UMN Policies & Guidelines
UMN Conflict Sensitivity Policy
UMN Programme Support Team

VERSION: February 2018

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out UMN's objectives and methods for a conflict sensitive approach to development.

Policy Owner

This policy is owned by UMN Programme Support Team.

Policy Change History

DATE	STATUS/MODIFICATION	APPROVED BY
2012-08-22	Approved initial version	Leadership Team
2018-02	Revised version	Leadership Team

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1. RATIONALE

UMN is committed to work in ways which are based on respectful relationships among beneficiaries, partners and staff. Where people are suffering from acute poverty, we realise that our development programmes are needed. However, if programmes are not carefully planned and managed in a conflict sensitive way, they can contribute to conflict, prolong broken relationships, or even create new conflicts.

The diverse people of Nepal need opportunities to knit and weave their diversity into a strong new nationwide vision where differences are seen as a source of richness rather than a threat. As a development organisation, we want our programmes to provide as many opportunities as possible for people to meet and be enriched by each other and to celebrate their diversity.

As the country has adopted federal system, the power and authorities from the centre have shifted to the local level. Municipalities and rural municipalities are now responsible for monitoring the work of development organizations in their respective areas. This changing context brings both opportunities and challenges for UMN in its working areas. In one hand, there is a likelihood of increased participation, ownership and sharing of resources by the local bodies, while in the other hand, the local bodies and political parties may try to influence the programmes to serve their own interests. This could potentially create tensions and affect relationship.

Conflict sensitivity is one of the cross-cutting issues in UMN's Strategic Plan. The policy is necessary because:

1. Nepal is now in federal status so different dynamics of conflict may happen. UMN needs to be conflict sensitive in this.
2. Development patterns will be affected in several ways by new changing contexts.
3. As a Christian organisation, we need to take seriously the biblical mandate to be peacemakers and to work towards reconciliation in all areas of life.

2.   UMN CONFLICT SENSITIVITY POLICY

2.1   Policy Key Objectives

This policy sets out our objectives and methods for a conflict sensitive approach to development.

1. To raise staff awareness on conflict sensitivity and apply it in work.
2. To help UMN create opportunities to build connection between different interest groups for peace building and sustainable development.
3. To guide in dealing the negative effects of existing conflicts.
4. To prevent conflicts being created during our programme interventions.
5. To support UMN and communities to deal with conflict issues positively.

It involves:

1. Understanding the context within which UMN works, particularly with respect to conflict dynamics incorporating gender dimensions.
2. Understanding the interaction between UMN programme interventions and the conflict context with gender perspective.
3. Acting upon the understanding and analysis of this interaction, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts incorporating gender dimensions.

2.2   Policy Definitions & Key Conceptual Understanding

Conflict

Conflict is a clash or struggle between two or more individuals or groups that perceive that their interest, needs, goals or strategies are incompatible. It involves the contestation around demands, interests, collective memory, emotions, perceptions, values, beliefs, history, culture, behaviours, actions, symbols and power. It can develop from micro interactions to macro systems. However, conflict itself is not necessarily negative. Conflict can lead to positive change. The expression, process and outcomes associated with conflict may be destructive, constructive, or both, in any given context.

Conflict Analysis

In general, conflict analysis is the systematic study of the profile, causes, effects, actors and dynamics of conflict by capturing the multidimensionality (political, social, economic, security, etc.). It is essential to resolve the conflict in sustainable way.

Conflict Management

Any efforts made to certain violent conflict, reduce the level of violence or engage parties in a process to settle the conflict.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution address and resolve the deep-rooted sources of conflict. It is often uses a problem-solving methodology to identify options for addressing the sources of conflict.

Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation goes beyond the concept of conflict resolution and in that it requires a transformation of the parties, their relationship to each other, and the structural elements that underline the conflict.

Conflict Sensitivity

It is an awareness of the causes of historical actual or potential conflict, and the likelihood of further conflict, including its likely severity; and acting to minimise negative impacts and maximize positive impacts of the intervention on conflict.

Mainstreaming Conflict Sensitivity

Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity is a process of fully incorporating conflict sensitive practices in the organizational mandates, policies and programme cycle management. It is a comprehensive process of integrating conflict sensitivity throughout the entire programming cycle at all levels of the organization and across all programmes.

Level of Mainstreaming Conflict Sensitivity for UMN

- **Individual Level:** The individual is vital to prevent, cause, resolve conflicts. It is therefore important for the person to acquire conflict sensitivity in our attitudes, behaviours and practice of our daily life and in UMN work.
- **Organisational Level:** For mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity in the organisation, we need to have clear common understanding on conflict sensitivity, develop related organisational policies, procedures and application.
- **Programmatic Level:** To have good development practices and impacts, we need to apply conflict sensitivity to project cycle management (from conceptual development, need assessment, project design, implementation, learning and monitoring, evaluation and to phasing out).
- **Partner Level (UMN & Supporting/Funding Partners, UMN & Implementing Partners):** Good partnership relationship whether between UMN and implementing partners, supporting partners and funding partners, is fundamental to achieve our mandate. We need to have conflict sensitivity in our partnership relationship.

Gender

The term "Gender" on the other hand refers to the sociologically and culturally based distinction between male and female i.e. the roles that men and women are given by society and which are not biologically determined. Because "gender" is not biologically given, the attributes of both male and female gender can (and do) change over time and across cultures.

Gender Equality

Equality exists when both men and women are attributed equal social value, equal rights and equal responsibilities, and have equal access to the means (resources, opportunities) to exercise them.

2.3 Policy Principles

1. We should seek to contribute to peace and harmony at all times, through our work, and through our lives outside of work. This contribution can include all we say and do, while recognizing that conflict is sometimes a necessary part of creating a more just and peaceful society, as long as it is dealt with in a sensitive manner.

2. We should recognise and respect all kind of diversity including gender, differently abled people, people of different religions, caste and ethnicity. This implies that we treat diversity as an opportunity to be enriched by others, rather than as a source of conflict.

3. Conflicts are best resolved by the parties concerned and should be attended to early before the conflict escalates.

4. We take Jesus' command to love our enemies seriously and encourage others to do the same.

5. Everyone should be treated fairly. No one should be treated differently based on gender, caste, ethnicity, age, position and abilities.

2.4 Key Aspects to be Considered in Conflict Sensitivity

2.4.1 Sensitivity Related to UMN Staff's Attitudes, Behaviours & Actions

1. UMN staff should not promote their own political views or those of any political ideology in any way that could be understood as reflecting the views of UMN.

2. UMN staff must not use violent or coercive behaviour, or provoke others to use such behaviour within UMN, with the partners or in the communities.

3. UMN staff should seek to be humble and model UMN's values.

4. UMN staff should maintain a respectful attitude to everyone (women, men, girls and boys, differently abled people, people of different age, religions, caste and ethnicity).

5. UMN staff should be sensitive to the power dynamics in the community by not being perceived as siding with one particular group such as political parties, religious group, conflicting groups.

6. UMN staff should recognize and handle potential conflict issues in resource allocation with conflict sensitive way (by having clear targeting guidelines, criteria, participatory processes, communication of mandate and approaches etc.).

7. UMN staff should encourage to identify and mobilize of local resources.

2.4.2 Sensitivity Related to UMN's Organisational Mandate, System/Policies, Funds & Decision-Making Mechanism

1. UMN should provide a clear understanding of the organisational mandate (vision, mission, values) and how to do things (e.g. decision-making mechanism, funding allocation strategies, people management framework guideline) to all its staff.

2. UMN should develop and/or revisit its organizational policies and approaches according to changing contexts with conflict sensitivity.

3. UMN should apply conflict sensitivity analysis while making major organisational decisions such as selection of Cluster locations and partner organisations.

4. UMN should provide opportunities for UMN and partner staff to gain knowledge and skill in conflict prevention, conflict transformation and conflict management.

5. UMN should conduct periodic analysis of the changing contexts incorporating conflict sensitivity and gender perspective, and redesigning project interventions accordingly.

6. UMN should communicate clearly and consistently to partners and communities about UMN's vision, mission, values, working approaches and details of the projects.

7. UMN should recognize and handle potential conflict issues early and according to established organizational mechanisms.

8. UMN should analyse workload implication, access to and control of project intervention and resources in relation to women, girls, men and boys in its projects.

9. UMN should use gender friendly and gender sensitive approaches and tools that facilitate equal and meaningful participation in decision-making.

2.4.3 *Sensitivity Related to Partnership Relationship*

1. UMN should maintain a regular communication with its Partners informing them of any significant changes in its policies and programmes.

2. UMN should fulfil its organisational and programmatic obligations as required by Partners.

3. UMN should develop and follow a clearly defined exit plan while ending a partnership with its local Partners.

2.4.4 *Sensitivity Related to Project Cycle Management*

2.4.4.1 *Concept Development Stage*

UMN staff and project team should:

1. Embed conflict sensitivity right from the concept development stage of the project.

2. Have a clear understanding about targeting with sufficient rationale.

3. Have a common understanding on process among project team members, supporting and implementing partners.

2.4.4.2 *Need Assessment/Situation Analysis Stage*

UMN staff and project team should:

1. Conduct a participatory need assessment process so that the process itself does not lead to tensions.

2. Ensure that the stakeholders are communicated clearly so that community expectations towards the project are not overly raised through the assessment process.

3. Follow a participatory and inclusive process involving different sections of the target community e.g. women, men, girls, boys etc.

2.4.4.3 *Design/Planning*

1. Conduct divider/connector analysis as part of any project design, and during annual planning with partners. However, in cases of conflict situations a detail conflict analysis should be conducted i.e. the systematic study of the profile, causes, and dynamics of conflict.

2. Ensure all the programmes have relevant baselines, Participatory Capacity Assessments and Technical Capacity Assessments (conducted with partners before, during and at the end of the partnership process). This will ensure that all interventions are "evidence informed" and not based on personal bias.

3. Ensure all the programmes are inclusive and that, as far as is reasonably practicable, beneficiaries are chosen according to clear, objective poverty criteria. No group or person will be excluded simply based on sex, caste, religion or political belief.

2.4.4.4 *Implementation Stage*
1. Conduct the conflict analysis if required before and after project implementation and manage any issues that arise concerning working approaches, targeting, staffing, information networks, contracting etc.
2. Include conflict sensitivity during project reviews (which involves developing a mitigation plan) and share the reports in relevant forums (i.e. PMC) within UMN.
3. Incorporate conflict sensitive perspective in Detail Implementation Plan (DIP) of projects.

2.4.4.5 *Monitoring & Evaluation*
1. Include a conflict sensitive measures during monitoring and evaluation process.
2. Build the capacity of the concerned staff in conflict sensitive monitoring and evaluation process.
3. Incorporate conflict sensitive indicators in the monitoring and evaluation plan, process, reporting and mitigation actions.
4. Incorporate impact of conflict sensitivity in the programmatic reviews and reflections.
5. Ensure that the overall process of project/programme monitoring and evaluation are conducted in a conflict sensitive way.

2.4.4.6 *Phasing Out*
1. Include the phasing out plan including conflict sensitivity by setting annual target in the project proposal and contextualize it according to the changing context.
2. Conduct post-partnership follow up as required.
3. Ensure that phase out plan is applied well so that there will not be any further tension after exiting the project.

2.5 Mainstreaming Conflict Sensitivity With Gender Equality Perspective
1. Identifying and understanding context specific patriarchal system, structures, gender power relations and practices which perpetuate/exacerbate unequal distribution of the benefits of development outcomes, resources, opportunities and choices, and challenging them.
2. Examining intersectionality impact of gender with caste/ethnicity, class, religion, disability, status of HIV, etc. and addressing them through relevant interventions.
3. Applying gender relationships analysis to Divider and Connector framework.
4. Looking at who (women, men, girls and boys) has the access to resources and is benefiting from the resources.
5. Reflecting on how gender attitudes affect our conflict sensitivity.
6. Looking at how our organization and programs/projects interact with gender roles, experiences and relationships in the contexts of conflict, conflict prevention and conflict transformation.
7. Identifying and addressing different practical and strategic gender needs.

2.6   Policy Implementation

This policy applies to all staff including expatriate, volunteers and interns of UMN. Partners are encouraged to follow this policy and/or develop their own.

2.6.1   Leadership Team

2.6.1.1   DO:
1. Amend this policy as needed.
2. Ensure all staff are aware of this policy.
3. Be committed to choosing partners whose values do not conflict with those of UMN.
4. Link this policy with security and UMN organizational development risks as and when necessary.
5. Ensure that the staff are explained about how the policy relates to relevant technical areas and approaches.

2.6.1.2   DO NOT:
1. Allow social or political, class, gender, caste, disability, bias or discrimination within the organisation.
2. Ignore legitimate concerns, feedback and issues raised by UMN staff, government stakeholders and partners.
3. Approve project proposals that have not considered conflict sensitivity.

2.6.2   Project Team

2.6.2.1   DO:
1. Integrate conflict sensitivity throughout the project cycle management.
2. Redesign development effort according to conflict sensitivity analysis findings.
3. Report programme concerns to the relevant teams/forums.
4. Work and act in a way which builds harmony and peace with colleagues.
5. Commit to fully supporting decisions that have been made in an inclusive way.
6. Look at all detail implementation plans and budgets through a conflict sensitive lens using the appropriate tools.
7. Conduct conflict sensitivity policy orientation with partner staff and executive board during the first year of partnership, and then annually.
8. Built capacity of relevant staff for conflict analysis and conflict management so that they can mediate conflict as needed.
9. Conduct conflict sensitivity analysis involving all relevant staff on a regular basis for review, reflection, and to mitigate negative impacts.
10. Integrate conflict sensitivity in baseline studies, monitoring and evaluation.
11. Incorporate conflict sensitive measures in all UMN reports.
12. Include conflict sensitivity as part of the partners' half year and annual project reviews.

2.6.2.2   DO NOT:
1. Ignore opportunities to improve relationships and challenge stereotypes.

2. Take conflict sensitivity as an unnecessary extra workload but see it as part of all programme components, and essential for sustainable development and good governance.
3. Ignore the importance of conflict sensitivity in project cycle management.

2.7 Dealing With Conflicts (Among UMN staff or Between UMN Staff & Partners)

- When a UMN staff has a concern with another UMN staff or someone in the partner organisation, they should seek to resolve the issue within themselves.
- If such attempts fail or are not appropriate (e.g. in case of sexual harassment), then the person (UMN staff) should follow the grievance procedure as outlined in the PMF.
- If the above two procedures do not give a satisfactory result, then it may be possible to seek the help of a neutral mediator.

2.8 Related References

- UMN Strategic Plan
- UMN People Management Framework
- Other policies of UMN such as:
  – UMN Gender Policy
  – UMN Policy & Guidelines for Prevention of Corruption & Fraud
  – UMN Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy & Guidelines

More information

In case you need more information or clarification about this policy, or you should have any suggestions, please contact the Programme Support Team.