



INTEGRATING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY IN CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMMES

TECHNICAL BRIEF 3

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BACKGROUND

Development work is designed with the intention of supporting positive efforts in the community. However, development work may sometimes lead to unintended negative impacts if conflict sensitivity and 'do no harm' principles are not adequately integrated into the programme design. This makes conflict sensitivity a critical component in all contexts of programming. In fragile and conflict-affected areas such as the Mander triangle (Liban and Afder zones in the Somali Region of Ethiopia, Gedo in Somalia and Mander in Kenya), the need to integrate conflict sensitivity in programming is even higher.

The Mander triangle has a long history of trans-boundary conflicts over natural resources. Conflict, particu-

larly over pastoralist resources such as water and pasture, is worsened by limited state functions, and historical and contemporary marginalization. In recent years, external factors such as spill-over political contestation, increased flow of small arms and light weapons across the borders, and periodic attacks by violent extremists have worsened the already fragile context. Moreover, the three countries that constitute the Mander triangle have distinct border policies that affect cross-border projects. Addressing insecurity for cross-border communities requires joint coordination, collaboration, and engagement with respective authorities. As a project supporting multiple components within the Mander triangle, BORESHA strives to mainstream conflict sensitivity and ensure Do No Harm in its programming.

About BORESHA & DDG

Building Opportunities for Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BORESHA) is a 3-year (2018-2020) cross border project implemented by a consortium of the Danish Refugee Council, World Vision, WYG and CARE International with funding from European Union Trust Fund for Africa.

BORESHA works with local communities and public authorities to establish transformative processes to enhance the cross border socio-economic integration and support resilience in the fragile and underdeveloped borderland areas between Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia.

This technical brief was produced through a collaborative workshop between BORESHA and the Danish Demining Group (DDG), a Humanitarian Mine Action and Armed Violence Reduction Unit within the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

JUSTIFICATION

BORESHA is a multisectoral programme that has introduced resources including cash, goods, services and skills into the communities living in the Mander Triangle. These resources, while intended for supporting development and resilience efforts, have the potential to create or exacerbate conflict. This can happen if the programme operates without a clear understanding of the context and a comprehensive analysis of the interaction of the programme with the dynamics of the context. In Mander triangle, choices are constrained and possibilities few, and therefore, resources such as cash, trainings, and grants have the potential to create competition and deepen existing fault lines between individuals and communities. To address these issues, organisational capacity building, commitment to Do No Harm principles through analysis and consultation, and working in concert with communities and other stakeholders are critical.

Conflict sensitivity is the ability of an organization to understand the context in which it operates and the relationship between its intervention and the context, and to act upon that understanding to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive outcomes. Do-no-harm is a key principle of conflict sensitivity, which relies heavily on a solid contextual understanding and dynamics at play in a given environment to be able to design and implement programmes that are sensitive to people's needs and do not create or exacerbate divisions.



River Genale crossing point in Dolo Ado, Ethiopia, 2019© Maslah Mumin / DRC



Local Community elders in Mandera, Kenya, 2019© Rob Maroni / CARE

TECHNICAL APPROACH

BORESHA programme has adopted a conflict sensitive approach in several key ways. The consortium carried out assessments that have helped partners to implement the programme with a clear understanding of the socio-political, ecological and economic context. BORESHA's baseline study provided a broad analysis of dynamics around the Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia borders to gauge the driving factors behind the movement of people, livestock, goods, services and trade. Although the baseline assessment did not consider conflict and power dynamics between various people or groups, it provided observations on conflicts in these borderlands and their impact on people's overall resilience. Similarly, a labour market assessment and value chain analysis on livestock, livestock products, and alternative livelihoods ensured that activities were aligned to the needs of the communities.

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY TRAINING

In December 2018, BORESHA teams from Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia organised and participated in a conflict sensitivity training in Mandera Town, Kenya. The aim of the training was to equip staff with the skills, tools and approaches of integrating conflict sensitivity into programme implementation. The training covered principles of conflict analysis (understanding the profile, causes, actors and dynamics), conflict sensitivity (participation, inclusion, respect, transparency and equity), conflict sensitivity in practice, conflict sensitivity as it

relates to Do No Harm, and use of the conflict sensitivity self-assessment form. The training enabled consortium partners to harmonize programme implementation with a level of predictability in driving development and community cohesion.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK MECHANISM

BORESHA established a joint feedback mechanism within the Project Management System to provide harmonized feedback and engage beneficiaries on the project activities. The system tracks: beneficiaries' selection and registration to assess process fairness, cases of corruption, satisfaction with services (delivery approach, quality, relevance and timing), awareness and use of feedback channels and entitlements in the project, follow-up support and recommendations from beneficiaries.

RESULTS

Coordination and Partnership

BORESHA is a consortium of partners, each bringing a unique strength to collectively meet an overarching objective. The partners developed a coordination framework that allows them to speak with one voice including key messages, share information, lessons and best practice for programme improvement, which is a key step in conflict sensitivity. Through the technical implementation group,

BORESHA developed standardized rate guides for beneficiaries, government officers, facilitators and community members. This harmonization of actions between programme partners ensures that all partners are viewed favourably and equally, thus limiting potential conflicts between partners and community members.

The programme collaborated with clan elders to promote inclusion of community groups in accessing project support by considering clan dynamics in the selection of beneficiaries. BORESHA also collaborated with the Regional Approaches for Sustainable Conflict Management and Integration (RASMI) project on joint implementation opportunities, such as the use of participatory learning and action, thereby improving linkages between resilience and conflict management. The programme also coordinated and collaborated with local government line ministries (Education, Technical and Vocational Training, Trade, Agriculture and Livestock) on particular activities such as livestock mass vaccination, verification of businesses for grant support, and students to be enrolled in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The County Steering Group participates in programme coordination meetings where progress is shared and action plans drawn. As such, the BORESHA project aligns with County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP).

DRC, CARE and World Vision implement a coordinated Cash-for-Work component of the project. CARE works with natural resources management (NRM) committees, DRC works with the disaster risk reduction (DRR) Committees, while World Vision empowers the DRR committees through the community-owned vulnerability and capacity assessment (COVACA) process, and enables them to develop practical community action plans. DRC and CARE then pick activities from the community action plans. All BORESHA consortium partners then share knowledge and information during the coordination meetings.

Consultation

The programme conducted in-depth consultations with community members, community structures and pre-existing committees, such as village development committees, NRM committees, and local authorities. The consultations were done when selecting beneficiaries, selecting specific sites and in various aspects of the project design.

On one occasion, a government stakeholder approached a key staff to influence hiring of an individual from his constituency. BORESHA staff responded that the process of recruitment was transparent and competitive. Although the advanced individual was unsuccessful, the project filled the position with a qualified individual from that very constituency. No conflict emerged from the recruitment process.

When the project received a grant related complaint alleging disbursement to non-existent businesses, the consortium partners carried out extensive investigations including document reviews, physical verifications, and inquiries with government ministries to ascertain legitimacy of the businesses. This way, the consortium ensured that no complaint was taken lightly, and that every effort was made to maintain transparency in the targeting procedure. Communities were satisfied with the results.

Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) promoted consensus with the community on issues such as environmental degradation, causes of destruction of key species, identification of degraded rangelands and development plans to rehabilitate degraded rangelands. The programme also held consultations around setting up of tri-border trade, economic development committees, and peace. For example, BORESHA organised five peace committee meetings bringing a total of 208 participants.

Targeting and Transparency

In all its programme components, BORESHA mainstreamed inclusivity and transparency. It brought together stakeholders representing all groups for beneficiary selection as a means to mitigate conflict and manage perceptions of exclusion. Partners have developed guidelines that are accessible to stakeholders. For the livelihoods component, stakeholder meetings are held to share program information by all consortium partners including guidelines for grants.

Community Feedback Mechanisms

The BORESHA programme has ensured that beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries have the freedom and necessary tools to provide feedback, whether positive or negative, to the partners. At the beginning, each partner used their own methodology for collecting and responding to feedback, and this occurred with varying efficiency. However, the consortium streamlined a consolidated feedback mechanism and used a collective voice to respond to complaints or concerns. This has sustained unity within the teams and shielded individual partners from blames while keeping the beneficiary feedback loop consistent. Partners use relevant and appropriate methods such as mobile phones, suggestion boxes, establishment of complaints and response mechanism (DRC), emails and grant fact sheets (WYG), post activity feedback templates, as well as regular feedback meetings. Partners used their conflict sensitivity knowledge during the community feedback engagements.

The joint feedback mechanism improved coordination, receipt and response to stakeholder concerns, and promoted community participation and ownership. BORESHA addressed the feedback received at different levels. For example, three concerns were fully investigated and resolved. Others came in the form of requests for assistance from needy beneficiaries and seeking clarification about the project. BORESHA has responded to all the 45 concerns received in the course of implementation.

Inclusion

Exclusion often affects poor and marginalised groups, minority groups and individuals, including children, indigenous peoples, the elderly, refugees, internally displaced people, and people with disabilities. BORESHA has intentionally put in place inclusion mechanisms for community members to participate in developing beneficiary selection criteria, assessments, and programme implementation. Community structures such as NRM Committees have membership with representation from the community, the local authorities, women, clan elders, religious leaders, marginalised groups, the disabled among others. Consortium members are intentional in ensuring they work with legitimate leaders and that they Do No Harm by legitimizing individuals such as gatekeepers.

Staffing and Recruitment

BORESHA recruited qualified and community-trusted individuals through a transparent process devoid of coercion. This meant that the allegiance of the staff would be to the project objectives and not influential individuals. The Programme avoided any clan politics in its recruitment.

Recruiting staff from the area of implementation and with in-depth knowledge of the context has helped support the consortium in resolving conflicts resulting from misinformation. For example, when BORESHA identified a community health facility for rehabilitation, the county government informed the team that the government had already rehabilitated the facility. The programme, through the Technical Implementation Group taskforce, reported after investigation that the county government had been misled on the status of the health facility. BORESHA and the county government reached a resolution that BORESHA would proceed with support to the health facility. Because BORESHA's team have been recruited from within the communities, they understand the context and its dynamics and are able to have frank discussions with local government officials.

CHALLENGES

Mainstreaming conflict into BORESHA has faced various challenges:

- Government officers demand for support such as fuel for vehicles or increased activities in certain areas beyond the budgetary provisions and plans. This has resulted to BORESHA being branded as a hostile partner when it states lack of budget and inability to support.
- Border closure by government authorities due to security threat has delayed project implementation. This has led to the adaptation and iteration of activities, such as using skype meetings rather than physical technical implementation group (TIG) meetings.
- Despite best efforts, there are still levels of exclusion of vulnerable groups due to insecurity which inhibited their participation in program activities. To mitigate this, BORESHA has used community structures such as Village Development Committees, Disaster Risk Committees, Natural Resource Committees and Livestock Common Interest Groups to supervise interventions and ensure inclusivity where programme staff are unable to access.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BORESHA in its efforts to move towards and maintain best practices in conflict sensitivity has learnt some lessons in the process.

1. BORESHA has utilised conflict sensitive principles, such as participation, equity, respect (consideration of self-worth of beneficiaries), inclusion and transparency to support conflict sensitivity. This shows enhanced commitment on conflict sensitivity and community development.
2. Transparent and functional systems and responsive feedback mechanisms either positive or negative with a lens of conflict sensitivity enhances community trust, eases programme implementation and supports conflict sensitivity. Developed guidelines for beneficiary selection with open verification processes should be tested for replicability as an approach to conflict Sensitivity.
3. There is need for regular conflict sensitive monitoring to have improved perspective on how BORESHA is interacting with the context and vice-versa, and intentionally develop options that enhances positive impacts and avoids negative outcomes.

4. Cross-border programmes should include conflict-sensitive indicators in their monitoring and evaluation plans to understand the interaction of particular project components with the contexts.
5. Periodic refresher trainings for programme implementers on conflict sensitivity enhances knowledge and skills for new and old staff and promotes consistency in efforts to do-no-harms in humanitarian and development contexts

Conclusion

Cross-border programmes are already dealing with a potentially volatile environment. And while programmes mean well for the community, lack of soft and often less prominent programme objectives such as conflict sensitivity can erode intended gains and contribute to increased tension in such environments. Conflict sensitive mainstreaming in the BORESHA programme has enhanced positive interactions with beneficiaries and stakeholders, and enhanced cohesion within communities.

By integrating conflict sensitivity in programming, BORESHA has initiated a culture where communities trust systems as credible instruments for unbiased development opportunities; enhanced harmony among implementers and local leaders; and, as a platform for stakeholder dialogue. Increased consultation processes and feedback mechanisms at levels of policy, programme implementation, and community has the capacity to mitigate potential conflicts. BORESHA's integration of conflict sensitivity into cross-border initiatives synchronizes other partners' conflict management efforts, and thus, propagates a responsive and resilience-conflict management environment.

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