



Conflict sensitivity

Development and conflict are inseparable, but conflicts must be dealt with constructively and non-violently if they are to lead to progressive social change. A conflict that is not dealt with peacefully and constructively can snowball instead, and become destructive, hostile and/or harmful – even to people who are not directly involved in it.

The core activity of the Olof Palme International Center – i.e. to build alliances, to organise and to give people the tools they need for change – entails handling social conflicts non-violently. It is important to consider that we are constantly placing ourselves in the path of conflicts, given that the objective of our development partnerships is to change structures, highlight injustice and oppression, and redistribute power and resources. When people organise and join forces to demand their rights, there are other parties who apply resistance to these changes.

A development initiative always affects the local context, in precisely the same way as the context affects the development initiative. It is therefore important that we always attempt to minimise negative effects of our change work to ensure that our input does not unintentionally cause damage, create/worsen violent conflicts, or increase the power of destructive players. For this reason, we need to compile knowledge about the local context, players, power and conflict dynamics, and risks.

Furthermore, the Olof Palme International Center's development work is often carried out in conflict or post-conflict situations. In such cases, it is even more important that we attempt to exert a stabilising, peace-promoting and conflict-preventing influence. We do so, for example, by working actively with inclusion, openness and non-discrimination, and to promote peaceful co-existence.

It is likewise essential to act on the assumption that there may be ongoing or potential conflicts within the partner organisation or the target group.

In order to minimise the risk of negative effects from our change work, it is crucial to analyse the context from the perspective of conflict sensitivity, to follow up on development continuously, and to adopt relevant measures.

Discuss:

- What **conflict factors and/or tensions exist** in the area where the project is taking place? Is there a risk that the operation will cause conflict? In what ways is this taken into consideration in the planning and implementation?
- What **unintended negative effects** might the operation have on the local context? What **measures** are required to minimise, prevent and deal with these effects?
- How is **power distributed** in the area where the project is being carried out? What **players** are relevant to understand the local power and conflict dynamics?
- Are there any **conflicts within the partner organisation**? Is there a risk that the operation may cause conflict? How can this be prevented/dealt with?
- **What factors unite people** in the area where the project is taking place? Might the operation help to prevent or resolve conflicts/contribute to peace and peaceful co-existence?

On our website, under [Method material](#), you can download **The Conflict lens** – which is the Olof Palme International Center’s method material on conflict sensitivity.