

## Keeping It: Maintaining and Sustaining Do No Harm

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What do we mean when we say someone is *keeping* Do No Harm? Evidence from the DNH Reflective Case studies shows that keeping DNH is different from person to person and from organization to organization. For some people, using DNH means running through the entire DNH framework, but for most people, using DNH means applying a set of lenses or filters, a new vocabulary and a fresh perspective to their work. In every case, practitioners who keep DNH all, at the very least, continue to consider their impacts on conflict as they plan, execute and/or monitor their programs over time. This paper examines WHY some practitioners keep DNH—what about DNH itself or their context makes continuing to use DNH practical and possible—as well as HOW they are able to—what actions they took, and what systems and structures they put in place. This paper also examines the role of donor organizations in practitioners’ continued use of DNH.

### WHY do people Keep DNH?

#### Relevance and Resonance

Practitioners who keep DNH say one of two things about it:

1. “It is useful in my work/personal life.” *It’s Relevant.*

One woman, originally from Mindanao, working in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, told us that she was surprised that her Cambodian staff found DNH useful, “I was amazed at how they saw LCP to be relevant in their context.” She further explained that coming from a context of ongoing, violent conflict, such as Mindanao, the need for DNH is quite apparent, but when she arrived in the relatively peaceful context of Cambodia, the need, to her, for conflict sensitivity was not as clear. However, local staff readily took up the tool and used it to identify and mitigate latent conflicts among beneficiaries and further build on connectors in villages.

In Afghanistan, aid workers said that they have found DNH useful conceptually, to help them, their colleagues, their communities and government begin to share an understanding of the challenges of development and humanitarian aid in the midst of conflict. DNH helped them notice actors and imbalances that might otherwise have been ignored and later would have caused the project to come to grief.

In Rwanda, practitioners said, “DNH changed the way that we were thinking about what kind of impacts we were having, thinking about dividers and connectors.”

An organization’s readiness for conflict sensitivity is also an important factor in DNH uptake. Some people said that the timing of DNH’s introduction to their organization was vital to its integration. “It was the right tool at the right time. DNH would have fallen on deaf ears except that we had been through two years of VBNK’s Creativity in Development and CHART Project. CHART taught us that development begins with the development worker’s attitude and behavior. DNH became the tool to express those lessons,” said the director of Church World Service Cambodia.

Staff in CARE Nepal found that DNH gave structure to their thinking and accelerated their analyses. It also gave them the confidence to think ahead and predict unintended impacts of program choices. People also found in DNH a new language to speak with the conflicting parties. A few people said that they had already been using aspects of the DNH framework informally and intuitively, but that a formal training helped to validate what they were already doing, and that the framework organized their thinking.

2. “The concepts and language are very meaningful.” *It’s Resonant.*

Many people told us that DNH had applications in their home or personal lives. In Mindanao, Youth Trainers, trained by World Vision, found that DNH was useful in mediating conflicts within their families. During their trainings, at least one parent was present. The Youth Trainers use DNH language to engage with their parents around familial conflicts.

A woman in Rwanda said that DNH has permitted her, as a survivor, to better analyze and understand the post-genocide situation in Rwanda. She explained, “DNH helped me realize that I can do harm to others, even without overtly pursuing revenge or killing anyone. It helped me to understand what good or bad I could do with my actions as an individual.” Another Rwandan said, “DNH was a tool originally meant for aid intervention, but for Rwandese, it was very relevant to their life situation.”

In many contexts, practitioners refer to DNH training as “eye-opening.” In Cambodia, one person from the American Friends Service Committee said, “The DNH framework itself is useful. By just reflecting, reading stories, and considering dynamics, it all seems rather obvious. It has made a reality so obvious. You do not have to struggle with it, but you also cannot ignore it anymore.” Many others echoed the sentiment, that once trained in DNH, it was hard to ignore negative impacts of your work. In Mindanao, a GTZ staff person said, “The problem with DNH is that it makes life as a practitioner very very difficult. You can see what people do and how they screw up. Screw ups cannot be covered by saying, ‘it is a cultural difference’ once you know DNH.”

### **Keeping the spark alive: Networks and Champions**

Network members and champions alike can act as sounding boards for practitioners, a resource for questions and a means of testing ideas. Evidence from the Reflective Cases shows that DNH analysis is done better and more frequently when practitioners work together. Champions within an organization offer support, encouragement and coaching. Networks, external to an organization, offer space for analysis, questions and a DNH act as a sounding board for challenges that arise.

Champions within an organization motivate their colleagues by asking probing questions, offering guidance and establishing themselves as an available resource for questions and concerns. DNH Champions operate at three levels: the donor level, staff that push for DNH to be required or supported; the headquarters or executive level of an organization, executives motivate or encourage their staff to be trained in DNH or incorporate it into organizational policies and procedures; and the local or field level, staff use DNH in their work and also encourage their colleagues to take it up as well.

DNH champions operating at a high level within an organization can inspire their staff to take up DNH in a big way. In Rwanda, one such champion was the Country Director for Oxfam Quebec, Michel Dubois. According to his colleagues, “DNH really stuck,” thanks to Dubois. High level champions also have the opportunity to incorporate DNH into staff training programs, as happened at Norwegian Church Aid and World Vision.

At a local level, beyond offering support and answering questions, champions can challenge their colleagues to incorporate DNH into their thinking and planning. In East Timor, Deng Giguiento of CRS worked for a time on the emergency response following the conflict. Deng said, "I had the experience, the gray hairs and the time in country to battle with those [emergency response] guys. They would shout that they were busy and I would shout back questions about their projects. I don't believe the assertion that 'we don't have time,' or 'we're stressed' ... you shouldn't deepen dividers." By acting as a "DNH nag" Deng was able to incorporate conflict sensitive thinking into the emergency response in East Timor.

Though they do much the same things as Champions, Networks operate from outside an organization, rather than inside. In many cases, regular meetings, refresher trainings and consultations keep practitioners active in DNH.

While it was active, LCPP in Kenya held periodic meetings of DNH trainers and trainees to discuss issues surrounding conflict sensitivity. During the case study visit in 2009, many people said this was one of the aspects of LCPP that they missed the most, the opportunity to share experiences with their fellow practitioners.

In Tamil Nadu, India, the URAVUGAL Network convenes multiple times each year. Practitioners were originally brought together for DNH training. Since their first training, they have been asked to incorporate DNH and report on its effects at each meeting. The next stage for URAVUGAL will be for each member to become a DNH trainer then go on to train their staff and colleagues.

The Davao Ministerial Interfaith Group, in Mindanao, Philippines operates in much the same way. Members are all trained in DNH, and share experiences with one another both formally, during their Group meetings, and informally, when the members see one another socially. The group acts as a training resource to its members, when one member wants to offer training to their staff, or in one case, to a group of prisoners at the Davao City Jail, other members step in to train, co-train or offer guidance and support.

## **HOW do people Keep DNH?**

### **Monitoring and Support**

Buy-in from headquarters or executive level staff is crucial to keeping DNH on an organizational level. While some practitioners continue to use DNH in their work even without a mandate or funding to do so, this is often the exception to the rule. A good example of this is a VSF-Germany staff person in Kenya, who took funds from her budget for intercommunity meetings to offer DNH trainings to community members. However, in most cases, DNH-trained staff without support from higher-ups, funding or a mandate to incorporate DNH, will not apply the tool to their work. At many organizations, management support is seen as so vital that short DNH workshops for managers are incorporated into the DNH roll-out plans for the organization. This has been effective in several places, such as World Vision Cambodia, Norwegian Church Aid, CARE Sri Lanka and the Anglican Church of Kenya to motivate managers to support and encourage DNH among their staff.

At CARE Nepal, project team leaders are responsible for encouraging and assisting staff in applying DNH after a workshop. Project team leaders work with staff to integrate DNH into their workplans, incorporate it into the project cycle and develop methods for monitoring and assessing its use and effectiveness.

In some organizations, DNH has been implemented as a tool for monitoring program impacts. While not monitoring for DNH use specifically, World Vision Cambodia used DNH to analyze the impacts of its Child Sponsorship Program (CSP). The internal study, conducted over six months produced several recommendations for changes to the CSP, which staff have since implemented. This type of monitoring was useful to the CSP staff because they were already using DNH on the micro level, “Field staff say that the framework helps to analyze family issues.” The application of DNH to the program gave staff at the field level and the headquarters level valuable insights into their impacts.

### **Resources: Time and Money**

At Church World Service in Cambodia, DNH trainings take place over six consecutive days, requiring a large amount of time and financial resources from both the organization and the trainees. The typical three-day DNH training is, at CWS, followed by a three day field assessment. Trainees and trainers are away from their assignments for more than a full week and trainees must commit to a longer-than-usual workweek. One CWS trainer told us, “We have a five-day workweek, but we ask staff to participate in six consecutive days of training. Even though it was longer than the workweek, staff said that six days was not enough. They wanted more time for analysis and to complete their reports. They told us, ‘we need nine days, not six.’”

The Kamwokya Christian Caring Community (KCCC) in Uganda holds daily staff meetings. During these meetings, staff are expected to talk about plans for their projects and describe any recent training they have had. After a DNH training, the staff that attended offered a 15-minute overview of DNH for the entire KCCC staff. Staff understand this expectation, and prepare for it. Those who attend trainings must also think of ways to make that topic digestible for a 15-minute briefing. Since the initial DNH briefing, other staff have been trained, and some have been trained as trainers. It has also become routine for staff members to ask each other, “Will you do harm today?” during the morning meeting, and indeed, throughout the day. As DNH became incorporated into the organization, it was folded into the daily meeting system. This daily routine is driven by KCCC’s directors and staff have taken it further by using DNH language in casual conversations and jokes around their offices.

World Vision International (WVI) has also invested considerable resources into training its staff, including establishing two Centers for Learning, one in Indonesia and one in the Philippines. DNH trainers employed by WVI must undergo a two-week intensive ToT in order to qualify to train WVI staff. These in-house trainers often become DNH resource people within their country offices as well.

### **Integration**

During a workshop in Uganda in 2002, Lucas Wadenya, a Kenyan DNH Trainer, and others combined participatory methodologies with DNH to create Participatory Integrated Community Development (PICD). Lucas told us “PICD incorporates a lot of DNH: Dividers and Connectors; Options; Tensions; Resource Transfers; and Implicit Ethical Messages. We incorporated these elements from the beginning, as people enter the community, so we don’t leave out anyone in the planning.” PICD continues to form the cornerstone of Lucas’ organization, STIPA’s, work in community development. This tool was introduced and refined at a consultation, and Lucas offers PICD trainings to his staff and other interested practitioners.

At World Vision, DNH has found its way into two of their conflict tools: Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts and Integrating Peace and Development.

In Afghanistan, practitioners combined DNH with evaluation methodologies, participatory tools and training workshops on conflict approaches. They reported that DNH combined easily with other approaches and was compatible with them. This helped them to continue using things which they knew and already found useful.

### **Adaptation**

DNH has been adapted by users in remarkable ways. Indeed nearly every organization or practitioner that continues to use DNH does so because they have adapted the tool to fit their work. In some cases, these adaptations are as simple as changing the words on the framework, in other cases, practitioners excise whole sections of the DNH framework and only keep what works for them. Adapting the tool to a program or organization's needs gives practitioners a sense of ownership over DNH. In Rwanda, CRS used DNH translations to discuss project design with their community partners. CRS staff said, "the ideas of DNH no longer belong exclusively to CDA."

In several contexts, the language of the DNH framework is very important. In Spanish-speaking countries, even the name, "Do No Harm" was changed to "Acción Sin Daño" or "Action Without Harm." This change was undertaken because 1) the phrase 'do no harm' has no clear meaning in Spanish and 2) Action Without Harm more adequately describes the desired outcome of DNH use.

In other cases, the language of the framework was adapted to the realities of the context. At KCCC in Uganda, people were initially skeptical about DNH in the Kamwokya slum; the tool was intended for use in conflict areas or war zones and there was no active conflict in Kamwokya. KCCC staff realized that by taking the word 'conflict' and replacing it with 'tension,' DNH made sense to them and became applicable to their context.

Other people change the tool itself, or use the pieces they find the most applicable to their context. In several organizations the concepts of Dividers and Connectors stay with people much longer than the terms Resource Transfers and Implicit Ethical Messages. Practitioners understand what is having an impact on a divider or a connector, but their thinking about RTs or IEMs is less explicit.

URAVUGAL network members in India are trained in DNH and another tool called Composite Heritage. This tool helps practitioners understand and recognize the common heritage among Indian people. In Mindanao all DMI network members receive a DNH training as well as a training in Culture of Peace, a tool for inter-faith engagement.

Bonie Belonio, a World Vision staff member in Mindanao used the skeleton of the DNH framework to create his own Disaster Risk Reduction framework called Local Capacities for Resilience. He said, "People in WV understand how the DNH framework works. They know how to read it. If they are familiar with the tool, they will be able to understand how to use LCR."

The staff of CARE Nepal, during the civil war, turned DNH inward to analyze their own relationships to Maoists and Security Forces in order to better understand how they can gain access to areas and improve their operations, rather than looking at the relationships between these two groups. Other organizations use DNH for peacebuilding. URAVUGAL members use DNH for "issue-based peacebuilding." Members identify issues in their community that affect all people, regardless of religion or caste, such as lack of access to clean water, land tenure problems or community relocation. They bring the community together to find a solution to these problems. In some cases, the connections developed through work on these "negative connectors" only last as long as it takes to solve the problem. In other cases, it has led to lasting connections and further work on other issues.

## **The Role of Donors in Keeping DNH**

Practitioners don't keep DNH because of donors. They can get it because donors push for it, fund it or require it and they can lose it because of changes to donor agendas or removal of funding, but evidence from the Reflective Cases shows that they seem to keep it because of *internal* factors (internal to individuals and internal to their organizations).

Practitioners do not appear to maintain DNH usage because of a donor requirement to do so. Donors and headquarters must undertake additional steps, beyond simple requirements, to ensure that practitioners continue to use DNH. Without ongoing support at the local (usage) level, DNH often ends up becoming "lip service" in donor reports, or a "check-box effect."