The Conflict Sensitivity Lens
A Palme Center Tool

I. WHY WE NEED A CONFLICT SENSITIVITY LENS?

I. 1. CONFLICT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Conflict occurs everywhere in all times. It is part and parcel of human relationships and human existence even in peace. Conflict may occur at many social levels. It can be personal, interpersonal, inter-group, intra-group, inter-organisation and intra-organisation levels. It can also be intrastate (state-based) armed conflict and international levels. There are conflicts of political orientation, gender issues and conflicts originated in class and socioeconomic conditions and conflicts related to religious, ethnic, sectarian etc identities. Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that their concerns/ interests/values/needs/ organisations are in a negative opposition. Most conflicts may remain peaceful even when they can be perceived as negative situation that needs to be solved. If handled peacefully and constructively, conflict can function as an essential vehicle for social change and progress. It is in human relationships that a conflict is managed, resolved or transformed. Good relations and constructive negotiations between trade unions and employers, minorities and majorities, men and women, political parties and civil society organisations lead to mutually beneficial resolutions of various and potential conflicts of interest.

I.2. DEVELOPMENT WORK AND SOCIETAL CONFLICTS

Olof Palme International Center (Palme Center) believes that all development work for change takes place in a context that is conflict-filled. The Palme Centre's and partners' aim to address fundamental negative conditions that create harmful conflicts related to poverty, inequality, social injustices, segregation, human rights abuses, authoritarianism and corruption. This development work is guided by a rights-based approach and democracy and solidarity values and directed to all people irrespective of social backgrounds. Democracy and human rights will be strengthened by facing the above-mentioned conditions as well as peace and stability. Development work occurs within complex contexts that are characterised by multi religious, ethnic, racial, territorial, cultural and language identities. These identities can easily be politicised and monopolised by elites in damaging and destructive ways. When this happens, the normal social interactions that connect people across identities is being disrupted. This may result in broken human bonds, fragile communities and weakened institutions and pave the way for social tensions and harmful conflicts.

II. THE PALME CENTER CONTRIBUTION TO COMBAT HARMFUL CONFLICTS

II.1 HARMFUL CONFLICTS

Conflict becomes harmful when the concerned actors start to communicate and act in ways that are perceived by each side to be threatening and damaging each other´s ability to pursue own needs/values/ interests or their existence is endangered. When the conflict it not addressed and resolved, the harmful conflict may grow, becoming increasingly destructive for all involved. Even many non-involved and already vulnerable people are negatively affected. Those harmful conflicts when involved parties use violence

constitute a threat to democracy and the well-being of the communities. This may result in distorted social trust and broken social bridges within the larger society. The harmful conflicts contribute also to polarisations, hatred among people and lack of basic human security. Hatred, racism, negative attitudes and stereotypes between communities and people increase and may lead to dehumanisation of the other. This situation is characteristic for ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Lack of understanding of harmful conflicts within the development partnerships can undermine the civic engagement for democracy, peace, human security and human rights. It is, hence, of great importance that a conflict sensitivity perspective permeates the Palme Centre's development aid and operations.

II.2. CONFLICT SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

The aim of applying a conflict sensitive analysis in the Palme Centre's development work is to avoid creating destructive conflicts between people and communities while, at the same time, working to achieve change for democracy and human rights. Thus, the conflict sensitivity approach can be applied to all contexts, regardless of the level of tensions and violence. The Palme Center strives to advocate a more encompassing principle of conflict sensitivity to maximise the positive impact of the rights-based development work on peace and human security. Although conflict sensitivity in development work does not imply working specifically for peace, it has nevertheless an important effect on the Palme Centre's vision.

III. THE CONFLICT SENSITIVITY LENS

III.1. PURPOSE

The Conflict Sensitivity Lens is a tool used by the Palme Center to ensure that the development work does not contribute to harmful conflicts but creates opportunities for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The tool allows the Palme Center and partners to be relevant and active actors by empowering them to understand how the development work in the complex world may impact on the societal conflict and, vice-versa, how the societal conflict influences the development work. By doing so, partnerships may create opportunities for progressive change based on a more informed context and conflict analysis that hopefully lead to durable democracy, human rights, human security and peace. The tool is simple and straightforward and can be used by a minimum of expertise in conflict analysis.

III. 2. WHEN AND HOW TO USE THE TOOL

- o The Conflict Sensitivity Lens should be used in the first stages of planning of a development project and program so that all operations can be seen from the perspective of conflict sensitivity.

- o It is also valuable to conduct a conflict sensitivity analysis as part of monitoring of a project or program.

- o The tool can be used in projects and programs which do not work directly on mitigating conflict and those which work specifically on conflict and peace.

- The Lens consists of separate yet related, subsequent questions. The basic step 0 is a crucial question and intended to provide a joint introductory analysis. Steps 1 and 2 raise two questions which relate to the ways how the societal conflict may influence the development work. These questions are usually looked at as risks on the projects and programs.

- Steps 3 and 4 raise two questions which should engender discussions on the ways how the development work may create impact on the societal conflict.

- Steps 3 and 4 provide for a more extensive analysis that has the potential to change the strategic focus of the development work to pro-active peace building and making operations.

- The best way to use the Lens is to do the analysis in a group. The target groups, partner organisations and projects/program staff involved in the project/program can be involved. The analysis could also be performed by the Palme Center and partners staff and result in strengthening of our own and partners' capability to reduce sources of violence, social tensions, hatred and extremism.

Basic Step 0.	
Context, conflict Analysis	
Assess the political context in which the project/program is implemented from a conflict analysis viewpoint i.e. focus on understanding the possible sources of tension, polarisation, hatred, patterns of war communication as well as sources of common understanding, social cohesion and patterns of peace communication. Predict the future situation.	
Step 1.	**Step 3.**
Risk awareness: conflict context impact on the project/program	**Project's/ program's impact on the conflict**
How the conflict situation affects the project/program, both positively and negatively? How can positive impact be strengthened, and negative impact and risks be addressed and avoided?	How does the project/ program impact on the social conflicts, both positively and negatively? How can negative impact be reduced and positive impact strengthened?
Step 2.	**Step 4.**
Reducing negative impact and strengthening capacity	**Addressing the harmful conflict**
What can the project/program/ organisation do to reduce the impact of harmful conflicts on the project, program and the organisation? Leading question.	How can the project/program/organisation contribute to peace and social cohesion through inclusion, non-discrimination, non-violence and peaceful-coexistence?

Give examples