



Learning Strategy

1. Background

'The Practice of Conflict Sensitivity - Concept to Impact' project is intended to strengthen the practice of conflict sensitivity throughout and beyond a broad consortium of humanitarian, peace-building and multi-mandate development NGOs. The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium comprises some 37 agencies and operates in four countries - the UK, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. It works on six related areas to deliver its purpose, which is to improve policies and practices that support conflict sensitive approaches, across a broad network of organisations. As this process is about effecting changes – at both the organisational and programmatic levels – the project has a strong focus on learning, applying and sharing lessons about conflict sensitivity in practice: it can therefore be seen as a learning project which aims to push the boundaries of what is currently understood about this area of development, humanitarian and peacebuilding practice.

With 37 NGO members and activities progressing in 4 countries, the Consortium has already developed a considerable amount of information, documentation and lessons learned, with new outputs continually being developed. The questions now facing the Consortium relate to our methodologies for learning and how to make learning, documentation and dissemination effective in order to influence policy and practice.

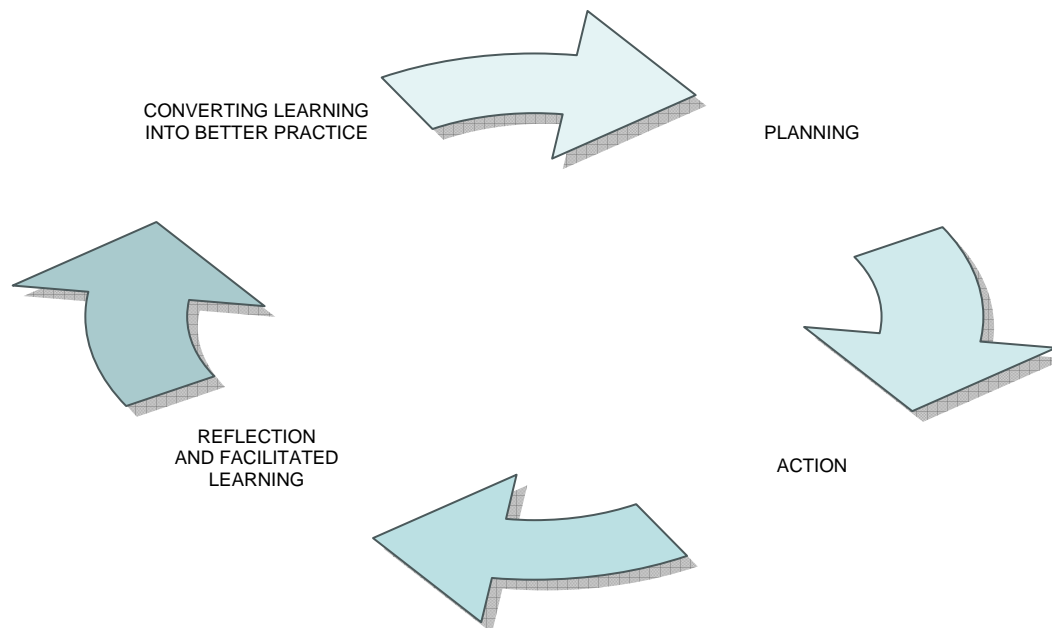
The Learning strategy has been developed to provide guidance across the four countries and will enable the Consortium to remain focused and reflect, review and monitor more systematically whether the project is reaching its potential. The Consortium's Mid-Term Evaluation completed in March 2010 highlighted a number of findings and questions related to the project learning, which have been taken into account to develop the strategy and will inform the monitoring of future Consortium's progress in terms of transformative learning.

2. Overall Framework

Overarching principles – How to Make Learning Effective/Transformative

Main principles guiding the Consortium's approach to learning involve:

- *Purpose-driven practice*
- *Reflective practice*
- *Bottom-up approaches*
- *Inclusive process, engaging actors beyond the Consortium*
- *Using transformative and incremental approaches to change*



A. Capturing Learning from Project Implementation

The first step in the learning strategy is to capture the learning emerging from different activities in different locations in ways that can inform reflection, planning and new actions.

The Consortium is applying and testing conflict-sensitive approaches (CSA) across a spectrum of areas, ranging from institutional capacity-building to the practical implementation of CSA at the programme and project levels. It is also piloting innovative approaches to assessment, monitoring and evaluation. An experiential, learning-by-doing approach is being used to transform lessons learned into improved practice. The challenge for the Consortium is to ensure that our purpose-driven practice is coordinated across different teams and countries, that documentation of processes effectively happens at pivotal points and that efforts are focused towards common areas of learning across the four countries – enabling effective sharing and reflection to spread from the country-level to the overall Consortium level and beyond. A tentative framework of key **guiding questions** has been developed, which is intended to link to both practical implementation and to the outreach and advocacy strategy.

CLUSTER 1 – INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING

- What are key blockages to the integration of CSA into organisational systems and what are possible ways to address them?
- What are key strengths and opportunities that can be built on?
- How can agencies conduct self-assessments and develop capacity-building plans in a practical and effective manner?

CLUSTER 2 – PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF CSA (AT PROGRAMME AND PROJECT LEVEL)

General programming:

- What are practical and effective ways to conduct and regularly revisit conflict/context analyses?

- How can conflict/context analysis be effectively used to inform programmatic decisions and help reassess and adjust implementation plans?
- What innovative approaches can contribute to enhancing the practice of conflict sensitivity at programme and project level?
- How can we best assess and measure the level of integration of CSA into programming and the impact of conflict sensitivity?

Conflict-sensitive emergency response:

- What are the challenges specific to conflict-sensitive emergency response?
- To what extent are conflict-sensitive principles already included (explicitly or not) in sector-wide and agency-specific emergency guides and standards (such as Sphere, HAP etc) what are the remaining gaps and how can these be addressed?

Notes:

- Programmatic learning as explored by the country pilots would involve a set of guiding sub-questions such as: what worked? What did not? What would we do differently? What was in our control? What was out of our control? Who else could we involve? Etc.
- Learning around the practical implementation of CSA should directly feed into the development of practical tools and guidance.

CLUSTER 3 – DONOR AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Key questions to be established as part of the review of the Consortium's outreach and advocacy work and strategy.

B. Facilitating Learning

Under each cluster each country consortium will detail concrete next steps to ensure that lessons learnt are effectively documented, and to ensure that appropriate times and mechanisms) are planned to maximise learning. Processes may entail: workshops, training, engaging colleagues in joint work, learning forums, action learning sets, proactive use of the website, videos, blogs, piloting learning in new projects (such as mini-pilots planned by the Kenya Consortium).

The next step for the overall consortium is to develop:

- 1) A coordinated system to store, process and disseminate information (linked to the website and outreach strategy);
- 2) Guidelines to ensure all events include **learning questions**: Before each future event the consortium will allocate a sub-group to discuss the learning questions for that event (A key learning question will shape each segment of annual cross learning events). The consortium should ensure that consortium learning questions are explicit and discussed/agreed before each event.
- 3) Guidelines to ensure Consortium reports focus upon learning. Each country will ensure that future agency specific progress reports explicitly consider the following questions:
 - a. What are you learning?
 - b. What is your organisation learning?
 - c. What is shareable / transferable?
 - d. How will you document this learning?
 - e. Who would find your learning useful?
 - f. How will you disseminate this learning?