



Conflict Sensitive Assistance in Libya Forum

Conflict Sensitivity Considerations relating to Local Governance Assistance in Libya

September 2019

Introduction

This brief report outlines key conflict-sensitivity considerations relating to the provision of international assistance to local governance authorities in Libya. It identifies recommendations for donors and implementing organisations to strengthen the conflict sensitivity of their activities. The report builds on the work of a conflict-sensitivity peer review of implementers working with local governance authorities facilitated by Peaceful Change initiative (PCi) in 2016 and presented in 2017, reflecting changes in the context and the ways in which assistance has been delivered since.

Research for the report was conducted by PCi in August 2019 with nine EU-funded organisations delivering assistance to local authorities in Libya.¹ Desk research was followed by face-to-face consultations with staff from each organisation to identify and discuss conflict sensitivity considerations. Follow-up consultations occurred with members of PCi's networks and interlocutors in Libya, with final analysis and identification of recommendations conducted by PCi.

The report focuses on common conflict-sensitivity considerations relating to assistance provided to local municipalities in Libya and is intended to inform practical policy, programme design and implementation. The considerations represent issues faced practically by implementers and were identified through consultations and PCi's broader peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity work in Libya.

Implementers engage at the local level in a wide range of ways. As a result, this review does not limit itself to activities focused on enhancing the governance capacities of municipalities but also looks at assistance activities that are delivered through or to municipalities. This includes capacity building

What is conflict sensitivity?

Conflict sensitivity recognises that we cannot separate our humanitarian, development and political assistance activities from the peace and conflict context in which we work. All our activities *interact* with the peace and conflict context and this may have *positive* and/or *negative effects*.

Conflict sensitivity is an approach to working that aims to minimise the way assistance activities may contribute to conflict and maximise the contributions assistance makes to sustainable peace.

It involves three steps:

- 1) Developing an understanding of the peace and conflict context, including key factors, stakeholders, their relationships and dynamics;
- 2) Identifying the ways in which assistance activities and the peace and conflict context affect each other;
- 3) Adapting activities to minimise potential conflict sensitivity risks and leverage opportunities to contribute to peace.

¹ The participating organisations were: ACTED, AICS, CoR, GIZ, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNICEF and VNG.

of municipalities as well as a set of activities around service delivery, reconstruction and rehabilitation – all of which have an impact on Libya's broader local governance environment.

As the report addresses assistance to municipalities in general, it is unable to provide particular recommendations about conflict sensitivity in specific local areas. This remains something which is necessary for all implementers to review as part of their project activities.

The first section of the report outlines the relationship between local governance and peace and conflict in Libya. The second section then provides an overview of the landscape of local governance assistance in Libya, including the types of assistance delivered by participating organisations and the areas in which this is delivered. Building on this understanding, the third section identifies several of the primary interactions between local governance assistance and Libya's peace and conflict context, including both risks of doing harm and opportunities to contribute to sustainable peace. The final section presents recommendations for donors and implementers regarding how to strengthen the conflict sensitivity of assistance.

The relationship between local governance, peace and conflict context in Libya

A conflict-sensitive approach requires a detailed understanding of the broader peace and conflict context. While other resources are better able to provide nuanced understanding of Libya's broader peace and conflict context, this section considers some of the ways in which Libya's local governance framework is impacted by and impacts the country's peace and conflict context. This provides important background when considering the conflict sensitivity of local governance assistance activities.

PCi looks at the peace and conflict context of Libya as a system of three overlapping conflict domains, which have separate dynamics but also feed into one another:

- a national level competition over the nature and control of the Libyan state, currently most visibly playing out with the military assault on Tripoli;
- a series of local-level conflicts within and between communities over control of authorities, local economic resources, access to administrative rights and inter-communal relations; and
- competition by international actors over interests and influence.

Libya's local governance environment is both affected by and affects Libya's peace and conflict context at national and local levels. It has a less direct relationship to international conflict dynamics in Libya and this will not be addressed here.

The local governance framework in Libya

The basis for Libya's decentralised governance was established during the 2011 revolution, during which local councils were organically established in many areas. Local councils were formally established under Law 59 in 2012 under the National Transitional Council. Law 59 provides an outline for the structure of municipalities and their responsibilities, though accompanying regulatory frameworks and other related legislation, including relating to fiscal decentralisation, still need to be developed or amended.

Libya's decentralisation framework is further complicated by Libya's contested environment relating to national governance, where different entities, most significantly the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Bayda-based Interim Government (IG) affiliated with the Eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA), claim legitimacy and authority over national institutions. These have engaged with local authorities in parallel and in some cases developed different regulations regarding municipal authorities.

The exact number of municipalities is unclear and appears to change periodically as both the GNA and IG establish new ones beyond the original list. At the time of writing, the Ministry of Local Governance affiliated with the GNA (MoLG-GNA) lists 118 municipalities. Elections for municipal councils in 92 municipalities were held in 2014 and 2015, with elections impossible in some areas, such as Derna and Bani Walid, due to security concerns. Despite these elections, from 2016 a number of municipalities under the control of the IG and the LNA saw their elected mayors replaced by unelected military and civilian officials.

With the exception of a few municipalities which held elections in 2018, the mandates of the majority of elected municipal councils will have expired by the end of 2019. With elections due, 22 municipalities have held elections in 2019² with further elections envisaged by both the GNA and IG. Nevertheless, these further municipal elections are not guaranteed to take place in all areas, owing to the influence of various political and military realities.

Municipalities themselves have limited legal capacity to respond to the service needs of their constituencies. Despite provisions in Law 59 relating to decentralisation of responsibility to municipalities for delivering certain services, these have not yet been put into practice. Municipalities do not have access to regular financial disbursements from central governments for more than salaries and operating costs, while the majority of services continue to be delivered through a number of government-owned service companies, each catering to specific services, such as water supply, waste management etc. Despite this, some municipalities have sought to identify ways in which they can deliver services, such as through partnerships with international implementers, despite legal and institutional uncertainty.

Despite these challenges, municipalities continue to represent the closest thing Libya has to democratically legitimate institutions. As a consequence, within the context of political uncertainty around Libya's broader national governance, international donors and implementers have seen municipalities as primary partners for addressing Libyans' needs.

Interaction between local governance and national-level conflict dynamics

Local governance in Libya is an important dynamic within the country's broader national-level conflict. Local governance can be seen to interact with the national conflict in two related ways.

Libya's weak decentralisation framework allows municipal level actors to act autonomously

At various points since the 2011 revolution, municipalities have moved to address weak governance and services as a result of political uncertainty at the national level and Libya's partially implemented and weak decentralisation framework (see above). They have done so by developing and leveraging relationships with local armed groups, local community organisations and businesses, informal community structures and international assistance providers working through international and local implementers.

In many cases, these moves by municipalities have been necessary as a result of the lack of service delivery at a local level and to address local needs. Nevertheless, they have also weakened the connection between municipalities and central authorities, who lack meaningful capacity to compel municipalities to follow policy. This has provided space for some of the stronger

² These elections were conducted under a closed party list system stipulated by a newly introduced GNA decree. The administrative legality of the decree is currently being challenged in court based on a failure to consult the MoLG-GNA as a step in the procedure. A ruling against the legality of the decree may jeopardise the results of the elections already held. However, CCME is currently preparing another nearly identical proposal for a closed list system, which could support claims to maintain the election results.

municipalities to exercise a degree of autonomy to pursue their own interests and act as independent actors, contributing to a fragmentary or centrifugal dynamic within Libya's broader context.

In practice the degree to which municipalities have exercised independence has waxed and waned during different stages of Libya's transition and has taken different forms in different areas. In 2014, for example, municipalities such as Misrata and Zintan demonstrated consistent willingness to act independently and acted antagonistically towards one another. Since 2017, however, as the politics around the GNA has developed, they have acted less overtly. In Eastern Libya, in the face of stronger control by LNA forces, municipalities have been able to act less independently.

Since April 2019, the increasing polarisation of the national political environment (see next section) has meant that municipalities have less capacity to act autonomously, though the degree to which this will remain the case is uncertain.

Polarisation of municipalities based on national conflict

The practical autonomy exercised by municipalities has fostered an environment in which a large number of municipalities have been functionally able to choose how they align with national political actors and, in turn, where national actors, such as the GNA, or IG and LNA, compete over the support of municipalities as part of their broader political interests. This dynamic has increased since 2017 as GNA politics has developed, and it has strengthened further since the start of 2019.

National political actors seek the support of municipalities by appealing to the interests of powerful factions within municipalities, providing or appealing to economic incentives, political interests, social relationships, manipulation of grievances and, in some cases, the threat or use of force.

A number of examples of this dynamic exist. In February 2019, Khalifa Haftar and LNA forces were able to secure the support of key local actors, including municipal authorities, in Sabha by appealing both to promises of improved services (including security) and to inter-communal grievances (Sabha municipal council is largely made up of the Awlad Suleiman tribe). Sabraatha also switched their support away from the GNA in April 2019 due to relationships between the major armed group in the town and the LNA. Such shifts in support have played very important roles in facilitating the political and military strategy of Khalifa Haftar's forces during the assault on Tripoli.

Some municipal actors have also sought to exploit this political marketplace and have reportedly hedged relationships with both the GNA and the LNA, both in order to prevent taking sides, but also to identify which side would offer greater promises of services, or of benefits to those actors and their constituencies.

However, municipalities are not always able to pursue their interests over national authorities. From 2017, in areas under IG/LNA control, municipal councils that have pushed back against those authorities have been removed and replaced with appointed military (later civilian) officers who are more compliant. Since the assault on Tripoli in April 2019, moreover, the ability of municipalities to chart a middle course between the national actors has become more limited, with local actors increasingly expected to define whom they support. Communication and collaboration between municipalities has become increasingly difficult as the security situation has worsened and tensions have flared, reportedly putting pressure on municipal authorities not to have contact with municipalities aligned with the other side.

This has the added impact of forcing municipalities to choose between increasingly divergent administrative processes under the GNA or IG (such as, which MoLG to answer to; which local electoral commission to engage with; or which decrees to pay attention to) – potentially complicating the process of reunifying these areas once the national governance environment becomes more settled.

Local governance and local conflict in Libya

Local governance is also a key dynamic influencing local conflicts in Libya, either between or within municipalities. Three important dynamics can be identified.

Intra-communal inequality and exclusion within municipal authorities

In municipalities with diverse constituencies, inter-communal tensions are driven by historic grievances and inequalities in terms of access to resources, opportunities and economic and political rights. Lack of trust and fear of marginalisation push community groups to take measures to safeguard their own interests and feed competition. Where local governance structures and processes are not inclusive of and responsive to all the different communal groups present in the local area, inter-communal tensions have led to violence, particularly in Libya's South.

In Kufra, where local authorities are widely seen to be aligned to the local Arab Zway tribe, unequal access to services is a key driver of tensions between local Tabu and the Zway communities. In Sabha, municipal authorities have been seen to be dominated by the Awlad Suleiman tribe since 2014, contributing to the intercommunal tensions between the town's various component communities.

On the other hand, some municipalities, where municipal councils have been divided, have seen disagreements between council members paralyse council business. To ease council decision making, the GNA issued a decree which would see a winning list in municipal elections secure all seats on the council. Despite including a provision stipulating minimum requirements for the lists, the list voting system would likely worsen feelings of exclusion by communities who are not represented within the list. The administrative legality of the decree is currently subject to court proceedings, though a new and nearly identical decree is being formulated to maintain the list system.

Competition over local political economies

Competition between local actors plays out in municipalities, where municipal authorities are one of many actors in local political economies. Informal governance structures are commonly present alongside formal ones, and local governance decisions are influenced by a mix of interrelated social, political, economic and armed actors.

Within this context, control of or influence over municipality administration is a key prize for local actors. Influence over municipal authority provides an avenue for securing resources and economic opportunities, for securing the interests of constituent communities, and to redirect the benefit of services provided by national government institutions towards actors' own benefit.

In some areas, armed groups in particular have disproportionate influence over municipal authorities. There have been instances where these groups have been able to fill gaps in services – most prominently in security provision – and are reportedly able to improve their standing by contributing to solving local problems and supporting community interests. In this role, armed groups maintain both credibility and coercive power which they are able to use to influence decision making.

Many local armed groups are informally connected with municipal authorities. Some armed groups, for example in Zintan and some groups in Misrata, position themselves as semi-official security actors under the direction of local authorities; others more blatantly attempt to influence municipal decision making for their own interests, as is the case with particular groups in Tripoli. Others, such as armed groups in Sabratha or Zawiya, represent a complex middle relationship, with direct links to the community but willing to influence decision making for their own economic interests. Regardless of the dynamic in any particular location, the strong link between municipal authorities and armed groups constitutes another factor entrenching them within Libya's broader political economy.

Support from national political actors fuels local conflict

As noted in the 'Polarisation of municipalities based on national conflict' section above, the support of municipality-level actors is important to national political actors who compete to secure their support. At the same time, local factions are able to use support offered by national actors to pursue their own local interests – many of which may be separate from broader national issues and based on inter-communal grievances or competition over local political economies. The provision of outside support to local factions can be a destabilising force that overrides municipal processes.

This dynamic has been particularly visible in the South West of Libya in 2019, when LNA forces reportedly engaged with particular factions in local areas to switch sides. LNA forces empowered those actors through promises of improved services and political futures. In several cases, such as in Murzuq and Sabha, LNA forces appear to have engaged local actors by supporting their interests to expel or dislocate the Tabu community.

Interactions between local governance assistance and the peace and conflict context

As part of a conflict-sensitive approach to delivering local governance assistance, it is necessary to review the potential ways in which assistance activities may interact with the peace and conflict context. This section briefly looks at some of the ways in which implementers report the peace and conflict context has impacted assistance – an important part of conflict sensitivity but one often captured in existing risk management processes. The section then reviews some of the key ways in which implementers' assistance activities may be intentionally or unintentionally impacting peace and conflict in both negative and positive ways.

Impacts of peace and conflict on local governance assistance

The conflict context in Libya affects programming in a number of ways related to increasing insecurity, access difficulties, uncertainty and mistrust.

Insecurity caused by ongoing violence impairs delivery capacity by posing security risks, damaging crucial infrastructure, limiting movement and access and otherwise impeding partners' abilities to operate. This has caused delays in delivery of activities in certain areas.

Increased security restrictions on the capacity of organisations to operate in Libya since the start of the assault on Tripoli in April 2019 has forced many implementers to return to remote management approaches to delivering activities. This reduces implementers' awareness of the context and knowledge of partners; it makes due diligence oversight of partners more difficult; and it increases the risk of corruption.

The broader conflict context has contributed to a degree of suspicion and mistrust of international actors and their motives. This negatively affects abilities to communicate and coordinate with staff, partners and counterparts, limits available information, and can complicate or hinder delivery of activities.

Finally, the changing conflict context may affect priorities relating to assistance. The military assault on Tripoli beginning in April 2019 was widely seen as a paradigm shift in Libya's broader peace and conflict context, and a number of donors are continuing to reassess their programming priorities and the relevance of the existing activities they support. While local governance is likely to continue as a focus area for international support in the current situation, in the longer term further changes in context at the political level may change that.

Impacts of local governance assistance on peace and conflict

Local governance assistance activities may impact Libya's peace and conflict context in a number of ways, either intentionally or unintentionally, and either positively or negatively. These interactions

represent risks that should be taken into account during programming or opportunities to contribute to peace that could be leveraged.

Six key interactions have been identified in this review.

Insufficiently defined political basis for providing support to municipalities contributes to national divisions

The GNA is the internationally recognised government of Libya and donors who provide assistance to municipalities do so in support of the GNA's administration of the country. Assistance to municipalities is commonly provided in close consultation with the GNA. In some cases, implementers make explicit the GNA's involvement, with the intention to enhance the credibility of the GNA at the local level. GNA officials are able to influence the selection of municipalities which receive assistance and to complicate procedures for delivery of assistance to certain municipalities, for example by withholding permits. This can contribute to strengthening a persistent perception that assistance is disproportionately delivered to areas under GNA control in the North west of Libya rather than in the South or East.³

International support to the GNA is divisive among Libyans who do not support it. When assistance is explicitly linked to political support for one side, it feeds into narratives around the international marginalisation of geographic, communal and political communities within the country. Reports from Libyan interlocutors confirm that many constituencies in the East of the country regard the international community and international assistance providers to be biased towards the GNA and aligned constituencies, which the LNA in particular has been able to leverage to discredit international action and the international actors supporting the peace process.

Because of this, many donors and implementers are conscious of the need to deliver assistance across the country and do provide assistance to areas under IG and LNA control. However, engaging with authorities in these areas risks diluting the political message of placing international recognition behind the GNA and, potentially, allows military appointed local actors to gain credibility and benefit from assistance delivered through international projects.

In response to this, international assistance to IG- and LNA-controlled areas is delivered at a 'technical' level rather than a 'political' level and some implementers stress to their technical counterparts that assistance is delivered in collaboration/coordination with the GNA not the IG. In reality, different implementers adopt different approaches to the problem, engaging to varying extents with local authorities in areas outside GNA control based on practical considerations. Strategies are commonly devised based on the ability of the implementer without clear guidance from donors. This collective 'muddling through' approach allows for delivery of project activities but creates a situation in which the conflict sensitivity harms caused by policies to either engage or not engage with the IG and LNA are exacerbated while the benefits are minimised.

Non-harmonised approaches to local assistance contributes to fragmentary governance dynamics

Despite the existence of several local governance coordination forums among international implementers, there remains a lack of coordination and harmonisation between implementers relating to assistance activities and types of support, particularly at the local (municipality) level. In

³ This perception is not necessarily accurate according to all metrics. For example, recent EU summaries of assistance to local governance authorities sees financial distribution of assistance roughly equivalent to the number of municipalities in each region, though in the East this assistance is concentrated in fewer municipalities (and more in the South). A review of assistance by all donors was not undertaken for this report.

the first instance, this contributes to the risk of overlapping assistance, inefficient delivery and potentially conflicting activities. Where frameworks for capacity building are not agreed upon, it also means that municipalities may be being empowered in different ways and to different degrees.

Importantly, despite the uncertainty that exists at a national level, frameworks for support to municipalities need to be placed within the context of Libya's current and potential decentralisation frameworks, including legislation and regulatory frameworks. Activities in support of municipalities that do not take this into account, such as by responding only to capacity building needs identified by municipal authorities themselves, risk worsening relationships between national and local governance institutions. When Libya's national governance environment becomes clearer, different expectations about the role of local governance between local and national authorities, coupled with the significant autonomy of local actors, can be expected to add complexity to the task of establishing a coherent and effective governance structure within the country.

On the other hand, defining a harmonised approach, contextualised within Libya's governance framework, may provide an opportunity to bring local and national authorities together in a way that contributes to addressing Libya's fragmented governance environment.

Defining a harmonised approach⁴ is particularly challenging in the context of Libya's competing national authorities. The GNA and IG demonstrate increased willingness to diverge in terms of policy relating to local governance and local authorities. With different municipalities looking to either government, whether by choice or otherwise, there is a risk that municipality structures, responsibilities and processes will also diverge, making even more complicated the task of reunifying Libya's governance framework after the national political context is more settled. International assistance to local governance may contribute to this, particularly if it is delivered on a case by case basis to municipalities, in a way that inadvertently supports divergent policies and processes.

Assistance undermines or contributes to inclusive governance structures

International assistance implementers working at the local level necessarily work with municipal authorities as a primary partner and beneficiary of their activities. Municipal authorities are potentially able to influence the design of activities, identification and prioritisation of beneficiaries and the identification or selection of other partners. Where municipal authorities are not inclusive of the various communities and other stakeholders at the local level, there is a risk that municipal authorities may seek to, or be perceived to, channel assistance to support their own interests and constituencies. This can feed into negative dynamics within local political economies and exacerbate existing inter-communal or inter-group tensions and conflicts. It is of particular concern as a result of increased polarisation at the local level due to the escalation of tensions at the national level in 2019.

On the other hand, support to municipalities can be delivered in such a way as to encourage municipal authorities to engage in inclusive processes. By designing the delivery of activities in such a way as to promote participatory and inclusive decision making, even when municipal authorities themselves may not be representative of all stakeholders in the local area, such approaches can establish or strengthen sustainable approaches to local governance, reduce inter-communal tensions and contribute to peace at the local level.

⁴ Several international assistance providers are working on developing frameworks for ensuring that local governance assistance is contextualised within broader national decentralisation frameworks.

Focus on delivery over participatory processes leads to some actors being strengthened over others

Implementers face a natural pressure to deliver activities, both within the framework of project commitments and funding cycles, as well as by donors that are eager to demonstrate that they are responding to Libya's conflict-related needs. However, focus on delivery may lead implementers to compromise time-consuming participatory processes that ensure that assistance is delivered in a genuinely inclusive manner. This risks contributing to non-inclusive governance structures or strengthening already dominant actors who are able to channel assistance to their own advantage, feeding into actual and perceived inequalities and tensions at the local level, especially in areas where the make-up of municipal authorities is not representative of the various stakeholders in the local area.

Activities may need to be delivered quickly, particularly in response to conflict or humanitarian needs. However, this needs to be balanced with approaches that take into account local tensions. In particular, increased polarisation at the local level as a consequence of the worsening national context in 2019 actually increases the risk that quickly delivered, and unsatisfactorily inclusive, activities will fuel local competition over control of municipalities and inter-communal tensions.

Perceived motives for assistance contribute to perceptions of inequalities and mistrust of international actors

Among many constituencies, a perception exists that international activities are motivated only by self-interest. EU-funded activities in Libya, for example, are seen to be motivated by an interest in reducing irregular migration flows and, in some cases, local governance assistance is explicitly linked to migration.

Such perceptions undermine trust in international actors and international support as a whole, including the internationally supported political process, weakening the effectiveness of all international assistance to contribute to peace and raising risks to implementers.

When seen to be specifically linked to migration, local governance support can increase resentment of migrants at the local level, who are seen by many Libyans to be illegitimate recipients of aid.

Reluctance to consider the role of armed actors at the local level raises the risk that they can benefit from or influence assistance activities in unknown ways

In many local areas, armed groups exert significant influence over local authorities, economic activity and communities as a whole. Many implementers are understandably reluctant to engage with armed actors and seek to avoid direct engagement with them.

Engaging with armed actors risks giving recognition to, and thereby strengthening, non-state armed actors and raising compliance or other risks for implementers. However, given the nature of local political economies, even when implementers do not engage directly with armed actors, there is a high likelihood that they will interact with that assistance indirectly. A lack of understanding of the relationships between armed groups and local authorities, partners or other beneficiaries, contributes to the risk that assistance may inadvertently be captured by armed actors for economic gain or influence.

Conflict sensitivity processes within local governance assistance projects

This section briefly considers the degree to which conflict-sensitivity perspectives have been incorporated into assistance directed to local governance in Libya.

PCi identifies a number of processes which donors and implementers should build into project, programmes and coordination processes to ensure they are incorporating conflict sensitivity into their way of working. These include:

Projects/Interventions	Programmatic-level responses	Coordination processes
<p>Project staff have access to regularly updated conflict analysis, detailing factors, actors and dynamics and relevant to the areas in which project activities are being delivered (including local area analyses where assistance is delivered locally).</p> <p>Conflict sensitivity markers and indicators are incorporated into monitoring and evaluation plans.</p> <p>Project activities reviewed in terms of interactions with peace and conflict context.</p> <p>Conflict-sensitivity risk matrix developed, outlining how project activities could potentially do harm.</p> <p>Possible opportunities for contributing to sustaining peace identified and listed.</p> <p>Mitigations to reduce likelihood and impact of conflict sensitivity risks are identified and incorporated into project activities. Response plans developed to respond to conflict-sensitivity risks when they do occur.</p> <p>Project activities adjusted to take advantage of identified opportunities to contribute to sustaining peace.</p> <p>Project governance meetings reflect on the continued conflict sensitivity of activities and adapt programming as necessary.</p>	<p>Overall and up-to-date country conflict analysis reviewed when developing country programme.</p> <p>Conflict-sensitivity indicators incorporated into results and resources framework and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.</p> <p>Potential interactions, both risks and opportunities, between programme activities and peace and conflict context identified.</p> <p>Programmatic priorities linked to addressing conflict factors where relevant and possible.</p> <p>Strategic-level mitigation and response plans developed to manage conflict-sensitivity risks and dilemmas.</p> <p>Conflict sensitivity made an explicit topic for reflection during strategic reviews/mid-term evaluations informed by updated analysis and M&E data.</p>	<p>Coordination processes are informed by a shared, mutually understood conflict analysis.</p> <p>Shared assessment conducted of how coordinated activities may affect the peace and conflict context.</p> <p>Joint identification of conflict sensitivity risks undertaken.</p> <p>Joint assessment of opportunities to contribute to peace undertaken.</p> <p>Coordination processes agree on mutually compatible conflict sensitivity risk mitigations and responses.</p>

Preparation for this report did not involve undertaking an audit of how programmes and interventions delivering assistance to municipalities incorporate conflict-sensitivity processes into their work. Nevertheless, a number of general observations can be made about how implementers appear to be incorporating conflict sensitivity into their project processes.

Implementers show increasing awareness of the need to be conflict sensitive, regarding it as inherent within their work. Many have taken steps to incorporate conflict analysis and/or conflict-sensitivity measures into stages of their programming, including enrolling staff in conflict sensitivity trainings.

This awareness is important and leads many actors to intuitively think through conflict-sensitivity considerations as part of their work. However, this approach remains largely informal and, for the majority of actors, conflict-sensitivity processes like those identified above are not incorporated into their project activity cycles. There are legitimate reasons for this, such as lack of experience with conflict-sensitive programming among staff, lack of staffing and financial resources and limited space to adapt activities within project and operational processes.

There is increasing awareness of the need to undertake conflict analysis, with most implementers reporting that they have undertaken some kind of conflict analysis at the start of their activities. In many cases activities do not include provision for keeping these analyses regularly updated.

A few implementers have undertaken more explicit efforts to be conflict sensitive, however, including undertaking processes to develop conflict-sensitivity risk plans and to explicitly adapt activities in response, such as around joint communications approaches.

Recommendations

Based on a review of the relationship between local governance and peace and conflict, and the interactions between assistance provided to municipalities and peace and conflict, a number of general recommendations can be identified, relevant for either, or both, donors and implementers.

Recommendations are divided into three categories: strengthening conflict sensitivity within project and coordination processes; utilising project activities to strengthen positive peace; and identifying responses to collective conflict sensitivity issues.

Strengthening conflict sensitivity within project and coordination processes

Recommendation 1: Build in processes to update detailed understanding of local level peace and conflict contexts during programming

Given the variable peace and conflict context in Libya, particularly at the local level, it is imperative that understanding of the context be updated regularly. Many implementers providing assistance to municipalities undertake peace and conflict analyses to inform their programming. Unfortunately, however, many projects do not include processes or resources to keep the analyses up to date within activities. A number of implementers noted challenges in terms of being able to maintain analyses – particularly in terms of time and resources required.

Implementers and donors should ensure that project are designed with analysis mechanisms built in, including appropriate resources. In order to make analysis more efficient, and ensure complementary understanding of the situation, donors and implementers should look to build joint analysis processes of local areas into coordination mechanisms, including both analysis of the context and of interactions between the context and assistance programming.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen conflict sensitivity within project management and governance processes

Adopting a conflict-sensitive approach requires implementers to incorporate conflict-sensitivity reflection into every stage of the project management cycle. This includes maintaining an updated analysis, but also translating that into conflict-sensitivity risk assessments, identification of opportunities and ongoing monitoring.

Implementers should ensure that time within project management and governance meetings should be dedicated to reflection on how activities may need to be adapted to the changing conflict context. Donors should facilitate and mirror this by including conflict sensitivity and conflict analysis discussions in steering committee meeting agendas and periodic programme reviews.

Recommendation 3: Incorporate conflict sensitivity explicitly into coordination processes relating to local governance assistance

In a number of municipalities several implementers are providing assistance to local governance authorities concurrently. Even where such activities may address different issues, from a conflict-sensitivity as well as aid-effectiveness perspective it is necessary to ensure that implementers are engaging in a consistent approach, reducing the risk of exacerbating tensions. While coordination does take place to varying degrees at different levels, it has been noted that it is generally limited to information sharing about where implementers are working and a brief overview of activities. Local level coordination in particular could be improved.

Donors and implementers should ensure, or continue to ensure, that local governance assistance activities are coordinated with one another. Coordination mechanisms should incorporate explicit conflict-sensitivity considerations, including periodically reviewing interactions between assistance and peace and conflict context and developing commonly agreed strategies to minimise conflict-sensitivity risks and leverage opportunities.

Recommendation 4: Ensure adaptive programming and be prepared to take longer to implement activities

In a context of heightened national and local political polarisation, it is of paramount importance to ensure that activities are delivered in a conflict-sensitive way, taking into account the perspectives of all the conflict actors on the ground. This requires maintaining an ongoing understanding of the context as well as preparedness to adapt to changing circumstances. In many cases, it may be necessary to slow down activities in order to ensure buy-in from different groups.

Donors and implementers should discuss and plan for adaptive approaches to delivering activities, acknowledging that in some cases activities may need to be adjusted or slowed down in order to be conflict sensitive.

Strengthening peace through project activities

Recommendation 5: Identify how to promote the inclusivity of municipal authorities' engagement with communities

Even where the make-up of municipal authorities in themselves may not be representative of all communities in the local area, inclusive governance approaches can address many of the structural conflict risks that may exist at a local level and provides an important opportunity to contribute to sustainable local peace.

Implementers should identify ways to ensure and enhance the capacity of municipal authorities to engage with communities in a genuinely inclusive way as part of their assistance activities. This should be informed by a detailed stakeholder assessment⁵ undertaken as part of peace and conflict analyses at the local level.

Identifying responses to collective conflict sensitivity issues

Recommendation 6: Harmonise frameworks for local governance systems and structures

Through existing coordination mechanisms and in consultation/collaboration with a broad representation of Libyan central and municipal authorities, implementers should engage to define a harmonised framework for local governance capacity building and engagement with central authorities. This framework should take into account the legal framework around decentralisation as well as the practical governance realities at the local level.

A harmonised framework will ensure that different municipalities, supported by different implementers, do not develop in a way that will exacerbate tensions between the local and central level when national governance is more settled and indeed facilitates effective decentralisation. Several international assistance providers are reportedly currently working to define such a framework.

⁵ Preferably done jointly by (different) implementers at municipal/local level and/or shared with other implementers to share experiences and knowledge around the local actors and environment.

Recommendation 7: Define collective approach to dealing with different governments

Donors, in consultation with implementers, should convene through or alongside existing coordination mechanisms to define a common and consistent approach towards engaging with municipal authorities aligned with different national authorities. This recommendation does not *per se* advocate for donors to change their political positions regarding the GNA, but rather calls for recognition that such a political position has consequences and that when different donors and implementers have different approaches, the benefits of such political recognition are undermined while amplifying the conflict-sensitivity risks involved.

A common approach to this issue should take into account the conflict sensitivity risks of working or not working with certain authorities (based on feedback from implementers in the field) and define common principles, agreed by donors and communicated clearly to implementers, outlining under what circumstances it is appropriate to engage with different authorities. Defined guidelines will provide clarity for implementers while reducing the risks that inconsistent approaches worsen conflict dynamics.

Recommendation 8: Develop joint principles for how to engage with and around security actors

Within existing coordination mechanisms, donors and implementers should convene to develop realistic principles for engaging in areas where security actors and armed groups may be able to benefit from or influence activities.

By acknowledging the risks associated with providing activities in such a context and identifying practical measures for addressing them, such principles can ensure that conflict-sensitivity risks are managed and reduced.

Further contact

Tim Molesworth, Senior Advisor – Conflict Sensitivity and Peace Technology, PCi
tim.molesworth@peacefulchange.org

Anne Kristine Raunkiaer-Jensen, Conflict Analysis and Conflict Sensitivity Advisor, PCi
kristine.raunkiaer@peacefulchange.org

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The Conflict Sensitive Assistance in Libya (CSA) forum, funded by the Government of Switzerland and the European Union and facilitated by the Peaceful Change initiative, aims to support the ability of international assistance providers working in and on Libya to undertake their work in a conflict sensitive manner – minimising the risk of harm caused by their assistance and maximising opportunities to promote positive peace.

The CSA forum includes: a bimonthly meeting bringing together international organisations, donors and implementers to consider how the changing context in Libya affects and is affected by their programming; a Leadership Group made up of senior representatives of diplomatic missions and the UN, which aims to consider policy responses aimed at enhancing conflict sensitivity; research and preparation of resource materials relating to conflict sensitivity in Libya; and technical support to implementers, through convening discussions, provision of training, and ad hoc advice relating to conflict sensitivity.