The Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation
Thursday Talks

Part 1: Overview

In January 2012, the Summer Institute of Peacebuilding (SIP) brought together Catholic Relief Services’ (CRS) Emergency and Peacebuilding communities of practice. The SIP was meant to better connect peacebuilding with humanitarian work, including better integration of peacebuilding principles and approaches with humanitarian response programming, and an increased understanding of the humanitarian response community’s sectors, and tools created by the peacebuilding field.

CRS generally differentiates between working on conflict (addressed by the justice and peacebuilding sector), and working in conflict, which the humanitarian response (and sometimes development) sectors often face. CRS’ staff is increasingly aware, however, that a lack of intentional connection between the two sectors can result in a negative impact on humanitarian response program beneficiaries, especially in a context of rapid onset violent conflict or the threat of violent conflict. Emergency programming in such contexts at least must be conflict sensitive—grounded in good and regularly updated conflict analysis and implemented so as to “do no harm.”

SIP participants acknowledged that emergency and humanitarian programming already including activities that improved social cohesion; the emergency workers were very clear that they were not coming to the table without experience, they understood and practiced “do not harm”. Everything discussed was already in line with CRS’s commitment to integral human development.

One of the goals, or “deliverables”, that the 2012 workshop participants were committed to creating was the handbook. *Humanitarian Response in Violent Conflict: A Toolbox of Conflict Sensitive Indicators*. CRS’s South Sudan country program has recently reached out for technical support, and the country program intends to use handbook for programming that will link peacebuilding and reconciliation with emergency response and recovery programming. The authors and CRS are waiting to see how else the handbook will be utilized.

The Handbook is available, for free, to anyone at the following address: [www.csrprogramquality.org](http://www.csrprogramquality.org). The Handbook is based on SPHERE project core and sector standards and indicators. The SPHERE Project is a voluntary initiative bringing a wide range of humanitarian agencies around a common aim – to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, as well as the accountability of humanitarian actors to their constituents, donors, and affected populations. The SPHERE handbook establishes shared principles and universal minimum standards in four lifesaving areas of humanitarian response:

1) Water and sanitation,
2) Food
3) Shelter
4) Healthcare

The indicators in the SPHERE handbook are already conflict sensitive. The new handbook seeks to enhance conflict sensitivity. The 15 indicators, selected from over 100 indicators, are meant to be illustrative of a range of indicators, and encourage people to look at others. The 15 selected are not meant to be viewed as mandatory or standard indicators.
The 15 indicators were chosen from SPHERE’s six core and four sector-specific standards, to demonstrate the range in which conflict sensitivity can and should be applied. The authors wanted to give their audience a template or model from which they could modify other SPHERE indicators as challenges in the field require.

To demonstrate the use of the new standards, the presenters gave examples of indicators by identifying the original and modified indicators.

Example 1) Core Standard #2: Humanitarian response is planned and implemented in coordination with relevant authorities, humanitarian agencies, and civil society organizations engage in impartial action working together for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. To modify this indicator, the following addition has been made: Along with strengthening the individual capacity of indigenous actors (etc.) and investing in a platform for greater coordination and harmonization of efforts as well as building healthier relationships between relevant stakeholders.

Example 2) Food Security Standard #1: Where people are at risk for food insecurity and assessments are made using accepted method to understand the type, degree, and extent of food insecurity, identifying those who are most affected and defining the most appropriate responses. The modification was to add, with attention to issues of equity along lines of gender, ethnicity, age, race, and region of origin and the relationship to the context structures and systems.

To summarize looking across the 15 indicators that were included in the new handbook, many of the modifications were made to focus on the following four elements:

1) Increasing horizontal equity or fairness among and between displaced populations and host communities in the process of developing a program, and delivering service in access, especially in regards to information, resources, and decision making.

2) Improving the quality of intra and inter group relationships, especially between refugees, internally displaced persons, and host communities.

3) Deepening and regularly updating and integrating the results of conflict analysis.

4) Going beyond immediate responses to build the capacities of local populaces and institutions, to prepare and plan for eventual reconstruction, to build resilience.

Part 2: Question & Answer

1. The indicators mentioned seemed very subjective. Is it necessary to have some consistency in how they would be interpreted or measured?

Tom: To some degree it is difficult to avoid a degree of subjectivity. The handbook we’ve prepared, contains a brief rational on why tweak the indicator, and a few notes of guidance around its development. There is nothing more quantifiable or standard that what’s been suggested.

Aaron: The only thing I would add is that we’re looking at this from the perspective of an area of programming that traditionally is not considered part of emergency. So we are trying to put forward suggestions that will be as user friendly as possible for people who are working around the clock. How can we facilitate this process? And how can we increase their degree of willingness to take on what might otherwise be seen as a burden? We don’t want that perception, at the same time we certainly respect the need to have greater consistency in how we measure and report on these indicators. So this is our best effort to try and balance all those needs and requirements.
Tom: Again, I think it’s important to take into account that the original SPHERE indicators are themselves phrased in what you might call fairly subjective way. We haven’t really enhanced their subjectivity.

6. Does that allow for a little bit of wiggle room for contextualization?

Aaron: Tom is always fond of saying, “Peacebuilding is a lot like real estate – it’s all about location, location, location.” I think it absolutely does. For people who are familiar with a similar publication we put out about four years ago, the Generally Acceptable Peacebuilding Templates that look more at peacebuilding in a development setting, we made it very clear that for as much guidance as they gave, they were simply models. We decided that Generally Acceptable really should have read Generally Appropriate, so by all means there’s plenty of wiggle room or adaptation depending on your context.

It sounds like room for interpretation is what you guys are aiming for, that that’s part of the benefit.

Tom: Absolutely. The idea is to give people some ideas to work on. In terms of actually preparing and implementing your projects, take these somewhat more conflict sensitive indicators into account and then develop them.

2. You mentioned a lot of factors in the process of developing these indicators. You talk about timing; you talk about techniques, opportunities, and methods, but also the context. Some people are in very high risk situations; that security issue, and the urgency issue, how important was that for you as you worked on creating these indicators?

Aaron: When we were putting these together, we put them to members of the emergency operations community at CSR, and they are very aware of these issues. Therefore, when they reviewed what we produced, it was through that lens. They were thinking about staff security, and about levels of access.

Tom: One of the major challenges of bringing together justice and peacebuilding with the field of emergency had to do with the different timeframes that the communities live in. Emergency responders think in the immediate and short term where as those working in peacebuilding think in the long term. To bring these two extremes together necessitates creating what is “good enough” for both.

3. Toolkits are a good start but it is always about how we operationalize them and how we share them with staff. The challenge is staff turnover and also not overwhelming staff with toolkits and too many options. At Search for Common Ground we are thinking a lot about how staff learn and their needs. We have found that coaching is the best approach, as opposed to training. Any tips from CRS on how to effectively disseminate toolkits or utilize existing resources?

Aaron: CRS’s monitoring, evaluation, learning and accountability group just came out with a new set of procedures, on learning how to learn. So that application meets the preference of professionals in the field. It is important to move beyond “one and done” workshops. There needs to be “accompaniment”, which is where workshops are followed up by experts working alongside participants as they implement what they’ve learned. The number of justice and peacebuilding specialists who are available to perform this function are limited. In order to operationalize this goal, there is an increase in cohesion between different program areas (justice and peacebuilding and emergency response). As justice and peacebuilding, and emergency response move forward, it is in their best interest to integrate what the other is doing.
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**Tom:** It is important to look at lessons learned, who is learning them, and how are they learning them. A publication in and of itself is not enough. A workshop is great, but without accompanying coaching, it will be lost. Again, there is limited staff for follow up programming to workshops; they are unable to mentor many people for very long. There has been a pilot of “teaming”, to work on a response and indicators as a team between peacebuilding and emergency response. In reality it was difficult to implement, because there are limits on time in an emergency.

4. **How can these tools help incentivize their use? How can we go beyond performance reviews? How to get people to go beyond the tools they already know?**

**Aaron:** A couple of things, one is coming from us, and one is coming externally from the donors. In our new agency, where the rubber hits the road is in “strategic initiatives”. Strategic initiatives have expected results as well as indicators. One of the strategic initiatives that we have is to look at the number of successful proposals/projects that have included a conflict analysis and/or governance analysis and/or gender analysis in the design; that’s something that will be tracked by our internal project management platform, and that should be operational in the next fiscal year.

Externally, some of the major partner donors, such as USAID, increasingly use integrated project and proposal design evaluation criteria. CRS does a lot of work with multi-sectoral development food assistance programs, which include elements of conflict mitigation and disaster risk reduction, USAID packages these elements together and calls them resilience.

**Tom:** A couple other thoughts here, I think we need to use both carrots and sticks in getting people motivated to do this kind of work. We have often in CRS appealed to people on the broader mission and values of the organization, with importance of focusing on justice and dealing with conflict. A lot of people are sympathetic to that. There is a sense that this is very much at the heart of what CRS should be about, and so there is some motivation there. But I think without sticks, it’s very difficult. This is a stereotype, but I often refer to our technical advisor for agriculture, he would say, “Look, you’re working on conflict. I’m working on poverty. Poverty is a driver of conflict, so leave me alone.” That has changed. In the new CRS strategy integration is emphasized. Peacebuilding, governance issues, gender are meant to be cross cutting and integrated into all our work. And because leadership is now saying these kinds of things and it’s in the strategy, there’s more incentive.

5. **Which monitoring and evaluation methods are you using?**

**Aaron:** I don’t know what we use in integrated humanitarian response, because it is outside my experience

But to provide an example, we as an agency submitted three proposals for development food assistance programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2 of them we partnered with Notre Dame University to try and do impact evaluation work that uses randomized control trials to look at the contribution of having integrated peacebuilding, governance, and gender concerns in the program areas of food security, nutrition, water and sanitation and hygiene, and disaster risk reduction. If we integrate these concerns into our programming areas, then we are more likely to achieve integral human development and hopefully achieve higher impact results.

**Tom:** We’re beginning to look more seriously at counterfactual work, which we haven’t done in the past. We also do case studies, and we’re learning we need to make our case studies much shorter. Case studies need to be simple and accessible.

In integrated programming it’s important to look not only at results A and results B, but also look into what happens when you bring A and B together? Is there an added value to doing things together instead of just in parallel? Another consideration is that it’s impossible for certain people to access certain parts of a country in a conflict situation. The issue of “chained access” for expats especially,
creates the necessity of delegating some M&E to those partners and stakeholders who have greater access.

Aaron: A personal example, while working in North Kivu our group split into two teams – expats and locals- and took different routes, the expats taking the more secure route. Our Congolese colleagues were caught in a battle situation. It is important to be very sensitive to what we ask colleagues and partners who have more access to do.

You can listen in on the complete talk here.

If you have any follow-up questions, post them on the Thursday Talk Discussion Forum.