

WESTERN BALKANS COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS REGIONAL MEETING

INTRODUCTION TO CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

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PEACENEXUS FOUNDATION

PeaceNexus is a Swiss-based Foundation that provides a range of capacity building services to organisations that play a role in building peace. The Western Balkans is one of PeaceNexus' four focus regions.

PeaceNexus participated in a meeting of community foundations in the Western Balkans in May 2018 and presented its approach to strengthening Conflict Sensitivity, exploring the concept and its relevance to community foundations, and referring to a call for proposals.

The core presentation is contained in this document.

Further information can be found here <https://peacenexus.org/>

WHAT IS CONFLICT SENSITIVITY?

It is typically defined as the ability of an organisation to:

- Understand the context in which it operates;
 - Understand the interactions between its actions and the context;
 - Act upon this understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict.
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CONFLICT SENSITIVITY: ORIGINS OF THE CONCEPT

- 1994: reflection among aid workers about their role in the Rwandan genocide
- **Mid-late 1990s, emergence of Do No Harm:**
 - Well-intended actions can inadvertently fuel tensions and violent conflict
 - Initial focus on humanitarian projects of international NGOs
 - Any actor intervening in a conflict context becomes part of that context



"Actually, I was hoping for a more inspiring mission statement."

- **From early 2000s, increasing take-up of broader concept of conflict sensitivity:**

- For all contexts: from high intensity violent conflict to more stable contexts with underlying lines of tension and exclusion
 - For all actors: local and international, NGOs and donors – more recently: businesses, national governments
 - Do No Harm + Do Good: from project level to international policy principles
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CONFLICT?

“Conflict exists in all societies at all times and need not necessarily be negative or destructive. Conflict is the pursuit of contrary or seemingly incompatible interests – whether between individuals, groups or countries. It can be a major force for positive social change.”

DFID, Preventing Violent Conflict, 2008

SPECTRUM OF AMBITIONS



←—————→
Conflict sensitivity

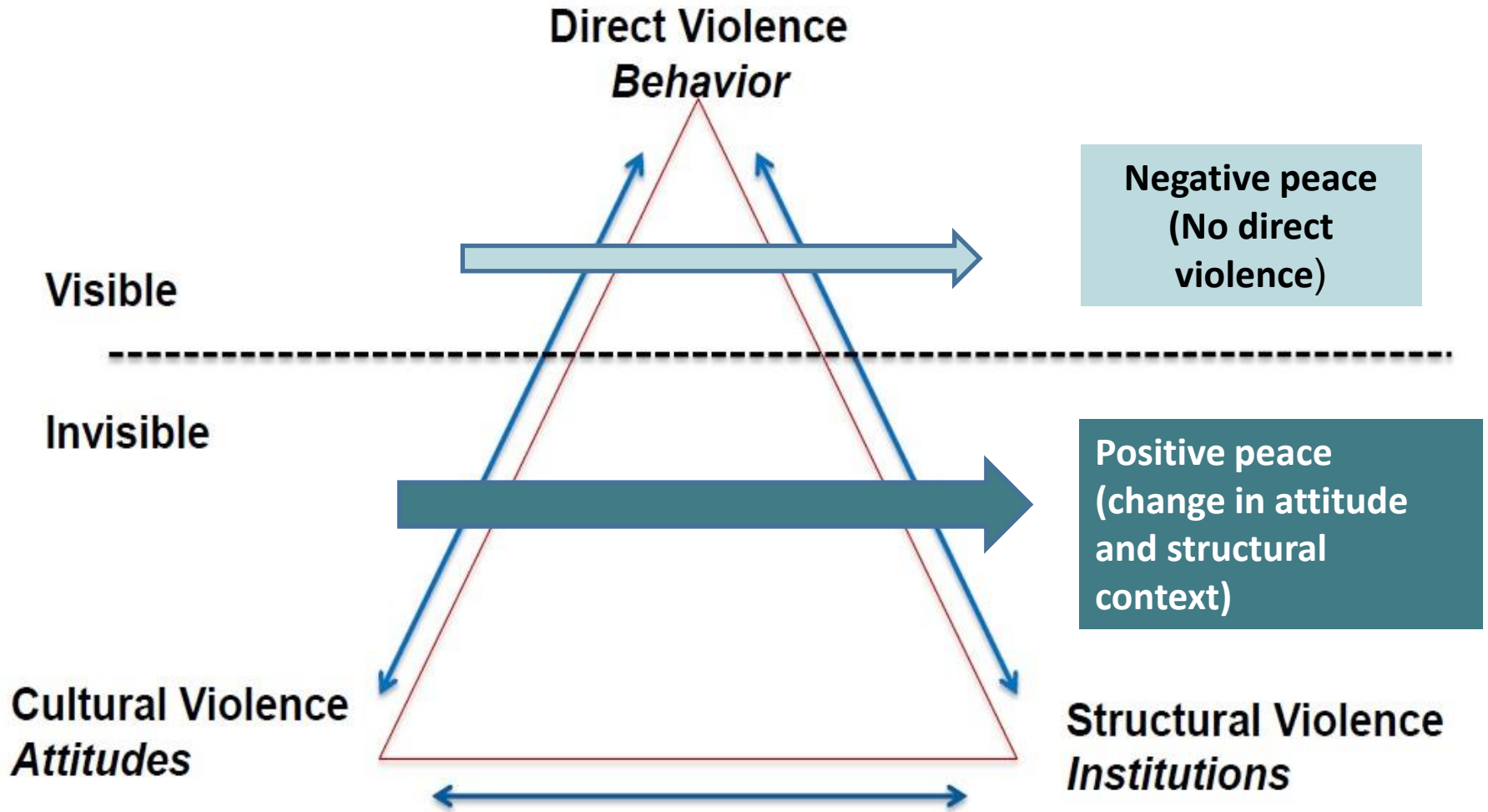
←—————→
Peacebuilding

3-step
conflict
sensitivity
cycle



Understand the context

VIOLENCE?



**Understand the interactions
between your actions and the
context**

Impact of the context on your organisation and actions:

- Often easier to think about, direct relation to risks analysis
- Dynamic

Your impact on the context :

- All organisations have effects, intended and non-intended, on the context → local or international, working on education, health, culture, the environment, or peacebuilding...
 - They may be negative (fuelling tensions, divisions, exclusion...) or positive (strengthening social cohesion, promoting more equitable use of resources, ...)
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If we are not conflict-sensitive, we risk ...

- To (unintendedly) reinforce or create tensions between different groups
- To put our organisation, staff, partners at risk
- To be (unintendedly) associated or partnering with conflict actors

...

If we are conflict-sensitive, we can...

- Avoid the risks of fuelling divisions
- Anticipate and react to change
- Anticipate risks for our programme, organisation and staff
- Contribute to positive change

...

Act upon this understanding to avoid negative impacts (Do No Harm) and maximise positive impacts on conflict (Do Good)

SOME INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE

What have organisations done?

- Conducting conflict analysis before and during projects
- Building feedback loops with beneficiaries
- Promoting more diversity in staffing and partners
- When funding projects: asking for a conflict sensitivity analysis (and providing budget/time); enabling more flexible implementation in view of context changes, ...

How has it helped?

- Less tensions around project implementation
 - Increased overall quality of programming
 - Strengthened relations with communities
 - New perspectives brought by staff/partners
 - More credibility
 - Identification of new options for contributing to positive change
 - ...
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CONFLICT SENSITIVITY: SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

- [How to guide to conflict sensitivity](#) (conflict sensitivity consortium)
 - [Factsheet on conflict sensitivity](#) (KOFF/Swisspeace)
 - [Conflict sensitivity topic guide](#) (GSDRC)
 - [Promoting conflict sensitivity amongst donor agencies: policy brief](#) (conflict sensitivity consortium)

 - [Swisspeace online course](#)
 - Galtung, Johan (1969). "Violence, Peace and Peace Research". *Journal of Peace Research*. **6**: 167–191. (= paper introducing the conflict triangle framework)
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