

Getting It: Introductions and “Aha!” Moments

Do No Harm Issue Paper June 2011

“The ones who get it...love it...use it... are bought in. But, those who don’t are the ones who question the integrity.”

When it comes to Do No Harm, “getting it” means two things: the introduction to the concept and the “aha!” moments, where people finally feel they can use the concepts well. The introduction is important as it raises awareness about issues that people may have felt were important, but they did not yet have a way to talk about them. This is the first step on the path to DNH.

The “aha” moments demonstrate knowledge, where the DNH concepts are brought to an experience or a situation and the user can see how DNH applies. The person who was aware of the ideas and the tool feels empowered to actually use them to inform themselves about the context and to begin exploring options.

Much successful time and effort has gone into introducing DNH to people and organizations. The field of humanitarian and development work has had its awareness raised with regard to DNH and conflict sensitivity. It is safe to say that nearly every practitioner at the field and headquarters level, and every donor is aware of the need for conflict sensitivity.

Not as much effort has been put into creating the “aha” moments. It is still rare to find assistance workers who can articulate what a conflict sensitive approach or a Do No Harm approach would look like. Helping to foster the ability to move beyond simple awareness toward a method for action has been the key challenge DNH – and all development tools – has faced.

This paper outlines how the concepts have been introduced and where people have told us that their “aha” moments occur.

Introducing DNH through Training

The most common way DNH is introduced is through training. NGO practitioners have said that training is the default way that ideas and concepts and tools *of all sorts* are introduced to them.

Why was DNH training introduced to an organization?

1. Something bad happened or conflict is increasing.

This is one of the most common reasons why people have asked for DNH training. Field staff who are confronted with new challenges will begin to look around for tools or ideas that address their current concerns. In the case of conflict, DNH is one of the tools they find and one that has training available.

“In 2002, one of our offices was confronted by the Maoists. We used this as a case study for training in DNH. There was a real need in our situation as we were constantly confronted by Maoists.”

2. A donor has made DNH a requirement.

Requirements are often accompanied by offers of training. What a donor means by “requirement” can vary, of course. In some cases it can be a requirement of the proposal process, while in others it can be a requirement to undergo training before participation in a project.

CARE Nepal staff and partners, for example, were exposed to SEDC [Safe and Effective Development in Conflict; an adaptation of DNH]; because it was a requirement of the project donor, DFID.

3. A donor offers training and puts resources into making the training available.

In many cases, this is an explicit part of the partnership agreement between the donor and the organization. The donor sees their mandate as providing some form of capacity building. When they determine that DNH could be useful in a situation, they make it a part of the potential training on offer.

Caritas Switzerland, in the process of mainstreaming Do No Harm into their programming, offered training for all their partners working in collaboration with the East African and Horn Regional office based in Nairobi.

EED offers partners a variety of training and capacity building services on an ongoing basis in several forms ... Local Capacities for Peace in the Horn of Africa (LCPP) was established in 2001 as a joint project of EZE and CDA to introduce the Do No Harm approach to EZE partner organizations in South Sudan and Ethiopia.

The Challenge of Introducing DNH through Training

“The biggest complaint I have with ... training is that people do a one-shot training then go away and think that everybody got it. After a training, people have a new concept running around in their brain and they are looking for a place to attach it. People need something to link training to!”

Too often training does not include any follow-up or any attempt to link the training to action. While participants often grasp the concepts conveyed through a DNH training, they have not yet had an experience that draws them into the use of the tool and the ideas. The training is seldom designed to elicit or contribute to that experience. It is also seldom placed into the structure of the organization (good timing, right department, appropriate staff) in a way where trainers or peers can help provide a context for experience after the training.

The case writers in Nepal captured one result of this when they wrote, “Though, there were exceptions, the length and depth of training typically reflected the individual’s and the organization’s awareness and understanding of DNH.”

Introducing DNH through Peers

Another key way DNH has been introduced has been through the engagement of colleagues and peers, where one person has some DNH experience and brings it to their friends. Within an organization, a person may identify a key area where they feel DNH needs to be introduced. They work with their colleagues in a variety of ways, from friendly chats over coffee to hectoring.

At the international level, CRS’ Deng Giguiento introduced colleagues to conflict sensitivity during a deployment to East Timor ... Deng, who worked for a time in East Timor on the emergency response following conflict there had credibility with the emergency response team. *“I had the experience, the gray hairs, and the time in country to battle with those guys. They would shout that they were busy, and I would shout back questions about their projects.”*

In other situations, a person tells a friend about DNH because they like it personally or because they feel it will help their friend. This friendship based model of spread has been quite common among expats in

Afghanistan, as people have looked for all the help they can get in the context of an ongoing and dangerous conflict.

[In Afghanistan] Others came across it in a variety of ways. The new program director of Helvetas participated in a DNH training by SwissPeace. The current program coordinator of NCA learned about Do No Harm through a Danish church bishop. One NGO worker who now does trainings in DNH learned of it only indirectly, because of what he heard about one of Raz Dalili's workshops which he himself did not attend.

In some organizations, people learn about DNH from colleagues in the course of daily work. This often follows some sort of training exposure, but the organization expects the simple daily process of working through DNH to help it take root. This has been one of the most successful ways of achieving "aha" moments in DNH use.

"We were doing an evaluation of the integration and mainstreaming of DNH into their development projects. That was when I really got the concept of LCP, when I was listening to people who had seen the impact of the tool."

The Constant Challenge of Moving Past Introductions

In many cases, when people spoke about their initial exposure to DNH, they said that they did not fully grasp the tool. Some people felt it was too technical, or that it did not apply to the type of work they did. Many people said that it took multiple exposures to the tool, through reading, trainings or participation in assessments and workshops, before they were fully able to understand the DNH framework. ... Some people who experienced this initial lack of clarity about DNH told us that they had little experience in the field when they were first trained, so they had no point of reference for the tool. Others said that while Dividers and Connectors are concrete and easy to understand, other parts of the framework were more subtle and required either more exposure to the tool, or a better training module to more fully develop the concepts.

"Aha" Moments

When a DNH user realizes that they see something new, something that they never saw before, and that they would not have seen without the DNH tool or lens, that's an "aha" moment. People tell us that these moments are where they really became DNH users. They had seen the power of the ideas and had seen how they could change things.

Building the "Aha" Moment

The phrase "aha" moment seems to imply a sudden strike of lightning, where a person grasps DNH in an instant. In reality, the moment is usually more subtle, where the awareness of the ideas builds through observation and experience into a knowledge base that can be applied to the difficult task of options.

There are two main ways this appears to happen.

1. When DNH helps create a common language (Nepal, WV Cambodia, AFSC, DCA in Sri Lanka)
2. When DNH is used by a team

Church World Service has designed a DNH training regime for staff that begins with a three-day DNH workshop, immediately followed by a three-day DNH field assessment, to give trained staff immediate practice doing DNH analyses. When new staff start at CWS, they receive a one-hour DNH orientation, and once there are 20 new untrained staff members, they hold the six-day training. In the meantime, however, “new staff learn the concepts from their team members.”

The staff of the [World Vision] peacebuilding project trained all staff in DNH with a series of workshops and then provided accompaniment during their project design.

[T]he management team [of KCCC] went ahead and supported the streamlining and mainstreaming of Do No Harm by suggesting the formation of a *Do No Harm* task force. The task force was charged with several responsibilities that ensure that Do No Harm was taken up and integrated within all the KCCC departments.