiness? Is focusing on SMEs a priority or should we work on an enabling business environment before anything else?
- Sharing lessons and capturing knowledge is very important to work on these sensitive issues, especially because much knowledge is found in the experience of people – which can be lost after they leave an organization. We need to find ways to ensure that knowledge and lessons from the field is not lost and keeps feeding into practice. This is essential to ensure we go beyond ticking boxes.

## List of participants

| Presenters | |
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| Yannicke Goris | The Broker |
| Mark van Dorp | Consultant to SOMO |
| Charlotte Vollaard | Oxfam |
| David Betge | ZOA |
| Rojan Bolling | The Broker / Food & Business Knowledge Platform |
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| **Participants** | |
| John van der Walle | CARE |
| Ries Kamphof | Clingendael Institute |
| Margot Loof | Cordaid |
| Peter le Poole | Netherlands embassy Juba, South Sudan |
| Frans Verberne | Food & Business Knowledge Platform |
| Tini van Goor | Hivos |
| Saskia Hollander | INCLUDE |
| Fia van der Klugt | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Frits van der Wal | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |

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|---|---|
| Jan Hijkoop | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Jeroen Rijniers | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Julia Matser | The Broker |
| Karlijn Muiderman | Utrecht University |
| Gemma van der Haar | Wageningen University and Research Center |
| Corita Corbijn | ZOA |