

# Guidance: conflict sensitivity matrix

## What this tool is for

PCI's Conflict Sensitivity Matrix is designed to be used hand-in-hand with the **Interactions Typology** to systematically identify how aid activities affect the peace and conflict context. The matrix allows those designing and implementing assistance programmes (1) to reflect on the potential interactions between activities and the context, (2) to design adaptations to minimise risks and maximise positive contributions, and (3) to plan monitoring strategies. Developed to complement organisations' existing risk management processes, the matrix is designed to be a practical and easy tool for producing conflict sensitivity assessments. For this reason, the document resembles other risk management tools.

## When to use this tool

Organisations implementing programmes in conflict-affected contexts should have a conflict sensitivity matrix to refer to at any time during the intervention. The matrix should be developed at the beginning of the intervention and requires regular updates during implementation. The matrix needs to be systematically reviewed to monitor the risks and opportunities and to identify new ones. The result of the process is a conflict sensitivity assessment, which highlights the intervention's potential positive or negative impacts on the context. These impacts may be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect.

## How to use the tool

You can use PCI's **Conflict Sensitivity Interactions Typology** to identify how your programme may interact with the peace and conflict context where you operate. You can do this as an agenda item in a team meeting, or as a workshop. The tool can be updated during regular team meetings or project review meetings. It is important to consider who is around the table during these discussions. The greater the context expertise and the diversity of experience and perspective, the more robust the outcome is likely to be.

## The tool

The conflict sensitivity matrix is a table comprising four columns. The purpose of each column is explained below.

### Column 1 - Interactions

Identifying a list of interactions is the first step to completing the matrix. Use the **Conflict Sensitivity Interactions Typology** for this. It can be helpful to discuss with colleagues which interactions from the typology are relevant, based on your understanding of the context. It is important to write down all the ways in which your intervention and the context will affect each other, whether these effects are direct and indirect, intended and unintended, positive or negative – including even the ones which seem

Interaction	Description	Adapatations	Monitoring

Table 1. Example of an empty conflict sensitivity matrix

obvious. Later you can refine the document, merging similar interactions or removing less-relevant ones.

### Column 2 - Description

In the second column, we explain how activities impact the peace and conflict context or vice versa. It is important to be clear and explicit. We usually describe the interactions in three paragraphs. Firstly (1), we explain the risk or opportunity – what could happen. Then (2), we describe the possible impacts of interaction on the peace and conflict context – detailing the consequences of the interaction occurring, including any gendered impacts or impacts on marginalised groups. Finally (3), we explain why we suspect the interaction could happen, we cite sources, and we highlight its relevance.

### Column 3 - Adaptations

The third column is dedicated to adaptations, where we determine our strategy for dealing with the interactions between our programmes and the context. We often divide adaptations into mitigations and responses. Mitigation strategies aim to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring or to maximise the chances that the opportunity materialises. Responses are the actions that need to be taken if the event occurs. They aim to reduce the consequences of negative interactions or to maximise the consequences of positive ones.

Both mitigations and responses should be realistic and feasible, considering the flexibility of the programme and/or the donor and the budgetary constraints. It is important to develop mitigations and responses involving a variety of stakeholders; for example, staff that will implement the programme on the ground, and operational staff working in areas such as procurement or communications. Adaptations to programming need to be identified based on the specific programme/project activities, capacities and context.

You may face a conflict sensitivity dilemma when the balance between the opportunities and the risks linked to a programme is unclear and the risks of doing harm seem unavoidable. In these situations,

it can be helpful to work your way through the four conflict-sensitive decision-making tests.

### Column 4 - Monitoring

In the fourth column we include how we will monitor the risks and opportunities identified. Conflict sensitivity is an ongoing process that involves continually tracking changes in the conflict context and monitoring for anticipated and unanticipated interactions (both risks and opportunities).

We identify the indicators to disaggregate the risk/opportunity into measurable and monitorable proxies, then we indicate how we will identify them (e.g. news monitoring, interviews, public opinion surveys), and how often we should verify them (e.g. monthly, quarterly). Monitoring strategies can be loose and informal (i.e. observations during activities) or more formal and in-depth (i.e. academic study), depending on the relevance of the risk and/or opportunity, the level of interest in working on peace and conflict, and the resources available. You may want to disaggregate data so that you can monitor whether the impact of risks and opportunities affects men and women, or different socio-economic groups, differently.

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In the table below, we draw from real projects we have worked on to provide some examples of interactions and demonstrate how to use the matrix. Your own matrix will likely be more extensive and the interactions more specific than this.

Interaction	Description	Adapatations	Monitoring
<p>Assistance access is limited by authorities/armed groups on a political or communal basis.</p> <p>(Diversion effect)</p>	<p>Authorities or armed groups may use their control over granting permission for activities in order to halt, redistribute or concentrate assistance towards communities or groups based on political or communal lines. These motivations may not be explicitly stated but rather occur through administrative delays or other indirect means. Armed groups may attempt to use their ability to determine access for activities based on provision of support to affiliated communities.</p> <p>This could play into existing perceptions of inequalities between communities and raise tensions (including between IDPs and host communities) or be used to enhance certain political or armed groups' standing within particular communities.</p> <p>Implementer has seen delays to the granting of permission for assistance to IDP communities in a project location, understood to be due to armed group hostility towards IDPs in the area.</p>	<p><b>Mitigations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with humanitarian actors around access.</li> <li>Ensure coordination with local authorities, including transparency about the purpose of activities and insistence on needs-based beneficiary selection.</li> <li>Anticipate how existing activities may interact with changing political/conflict situation, including emergency, and how new restrictions or sensitivities may emerge.</li> </ul> <p><b>Response:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a joint response with other humanitarian actors.</li> <li>Identify influential decision makers and engage at high level.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Indicator:</b> Incidents affecting access</p> <p><b>Data sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisational Incident reports, including reason for access restriction</li> <li>Reports from humanitarian coordination or security advisory mechanisms citing incidents reported by other organisations</li> </ul>
<p>Focus on issues that are not perceived as priority for local communities affects the trust of those communities towards assistance projects.</p> <p>(Prioritisation effect)</p>	<p>Project activities don't deliver material support and don't target basic needs, in a context where these are largely unaddressed.</p> <p>Focus on cultural activities, sport, community gathering, aiming to decrease tensions between host and IDP communities, may be perceived as a waste of resources or aimed to divert attention from more structural issues. This may reinforce the sense of marginalisation which is a fundamental driver of violent conflict in this context.</p> <p>It was reported from the field that local communities lack trust in international organisations, especially because they don't deliver material assistance. This includes a perception that sometimes INGOs divert aid meant for local communities.</p>	<p><b>Mitigations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be transparent and clear about what can and cannot be delivered.</li> <li>Communicate consistently and coherently what the project is about and why it was decided to work on certain issues.</li> <li>Explore with the donor the possibility of allocating some project funding to a small grants-making mechanism that could help address some practical problems in the project locations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Response:</b> Undertake a joint visit with the donor to community leaders to communicate project objectives.</p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b> Community attitudes towards and engagement with project (including how attitudes differ between men/women and different identity groups)</p> <p><b>Data sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity monitoring reports, including staff observations</li> <li>Complaints mechanism</li> <li>Third-party monitoring reports</li> </ul>

<p>Increasing the visibility of LGBTQ+ activists and organisations may endanger them and lead to backlashes towards LGBTQ+ people in the community.</p> <p>(Attention effect)</p>	<p>Project activities increase the visibility of LGBTQ+ activists and organisations, in a context where this theme is sensitive and people suffer discrimination and physical violence due to their gender or sexual orientation.</p> <p>Activities that increase the visibility of LGBTQ+ activists and organisations may lead to violent repercussions for them but also for the LGBTQ+ people in the community where activities take place. This may reinforce the structural violence and marginalisation they suffer, and also lead to episodes of physical violence. On the other hand, project activities and partnership with these activists and organisations may offer them an alliance and protection from attacks.</p> <p>The attacks towards LGBTQ+ community are widely reported and are increasingly accepted in recent years. Project participants shared concerns about visibility of activities.</p>	<p><b>Mitigations:</b> Co-design strategies for the protection of partners and participants with them; these may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring anonymity of participants in certain activities considered particularly sensitive</li> <li>taking care to limit identifiers in published materials</li> <li>building a network of alliances with local leaders and authorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Response:</b> Bring in the donor, the allied authorities and local leaders to stop violence, its spreading and/or its scaling up.</p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b> Episodes of violence against LGBTQ+ people (including verbal violence and discrimination)</p> <p><b>Data sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News outlets</li> <li>Complaints mechanism</li> </ul>
<p>Recruiting project staff primarily from outside the areas where the project takes place risks reinforcing structural inequalities between regions.</p> <p>(Distribution effect)</p>	<p>Assistance is often delivered through partner organisations based in the capital city, or with staff who originate from near the capital.</p> <p>Working predominantly with actors from outside the region of implementation reinforces structural inequalities between regions: an important conflict driver. A reliance on staff from the capital when working in rural areas also limits contextual, cultural and linguistic familiarity with the area, increasing the risk of insensitive programming.</p> <p>This tendency is widely reported as a significant problem for engagement between programmes and communities in the project areas. There is no easy answer, as there are recognised challenges regarding the availability and capacity of staff and organisations in the North of the country.</p>	<p><b>Mitigations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor team composition and take this into account in recruitment processes.</li> <li>Ensure positions are advertised widely, targeting under-represented groups. Consider including local knowledge/languages as essential criteria.</li> <li>Invest in building capacity of locally recruited staff, including providing opportunities for career progression.</li> <li>Ensure resources are available to build the language, cultural and contextual awareness of staff recruited from other parts of the country and internationally.</li> </ul> <p><b>Response:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire locally or collaborate with local organisations to increase cultural sensitivity of programmes.</li> <li>Communicate clearly the reasons for your hiring practices.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Indicator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community attitudes towards and engagement with project (including how attitudes differ between men/women and different identity groups)</li> <li>Staff composition (indicated by language ability)</li> </ul> <p><b>Data sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity monitoring reports, including staff observations</li> <li>Complaints mechanism</li> <li>Third-party monitoring reports</li> <li>Staff capacities matrix</li> </ul>