

## The ABCs of Assistance: Actions, Behaviors and their Consequences

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### Updating and Reframing Resource Transfers and Implicit Ethical Messages with ABCs and “the RAFT”

Simplify. To meet their practical needs in their day-to-day work, our colleagues around the world have been simplifying the Do No Harm tool. They have found that adding simpler models makes the tool easier to use and to teach. The development of the Action Model of the Do No Harm Framework in 2009 was one result of this learning.

People have also been developing ways to explain the concepts so that they can be understood more quickly and usefully. This paper reflects learning about the language people use while doing Do No Harm, and brings over some learning from the Corporate Engagement Project.

In the Relationship Model of the DNH Framework (the “old” model), the Patterns of Impact are known as Resource Transfers (RTs) and Implicit Ethical Messages (IEMs). The way these patterns express themselves in a context of conflict can exacerbate or mitigate conflict dynamics and can reinforce or undermine the work and mission of an organization. By examining and adapting the elements of the Assistance Programme (or Intervention) to address these patterns, an organization can change trends in Dividers and Connectors.

The language of RTs and IEMs is too technical and can be difficult to explain (especially what is meant by “implicit” and “ethical”). We found that many people had simply shortened them to Resources and Messages.

We also found that the way people explained these concepts lends itself to an even simpler set of terms:

*Actions and Behaviors lead to Consequences.  $A + B = C$ .*

### Actions, Resources, and Resource Transfers

When an organization enters a context, it brings certain ‘stuff’. We bring materials, personnel, and intellectual capital. The **ways** we transfer this stuff to the communities we work with has effects. It is not just the resources themselves, but our and our organizations’ actions in transferring or distributing them.

Simply put, these are our **Actions, and their Consequences**. There are five ways our actions have an effect on conflict. None of these has to do with precisely *what* we bring into a context, but rather how we go about storing, maintaining and distributing those goods.

1. Theft/Diversion: Fueling the conflict with stolen or diverted goods.

2. Market Effects: Changing local markets with an influx of outside goods.
3. Distribution Effects: Distributing goods along the lines of the conflict.
4. Substitution Effects: Replacing existing functioning systems or structures.
5. Legitimization Effects: Giving legitimacy to a group or leader by working with them.

It is important to remember to be aware of the impacts of these effects, and monitor for them consciously and thoughtfully.

### **Behaviors, Messages, and Implicit Ethical Messages**

Aid workers send *messages* to communities through their *Behavior*, as much as through their words, and their behavior, positive or negative, has *consequences* for individuals and for organizations. In fact, often, an outsider's behavior is a more trusted barometer for their intentions than what they say.

The book, *Do No Harm*, offered a list of seven Implicit Ethical Messages, based on experience, that aid workers send to communities. While the list has proven extremely useful, it has also proven hard to keep in mind in the moment. Fortunately, the Corporate Engagement Project, dealing with many of the same issues as DNH, arrived at four broad categories of the patterns of impact which clarify the types of behavior that have an impact, either negative or positive: the RAFT.

1. **Respect**
2. **Accountability**
3. **Fairness**
4. **Transparency**

Staff behavior can send negative messages about an organization's or an individual's intentions. When considering patterns of behavior, we saw that these patterns fell into four categories: patterns that convey **Respect or Disrespect**; patterns that convey **Accountability or an unwillingness to be held accountable**; patterns of **Fairness or unfairness**. These categories are useful in identifying how a negative pattern of behavior is having an impact on an organization's program.

Positive patterns can build trust among the communities an organization serves and its presence and work will be more accepted by local people. Positive Behaviors lead to calmer communities and substantive interaction and it lays the groundwork for true partnership and development.

Negative patterns can undermine an organization's efforts and put their staff in danger. Negative Behaviors lead to relationships that are antagonistic and untrusting, and can make communities feel humiliated. In extreme cases, violating these principles can lead to violence against an organization or within the community.

The original Behaviors (IEMs) have not been removed from the Framework. Rather, they now represent characteristic behaviors keeping the RAFT afloat or behaviors that sink it. The original list was also a comprehensive account of the *negative* messages that aid workers' behavior sends to local people, but

it said nothing of the positive messages it is possible to send. In reality, the negative patterns of behavior identified in the original list of IEMs all have a positive mirror.

	NEGATIVE PATTERNS of Behavior	POSITIVE PATTERNS of Behavior	
<b>RESPECT</b>	Belligerence/Anger	Calm	<b>TRANSPARENCY</b>
	Competition	Collaboration	
	Suspicion	Trust	
	Indifference	Sensitivity to Local Concerns	
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	Powerlessness	Action	
	Impunity	Responsibility/Accountability	
	Arms and Power	Rule of Law/Nonviolence	
<b>FAIRNESS</b>	Different value for different lives	Recognition of value for all lives	

**Transparency** cuts across all these patterns of Behavior. Being clear and open about your project and its aims, inviting local people to participate in the process, give their feedback and share their concerns reinforces positive patterns of behavior. Closing a project to critique or criticism from outsiders leads to perceptions that an organization does not respect or trust local people, and is not willing to be held accountable for their actions.

Sharp-eyed DNHers will notice that this list of behaviors is slightly different from the original. It has been extended and updated to reflect people’s experience in the field, as well as disaggregating some concepts that needed to be separated for clarity. One of the original concepts, *Publicity*, has in fact been omitted from the revised list of Behaviors because it can encompass any or all of the other IEMs. It is now incorporated as one of three spheres where behavior takes place, along with Conduct and Policy.