

DO NO HARM PROJECT

Footprints in the Sand? Missed Opportunities and Future Possibilities for Do No Harm in Sri Lanka

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This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

These documents do not represent a final product of the project. While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

Not all the documents written for any project have been made public. When people in the area where a report has been done have asked us to protect their anonymity and security, in deference to them and communities involved, we keep those documents private.

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Introduction

This report for CDA's Do No Harm Project is one in a series of case studies which explore how individuals and organizations use and integrate Do No Harm and the successes and challenges that they face in this process. Some organizations are experienced and effective in applying Do No Harm principles and framework to their work, while others are struggling. This range of experience provides valuable lessons. Whether implementing Do No Harm in their daily work, in their program design and monitoring, or in shaping policies and organizational procedures, the cases look at where in their work people find it easy to use Do No Harm, where they find roadblocks, and how (or if) they overcame them.

Sri Lanka, the focus of this case study, has a rich history with CDA. Since the very beginning of the Local Capacities for Peace Project (LCCP), later renamed Do No Harm Project, there have been numerous DNH workshops, training sessions and consultations involving national and international staff of many international and local NGOs based in Sri Lanka. In addition, a team of CDA staff and consultants visited Sri Lanka six times in the period of 1998-2000 and worked primarily with CARE to help institutionalize and mainstream DNH principles.

This case study on Do No Harm application in Sri Lanka is by no means a comprehensive investigation of all of the organizations and practitioners who are informed by or using DNH in their work. The information gathered during the study visit is but a small portion of a much larger body of knowledge and experience with the Do No Harm Project itself and with its key concepts and tools. The scope of this work, undertaken by Isabella Jean and Maureen Lempke in July 2007, was influenced by an escalation of military confrontations between the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE forces in the East and the North of Sri Lanka. An increasing number of civilian casualties and displacement, human rights violations, disappearances and hate crimes, recapturing of territory once controlled by LTTE, and growing mistrust and hostility by the Sri Lankan government toward international NGOs formed the backdrop against which the conversations about Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity took place. The authors were limited in their ability to travel outside of Colombo and their opportunities to speak with field level staff and beneficiaries about their experience with DNH.

Despite these limitations, compelling key themes have emerged including how DNH is adapted by development practitioners and humanitarian aid workers to the overarching context within which they are working. We heard about DNH being described and used as a 1) conflict sensitivity lens, 2) a conflict-sensitive program design tool, 3) a peacebuilding tool to identify potential "connectors," and 4) as a risk assessment tool to protect staff, partners and beneficiaries in an environment of increasing insecurity. In addition, we received several requests to assist individuals and organizations in developing monitoring and evaluation systems to help them monitor for DNH. These themes and others are described in great detail in this case study.

Methodology

Because CDA's projects, including Do No Harm, are field-based and experience-driven (rather than theory or model-based), no formal research protocol was used during our July 2-18th 2007 field visit. However, as with the other case studies in this series, three broad categories of inquiry guided the questions asked. First, conversations explored what analytical tools organizations and individuals regularly used (or not) for *context analysis* and for assessing the *impacts* of their programs on the conflict environment in which they operated. Second, we sought to understand how the DNH framework has been applied for analysis and generation of *programmatic options*. Third, we wanted to understand the *efficacy of DNH training* to better prepare staff and implementing partners to anticipate the potential harmful effects of assistance within the Sri Lankan context. In other words, if the aim of DNH is to help assistance workers and organizations provide assistance in ways that do not exacerbate conflict dynamics and help sustain or build positive linkages, then to what extent is this happening in Sri Lanka and if not, why? (For a complete list of questions see Annex 1)

As alluded to in the Introduction, this case study was affected by two major constraints: the relative brevity of time spent in country and the geographic limitation of being in Colombo for the entirety of the visit. In regard to the former, there are a great number of organizations and individuals in Sri Lanka whose work has been informed by their exposure and use of the Do No Harm principles. To gather evidence from a wide range of actors in the international assistance sector we are aware that this "environmental scan" allowed for a broad view but, with a few exceptions, our limited time did not allow us to examine detailed application of the Do No Harm Framework. As for the latter, we spoke primarily to program staff (i.e. project and program managers, country directors and policy advisors) most of whom spend the majority of their time in Colombo, although they do travel regularly to the field. In some instances, we did have a chance to speak to a few individuals who came to Colombo from their regional offices and locations.

It is important to be explicit about these two constraints, for they impinge upon the nature, style and perspective of our findings. First, most of those we spoke with, both national and international staff, are very experienced in the discourse of international development, having developed proposals, worked with multiple donors and within various international NGOs. Their feedback and insights reflect the highly structured and formalized language that characterized many of these conversations. At the same time, our articulation of the "impacts" of Do No Harm application on the conflict environment and on the communities in Sri Lanka is similarly informed by the assessments provided by Colombo-based staff. Regrettably we were unable to speak to any beneficiaries of these projects in order to weight our findings against their opinions and judgments of the communities. It is important to note that despite these limitations, they seem to have no effect on the candor and honesty with which people spoke. They were always reflective and aware of the context in which they are working, often critical of themselves and their respective organizations, and never flinching in their efforts to learn and improve. (For a complete list of organizations and individuals visited, see Annex 2).

The Sri Lankan Context

“During a Canadian Embassy briefing for a group of newly arrived organizations and private philanthropists, many expressed genuine surprise upon hearing that there was even an armed struggle on the island and asked who the LTTE were. Some of these individuals were literally holding suitcases full of money to provide assistance. It was all very chaotic.”

A representative of a donor agency on post-tsunami influx of foreign assistance

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka between the Tamils and Sinhalese has been characterized by intercommunal and political tensions for more than fifty years. In the last three decades, the conflict has escalated into a protracted violent struggle between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who demand an independent homeland for the Tamil minority on the North and East of the island. It is estimated that to date the military confrontations have resulted in close to 65,000 civilian deaths. A number of negotiated ceasefire agreements have been violated and treaties broken. There is a deep erosion of trust between the political parties representing the Tamil, Sinhala, as well as Muslim communities.

When the tsunami struck in December of 2004, the sheer devastation of the tsunami seemed to temporarily neutralize the conflict and in some areas, bring together bitter enemies. One Sri Lankan DNH practitioner and trainer described that in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, a Buddhist monk and LTTE fighters, the two fiercely nationalist groups on the opposite ends of political spectrum and often identified as the primary “dividers”, worked alongside each other and cooperated on provision of first aid, emergency food and shelter to all survivors notwithstanding their ethnic background. Inspiring stories similar to this surfaced in several conversations. This goodwill lasted for no more than three to four weeks.

An unprecedented number of international and local relief agencies and private charitable groups mobilized to bring assistance to the South and East of the country. A number of these organizations lacked even basic knowledge of the Sri Lankan context and on-going conflict and others had limited understanding of the historical animosities and knowledge of DNH or other conflict-sensitive context analysis principles.

Local and foreign agencies who had focused on humanitarian, development and peace building issues on the island for many years were now working alongside newly arrived organizations and private interests. The sheer number of new actors in Sri Lanka resulted in what one observer called “a congested humanitarian space.” There was pressure to “operationalize quickly,” to “get the money out the door,” and demonstrate “visible results.” NGOs whose sole mission had once been dedicated to peace building pre-tsunami, for better or worse, were either perceived to be or were in fact engaged in relief work.

The results of these dynamics were largely negative. Poor coordination and communication was magnified by the abundance of groups operational on the ground as well as by the scale of the disaster. Conflict-sensitive programming in the tsunami affected South and tsunami-affected *and* war-affected East was largely compromised. In many cases, relief aid was distributed to already divided communities in ways that did not build on recent collaboration and therefore, failed to strengthen the nascent relationships and “connectors.” Some respondents commented that the effects were even worse on the macro level: the tsunami and subsequent aid is perceived as the driving force in funding both the Sri

Lankan Government and LTTE to further escalate the conflict through the monetization of goods provided.

The signing of the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMs) between the government and LTTE failed to move the parties closer to renewed political negotiations and war between the Sri Lankan government and LTTE resumed in early 2006. Both sides have been culpable in the rapidly deteriorating situation. The LTTE has directly targeted civilians with remote-controlled landmines and suicide bombers, murdered perceived political opponents, and forcibly recruited ethnic Tamils into its forces, many of them children. The Government of Sri Lanka has been accused of violating the laws of war, committing extrajudicial killings, unlawfully restricting the media and nongovernmental organizations, and conducting indiscriminate attacks on civilians. Between January 2006 and June 2007, 1,100 new cases of abductions and “disappearances,” were reported and an estimated 315,000 people have had to flee their homes due to fighting since August 2006- on top of the already 200,000-250,000 people made homeless by the tsunami. Ethnic Tamils have suffered the brunt of abuses, but members of the Muslim and majority Sinhalese populations have also been victims of the conflict.

Current Context of Relief Operations

“We had a wonderful peace building program involving the exchange of teachers from the Tamil and Sinhala communities. Everything was going so well. We were trying to build upon existing ‘Connectors,’ that is teachers, to foster relationships between the two communities.”

“Was the DNH Framework helpful?”

“Yes, it was...until one day the teachers got into a van for one of their teaching activities. All 11 of them and the van disappeared and they have not been seen again.”

A representative from an international development organization

International NGOs operating in Sri Lanka have been profoundly affected by the resumption of violence. The appalling murder of 17 aid workers from Action Contre Faim in August 2006 and the subsequent stalling of investigations into these killings has fostered a very real sense of fear and suspicion in the humanitarian sector. Many INGOs are operating under constraints imposed both by the government forces and the rebel forces and have difficulty gaining access to certain areas and needy populations. A number of INGOs regularly find themselves under close scrutiny and intense criticism by the Sri Lankan government due to their on-going presence in the LTTE-controlled areas in the North. New administrative “procedures” have been adopted by the Government to monitor aid organizations that work on human rights, democratization, and peace-building. A Parliamentary Committee requires NGOs to submit their internal records from the past ten years, such as lists of publications and organized functions, including list of attendees.

Virtually everyone we spoke with expressed grave concerns about the current context and how it affects their on-going work both in terms of any future peaceful settlement of the conflict and the many adjustments to their programming scope, location and staffing. In fact, in nearly all conversations people spoke more about the *context* than their actual work and it was clear that they *needed* to do this. Several international NGO representatives were concerned about maintaining their level of staffing, their working relations with local implementing partners, and relations with beneficiary communities. They attributed this in large part to the government-controlled media (and several prominent political parties) regularly accusing international organizations of having hidden agendas, bias and supporting the

rebel movement with goods and services. A few spoke about fears of their phone conversations being monitored and many said that they perceived a reticence by the NGO community as a whole to “stick their necks out.” Either implicitly or explicitly the sentiment of personal and organizational “powerlessness” was articulated again and again.

Despite this expression of powerlessness, in connecting the current context to application of Do No Harm, the *first* issue discussed in many cases was how DNH concepts and tools are useful or could be useful for managing risks to their own staff stationed in the field. In these cases, risk reduction was understood as one of the goals of conflict-sensitive programming. The *second* most commonly stated use of DNH in the current Sri Lankan context was that donors and NGOs, (including USAID, Helvetas, Norwegian Church AID, Danish Church AID, World Vision and others) used and continue to use DNH as a context analysis tool to actively and successfully negotiate the flow of funding to be used in Tsunami affected *districts* as opposed to being earmarked for tsunami-affected beneficiaries or villages only, doing so with a full understanding of how funding only the latter could reinforce Dividers and send the wrong Ethical Message to surrounding communities.

People expressed real concerns about the current environment for humanitarian, development and peace building efforts as characterized by increased risk and an abundance of development and humanitarian actors under pressure to show impact in a setting where they may not necessarily be welcomed by the host Government. Against this backdrop, people’s assessment of their own relief, development and peacebuilding work and the level of understanding of DNH (and other conflict sensitivity methods) in their organizations revealed a range of experiences with application of these tools and principles, which is be discussed in more detail below.

DNH in Sri Lanka – History and “Epidemiology”

Do No Harm has a rich history in Sri Lanka, dating back to the early Local Capacities for Peace workshops in mid-90s. Later, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) worked with several international partners such as International Alert, Safeworld and others to develop the “Resource Pack on Conflict Sensitive Approaches” in 2004 in which Do No Harm was also featured. CHA offered a number of Do No Harm trainings to the members of the Consortium and their implementing partners. A Do No Harm Working Group was initiated by the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies before the Tsunami and convened three meetings, “but in the day to day responsibilities of their work they [relief agencies] found it increasingly difficult to engage in the group” (Program manager of a European development NGO)

Currently there are five primary ways in which individuals in Sri Lanka learn about DNH (Annex 2 contains a detailed table of each individual’s initial exposure to DNH):

- Through donors such as CIDA, SIDA, GTZ, Cordaid, and others
- From previous or current employers (including GTZ, Mercy Corps, UNHCR, CARE, RedR, others)
- Through a DNH Training or through meeting with CDA staff (including World Vision LCP Trainings, CHA, Swisspeace, CARE’s Voice Project, National Peace Council, others)
- Through educational and “think tank” institutions (including the University of Bradford, the University of Sri Lanka, American University Peacebuilding and Development Institute Summer Program, Kelayinna College, Austrian Center for Study of Conflict and professional and graduate certificate programs abroad)

- Through participation in modules and capacity-building workshops or exchange trips funded by donors on conflict mapping and analysis, Do No Harm, Responding to Conflict (RTC), PCIA and others (including CHA, OxfamGB, World Vision’s Asian Regional Office, etc.)

DNH “exposure trainings” organized by organizations for their staff and local implementing partners are still the primary way people hear about DNH. FLICT, an organization that focuses on capacity building, presented another means by which professionals (and fledgling professionals) are learning about DNH. FLICT is not a direct implementer of projects in the field, but they have developed a specialized training module used for preparing local consultants for conflict transformation and peace building interventions. DNH and PCIA principles are incorporated into the project design and are presented as tools for situational analysis and conflict-sensitive programming. Special attention is given to Dividers & Connectors in the module. Finally, conversations we had with a variety of independent consultants revealed a cadre of “unaffiliated” development workers who are applying their knowledge of DNH, for think tanks and development organizations (for example GTZ and CEPA), as part of a larger critique and discussion of conflict sensitivity tools including PCIA and PCA.

DNH Training in Sri Lanka

“I am absolutely adamant about this, I could not support an outsider coming here to do a DNH training. Sri Lanka has the capacity. Where we could use some training is how to monitor for DNH, we are looking for some mentoring here.”

Conflict Sensitivity Advisor, CHA

If training remains one of the primary methods for learning about DNH, we sought to understand who was trained and why, how the trainings were designed and conducted, what worked and what didn’t in the design and implementation of trainings, and to what extent the concepts and principles were integrated in both the individual’s and the organization’s work.

Training Participants

Generally, DNH trainings are often provided by Program Managers and local or foreign consultants/trainers for junior level project staff, field staff and local implementing partners. World Vision’s most recent Training of Trainers was for their staff in the Area Development Programs and local partners. Helvetas’ DNH training was presented in conjunction with other CS methods during a proposal development process. The recent Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) training in Sri Lanka was conducted by NCA Peace Advisor from Norway and included NCA staff and partners from regional offices in Nepal, Bangladesh, and India.

People in organizations where training does not occur at the upper levels of management and in headquarters indicated frustration in attempting to change course or develop new options when elements of the project were seen negatively impacting the context. A proposed change in location, activity, or timing -presented within the DNH framework- was often met with resistance. In many cases when the program had to move forward, despite protestations and alternative options, the outcome was a failed project. Not surprisingly, these same staff representatives asserted that the top levels (headquarters and their donors) should be thoroughly trained in DNH. A representative from USAID’s OTI office went even further, though only half tongue-in-cheek, “Probably you should train the US Congress and the State Department, maybe then they will stay away from large infrastructure projects which create nothing but trouble.”

Training Content and Delivery

The vast majority of DNH training is delivered in a structured, formalized process. One exception is Danish Church Aid, which described their trainings to-date as “informal,” although an expert facilitator from RedR will be conducting a more formal DNH training in the fall of 2007. Everyone we spoke to indicated that the framework itself is accessible, valid, and relatively easy to understand. Colombo based staff and trainers (GTZ, World Vision, independent consultants, CHA, Danish Church Aid) pointed out that the DNH training or “presentations” are very accessible and easy to understand due to the fact that they are not overly academic or abstract. The key principles and concepts can be explained in simple terms with instructive examples and vignettes provided in the DNH book and training materials.

Most of those we spoke with acknowledged that the framework, presented visually, is the most important element in understanding the “mechanics” of DNH. However, a GTZ consultant asserted that we should consider *who* we have been speaking to, namely educated, higher level staff with the ability to understand the framework conceptually. He asserted that “others who are more practically oriented don’t recognize what the tool might give them. The content is fine but it has to be balanced with drawing out their experiences as they apply to the framework. There is a difference between telling people about the framework and then going a step further to make sure that it ‘sticks.’” When presenting the framework in a training, facilitators are often driven to “fill the frame” and quickly “move people” toward understanding. When staff return to their regular program tasks and are faced with specific issues in the field they don’t always find it easy to go through the framework. The practice sessions during the training tend to focus on going through the steps of the framework and generating a list of options, but rarely extend into the steps necessary for realizing these options into actionable steps. We heard some people report their own and their colleagues’ concerns in a question, “once we identify problems, what do we do? How do we change things?”

World Vision, Helvetas, Danish Church Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, Oxfam GB, Zoa Refugee Care (and many others!) remarked that the dividers and connectors portion of the framework is most easy to grasp and that they indeed spend much of the training focusing on dividers and connectors. This was explained by the fact that even staff who do not have background in conflict analysis are able to engage with these concepts and identify important actors, institutions and events that positive and negatively impact the context.

Despite satisfaction with the content of DNH trainings, conversations with Helvetas and Irish Red Cross, indicated that the “delivery” of trainings can be problematic, though for a variety of reasons. First, the workshop, classroom style of presentation prevents the material from “sticking.” Both of these organizations agreed that they should ideally learn it while they were actually designing their own program. Second, trainers who are “outsiders” limit their effectiveness in three major ways: 1. They are not embedded in the conflict therefore disconnected from participants as they seek to identify potential sources of conflict. 2. Outside trainers also struggle to move from explanation of the concepts to discussing examples of real application and pitfalls to avoid. 3. Since they tend to present workshops in English, it has a distancing effect on local staff, for whom English is not their first language. Even in cases where there is an attempt to compensate for the language barrier, as Helvetas did by looking for someone who spoke Sinhalese *and* Tamil, they had difficulties finding an appropriate person and as a result “the training did not go well.”

World Vision has overcome many of these delivery difficulties by conducting their training sessions with two facilitators, one who speaks Tamil and the other Sinhalese. Training materials are also translated into both languages. Because they are “local” they have in-depth knowledge of the context, they are

able to inject very relevant stories and examples into the training module. This was seen as very positive since other trainers have noted that case studies from other areas of the world are not always as useful to field staff. Norwegian Church Aid, Helvetas and many others (CHA!) also believe that local trainers are seen as more credible and that when it comes to introductory trainings on Do No Harm principles and tools, there is local capacity in Sri Lanka.

However, even the meaning of “local” is contested. While World Vision’s Colombo based Sinhala and Tamil trainers are considered local, Helvetas’ representative asserts that the trainings should be delivered even more locally-by local partners.

“When they come from Colombo, even if they are Sri Lankan, right away they are looked at as foreigners. Local partners should be empowered to do the trainings themselves and it is not so important that they be “experts,” but that they be willing. If they believe in what they are doing locals will also be willing. DNH is so valuable, but it takes time, patience and resources. It is important that local capacity is maximized in providing the trainings.”

After the Training: Organizational Uptake of DNH

A DNH training is one of the main catalysts for organizations “taking up DNH.” Norwegian Church Aid’s Sri Lanka office received training in November 2006 after recognizing its merits in by observing how it was used by their sister agency, Danish Church Aid. Claiming it was “a real eye opener” as it related to understanding dividers and connectors, the training was too late to include in the next round of programming at that time. They will be “pushing” their local implementing partners to integrate DNH principles in their proposals and incorporating it in next year’s programming. Oxfam GB learned about DNH in 1996 through a workshop attended by several key staff. The main concepts of “dividers and connectors,” as with DCA, had particular impact and has been used in planning and designing new projects. In 1998, DFID through its funding priorities, emphasized conflict reduction programs and subsequently, more analysis into fostering local capacities for peace was carried out. However, a systematic effort to introduce DNH into all of the programming decisions has not occurred. A core group from Mercy Corps, having participated in a TOT in the summer of 2007, has influenced an impact assessment of negotiation trainings for the WFP and UN in Sri Lanka. Based upon feedback from negotiation training participants they wanted tools to better prepare for their negotiations i.e. to better understand the context that they themselves will be acting in and how their behavior impacts the conflict. While the concept of DNH is briefly covered in terms of principles, they indicated they wanted to hear about examples of these principles in relation to their own work. To that end Mercy Corps is seeking to find “space” within the negotiation trainings for DNH. They perceive a nexus between DNH and negotiation trainings during the preparation phase of negotiation planning and that the IEM part of the framework also has significant application to the work of negotiation. “In the Sri Lankan context, negotiation isn’t just an event but a way of relating to people and this is a culture where building good relationships is critical.”

Not everyone who has taken up DNH did so as a result of their exposure to a formal DNH training. In the case of Danish Church Aid, its institutional “champion” learned about DNH at the University of Bradford. She found DNH “useful to her work, easy to understand, and able to be localized.” As a result, DCA has been training staff and seven local NGO partners and requires DNH principles to be observed and integrated into proposals and programming decisions by all its local implementing partners. In fact, she observes that it is common in discussions with field staff to talk about “dividers and connectors,” which they have found is a sensitive and non-antagonizing way to talk about conflict. A similar experience has occurred in the case of Helvetas. Two of the core values in Helvetas are human rights and conflict

sensitivity. One of their projects is called Development and Peace, with development being the entry point toward peace, particularly in the East of the country. Helvetas has been in the country 22 years, will depart in 2009 and are still trying to mainstream conflict sensitivity and rights based approaches. Their headquartered-backed effort, instigated by a staff member exposed to DNH during previous employment, is based on her realization that even if the organization buys into conflict sensitivity, it is equally important for the individuals within the organization to be conflict sensitive as well. Beginning in Fall 2007, Helvetas will be conducting DNH workshops as a tool to ensure that the economic, political, social, and cultural rights of all people are accounted for in programming. In the view of Helvetas “peace cannot occur without the realization of human rights and DNH is a way to test programming for realization of these rights.”

Application of DNH: As a Tool, As a Lens

“DNH is deceptively easy to learn, but when you get into it, it involves a rather complex process.”

Consultant with GTZ

“Clearly, DNH has taken root. It has worked itself into a frame of reference that we all share here in Sri Lanka.”

Representative of an international NGO

In our conversation we encountered two main groups of DNH users. The first we have called “sporadic users.” The second we have called “intentional users.” Sporadic users apply the framework as a tool and lens for three main reasons. 1. As a tool to undertake context analysis when developing projects and programs 2. As a lens to help the organization and workers within the organization to develop awareness of the potential effects of activities on the local context. 3. For “currying favor” with donors wanting to seem they are up on current practice. Intentional users are seeking to integrate, to mainstream DNH fully into organizational planning, implementation and monitoring processes. This latter group will be discussed later in the case study.

Many references to DNH occurred in conversations about a range of approaches to conflict sensitive development. For example, Oxfam GB has adapted a number of tools from the Responding to Conflict modules and conducted capacity-building workshops on conflict mapping, DNH and conflict analysis for all program staff, local implementing partners and partner INGOs. CHA, in their efforts to bring conflict sensitivity to the forefront of the Consortium’s work, presents DNH as one option in the menu of conflict-sensitive tools and approaches. Finally DCA uses the context analysis process in the DNH Framework as a CS method to identify “important dividers and connectors that take into account the dynamic nature of conflict...or field staff.” NCA concurs stating DNH is *best* an overall tool for keeping up with the shifting ground of the conflict and is an excellent conflict analysis tool. Why this emphasis on conflict sensitivity at this particular time? According to program staff at CHA,

We should learn our lessons from the problems we encountered after the tsunami and be better prepared. The main issues in the country are now in governance, militarization and human rights. War may come again and every effort should be made to keep conflict from escalating.

The application of CS methods, including DNH, seems to indicate that they are used in an iterative, dynamic way. Oxfam GB is not so sure: “like any other conflict analysis tool, Do No Harm has also been used by many organizations in a very sporadic and selective way, mostly at the start of projects and in that case, it generates a snapshot or a *static* picture of the context.” Another person thinks that DNH mistakenly came under critique for its perceived “hands-off” approach and for the process not being proactive enough. Some people in the past also misinterpreted “do no harm” to mean “do nothing.” (Program Director at an international NGO).

A few individuals we spoke with expressed doubts about DNH as a CS tool. “DNH is being used as synonymous with CS. But DNH is NOT a CS tool, but a program design tool.” But DCA has witnessed positive outcomes in using DNH as a CS tool. Prior to the Tsunami it worked with war affected populations. After the Tsunami they were engaged in tsunami relief efforts but continued working with conflict-affected communities. Moreover, they made a decision to engage with “tsunami-affected districts” and not just “tsunami-affected beneficiaries” with a holistic approach: rehabilitation,

livelihoods, health, education, and psychosocial help that provides aid to all vulnerable populations and avoid building tensions. They attribute this strategic decision to their “conflict sensitive planning” and understanding of DNH principles.

A number of organizations are also using DNH as a peacebuilding tool or relevant to their peacebuilding-focused training and activities. One trainer reported: “Conflict sensitivity tools such as PCIA and DNH are useful because values of inclusion and participation which should inform peacebuilding work by default, don’t come naturally. Exposing our trainees and consultants to conflict-sensitive development principles is part of the process of teaching peacebuilding and should not only be used to sensitize aid workers to conflict issues. Sometimes using DNH context analysis tool in a mixed group setting becomes an intervention in itself.”

World Vision uses DNH assessments in their Area Development Plans, and in conjunctions with Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts, to integrate peace and development in their programming. Several other organizations use DNH to “look for connectors to identify positive, feasible projects”, such as building a pre-school that serves children from several ethnic groups. FORUT has also used DNH in their peacebuilding focused programs as way of fostering connectors. “The applicability of the DNH framework for peacebuilding is recognized by many development agencies that aim to strengthen intercommunal ties and build relationships that could serve as foundation for peaceful coexistence.” No one could comment on the extent to which DNH as a peacebuilding tool is working, although Oxford GB admits “staff training was not enough to ensure long-term impact of reducing inter- and intra-communal tensions.” Using DNH for peacebuilding was met with skepticism by one person we spoke with who believes:

“It is risky to use it as a peace building tool,” as he sees it being used now. “Peace is a dirty word in Sri Lanka at the moment. If it is sold as a peace building tool, it would be a misuse of it in general and in this context. It becomes very complicated and perhaps a misuse of the framework or perhaps stretching it beyond its original intent; not only are you trying to DNH vis a vis the development project, but you are also trying to do “good.” Does the framework lead to ‘good’?”

Independent Researcher & Consultant

Several conversations indicated desire to use DNH as a risk assessment tool, although DNH does not explicitly consider risk assessment. In light of the context of humanitarian activity in Sri Lanka described above, this is not surprising. NGOs and donors are trying to find tools to lessen the real and perceived security risks for their staff. But others are not as sympathetic: In seeking tools to lessen and avoid risk for organizations and staff they may be losing sight of the community.

While we consistently heard about DNH as being a useful tool, many others described it as a lens with very broad applications. For example, Helvetas asserts that it is important for users to understand that not only does development have the possibility of exacerbating conflict, but can actually *create* conflict. Therefore, DNH has to be applied in a very global way, not just on a project, but as a way to look at the work of the organization as a whole. Another we spoke to, described DNH as a set of “big values” relating to humane and ethical practice that enables organizations to ask the question of “what kind of footprint do we want to leave.” For another, “DNH signaled a paradigm shift. If you are willing to accept the possibility that all your well-intentioned programming can go wrong and that you can actually cause harm, you still have to be ready to take responsibility for your choices. It needs to be used to assess your organizational footprint on the local context.”

Finally, there are reported applications of DNH that we have termed “DNH Lite” and they refer to unintended uses of the framework, namely to satisfy donors or justify programming. A senior staff person at Irish Red Cross has observed DNH being used in “rhetoric only” and noted that it is often “over-inflated in reporting.” Calling it the “ticking box” effect, he said it is “difficult to know how much it was integrated into the actual programming - five minutes, five hours?” A main theme that emerged from the Conflict Sensitivity Workshop sponsored by CHA was raised by participants representing dozens of NGOs who lamented that DNH and PCIA are “something we have to run our projects through”. The framework is used by some not in the process of creating a program but for ensuring the buzzwords are used in the proposals. In “checking it away” the value of the framework is lost. World Vision indicated a more “active” albeit manipulative use of DNH which occurs when, primarily field staff, make justifications for funding by saying the proposed program is “good for LCP.” People have also observed field staff picking and choosing which elements of the framework are not “relevant” if some problem emerges when projects are proposed or implemented. The consequences can be significant:

Our office was working on water infrastructure projects near an established IDP camp and we chose the location based on information we were getting from the local staff on the ground. We think they chose the area purposefully to buffer an STF [Special Task Force – a Sri Lankan Counter-Terrorism and Insurgency Police Unit]. To make matters worse, we also dug some wells. Later, we were doing some M&E visits and in interviewing those residing in the camps, they remarked how much they loved the wells...and so did the military.

A senior representative at USAID Sri Lanka

Whether used as a tool or a lens, we overwhelmingly heard about DNH being applied on the “front end,” as a way to engage in conflict sensitive program design, for context analysis, for peacebuilding initiatives, as an overall approach to programming. But many admitted that “DNH dies as the program marches on, it is rarely used consistently for developing options, for monitoring, and evaluating.” The reasons for this will be illuminated during the discussion of mainstreaming efforts.

Where and Under What Conditions is DNH Most/Least Applicable?

During our conversations we sought to understand, not only the context of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance and the application of DNH, but donor and NGO assessments of where, how and under what conditions they found DNH to be most (or least applicable). Many of those we spoke to have worked in Sri Lanka for a decade or more, before and after the tsunami, and have witnessed the dynamics of the conflict. Almost all said that it is much easier to “apply the framework where there is not an abundance of NGOs working and competing for a market share.” The “chaotic interaction of NGOs,” makes application of DNH more difficult. In Sri Lanka it was not just the number of NGOs that made the application of DNH more difficult, but the fact that the magnitude of the tsunami relief effort, combined with the underlying conflict created an almost unmanageable situation. One person put it bluntly:

Before the Tsunami the Red Cross only had one small office. After the disaster, there were over 25 Red Cross offices, all hoping to raise their profiles. They thought this was strictly a humanitarian disaster and did not account for either the micro or macro level conflicts and misunderstood the context that they were working in for a long time. The tsunami provided a hiatus for what was going to happen as it related to the conflict anyway. The problem is that

many humanitarian groups still do not have a policy or approach to dealing in conflict settings. It's appalling really, but it's a reality.

A few others stated that where there is a natural disaster *and* conflict, application of DNH becomes a challenge. For example, a former ZOA worker remarked "once you get big actors in there with big guns, the guns change everything." Another said that what constitutes "harm" is not always clear: "Do you feed people first and worry about the conflict later?" The challenge is even greater when, as World Vision staff person stated, "people don't see a conflict. We were working in the tsunami-affected South where we were helping fishermen, many of whom are Christian. The surrounding communities are Buddhist. Using DNH is much more challenging in areas where there is no violence, just structural injustices."

We also asked if there are certain sectors in which DNH is most applicable and the answers were varied. World Vision runs all of their shelter and food distribution programs through DNH and goes even further by stating that DNH is easier to apply relief programs than to development programs. Another organization sees DNH as most useful for IDP programming and organizational security since "issues of risk and security are huge at the present time in light of increasing deaths and abductions." CHA staff believe that DNH can be applied in a variety of sectors and context but works best at the field level for implementation of local programming. Several others identified the strength of Do No Harm in the fact that it is "community based" and surfaces "local conflict dynamics and factors."

The Elements of the DNH Framework: An Emphasis on Dividers and Connectors

In addition to the more general discussion about the application of DNH, we sought to focus on the use of the DNH framework itself: Are there any particular parts of DNH that you use more than other? Why? What is it about that particular element that makes it so helpful? What other elements are perhaps not so helpful? What parts of the DNH framework, both conceptually and as it is used on the ground, have worked and why?

Context of Conflict

Without exception, everyone we spoke with talked about their work with DNH in terms of "Dividers" and "Connectors." The majority were not only well familiar with the terms "dividers" and "connectors" but reported using these terms in their written and verbal exchanges with colleagues, local partners and donors. It also appears to be the part of the DNH framework used most robustly. Despite the ease and accessibility associated with dividers and connectors, one theme that emerged from our conversations is how to capture micro and macro level conflicts in this analysis.

A few believed that the weakness of DNH is that people rarely use it for political analysis at the macro level in order to understand the influences of bigger actors (large donors, the government, LTTE, other armed groups, Diaspora, etc). Opinions as to why DNH is not used for this 'larger stakeholder analysis' diverged. Some respondents believed that the tool itself is limited in its design to use at a local/communal level and that is why it is so much better understood and applied at that level. One respondent reflected on the fact that field staff hired in the communities are sometimes limited in their "horizon" and are unable to identify possible connectors or dividers that lie outside the boundaries of their immediate area of work. As to the limited use for political analysis, several people said that not enough "how-to" instructions are provided by trainers about DNH application at the macro level. Therefore, there have not been many efforts to use DNH at a macro level in Sri Lanka.

Conversely others asserted micro level conflicts are lost in context analysis, that “caste and the little conflicts are completely ignored,” and that “those highly localized conflicts which might not be surfaced in a headquarter-based assessment can be lost.” World Vision has addressed this challenge by doing both a large scale political and economic analysis and then breaking up into focus groups representing various stakeholders ie women, youth, religious leaders where they “run” the framework. They also do a timeline and when there is a triggering event, they do a more detailed divider and context analysis.

One former program staff person at an international organization with field offices in North of Sri Lanka reported on the limited use of dividers and connectors; “In a Sri Lankan context, people easily identify the connectors and dividers along ethnic lines. As a result, many INGOs recognize the need to work a little in the Muslim community and a little in Sinhala communities, but most organizations continue to provide the bulk of assistance to the Tamil population which is identified as most vulnerable due to their displaced status. Only few organizations try to purposefully integrate the three and increase local capacities for peace in a long-lasting way.”

Another challenge described related to “confusion by the fact that same actors/factors can be both connectors and dividers. People don’t get surprised by having to discuss connectors, but when they find the same actors in both categories, they are not always sure how to factor these into their programming decisions” (Consultant with a donor agency). World Vision observes arguments in the focus groups about who and what are dividers and connectors. For those acknowledging that dividers and connectors are the most emphasized aspect of the framework, there is a cost. World Vision claims that their focus on dividers and connectors means that gender issues are sometimes lost. In addition, because of the time spent on dividers and connectors they rarely get as far as the Options section and less focus is placed on Systems and Institutions, Attitudes and Action, Values and Interests, Experiences and Symbols and Occasions. One person observed:

The effort required to undertake a comprehensive context analysis is significant. Besides even if it is done, the actual programming isn’t altered or changes. NGO’s have the same menu of activities and even though they learn DNH, they don’t absorb it or integrate it. In other words the “what” part of the framework doesn’t change even if in the best case the framework is applied.

Former head of program at an international development agency

Still we overwhelmingly heard such sentiments as “dividers and connectors really make people think about the context they are working in,” they “really opened our eyes,” “people do understand context analysis steps and do go through them,” “we appreciate in this sensitive environment the words divider and connector as a way to talk about our approaches.” (Irish Red Cross, Norwegian Church Aid, FORUT, Helvetas)

Assistance Program

Interestingly, the Why, Where, What, When, With Whom, by Whom and How elements of the analysis of the Assistance Program itself received far less attention in our conversations than the Mandate, Donor and Headquarter elements. Many pointed to these latter actors as constraints to fully realizing the benefits of DNH-to lessen negative impacts in the contexts they work within. World Vision’s story was not uncommon:

“After we conduct focus groups in the community we go back to the main office and analyze the findings as a group and then come up with our programmatic approach. These meetings are attended by program coordinators, managers, and finance people, but not higher level staff. Sometimes we find a problem and if we do we consult with HQ and will meet to discuss the findings of the DNH analysis, but this can be problematic. In Trinco we had a project that in running the framework we found we might be contributing to sustaining the conflict. We went to the “WHERE” portion of the framework to try to change the location of the project. However HQ wanted the project to go on in Trinco. The project ultimately failed.”

Several conversations also revealed the obstacles that INGOs working in rebel-controlled areas face in the process of carrying out a needs assessment prior to developing their programming. The LTTE imposes restrictions on access to certain communities and generally, the armed groups are willing to cooperate with those international humanitarian agencies that arrive with aid and supplies ready to be distributed. In some of these cases, needs assessment or community consultation process is not possible carry out at all and the assistance program is fully designed upon arrival.

Implicit Ethical Messages and Resources Transfers

“LTTE raises ‘tax’ from INGOs working in the rebel-controlled areas in the North.”
Former Program Head at an international development agency

World Vision, CIDA, Norwegian Church and Helvetas acknowledged they put less emphasis on Resource Transfers or Implicit Ethical Messages in either their trainings or in practice. One person we spoke with went further: “IEM and RT aspects are almost completely ignored.” The reasons varied from “both trainings and program development generate more discussion about connectors and dividers,” to “in country and lower level staff who most often receive the trainings do not have the power to influence management to alter approaches anyway,” to “we will not be pushing partners to do the IEM and RT analysis—we find DNH provides sound principles for a code of conduct.”

Both World Vision and FORUT describe these two elements of the framework as “very real and very relevant to humanitarian and development agencies that provide assistance” and are “aware of the significance of IEM.” World Vision, for example, never schedules meetings on Friday afternoons because they know Muslims cannot attend. World Vision also recently put their internal/organizational practices through a DNH analysis and, realizing that they have been hiring very few Muslim staff, made a recommendation to hire more Muslim staff. The Colombo-based program manager admitted that this was not a recommendation that came from field staff, but one that was seen as important by the Colombo program team.

Any programs that entail distribution will focus heavily on potential resources transfers, which generally center on market effects of construction costs. When they uncover negative market effects, they spend much effort developing options, which can only be recommended and are rarely mandated by higher-up decision-makers in the organization.

Options

Our conversations around the Options element of the framework centered on the themes of *who* should generate options, *how* new options should be implemented and *how to monitor* for the effects of these new options. One staff member of an international organization confessed that they do not even get to the options part of the framework “since doing the context analysis and sorting out the elements of the

assistance we are proposing takes so much time.” There was no consensus on who should generate options. Opinions ranged from “options should emanate from Colombo as opposed to the local levels” to “staff at the field level, by virtue of their intimate knowledge on the ground, are the most adept at generating options to reduce the negative impacts of projects.” World Vision described their commitment to wanting to engage their field level staff in developing options but that they have resisted and speculates that this happens “so that if something goes wrong they can just blame them.” The result is “Even if they do generate options at the local level, they don’t run the options through the framework again. The result is both lack of practice and lack of confidence and overall weak local capacity.”

Regardless of who should generate options, we consistently heard about their difficulty in implementing these options based upon the decisions of either supervisors or headquarters as illustrated in this story by a representative of USAID.

“Even among the most sophisticated staff, the majority do not have the analytical skills to see how their programs will impact the conflict. Local staff don’t have the capacity either. I know we have further fuelled the conflict. We funded a large water project that was in the middle of “Sinhalization” [a government policy of resettling Sinhala population into traditionally Tamil areas]. Our project was a pull factor in furthering this process. I tried to raise the issue with my supervisors but was called a “spoiler.”

Even the *process* of generating options and changing course in programming can instigate tremendous conflicts, as the following story illustrates:

“People are good at manipulating who you are and what you represent. In Ampara, World Vision works with Muslim communities and had considered building a school for this community. But the Muslim community was trying to build the school on Tamil land. World Vision refused to do so for a number of reasons: DNH analysis, structurally unsound plan, and the availability of another school building that could have been restored. The Muslim community accused World Vision of being “Christian racists.”

Another person described their frustration in this way:

“So now we have generated options, but now we have to implement them. Problems arise when supervisors are not ready to meet the suggestions. People are running into walls. Buy-in from the top is important.”

And finally:

“DNH as an analytical tool helps engage with the dilemmas and complex situation we all deal with in Sri Lanka. But it would be unrealistic to assume that everyone is able to carry through the analysis all the way to implementation and affect real change in policies and programming. There is only a handful of activities that an organization has a mandate to undertake. People do understand context analysis steps and do go through them, but many still end up making similar choices as before but with increased sensitization to the potential conflict factors. “

A representative from an international development organization

Others that we spoke with described a kind of “complexity” that emerges when developing options and then having to understand how program redesign affects dividers and connectors. As one conflict sensitivity consultant described “you don’t always see what you get after you use the framework...people anticipate that there is more behind the seven steps, but they are not sure what it is, and some back off.” Another noted “despite at first glance being easy, accessible and user-friendly, it becomes operationally ‘heavier’ and more complex than the steps, frameworks, etc might suggest.” And still another: “DNH has been picked up the most out of all available tools, but then when people note the complexities, they drop it.”

An advisor at CHA offered this assessment of the challenges of developing options: “There is a problem once options are developed, to then monitor for those changes and their impacts. How do we develop M&E systems for DNH?” On several occasions the authors of the report were asked for assistance, guidance or recommendations for a workshop on how integrate DNH and DME. Norwegian Church Aid and World Concern concurred in stating that they “are confident that it will be useful for context development, for proposal development, but they are unsure about how to monitor and evaluate for DNH. How will they be able to articulate that the impact of their work ‘did no harm?’ Does this mean they will have to increase their baseline data and examine the overall environment?”

Center for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), a Colombo-based research and policy non-profit, is currently in the process of developing a training module for “Peace & Conflict Impact Assessment & Impact Monitoring.” The module provides a comprehensive overview of conflict analysis tools, reviews Do No Harm and PCIA, and suggests ways to connect these conflict impact methodologies with “the essential project practice of impact monitoring.” The draft of the module states that “combination of these two areas under the wider concept of mainstreaming is a response to the seeming lack of responsiveness of projects to their conflict environment.... We hope to situate conflict as fully in the project as the project is situated in the conflict... The training module is not a simple ‘how to’ guide for mainstreaming conflict sensitivity within development practice. It is a structured collection of ideas that will help individual projects and programmes get a systematic sense of their environment and translate this awareness into system that allows the project to adapt. We believe that this adaptation to conflict will help enhance the positive impacts a project will have on peace and conflict and will help reduce its potential negative conflict impacts.” CEPA plans to offer the training starting in 2008.

Mainstreaming DNH

“You have to have everyone on board for this to work.”
Conflict Sensitivity Consultant with GTZ

Nearly everyone we spoke with described DNH as “simple,” practical,” “easy to apply and “timely.” We did find a group of users so committed to its merits that they either have or are actively working to institutionalize or “mainstream” DNH into their organizational practice. The American Heritage Dictionary defines mainstreaming as “prevailing current of thought, influence, or activity; to integrate.” However, what organizations consider mainstreaming DNH is varied. For example, CARE equates mainstreaming as function of how many individuals within the organization internalize DNH (presented at the CHA workshop). Helvetas will recognize DNH as mainstreamed when its local partners are integrating DNH in their programming. Norwegian Church Aid will consider itself successful in integrating DNH when “in using DNH, they will know whether they are dividers or connectors and

whether they are rights bearers or duty bearers (NCA uses rights based development approach). It is about people knowing who and where they are in a conflict." World Vision has developed an organizational culture that promotes and invests in systematic analysis using DNH.

Those with whom we spoke identified the following barriers to mainstreaming DNH:

- Time and resources

In terms of the former, time constraints have occurred along 4 dimensions:

1. The time it takes to do conflict sensitive programming, development, and monitoring.
2. The brevity of project cycles, which can be as short as one year, presents a challenge using DNH when project start up must be quick.
3. The considerable time it takes to fully institutionalize DNH (or other CS methods) throughout an organization requires an investment in training, capacity building and creating structures to ensure that it will become part of the organizational culture.
4. The timing of the required assistance also impinges upon the ability to fully utilize CS approaches. For example, a sentiment that we often heard was when the tsunami hit, the sheer scale and need for assistance, combined with an exponential influx of new NGO's "washed CS away."

- New Employees

New employees coming to an organization have varying capacities/ exposure related to DNH. The challenges of training new employees in a sector and context that has high employee turnover are considerable.

- Tenuous Institutional Memory

One or two knowledge bearers may not be sufficient to mainstream DNH (and other CS methods). Two reasons account for this 1. Staff turnover 2. The knowledge simply does not spread or migrate to other parts of the organization.

- Overall Management of Organizations

Organizations struggle to develop the structures, expertise, time or technical ability to institutionalize DNH into the overall management of the organization.

- Securing "Buy-in"

CS tools and DNH may be readily used and successful at the field level when staff have recognized their value. However, this does not necessarily equal automatic "buy in" from managers. This same phenomena occurs at the donor level as well. If the donor does not have the "political will to make investments in time and resources, nothing will change" (statement by a representative of a donor agency).

Despite the barriers they describe, efforts to integrate DNH into their organizational practices are ongoing. Danish Church Aid asks its partners to "consider conflict sensitive factors... We try to remind people why we are doing this, this is why, this where it is going to make a difference." DCA also has a checklist of processes that they must use in dialogue with partners. These include DNH and participatory planning methods.

Norwegian Church Aid will follow suit, asking program partners to integrate DNH in designing their proposals, as will Helvetas. Still they fear that DNH is not yet a living part of their organizational life, that

“it is only on paper.” As the organizational champion of DNH, one senior staff at this agency said that with staff turnover, the expertise goes with them. For example, he knows that when he leaves, he will be taking his knowledge with him.

All three were concerned about the depth of analysis by partners that already takes place and will occur after more training. NCA does not want DNH to become just “buzzwords, but actually reflect the fact that the DNH process has been used.” NCA proposes to ensure that partners use DNH rigorously by going to the field during proposal time. It is possible that they may also take the same approach as its sister agency, DCA. DCA has used DNH to create indicators of “possible negative impacts on conflicts” which is very much DNH inspired. The bi-annual report to donors and other stakeholders looks at how DCA “did *not* create conflicts between communities.” They assess surrounding villages and ask questions: “how did this village get selected, why these people were selected, why this project, what are the numbers/incidents of violence, or threats?” Finally, Helvetas, closing their Sri Lanka office in 2009 is working to “ensure that DNH capacity is left behind.” To that end they are currently trying to find local NGO’s who have successfully mainstreamed DNH into their programming to guide them in their final two years in Sri Lanka.

We wondered if World Vision ever gets requests from NGOs and/or donors to share their experiences with DNH. World Vision staff indicated it receives few requests. In our conversations we asked about the extent of peer-to-peer exchanges of information and experience related to mainstreaming *any* CS tools and approaches. Many saw its merits, but described a reticence to do so “for fear of seeming like they don't have their organizational act together.” CHA summarized the issue this way:

The training is done, awareness raised, merits accepted, but not much capacity building on mainstreaming itself...We need to go the next step and find ways to institutionalize and monitor for DNH. Specifically we need *external* trainings in two areas:

- How to integrate DNH in organizational management
- How to integrate DNH into DME

Impacts of Do No Harm: Footprints in the Sand?

“As a result of the training those who take it get the LCP (Local Capacities for Peace) lens forever. They are able to analyze the situation. We have changed our programs as a result of DNH, especially in the implementation phase. Also, we have learned a lot through our training process. So you could say that we have better programming and better training.”

Program Staff, World Vision

It has been more than decade since the first DNH trainings in Sri Lanka and we wanted to discern what (if any) impacts the concepts have had. We heard much about DNH being “washed away” with the onslaught of the tsunami. But was it? A few warned of this overused metaphor and to that end we asked those with whom we spoke about their thoughts on the impact of DNH at four levels: individual, organizational, community, and country. They primarily reflected on these impacts by way of the stories we captured below.

Individual Level

I was speaking with an Army Officer from Special Forces. He was on duty when the LTTE came into the town to hold a peaceful protest. He let them in on the condition that they not raise their flag during the demonstration. In turn, they would be able to pass in and out of the town without incident. At one point during the day, LTTE did raise the flag. The officer admitted that prior to taking the DNH training, he would have charged the protest with guns and make them take the flag down. Instead, when it was time to return back to Tamil territory, the officer had the gate closed. He explained, “you didn’t keep your bargain and I won’t keep mine, you will have to stay here for the night and can pass through in the morning.” DNH gave him a way to think about the consequences of his actions.

Representative of Irish Red Cross

Organizational Level

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as a conflict sensitive donor agency leverages its resources to require conflict- and environment-sensitive practices among its grantees. In the process of considering proposals for funding, CIDA staff look both at project design and the monitoring/evaluation plans which are required to be designed with a DNH lens in mind. With a strong focus on conflict sensitivity, CIDA doesn’t just give guidelines to its grantees, but “walks them through it.” The selection process looks at how the proposed project, for example housing construction in Ampara, could affect the conflict. CIDA and its partners’ experience in working with a local town or provincial council on infrastructure development or on solid waste management project has been full of lessons learned. “Everybody wants a piece of the pie and we navigate through already tense expectations. There is a lot of political manipulation, but if people don’t get caught in it, you can still do your work.” Do No Harm has been useful in determining the various actors in the context in which CIDA grantees work.

Representative of a Canadian donor agency

Community Level

We were working on a project for IDPs here in Sri Lanka. At first we only worked with the IDPs, but on further consideration of the principles of DNH, we expanded into neighboring communities. We were working in a small Tamil village where the suicide rate was alarmingly high. In designing a program to try to stop the suicides we tried hard to find the “connectors” in the village that would provide a point of entry for its implementation of programs. We used a village women’s group and it took four years of permanent presence and effort, but the incidence of suicide was eventually *eliminated*. DNH can really re-phrase the project in terms of understanding dividers and connectors. But I think there should be a caveat that the analysis should be run through to include micro and cultural factors. For example, jealousy is something that should be considered and rarely is. A regular context analysis might not uncover this but micro level analysis would.

Representative of Zoa Refugee Care

Country Level

After the tsunami, Helvetas made a decision to not only work in districts that were tsunami affected but also the war affected ones based upon our knowledge of DNH principles. We used the Dividers and

Connectors part of the framework to do an analysis. We took it one step further by not only building houses in both communities but doing so in a way that was culturally sensitive. We were proud of that and it worked.

Program Staff at Helvetas

In Batticaloa, funds were earmarked for building wells for the tsunami-affected communities. World Vision field staff were able to plan and build the wells in a way that allowed other communities to access to them. A consultation process was used in order to explain the reasons for the well location. In addition, cash-for-work benefits after the tsunami were shared in ethnically mixed communities.

Program Staff at World Vision

Conclusion

By and large, I wouldn't say that the work of NGOs has made the conflict worse. It is because of the presence of NGOs that the situation is still somewhat bearable for the communities that we work in. But in terms of strengthening local capacities for peace – it has been possible on a small scale, but supporting peace is dangerous in this current context.”

Representative of a donor agency in Colombo

The majority of those with whom we spoke were firm in their belief that DNH has done “a very good job” of raising awareness and increasing knowledge about the potential impacts of programming on conflict. DNH “has done a good job of branding itself” so that it is easily recognizable. All attributed this recognition to the “sheer number of trainings” and the push by some donors. Many remarked that because CDA is not proprietary over its information, that there is no “black box,” people are readily being “taught” and are “learning it.”

But has this awareness translated into consistent *action*? This case study has shown that there are INGO's undertaking considerable efforts to mainstream DNH into their organizational practice. Others with whom we spoke were asserted that, “many have internalized the framework and what it means, but have not yet made the ‘leap’ to action,” that “people see the value and validity of it. Awareness is there but the NGO behavior has not really changed.” And finally, “we think we are at the outcomes stage where people attitudes have changed, but not necessarily their behavior.”

The reasons for this “failure to leap to action” have been varied. A representative from the Irish Red Cross attributes this to the fact that programming decisions are made *before* the program is developed. In other words:

I doubt whether very many agencies actually consider what the effect of 20 water wells will have on conflict. Or...they may uncover the potential impacts—and do it anyway. Unfortunately the question isn't whether to build new houses because the decision to build houses has already been made.

In other cases, the perceived stresses and limitations of short funding cycles, employee turnover, securing buy-in across all levels of the organization and tenuous institutional memory of DNH is to blame. Finally, “DNH is being taught and people are learning it, but everyone looks at it as another hoop that has to be jumped through, like gender sensitivity,” that it “comes to the surface when a proposal is due, when programming needs to be justified or the context has become too ‘hot.’”

Still, we consistently received requests, not necessarily for more training, but for technical assistance and mentoring to a) integrate DNH into project and organizational monitoring and evaluation system, b) adapt DNH for risk reduction, c) facilitate “collegial, cross learning support” about how to mainstream DNH. The case writers have documented these requests to feed them into on-going and upcoming conversations with CDA staff and partners about the next steps in the Do No Harm project.

Annex 1: Questions for Interviews*

1. How did you come in contact with the DNH Framework?
2. What were some of the motivating factors in picking up DNH? Please comment not only on the conditions on the ground that may have influenced your desire to learn more about DNH, but also why at that particular *time*.
3. If you recall, who was trained? If you have DNH integrated into your programming, how are new employees trained or how do they know about the framework? After a training how are the concepts used in your work?
4. Are there any particular parts of DNH do you use more than other? Why? What is it about that particular tool that makes it so helpful? Why are other tools perhaps not so helpful?
5. If you use other conflict sensitivity tools in addition to DNH, how do you adapt and integrate the tools?
6. What parts of the DNH framework, both conceptually and as it is used on the ground, have worked and why? What aspects of DNH have not worked and why?
7. Are there any particular sectors that you see DNH most amenable to? For which sectors does applying the DNH approach become more challenging and why?
8. In your work with partners, how do you use DNH in developing and implementing programming if they do not use DNH? What about if they do?
9. If you see any positive or negative impacts of your work as your programming is implemented what do you do? How do you generate options? How do you monitor the changes you have made to see if they are countering the original negative impact?
10. What has been the Most Significant Change for your Organization (with the communities you work with / with your partners) since either using or being trained in DNH?
11. If you could state one lesson learned as it relates to your use of DNH what might that be?
12. Do you have any “good practices” that you would like to share as it relates to your use of DNH

*Not all questions were applicable to all individuals and organizations.