

## 10 Conclusions and Way Forward

This book has highlighted three key lessons related to conservation programming in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

First, substantial investments of international funding, national funding, and in-kind resources in environmental programming are present in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Biodiversity hotspots are overwhelmingly located in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, combat desertification and land degradation, and strengthen governance of international waters are similarly located in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Accordingly, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has funded thousands of interventions in areas experiencing armed conflict or fragility; more than one third of its global portfolio is invested in countries affected by major armed conflict and 88.3 percent of the GEF's country-level projects are or were in fragile situations, categorized as either "alert" (very fragile) or "warning" (of concern). The prevalence of conflict and fragility in environmental programming suggests that conflict and fragility should be considered essential contextual factors affecting the ability of environmental organizations to achieve large-scale, sustainable impacts and initiate fundamental change.

Second, fragility and conflict affect project outcomes. The empirical analysis highlights the statistically significant impact of major armed conflict on the likelihood that a project will be cancelled and dropped; this relationship is also seen for fragility. Moreover, at all scales of implementation, a country's conflict status had a statistically significant impact on the duration of a project's delays. Based on the analysis conducted, a country's fragility classification is associated with a negative and statistically significant impact on project outcomes, sustainability, M&E design, M&E implementation, implementation quality, and execution quality.

Third, in order for conservation organizations to meet their objectives in fragile and conflict-affected situations, they need to adopt conflict-sensitive approaches. This is not to say that they need to change their mandate and become peacebuilding organizations. From a very narrow perspective, though, conservation success requires understanding the context in which the intervention occurs and managing the contextual risks—including those associated with fragility and conflict—to reduce the chances that fragility- and conflict-related risks will undermine the

long-term sustainability and success of the project, let alone generate new grievances and conflicts.

Conflict-sensitive programming presents a suite of tools for conservation organizations to understand, plan for, and adapt to risks related to fragility and conflict. This chapter highlights five conflict-sensitive approaches:

1. context analysis to identify conflict- and fragility-related risks to a proposed intervention and develop measures to mitigate those risks;
2. guidance for conflict-sensitive programming;
3. platforms for learning, exchange, and technical assistance;
4. expansion of environmental and social safeguards to address key conflict-sensitive considerations; and
5. policies and procedures.

These approaches emphasize risk management throughout the project life cycle. They provide institutional means that help funders, project developers, project implementers, and partners to identify potential risks that conflict and fragility pose to achieving the project objectives. Much emphasis is placed on conflict and context analysis (see Chapter 5) and on the design phase, but situations affected by conflict and fragility are dynamic and can change rapidly. Ongoing monitoring and adjustment are necessary. Similarly, projects and project staff continue to learn from the approaches they have innovated. Accordingly, mainstreaming conflict sensitivity throughout the project life cycle is critical.

### **Context Analysis and Developing Measures to Manage Risks**

The first step in most conflict-sensitive programming approaches is to analyze the context of fragility and conflict to understand the risks and develop measures to manage those risks.

In light of the many ways that conflict and fragility affect environmental projects, the findings highlight the need for consideration of conflict-related risks in project screening and a consistent approach to identifying potential conflict- and fragility-related risks. One approach would be to ensure that any risk management analysis conducted at project design and inception more consistently and systematically identifies potential risks and proposes mitigation measures.

Broadly, as part of the project review process for interventions designed in such situations, a combination of standardized and open-ended questions could be used to determine if the context is affected by conflict or fragility. For example, it could ask whether the project will be in a country that is affected by armed conflict within a particular period (for example, in the past ten years). This question could ask the project proponent to consult the Armed Conflict Dataset from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO),<sup>1</sup> the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project database,<sup>2</sup> or XSub's datasets<sup>3</sup> in answering the question. The screening tool could also ask whether the project will be in a situation affected by fragility or conflict. Again, this question could ask the project

proponent to consult established indices, such as the World Bank’s List of Harmonized Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations<sup>4</sup> and the Fund for Peace’s Fragile States Index<sup>5</sup>—recognizing that the latter provides a substantially more comprehensive list of countries. While referencing standardized databases, the screening tool could also ask an open-ended question that encourages the project proponent to consider the possibility of localized risks related to conflict or fragility that may not be reflected in the national-level indexes of conflict and fragility. If the answers to all these questions are “no,” then this portion of the analysis ceases.

If a project is in an area affected by conflict or fragility, the review process could identify conflict- and fragility-related risks along five dimensions: physical security, social conflict, economic drivers, political fragility and weak governance, and coping strategies. These five dimensions represented the key pathways by which conflict and fragility affect GEF projects, based on the analysis (see Chapter 3). However, that said, this is not necessarily an exhaustive list of conflict- and fragility-related risks, and project proponents should be able to identify other potential risks.

### **Guidance for Conflict-Sensitive Programming**

Many environmental organizations—including ten GEF agencies—have developed guidance on conflict-sensitive programming. These include the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Conservation International (CI), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the World Bank Group (see Chapter 2, Box 2.1). These guidelines, strategies, and toolkits—and experiences applying them—provide a rich body of approaches upon which to draw.

The conflict-sensitive guidelines and other documents developed by these ten organizations reiterate three important facts:

1. several multilateral and bilateral agencies have found guidance on conflict-sensitive programming to be valuable;
2. conflict-sensitive programming is both possible and desirable; and
3. guidance on conflict-sensitive programming, including addressing strategies, guidelines, and toolkits, are still important and necessary, notwithstanding the innovations and learning on conflict-sensitive programming.

Guidance on programming in situations affected by conflict and fragility shares some key elements, including understanding the local context (conflict analysis); collaboration; and stakeholder identification, analysis, and engagement. Existing guidance documents emphasize the importance of actions across the project life cycle. Guidance often provides an introductory section that defines key terms (such as conflict, peace, fragility, and resilience) and explains why conflict-sensitive programming is important (e.g., ADB, 2013b; CI, 2017).

Most guidance documents on conflict-sensitive programming include context analysis or conflict analysis as a foundational step in project development. This analysis seeks to understand the social, cultural, political, economic, and other dimensions of the local conflict, including the role of natural resources (e.g., FAO, 2006, 2019a, 2019b; UNDG, 2013). The approaches for analyzing the context, and the conflict in particular, vary from having a more generalized awareness of the severity of the conflict (e.g., AfDB, 2008) to providing specific conflict analysis tools (e.g., FAO, 2019b; UNEP, 2012).

In addition to context and conflict analysis, guidance, training guides, and other documents highlight a range of complementary tools that can help project teams understand the context for the intervention. These complementary tools include, for example, Post-Conflict Impact Assessments (e.g., FAO, 2019a), Post-Conflict Needs Assessments (e.g., UNDG, 2013), and Strategic Environmental Assessments (e.g., World Bank Group, 2005).

Conflict-sensitive guidelines often draw upon other guiding principles in framing measures to manage conflict-related risks (e.g., AfDB, 2008; ADB, 2013b; FAO, 2006, 2012). For example, many GEF agencies incorporate or refer to the OECD DAC Principles of Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations (OECD DAC, 2007) as guidance for managing conflict (e.g., AfDB, 2008; ADB, 2012). The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (OHCHR, 2011) were also used in various conflict-sensitive guidance tools (e.g., UNDG, 2013).

One of the most common guiding principles of conflict-sensitive guidance documents is an emphasis on inclusion and collaborative approaches throughout the life of the project. Several guidance documents recommend partnerships—national and international, private and public—to establish sustainable programming (e.g., FAO, 2012). Stakeholder engagement processes are included in most of the toolkits, manuals, and guidance documents (e.g., ADB, 2013a, 2013b; CI, 2017; FAO, 2019a). Provisions on stakeholder engagement processes tend to include recommendations on communication techniques (e.g., CI, 2017; FAO, 2012), determining the need for and defining the role of facilitators (e.g., FAO, 2012), and tips for navigating negotiations (e.g., FAO, 2006).

Monitoring and evaluation in conflict areas are difficult due to many ethical and practical challenges. Fragile and conflict-affected situations present accessibility issues due to the remoteness of sites, physical safety and security concerns, and rapidly changing situations that are unpredictable. Some of the practical challenges include data collection in unsafe environments, identifying and accessing affected groups, and dealing with shifting power dynamics. Evaluations in these contexts are resource intensive, costly, and physically and emotionally demanding, and traditional evaluation approaches may not be adequate. In response, some organizations have developed indicators and/or guidance and complexity frameworks for monitoring and evaluation in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to ensure evaluations are useful and valid. These measures seek to improve the ability of monitoring to better track changes in conflict dynamics, project outcomes, and interactions between the two. Some organizations undertaking projects in

fragile and conflict-affected contexts have worked to revise their indicators and theories of change as situations evolve through frameworks, such as CARE's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework for Social Analysis and Action (CARE, 2020). Another noteworthy development is the use of innovative methods and techniques such as geospatial analysis (satellites and drones), remote surveys through phones or tablets, voice or online forms, social media analysis, location tracking, and virtual communications in conflict zones. Various development organizations have started incorporating these techniques within their M&E frameworks for timely response, and adaptive management such as World Bank's Geo-Enabling Initiative for Monitoring and Supervision (World Bank, 2019) and the European Space Agency dedicated earth observation support fragility, conflict, and security.<sup>6</sup>

### **Platforms for Learning, Exchange, and Technical Assistance**

These platforms are designed to effectively foster learning and exchange, build capacity, and provide specialized assistance. Because conflict sensitivity is a cross-cutting issue, lessons learned can be exchanged on existing knowledge platforms supported through the various practice groups in the multilateral development banks and agencies.

Exchanges of approaches, experiences, and learning can enable project coordinators to quickly and effectively improve their projects and project performance. Project exchange within and across organizations can facilitate peer support and learning for teams that are implementing similar projects or facing similar challenges, allowing for network building and collaboration. These platforms also provide valuable services in surveying experiences to distill learning and exchange regarding best practices. Armed with this learning, the platforms then build capacity and provide technical assistance to new and ongoing projects. These platforms have proven particularly effective in addressing a discrete set of issues, such as international water management (e.g., the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network), illegal trade in wildlife (e.g., the Global Wildlife Program), and climate change (e.g., the Climate Technology Centre and Network [CTCN]).

For example, a GEF-funded initiative managed by the World Bank, the Global Wildlife Program,<sup>7</sup> seeks to end illegal wildlife trade and protect endangered species (ELI, 2017). With 37 child projects across 32 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, this program includes a component that seeks to enhance knowledge management across the projects. This includes organizing knowledge exchange events in which program participants can learn from experts and from peers. It also established a system to share documents with good practices and lessons from other projects. The goals of knowledge sharing are to accelerate learning, enhance collaboration between governments (especially in surveillance), strengthen partnerships between international organizations, and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress of multiple projects within the program.

A variant is to have a platform for learning, exchange, and technical assistance that extends beyond a particular portfolio. The CTCN is an example of this approach. Created in 2012 by the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, it is administered by a coalition led by UNEP<sup>8</sup> and receives part of its funding from the GEF. Though not GEF-specific, the CTCN operates similarly to platforms focusing on GEF projects. It focuses on technical assistance for climate programming by providing funding for technical projects, a platform for information exchange, network-building for related project teams, and workshops for capacity building.

Beyond the usual learning, exchange, capacity building, and technical assistance activities, the platform also could pay particular attention to learning from failure. To stimulate learning from failures, a growing number of organizations and networks are holding “fail fairs” or “fail fests” to learn from projects that failed. Fail fests attempt to build a culture of sharing failures so as to maximize learning and generate new ideas for improvement (Trucano, 2011). Fail fairs can be internal or external. Internal fail fairs hold events solely for one organization’s failed projects, engaging participants within that organization, rather than the public. By contrast, external fail fairs are open to the public to present or watch. According to NGO staff and other sources (Fail Forward, n.d.; Trucano, 2011), organizers of a fail fair should keep in mind a few important points:

1. Focus on celebrating taking risks—and learning from experience.
2. In addition to recruiting participants to speak about their risks, also recruit senior employees within the organization to speak. This can signal high-level support.
3. Establish a code of conduct for participants to create a safe space (especially important if donors are in the room). This code of conduct can be brief, but it is important to establish the rules of engagement.
4. Be cautious about sharing the presentations online. It is important to have candid discussions, and broad dissemination can restrict candor.

### **Environmental and Social Safeguards**

Many organizations, including the GEF agencies, have adopted environmental and social safeguards that provide high-level policy protections. For example, GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards apply to all GEF-funded projects so as to “avoid, minimize and mitigate any potentially adverse environmental and social impacts” (GEF, 2018, p. 4). The GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards provide a set of nine standards for policies, procedures, systems, and capabilities that all GEF agencies must demonstrate are in place (GEF, 2018).

Additional safeguards tailored to address conflict and fragile situations could help to ensure that projects both cause no harm (e.g., by exacerbating tensions or generating conflict) and continue to meet the needs of local communities in the midst of situations affected by conflict and fragility. Moreover, enshrining

conflict-sensitive measures in the Environmental and Social Safeguards could help to reduce the impacts of conflict and fragility on projects.

Safeguards could, for example, ensure that project documents include an analysis of conflict- and fragility-related threats to natural resources upon which communities depend, the political economy of natural resource economies related to the project, competition for or conflict over natural resources, and of marginalized communities' access (or lack thereof) to natural resources in and near the project area. Moreover, conflict sensitivity procedures, standards, and practices should extend throughout the project life cycle—not just during project design.

### **Policies and Procedures**

Institutional policies and procedures can both enable and impede conflict-sensitive measures. In particular, (a) the rules and procedures need to enable projects to make necessary programmatic adjustments if conflict flares up; (b) the rules governing financing of projects should enable project staff to make the necessary adjustments to reflect sudden developments on the ground; and (c) funders of environmental programming may consider greater flexibility in accounting for project costs to reflect the greater time and resource demands associated with developing and implementing projects in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

One of the greatest challenges for projects in such situations is being able to adjust the project as the dynamic context may require. This is both a technical question (How to adjust the project?) and an administrative question (Is it possible to adjust without additional permission from the funding body?). The administrative question can be particularly challenging and should allow for nimble adjustments in institutions. For example, funders might reconsider what constitutes a change in project objectives that would warrant additional approvals. Consider, for example, a project to improve biodiversity management in a country, particularly by training park rangers in a specific park with mountain gorillas. If rebels moved into the park and made on-the-ground work too dangerous, would efforts to train the rangers remotely be a change of objectives? What about policy work to empower the rangers? Would it be possible to move the project to another park with chimpanzees? Or a park with many endemic species but no primates? Useful guidance for practitioners would address what would constitute a change in project objectives, would be sufficiently broad to enable projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations to adjust as necessary, and would allow them to do so in a nimble manner.

Funders also could consider amending the rules governing financing of projects to enable project staff to make the necessary adjustments to reflect sudden developments on the ground. The four key ways to do this are (a) allowing for contingency costs, (b) allowing for new budget lines, (c) allowing a greater percentage of funds that a project may transfer from one budget line to another without seeking approval, and (d) accounting for the additional costs of working in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Funders could allow for contingent costs, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. A number of intergovernmental organizations allow contingency budgeting, including in the central budgets of the World



Bank and UNDP. More broadly, the growing interest in resilience—and funding for resilience—seems to be increasing interest in contingency reserves and contingent budgeting (see Chapter 5).

Reforming funding rules and procedures to allow for more nimble and adaptive programming in fragile and conflict-affected situations can make environmental programming more resilient in pandemics and other crises. Many of the challenges are similar: lack of security, difficulties in conducting consultations and securing evidence, changing political priorities, weakened capacity, and growing distrust of institutions. The ability to adjust project and programming scope and move money between components is essential to effective responses to COVID-19 and other pandemics. Indeed, numerous key informants working in fragile and conflict-affected countries noted that while the country had fewer resources for coping with the pandemic, the ability and frame of mind to navigate compounding crises that had been developed working in the fragile and conflict-affected settings may have improved the ability of projects to navigate the newest crisis.

## Notes

- 1 <https://www.prio.org/data/4>
- 2 <https://acleddata.com/>
- 3 <https://cross-sub.org/>
- 4 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations>
- 5 <https://fragilestatesindex.org/>
- 6 <https://www.eo4sd-fragility.net/>
- 7 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/global-wildlife-program/overview>
- 8 <https://www.ctc-n.org/>

## References

- African Development Bank. (2008). *Strategy for enhanced engagement in fragile states*. <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Policy-Documents/30736191-EN-STRATEGY-FOR-ENHANCED-ENGAGEMENT-IN-FRAGILES-STATES.PDF>
- Asian Development Bank. (2012). *A peacebuilding tool for a conflict-sensitive approach to development: A pilot initiative in Nepal*. <https://www.adb.org/publications/peacebuilding-tool-conflict-sensitive-approach-development-pilot-initiative-nepal>
- Asian Development Bank. (2013a). *Operational plan for enhancing ADB's effectiveness in fragile and conflict-affected situations*. [https://books.google.com/books?id=Zc0HDAAAQBAJ&dq=adb+conflict+sensitivity&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=Zc0HDAAAQBAJ&dq=adb+conflict+sensitivity&source=gbs_navlinks_s)
- Asian Development Bank. (2013b). *Working differently in fragile and conflict-affected situations*. <https://www.adb.org/publications/working-differently-fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations>
- CARE. (2020). *Monitoring, evaluation and learning framework for social analysis and action*. [https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/saa\\_mel\\_framework.2jan.pdf](https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/saa_mel_framework.2jan.pdf)
- Conservation International. (2017). *Environmental peacebuilding training manual*. <https://sites.google.com/a/conservation.org/peace/home/training>
- Environmental Law Institute. (2017, November). *Review of GEF projects on combatting illegal wildlife trade*. Report produced for the GEF Independent Evaluation Office.



- Fail Forward. (n.d.). *Tips for running a fail faire*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/583382786b8f5b1d0c788b9e/t/589e35208419c261c734aeab/1486763298168/Tips-for-Running-a-Fail-Faire.pdf>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2006). *Conflict management over natural resources*. <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/a779f3ae-6af3-5125-9159-b1009f1854d3>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2012). *Collaborative conflict management for enhanced national forest programmes (NFPS): Training manual*. <https://www.fao.org/3/a-i3101e.pdf>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2019a). *The programme clinic: Designing conflict-sensitive interventions—facilitation guide*. <https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA5784EN/>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2019b). *Guide to context analysis informing FAO decision-making: Approaches to working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/guide-context-analysis-informing-fao-decision-making-approaches-working-fragile-and>
- Global Environment Facility. (2018). *Updated policy on environmental and social safeguards* (GEF/C.55/07). [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF.C.55.07\\_ES\\_Safeguards.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.55.07_ES_Safeguards.pdf)
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2011). *Guiding principles on business and human rights*. [https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/guidingprinciple\\_sbusinesshr\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/guidingprinciple_sbusinesshr_en.pdf)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee. (2007). *Principles for good international engagement in fragile states & situations*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/38368714.pdf>
- Trucano, M. (2011). *Running your own FAIL faire*. November 17. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/edutech/failfaire-internal>
- UNDG (United Nations Development Group). (2013). *Natural resource management in transition settings: UNDG-ECHA guidance note*. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/guidance-natural-resource-management-transition-settings>
- United Nations Environment Programme. (2012). *Strengthening capacity for conflict-sensitive natural resource management*. [https://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/GN\\_Capacity.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/GN_Capacity.pdf)
- World Bank Group. (2005). Strategic environmental assessments: Capacity building in conflict-affected countries. *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Recovery*, No. 30. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/270821468135017970/pdf/349890Replacement0version0WP301Web.pdf>
- World Bank Group. (2019). *Geo-enabling initiative for monitoring and supervision*. <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/271431561153010274/Geo-EnablingInitiative-for-Monitoring-and-Supervision-GEMS>