

Conflict-Sensitive WASH Guidelines

Peace-Building Through Water and Sanitation Programming

Overview

Conflict-Sensitive WASH Guidelines provide comprehensive frameworks for implementing water and sanitation programs that contribute to peace-building, conflict prevention, and social cohesion while addressing immediate WASH needs. These guidelines recognize that water programming can either exacerbate tensions or build bridges between communities, and provides tools to ensure programming serves peace and justice.

Core Innovation: Integrates conflict analysis, peace-building, and community reconciliation directly into WASH programming design and implementation, transforming essential services into platforms for building sustainable peace.

Key Principles:

- **Do No Harm:** WASH programming that avoids exacerbating conflicts or creating new tensions
- **Peace-Building Integration:** Water and sanitation projects as opportunities for cooperation and reconciliation
- **Community Agency:** Local communities lead peace-building processes with WASH support
- **Equity and Justice:** Addressing root causes of conflict through equitable resource access
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Respect for diverse cultural approaches to conflict resolution and peace

Peace-Building Programming Approaches

Water Cooperation and Shared Management

Joint Water Resource Management:

Shared Infrastructure Development:

- ☐ Multi-community water supply systems serving different groups
- ☐ Shared treatment facilities with joint governance and maintenance
- ☐ Regional watershed management requiring inter-community cooperation
- ☐ Transboundary water projects building cross-border relationships
- ☐ Climate adaptation infrastructure serving multiple communities

Cooperative Governance Structures:

- ☐ Multi-stakeholder water committees with inclusive representation
- ☐ Joint decision-making processes with consensus-building mechanisms
- ☐ Shared resource allocation based on equity and sustainability principles
- ☐ Collaborative conflict resolution and grievance mechanisms
- ☐ Participatory planning and implementation with all affected groups

Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms:

- ☐ Economic benefits shared proportionally among participating communities
- ☐ Employment opportunities distributed equitably across groups
- ☐ Capacity building and training accessible to all community members
- ☐ Technology transfer and knowledge sharing between communities
- ☐ Environmental benefits (ecosystem restoration) serving all participants

Peace-Building Through Service Delivery:

Inclusive Service Provision:

- Universal access regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation
- Culturally appropriate service delivery respecting diverse practices
- Language accessibility and culturally competent communication
- Disability inclusion and accessibility for all community members
- Gender equity in access, participation, and benefit distribution

Community Integration Activities:

- Joint construction and maintenance activities building working relationships
- Shared training and capacity building fostering mutual learning
- Cultural exchange and celebration integrated with WASH programming
- Youth and women's programs crossing community boundaries
- Environmental education and stewardship bringing groups together

Reconciliation Through Infrastructure:

- Memorial and healing spaces integrated with water infrastructure
- Truth-telling and acknowledgment processes during project implementation
- Restorative justice approaches to addressing past water-related grievances
- Symbolic projects demonstrating commitment to peace and cooperation
- Community art and cultural expression celebrating unity and diversity

Conflict Prevention and Early Warning

Water-Related Conflict Prevention:

Early Warning Systems:

- Community-based monitoring of water scarcity and competition
- Social tension monitoring and early warning indicators
- Environmental degradation monitoring affecting water resources
- Political and economic early warning related to water policies
- Seasonal calendar planning for water scarcity and conflict prevention

Preventive Interventions:

- Mediation and dialogue facilitation before conflicts escalate
- Resource sharing agreements during times of scarcity
- Alternative livelihood support reducing water resource dependence
- Infrastructure improvements reducing competition and tension
- Policy advocacy addressing structural causes of water-related conflict

Community Capacity for Prevention:

- Traditional conflict resolution mechanism strengthening and support
- Community mediator training and ongoing capacity building
- Inter-community dialogue and relationship building initiatives
- Peace education integrated with WASH programming and community development
- Economic cooperation and joint ventures reducing zero-sum competition

Addressing Water-Related Grievances:

Grievance Identification and Documentation:

- Community processes for identifying and documenting water-related grievances

- Historical research and truth-telling about past water injustices
- Impact assessment of water policies and projects on different groups
- Participatory mapping of water-related conflicts and tensions
- Gender and intersectional analysis of water-related grievances

Redress and Compensation Mechanisms:

- Restitution and compensation for past water-related harms
- Acknowledgment and public recognition of water injustices
- Policy reform addressing discriminatory water laws and practices
- Infrastructure investment prioritizing previously marginalized communities
- Economic development and livelihood support for affected communities

Systemic Change for Prevention:

- Legal and policy reform ensuring equitable water access and governance
- Institutional reform making water governance more inclusive and accountable
- Economic reform addressing wealth and income inequality affecting water access
- Political reform enabling meaningful participation in water decision-making
- Cultural change promoting water cooperation and shared stewardship

Protection and Civilian Infrastructure Safeguarding

Civilian Water Infrastructure Protection

International Humanitarian Law Application:

Legal Framework and Advocacy:

- Documentation and advocacy for water infrastructure as civilian infrastructure
- Legal advocacy and international pressure for infrastructure protection
- Monitoring and reporting on attacks against water infrastructure
- Accountability mechanisms for violations of international humanitarian law
- Policy advocacy for stronger protection of civilian infrastructure

Physical Protection Measures:

- Infrastructure hardening and protection against attacks
- Redundant systems and alternative water sources for resilience
- Community-based protection and early warning systems
- International observer and accompaniment programs
- Neutral marking and identification of civilian water infrastructure

Community Protection Strategies:

- Community-based protection networks and rapid response
- Documentation and advocacy for community protection
- Evacuation planning and safe shelter identification
- Communication systems for emergency coordination and protection
- International advocacy and solidarity for community protection

WASH Worker and Community Safety:

Safety and Security Protocols:

- Risk assessment and security planning for WASH workers and volunteers
- Safety training and protective equipment for community WASH workers

- Communication systems and emergency protocols for worker safety
- Coordination with local authorities and security forces for protection
- International advocacy and protection for local WASH workers

Community Safety Integration:

- Community-controlled safety and security planning
- Protection of vulnerable populations during WASH programming
- Gender-based violence prevention and response in WASH programming
- Child protection and safety in WASH facilities and programming
- Community resilience building and mutual protection networks

Neutral Humanitarian Access:

- Negotiation and advocacy for neutral humanitarian access to water infrastructure
- Community consent and participation in humanitarian water programming
- Coordination between different humanitarian actors for coherent protection
- Advocacy with all parties to conflict for civilian protection
- Documentation and accountability for restrictions on humanitarian access

Community-Based Protection Approaches

Traditional Protection Mechanisms:

Customary and Traditional Protection:

- Traditional authority and customary law for community protection
- Cultural and religious sanctuary and protection mechanisms
- Community solidarity and mutual protection networks
- Traditional conflict resolution and peace-making for protection
- Cultural and spiritual practices providing community protection and healing

Women's Protection Leadership:

- Women's traditional roles in protection and conflict prevention
- Women's networks and organizations for community protection
- Gender analysis and women's specific protection needs
- Women's participation in protection planning and decision-making
- Women's economic empowerment and independence for protection

Youth Protection and Empowerment:

- Youth leadership development and protection role training
- Youth networks and peer protection systems
- Educational and vocational opportunities providing protection from recruitment
- Youth participation in community protection planning and implementation
- Sports, arts, and cultural activities building youth resilience and protection

Community Resilience and Self-Protection:

Collective Protection Strategies:

- Community early warning and rapid response systems
- Collective action and organizing for community protection
- Economic cooperation and mutual aid for resilience and protection
- Community-controlled communication and information sharing
- Regional and network solidarity for mutual protection and support

Livelihood Protection and Restoration:

- Economic diversification reducing vulnerability and dependence
- Livelihood restoration and economic recovery for community resilience
- Cooperative and collective economic activities for mutual protection
- Market development and trade relationships building inter-community cooperation
- Financial services and savings programs providing economic security and resilience

Implementation Strategies and Tools

Conflict-Sensitive Programming Design**Do No Harm Programming Framework:****Conflict Analysis Integration:**

- Comprehensive conflict analysis informing all programming decisions
- Regular conflict analysis updates and programming adaptation
- Stakeholder engagement and community consultation on conflict sensitivity
- Risk assessment and mitigation planning for conflict-related risks
- Monitoring and evaluation including conflict sensitivity indicators

Programming Design Adaptations:

- Resource allocation and benefit distribution considering conflict dynamics
- Implementation modalities and partnerships selected for conflict sensitivity
- Timeline and phasing adapted to conflict cycles and political events
- Geographic targeting and site selection considering conflict dynamics
- Technology and approach selection appropriate for conflict context

Staff and Partner Orientation:

- Staff training in conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive programming
- Partner selection and capacity building for conflict-sensitive implementation
- Community engagement and consultation protocols for conflict sensitivity
- Coordination and collaboration with other actors for conflict sensitivity
- Advocacy and policy engagement strategies for conflict-sensitive programming

Peace-Building Integration Planning:**Peace-Building Opportunity Identification:**

- Mapping opportunities for peace-building through WASH programming
- Identifying and engaging peace-building actors and institutions
- Designing programming to maximize peace-building potential
- Integrating peace-building activities with WASH service delivery
- Connecting WASH programming with broader peace-building initiatives

Community Reconciliation Integration:

- Truth-telling and acknowledgment processes integrated with WASH programming
- Restorative justice and healing approaches in community WASH development
- Cultural and spiritual reconciliation activities supported through WASH programs
- Economic reconciliation and benefit-sharing through WASH projects
- Political reconciliation and governance cooperation through WASH institutions

Community Dialogue and Mediation Tools

Inter-Community Dialogue Facilitation:

Dialogue Process Design:

- ☐ Pre-dialogue relationship building and trust development
- ☐ Inclusive participation ensuring representation from all affected groups
- ☐ Cultural and religious sensitivity in dialogue design and facilitation
- ☐ Neutral and safe space creation for honest and open dialogue
- ☐ Skilled facilitation and mediation support for constructive dialogue

Dialogue Content and Structure:

- ☐ Historical grievance sharing and acknowledgment
- ☐ Current needs and interests identification and articulation
- ☐ Common ground and shared interests identification
- ☐ Creative problem-solving and win-win solution development
- ☐ Agreement development and commitment to implementation

Follow-up and Implementation:

- ☐ Implementation planning and responsibility allocation
- ☐ Monitoring and evaluation of agreement implementation
- ☐ Ongoing relationship maintenance and communication
- ☐ Conflict resolution mechanisms for implementation challenges
- ☐ Celebration and recognition of cooperation and peace-building achievements

Traditional and Cultural Mediation Integration:

Traditional Authority Engagement:

- ☐ Traditional leader and authority identification and engagement
- ☐ Customary law and traditional conflict resolution mechanism utilization
- ☐ Traditional ceremony and ritual integration in reconciliation processes
- ☐ Elder wisdom and traditional knowledge integration in problem-solving
- ☐ Traditional governance and decision-making process respect and integration

Cultural and Spiritual Approaches:

- ☐ Cultural values and principles guiding dialogue and reconciliation
- ☐ Spiritual and religious leader involvement in peace-building
- ☐ Sacred and cultural site protection and access negotiation
- ☐ Traditional and cultural practice accommodation in WASH programming
- ☐ Cultural exchange and celebration fostering understanding and cooperation

Economic Cooperation and Joint Benefits

Cooperative Economic Development:

Joint Enterprise Development:

- ☐ Water-related business and enterprise development with multi-community ownership
- ☐ Cooperative and collective business models for shared benefit
- ☐ Supply chain and market development creating inter-community economic relationships
- ☐ Technology and knowledge sharing fostering economic cooperation
- ☐ Financial services and credit programs supporting inter-community business development

Employment and Income Generation:

- ☐ Employment opportunities distributed equitably across communities
- ☐ Skills training and capacity building accessible to all community members
- ☐ Income generation activities creating incentives for cooperation
- ☐ Economic empowerment and independence reducing vulnerability and conflict risk
- ☐ Economic development planning and implementation with broad community participation

Resource Sharing and Management:

- ☐ Natural resource sharing agreements and cooperative management
- ☐ Infrastructure sharing and joint maintenance agreements
- ☐ Equipment and technology sharing reducing costs and building relationships
- ☐ Knowledge and expertise sharing building mutual capacity and respect
- ☐ Environmental restoration and stewardship creating shared responsibility and benefit

Market and Trade Development:

Cross-Community Trade:

- ☐ Market development and trade facilitation between communities
- ☐ Transportation and infrastructure development supporting inter-community trade
- ☐ Financial services and credit supporting cross-community business development
- ☐ Product development and marketing creating economic interdependence
- ☐ Trade association and cooperative development fostering economic cooperation

Regional Economic Integration:

- ☐ Regional market development and integration
- ☐ Economic planning and development with regional cooperation
- ☐ Investment attraction and development with shared benefits
- ☐ Economic policy advocacy for regional development and cooperation
- ☐ International trade and development with regional coordination and cooperation

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

Conflict-Sensitive Monitoring Framework

Peace and Conflict Indicators:

Peace-Building Outcome Indicators:

- ☐ Inter-community cooperation and joint activities
- ☐ Trust levels and relationship quality between communities
- ☐ Conflict resolution and mediation effectiveness
- ☐ Social cohesion and collective action capacity
- ☐ Cultural exchange and understanding between communities

Conflict Prevention Indicators:

- ☐ Early warning system effectiveness and community response
- ☐ Grievance resolution and redress mechanism utilization
- ☐ Tension reduction and de-escalation success
- ☐ Resource sharing and cooperation during scarcity
- ☐ Inclusive participation and representation in water governance

Do No Harm Monitoring:

- ☐ Unintended negative consequences and conflict exacerbation

- ☐ Elite capture and benefit concentration assessment
- ☐ Exclusion and marginalization monitoring
- ☐ Resource competition and tension increase assessment
- ☐ Cultural insensitivity and offense monitoring

Community-Based Monitoring Systems:

Participatory Monitoring Design:

- ☐ Community indicator development and monitoring system design
- ☐ Community monitor training and ongoing capacity building
- ☐ Participatory data collection and analysis
- ☐ Community reflection and learning from monitoring data
- ☐ Community action planning and adaptation based on monitoring results

Cross-Community Monitoring:

- ☐ Joint monitoring committees with representation from all communities
- ☐ Cross-community monitoring visits and observation
- ☐ Shared data collection and analysis
- ☐ Joint reflection and learning from monitoring results
- ☐ Collaborative action planning and programming adaptation

External Verification and Support:

- ☐ Independent monitoring and evaluation support
- ☐ Third-party verification of peace-building outcomes
- ☐ Academic and research collaboration for learning and knowledge development
- ☐ International observation and accompaniment for protection and learning
- ☐ Peer learning and exchange with other conflict-affected communities

Learning and Adaptation Protocols

Adaptive Programming Management:

Regular Programming Review:

- ☐ Monthly conflict sensitivity review and programming adaptation
- ☐ Quarterly peace-building outcome assessment and strategy adjustment
- ☐ Annual comprehensive evaluation and strategic planning
- ☐ Special reviews following significant conflict events or changes
- ☐ Continuous learning and best practice identification and sharing

Stakeholder Feedback Integration:

- ☐ Regular stakeholder feedback collection and analysis
- ☐ Community complaint and grievance mechanism for programming adaptation
- ☐ Partner and colleague feedback and learning integration
- ☐ Beneficiary and participant feedback and satisfaction assessment
- ☐ Expert and technical advisor feedback and recommendation integration

Programming Innovation and Improvement:

- ☐ Innovation and experimentation in conflict-sensitive programming approaches
- ☐ Best practice documentation and sharing
- ☐ Failure analysis and learning from unsuccessful approaches
- ☐ Scaling and replication of successful conflict-sensitive programming
- ☐ Policy and advocacy based on programming learning and evidence

Knowledge Management and Sharing:

Documentation and Knowledge Capture:

- ☐ Programming experience and lesson learned documentation
- ☐ Case study development and sharing
- ☐ Training material and tool development
- ☐ Policy and advocacy brief development and dissemination
- ☐ Academic and research publication and collaboration

Network and Community of Practice Development:

- ☐ Practitioner network and community of practice participation
- ☐ Peer learning and exchange facilitation and participation
- ☐ Conference and workshop presentation and participation
- ☐ Online and digital knowledge sharing and collaboration
- ☐ Mentorship and technical assistance provision to other organizations and communities

Movement Building and Advocacy:

- ☐ Policy and advocacy for conflict-sensitive programming standards and requirements
- ☐ Donor and funder education and advocacy for conflict-sensitive programming support
- ☐ Academic and research collaboration for evidence-based advocacy
- ☐ Network and alliance building for conflict-sensitive programming promotion
- ☐ Public education and awareness raising about conflict-sensitive programming importance

Implementation Tools and Checklists

Conflict Analysis Tools

Rapid Conflict Assessment Checklist:

Context Analysis (2-4 hours):

- ☐ Historical conflict and grievance identification
- ☐ Current tension and division assessment
- ☐ Resource control and access pattern analysis
- ☐ Power structure and stakeholder mapping
- ☐ Economic interest and benefit distribution analysis

Stakeholder Mapping (1-2 hours):

- ☐ Peace-building actor identification and engagement
- ☐ Conflict actor and spoiler identification and analysis
- ☐ Neutral and swing actor assessment and engagement strategy
- ☐ Relationship dynamic and cooperation potential assessment
- ☐ Conflict risk and mitigation strategy development

Programming Risk Assessment (1-2 hours):

- ☐ Conflict exacerbation risk identification and mitigation
- ☐ Elite capture and exclusion risk assessment and prevention
- ☐ Cultural insensitivity and offense risk identification and prevention
- ☐ Unintended consequence identification and monitoring
- ☐ Security and safety risk assessment and mitigation

Comprehensive Conflict Analysis Template:

Conflict Context Analysis:

Historical Context:

- Background: _____
- Root causes: _____
- Triggers: _____
- Previous attempts at resolution: _____

Current Situation:

- Active conflicts: _____
- Latent tensions: _____
- Recent developments: _____
- External influences: _____

Stakeholder Analysis:

Peace-building Actors:

- Organizations: _____
- Leaders: _____
- Capacity: _____
- Interests: _____

Conflict Actors:

- Groups: _____
- Motivations: _____
- Capacity: _____
- Strategies: _____

Programming Implications:

Opportunities:

- Peace-building potential: _____
- Cooperation mechanisms: _____
- Shared interests: _____
- Entry points: _____

Risks:

- Conflict exacerbation: _____
- Elite capture: _____
- Exclusion: _____
- Cultural insensitivity: _____

Risk Mitigation:

- Prevention strategies: _____
- Monitoring systems: _____
- Response protocols: _____
- Stakeholder engagement: _____

Peace-Building Programming Tools

Joint Programming Design Worksheet:

Shared Needs and Interests:

Common WASH Needs:

- Water access: _____

- Sanitation facilities: _____
- Hygiene education: _____
- Infrastructure maintenance: _____

Shared Benefits:

- Economic benefits: _____
- Environmental benefits: _____
- Social benefits: _____
- Political benefits: _____

Cooperation Mechanisms:

Governance Structure:

- Joint committee composition: _____
- Decision-making process: _____
- Representation and participation: _____
- Accountability mechanisms: _____

Resource Sharing:

- Financial contributions: _____
- Labor contributions: _____
- Material contributions: _____
- Knowledge and skill sharing: _____

Implementation Approach:

- Phased implementation: _____
- Geographic distribution: _____
- Benefit distribution: _____
- Monitoring and evaluation: _____

Dialogue and Mediation Planning Tool:

Pre-Dialogue Preparation:

Participant Identification:

- Community representatives: _____
- Traditional leaders: _____
- Women's representatives: _____
- Youth representatives: _____
- Technical experts: _____

Process Design:

- Objectives: _____
- Format and structure: _____
- Location and timing: _____
- Facilitation and mediation: _____
- Cultural and spiritual elements: _____

Dialogue Implementation:

Session Structure:

1. Opening and introductions: _____
2. Historical sharing and acknowledgment: _____
3. Current needs and interests: _____
4. Common ground identification: _____

5. Problem-solving and solution development: _____
 6. Agreement and commitment: _____

Follow-up Planning:

- Implementation responsibilities: _____
- Timeline and milestones: _____
- Monitoring and evaluation: _____
- Communication and reporting: _____
- Ongoing relationship maintenance: _____

Do No Harm Implementation Checklist

Pre-Implementation Conflict Sensitivity Review:

Programming Design Review:

- ☐ Conflict analysis integration and programming adaptation
- ☐ Stakeholder engagement and consultation adequacy
- ☐ Benefit distribution and resource allocation equity
- ☐ Implementation partnership and modality conflict sensitivity
- ☐ Risk assessment and mitigation strategy adequacy

Community Engagement Review:

- ☐ Inclusive participation and representation
- ☐ Cultural sensitivity and appropriateness
- ☐ Language accessibility and communication effectiveness
- ☐ Traditional authority and customary practice respect
- ☐ Vulnerable population inclusion and protection

Staff and Partner Readiness:

- ☐ Staff conflict sensitivity training and capacity
- ☐ Partner conflict sensitivity commitment and capacity
- ☐ Community volunteer and leader conflict sensitivity understanding
- ☐ Coordination and collaboration conflict sensitivity integration
- ☐ Monitoring and evaluation conflict sensitivity design

Implementation Monitoring and Adaptation:

Monthly Conflict Sensitivity Review:

- ☐ Unintended negative consequence identification and response
- ☐ Elite capture and exclusion monitoring and correction
- ☐ Cultural insensitivity and offense identification and response
- ☐ Resource competition and tension monitoring and mitigation
- ☐ Programming adaptation and improvement based on monitoring

Quarterly Peace-Building Assessment:

- ☐ Inter-community cooperation and relationship quality assessment
- ☐ Trust building and social cohesion measurement
- ☐ Conflict resolution and mediation effectiveness evaluation
- ☐ Economic cooperation and shared benefit assessment
- ☐ Peace-building outcome achievement and impact evaluation

Annual Strategic Review:

- Comprehensive conflict sensitivity and peace-building evaluation
- Programming strategy and approach review and adaptation
- Stakeholder engagement and partnership effectiveness review
- Learning and best practice identification and documentation
- Strategic planning and goal setting for following year

Call to Peace-Building Through WASH: Water and sanitation programming has immense potential to build bridges between communities, foster cooperation, and contribute to sustainable peace. These Conflict-Sensitive WASH Guidelines provide comprehensive frameworks for ensuring WASH programming serves peace and justice while meeting essential human needs.

Transform Conflict Into Cooperation:

1. **Conduct Conflict Analysis:** Use the assessment tools to understand local conflict dynamics and peace-building opportunities
2. **Design for Peace:** Integrate peace-building and conflict sensitivity into all aspects of WASH programming
3. **Build Partnerships:** Engage peace-building actors and work across community boundaries
4. **Monitor and Adapt:** Continuously monitor conflict sensitivity and adapt programming for maximum peace-building impact

Contact for Conflict-Sensitive Programming Support:

- **Email:** globalgovernanceframeworks@gmail.com
- **Subject:** "Conflict-Sensitive WASH Implementation"
- **Include:** Conflict context, community dynamics, programming scale, and technical assistance needs

Water Builds Peace: When communities share water resources, cooperate in infrastructure development, and jointly govern essential services, they build the relationships, trust, and institutions necessary for sustainable peace. Conflict-sensitive WASH programming demonstrates that essential services and peace-building can advance together toward a more just and peaceful world.

The Conflict-Sensitive WASH Guidelines are part of the Global Framework for Water & Sanitation (WASH) Governance. For complete framework access and peace-building tools, visit globalgovernanceframework.org