Catalysing conflict sensitivity in Yemen

Enabling more effective assistance

December 2018

Contents

Acronyms

German Federal Foreign Office	AA
Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula	AQAP
Central Bank of Yemen	CBY
Conflict sensitivity	CS
Civil Society Organisation	CSO
Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility for South Sudan	CSRF
Department for International Development (UK)	DFID
Do No Harm	DNH
European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	ECHO
European Union	EU
General People's Congress (party of Ali Abdullah Saleh)	GPC
Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative	HDPI
International Development Association	IDA
Internally Displaced Persons	IDPs
International Monetary Fund	IMF
International Organisation for Migration	IoM
International Non-governmental Organisation	INGO
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	KSA
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam	LTTE
Ministry of Education	MoE
Ministry of Health	MoH
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	MOPIC
National Authority for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Recovery	NAMCHA
National Dialogue Conference	NDC
National Salvation Government	NSG
Non-governmental Organisation	NGO
New Way of Working	NWoW
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	OCHA
Post-Conflict Needs Assessment	PCNA
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen	SESGY
Social Fund for Development	SFD
Stabilisation Facility for Libya	SFL

Saudi-led Coalition	SLC
Supreme Political Council	SPC
Supreme Security Committee	SSC
Southern Transitional Council	STC
United Arab Emirates	UAE
United Kingdom	UK
United Nations	UN
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP
United States	US
United States Agency for International Development	USAID
World Bank	WB
Working Conflict Analysis process in Georgia	WCA

Executive Summary

Background

The armed conflict in Yemen has deepened a humanitarian crisis that has been unfolding for the past few decades. At the time of the report, an estimated 76 percent (20.7 million people) are in need of humanitarian assistance. The international community has responded with the second largest humanitarian aid package globally, accounting for 8 percent of all aid and projected to reach US$ 4 billion in 2018. As the conflict protracts, humanitarian aid is increasingly supported by Humanitarian Plus, Stabilisation and peace programming, in an attempt to prevent a further weakening of the Yemeni state and society.

The very conflict dynamics that have driven the humanitarian crisis also present a complex and challenging environment for delivering assistance, whether within humanitarian, Humanitarian Plus, Stabilisation or Peace programmes. All aid actors are required to negotiate multiple overlapping conflict dynamics: (1) a political conflict between the Government of Yemen (GoY) and the *de facto* National Salvation Government (NSG), representative of the Ansar Allah movement – collectively 'the authorities'; (2) a southern separatist movement that disputes the authority of central government; (3) growing tribal, community and sectarian divides; (4) an extremist Islamic movement that also disputes the authority of central government; and (5) a conflict for influence in Yemen by regional actors. Since 2015, there have been a range of examples of parties to the different conflict dynamics, intentionally or inadvertently, preventing, diverting or capturing international aid flows. There is also the potential for international assistance programmes to directly influence the level of violence used in the five conflict dynamics and the potential for their resolution.

Given this complexity, it is essential for international aid actors to be conflict sensitive in how they deliver assistance into Yemen. This means they need to understand, and plan to manage effectively: (1) the impact of conflict dynamics on their ability to delivery aid; and (2) the impact of aid on conflict dynamics. Being conflict sensitive means that those providing aid to Yemen should minimise the risk that their actions worsen conflict dynamics, but should also identify opportunities to achieve a peace dividend through 'what' and 'how' aid is delivered. This is especially important as donors invest more heavily in Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation programming. This report assesses the conflict sensitivity considerations that face aid to Yemen and the present capacity to manage them, and provides a framework for catalysing the conflict sensitivity of international assistance in the future.

Key findings

Impact of the conflict on aid

- Individual agencies' aid delivery is authorised through constant negotiation with: (1) political actors across the divide (the GoY and the *de facto* NSG); and (2) with community, tribal, political and security leaders at the governorate, municipal and local council levels. When these negotiations are unsuccessful or take time, aid organisations are prevented from accessing target areas, from control over the selection of final beneficiaries and undertaking operations in an autonomous manner. The analysis demonstrates that the requirement on agencies to negotiate, as well as restrictions imposed by authorities, has increased significantly in 2018; making the delivery of aid increasingly challenging. The delivery of aid is further restricted by the land, sea and air restrictions put in place by the Saudi-led Coalition (SLC).

- These negotiations, and the inconsistency of approach by agencies when negotiating with the parallel authorities, facilitate the partial diversion of aid at the political and local levels, in terms of delivery modalities and end beneficiaries. Organisations in effect temper a needs-based approach to aid with the requirement to sufficiently satisfy the interests of political and local conflict parties. The result is that aid is not always getting to those in need, as demonstrated by the ongoing food security crisis in Ansar Allah-held areas.

- Aid workers and organisations' resources are at risk of intentional targeting and unintentional harm. Intentional targeting is a particular risk when an agency does not make the concessions required by relevant authorities or is felt to be openly critical. This has included bans particular aid staff from working ('persona non grata') or attacks on agencies' property. Direct targeting is relatively rare at the local level as local conflict parties are generally careful not to allow harm to aid workers or directly steal resources due to a concern that aid would stop. The risk of collateral damage from air-strikes by the SLC is reduced by agreement of 'deconflicted' areas. However, the insecure environment creates a reliance on local staff and downstream partners, which can sometimes affect the quality of aid and increase the likelihood of diversion.

- The ability of aid agencies to deliver assistance is undermined by: (1) the collapse and division (between the competing governments) of governance and service delivery capacity, meaning that aid agencies lack consistent and capable partners; and (2) the conflict economy, as agencies struggle to procure and supply humanitarian aid, and to make payments through the formal banking system.

Impact of aid on the conflict

- The authorities attempt to use aid to reinforce their position in the war and among local communities. This entails: (1) the diversion of aid to preferred communities and beneficiaries, so as to maintain legitimacy at the local level; and (2) the militarisation of aid locally, by (a) steering it towards fighters and their families in order to fuel local war efforts, (b) using the denial of aid as a threat to force young men to join the armed conflict; (c) attempts to influence relocation sites for displaced persons from ground war areas, so as to provide military gain; and (d) the use of deconflicted areas by armed groups. This diversion of aid for military ends is one of the principal reasons that it is not reaching those most in need (see above).

- Beneficiaries are sometimes at risk from targeting and harm after receipt of aid. This is because: (1) others feel that beneficiaries were unfairly privileged for assistance, or that they should not be able to access assistance given their tribal, ethnic, political or other affiliation; and (2) there is a risk of collateral damage from air-strikes after aid agencies have left a deconflicted area.

- Aid distribution and the design of aid programmes has on occasion exacerbated conflict tensions at three levels: (1) inside local communities, as people are felt unfairly excluded from beneficiary lists for cash payments, food and fuel; (2) between communities, as aid is felt to unfairly privilege some groups – this is most evident with water aid and support for displaced families; and (3) across the national political divide, as aid is perceived to be politicised and to favour the other side.

- Regional actors, who in 2018 became the largest funder of aid into Yemen, in part use assistance to achieve their political goals in the conflict and in doing so challenge international assistance norms. A significant proportion of assistance is channelled through regional actors' national delivery partners to its local partners and their constituencies. There are also concerns that regional actors have attempted to influence multilateral funds through their substantial contributions to them. For example, through attempts to influence the geographic targeting of service-delivery programmes.

- While no robust analysis has yet been conducted, there are concerns that the modalities for delivering assistance can reinforce the fragility of the Yemeni state and society, and ultimately prolong the humanitarian crisis: (1) delivery of aid primarily through international organisations and with only a limited role for national counterparts may reinforce the weakness of state structures and capacity; (2) the use of informal payment processes and supply chains dominated by armed groups may reinforce the conflict economy; (3) the focus on internationally-delivered aid may weaken national civil society as a driver of positive social change and also restrict the development of parts of the country not affected by armed violence.

- The relationship between aid and progress of the national political dialogue and local peace processes is also not well understood. At the local level, aid may be a contributing factor in propping up the authorities' war effort and in perpetuating the ground war in Al-Hodeidah. At the political level, bilateral assistance modalities, which are delivered in partnership with 'legitimate' national agencies, may have the potential to reduce the parallel authorities' readiness to play a constructive role in the political dialogue (although this has not yet been properly analysed). This is because they can lead to a shift in actual or perceived balance of power between the authorities. Consequently, there is a need to better plan for the sequencing between aid and attempts to achieve ceasefires and build peace.

- Bilateral aid modalities also have the potential to undermine the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver aid across the country, as they entail a starker alignment of donors and delivery partners with the GoY. This risk needs to be properly understood and planned for as the donor community shifts towards Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation programmes, both of which require deeper levels of partnership with government agencies and greater levels of conflict sensitive planning.

Strategy and capacity to manage challenges

- Aid agencies are focused on risk management, meaning they prioritise: (1) ensuring access; and (2) reducing the potential for aid diversion by maximising discretion over the selection of beneficiaries. Some agencies have a secondary Do No Harm focus on preventing local tensions in target communities as aid is dispersed; but there was no consistent focus on conflict sensitivity. As a result, their strategies for managing conflict focus on: (1) individual organisational negotiations on access and beneficiaries, with the parallel authorities and local leaders (supported by some limited collective lobbying); and (2) the use of communication and consultations activities inside target areas to reduce the likelihood of potential tensions during delivery. While most organisations referenced 'Do No Harm' as a guiding principle, only a couple of examples of concrete measures to do no harm were identified through the research.

- Humanitarian agencies expressed two primary concerns about integration of conflict sensitivity into their work, that: (1) engagement on conflict sensitivity could politicise humanitarian aid and consequently restrict the reach of aid agencies; and (2) achieving a peace dividend was too long-term a goal for humanitarian action, and that their contribution would at best be minimal. Non-humanitarian agencies were more open to the importance of conflict sensitivity and saw it as a natural progression of their work. Importantly, there was a recognition across all types of interlocutors that as the conflict continues, humanitarian assistance alone is not sufficient to address the range of needs in Yemen, and hence there is willingness to explore the humanitarianism-development-peace nexus.

- The capacity of individual aid agencies to be conflict sensitive is low; in terms of dedicated expertise, the use of conflict analysis, and investment in crisis management procedures. Apart from a couple of exceptions, organisations do not have dedicated conflict analysis, management or sensitivity expertise within their team. Instead, organisations rely on the experience of their staff to be conflict-aware, supplemented in some cases by limited support from headquarters or regional hubs. Organisations focus on risk assessments, rather than conflict analysis, with the analyses conducted done so on an *ad hoc* basis. Most importantly, no organisations had established a crisis management process in the event of tensions as a result of aid. Humanitarian agencies identified the requirement for rapid response as preventing them from building the processes to be conflict sensitive. Those working on Stabilisation and Humanitarian Plus programmes had a greater ability to integrate conflict sensitivity into their work, in terms of planning for tensions inside or between local groups. This is because they were not constrained by a requirement to respond rapidly to Humanitarian need and had greater opportunity to invest in relationship-building and planning.

- The potential for collective action on conflict sensitivity is limited by the geographic spread of donors and aid agencies, a hesitation to share information and analysis, and restrictions on international coordination in Ansar Allah-held territory. The coordination that does exist is at the level of heads of missions usually focuses on risk issues and strategic approaches to security access.

Key recommendations – conflict sensitivity framework

Internal capacity

1) **Shared capacity development resource:** Establish a shared resource for capacity development of organisations. This support should go beyond standard training, to assisting the development of internal policies and ongoing mentoring in analysis, programming, and facilitation and mediation skills. Where possible, this resource should assist formalisation of internal processes for data gathering, sharing and lesson learning.

2) **Flexible delivery mechanism:** Create flexible delivery mechanisms that take account of the different geographic locations of donors and aid agencies, as well as restrictions on coordination in Ansar Allah-held territory. Potential mechanisms include physical trainings in Southern Yemen, temporary placement of expertise within agencies based in Sana'a, external training sessions in third countries and development of an online support platform.

Collaboration

3) **Third-party data gathering and conflict analysis housed online:** Contract a third-party specialist organisation to gather information on conflict dynamics in Yemen and their two-way interaction with aid, with the results housed in a secure remote-access online portal. Include human rights and peacebuilding organisations in data gathering as the holders of information more relevant for conflict analysis. In addition, immediate analysis is recommended on the conflict sensitivity of the supply chain and procurement, as the basis for an inter-agency agreement on this issue.

4) **United Nations-led joint planning on conflict sensitivity:** Establish a joint planning process under a United Nations (UN) agency able to work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and with opportunities for the inclusion of national civil society perspectives. Through this planning process, explore the potential for: (1) joint approaches in particularly challenging geographic locations; (2) the simulation of and planning for worst-case conflict scenarios; and (3) collective positions on key policy and strategy questions.

5) **Shared mediation and crisis management capacity:** Establish a shared mediation and crisis management capacity, through leveraging peacebuilding expertise or collective funding of a pool of dedicated mediators.

6) **Pilot conflict sensitivity in areas affected by the ground war:** Ensure collective action on conflict sensitivity is tangible on the ground, through early testing in one or a small number of localities. This could include a surge in support for analysis of localised conflict dynamics, pooling of local mediation capacity, and establishment of a shared crisis management mechanism.

Strategic

7) **Leadership group on conflict sensitivity:** Form a leadership group of key donors and delivery agencies to provide sufficient political support to the revised principles and their operationalisation. The leadership group would be comprised of key donors relevant for Yemen as well as multilateral agencies leading on key policy and strategic areas.

8) **Revise/develop and operationalise the conflict sensitivity principles for Yemen:** Either revise existing humanitarian principles for Yemen through a conflict sensitivity lens, and so that they are equally applicable for Humanitarian Plus, Stabilisation, and peace actors; or develop a new set of principles given the changing context. Operationalise the revised/new principles through: (1) widening of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative (HDPI) pilot in Yemen to agree collective outcomes for all aid agencies; and (2) inter-agency agreements on key shared conflict sensitivity issues, starting with (a) beneficiary protection, (b) operational processes (including, *inter alia* payments, supply chain and procurement) and (c) a code of conduct for interactions with parties to the conflict.

9) **Strategic communications on aid to the Yemeni public:** Undertake collective strategic communication on international assistance to the Yemeni public, potentially focused on generating understanding of an inter-agency Code of Conduct and supported by training for local partners in what the Code means in practice. Public understand of aid modalities will enhance perceptions that they are 'fair' and will help to reduce localised tensions resulting from aid.

10) **Mutual accountability frameworks with parallel authorities:** Develop Mutual Accountability Frameworks with the relevant authorities' institutions, supported with training and written guidelines for national counterparts. Where possible make these frameworks public, so as to increase the likelihood of public accountability over national counterparts on management of international assistance.

11) **Integration of principles into Humanitarian Plus/Stabilisation:** Ensure incorporation of the revised set of principles into nascent strategies on Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation.

12) **Outreach to regional actors on conflict sensitivity**: Undertake engagement with regional funding actors on their conflict sensitivity. This outreach should be based around the revised humanitarian principles and look to increase their internal capacity as well as that of their delivery partners.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context – aid and conflict

Humanitarian crisis and response

The armed conflict in Yemen has deepened a humanitarian crisis that has been unfolding for the past few decades. Before the outbreak of the current conflict in 2015, nearly half the population lived on less than two dollars per day, the unemployment rate was nearly 50 percent and approximately two thirds of the population (18 million people) relied on humanitarian assistance for survival.[1] Now, after more than three years of war, the crisis is acute, with an estimated 76 percent of Yemenis in need of assistance (20.7 million)[2] and 2.3 million persons forcibly displaced from their home.[3] The ongoing war has also further weakened the foundations of Yemen as a state and society, as it has worsened societal divisions,[4] halved the size of the economy,[5] and led to an unravelling of national governance and service delivery capacity. The end result is that many Yemenis struggle to access basic human needs such as food, water and medicine.[6]

In trying to meet these increasing needs, the international community has responded with the second largest humanitarian aid package globally (behind Syria) accounting for 8 percent of total humanitarianism in 2016.[7] The scale of humanitarian aid provided has also increased as the conflict has prolonged, with reported funding contributions amounting to US$ 1.8 billion in 2016, US$ 2.4 in 2017 and projected to be US$ 4 billion in 2018.[8] In 2017, this funding focused on food security (38.4 percent), health (13.8 percent) water sanitation and nutrition (both 5.4 percent); reflecting the direst humanitarian needs facing Yemenis.

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[1] Altman, M.J. (27 January 2015), 9 *Things to Know about Hunger and Poverty in Yemen*, World Food Program USA: https://www.wfpusa.org/articles/9-facts-about-hunger-yemen/
[2] Development initiatives (June 2018), *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018*: http://devinit.org/post/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2018/#
[3] International Organisation for Migration's (IoM) Displacement Tracking Matrix for Yemen, June 2018: https://www.globaldtm.info/yemen/. An estimated additional 455,040 Yemenis have been displaced in the period June-November 2018, 147,780 as a result of the Al-Hodeidah crisis:
https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/Origin_Displaced_Directions_From_Al_Hudayd ah%20%2315_English.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=4618
[4] Maktary S. and Smith K. (August 2017), *Pathways for Peace and Stability in Yemen*, Search for Common Ground: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Pathways-for-Peace-Stability-in-Yemen.pdf
[5] National GDP has contracted by approximately 50 percent since 2014. World Bank (October 2018), *Yemen's Economic Outlook*: http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/547461538076992798/mpo-am18-yemen-yem-9-14-kc-new.pdf
[6] For example, 68 percent of Yemenis cannot access basic health care and over 50 percent lack access to clean water supplies. International Rescue Committee (March 2018), *They Die of Bombs, We Die of Need*: https://www.rescue.org/report/they-die-bombs-we-die-need-impact-collapsing-public-health-systems-yemen
[7] Development initiatives.
[8] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service: https://fts.unocha.org/countries/248/summary/2017

Filling the gap –Humanitarian Plus, Stabilisation and the Nexus

With the onset of the 2015 conflict, most bilateral and multilateral assistance to Yemen was suspended. This included funding through the World Bank's (WB) International Development Association (IDA), which provides financing for development needs in poorer countries. There are two primary reasons for this: (1) a need to focus available assistance most directly on humanitarian needs; and (2) a belief that the Government of Yemen (GoY) did not have the capacity to deliver internationally-funded programmes, given the conflict context and *de facto* division of state institutions. However, since late 2015, some donors and delivery partners have looked to find means of providing assistance that both deals with immediate humanitarian needs and contributes to longer-term development – 'Humanitarian Plus'. This has included large-scale WB support to local services through a set of IDA-funded programmes delivered with UNDP, UNICEF and UNOPs.[9] This IDA funding has *inter alia* been used to pay health sector employees' salaries, provide fuel for public institutions, and make cash transfers to vulnerable households and for agricultural grants. Outside of WB-funded programmes, Humanitarian Plus has also included bilateral support by individual donors for e.g. local governance, health and education under agreements signed with the GoY prior to 2015.

The foundation of Humanitarian Plus can be found in the 'New Way of Working' (NWoW), agreed in a 'Commitment to Action' document signed at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016.[10] Key design decisions for Humanitarian Plus programming, given the conflict context in Yemen, are: (1) how much development is included; and (2) what role can be played by government agencies. The design of the WB IDA programmes has been criticised by GoY representatives, as well as some Yemeni and international analysts, for having a negative impact on the capacity and legitimacy of state institutions, as funding is channelled through international organisations. From their side, the WB and partner agencies argue that the weak capacity of state agencies would prevent the timely delivery of critical needs, and also that where possible they are partnering with local service delivery agencies.

As the conflict and associated humanitarian crisis has protracted, donors have also moved to fund programmes under a 'Stabilisation' umbrella, although the focus and nature of these programmes vary – including *inter alia* a Government of Japan-funded UNDP programme to provide stability through improvements in livelihoods and a German Federal Foreign Office (AA)-funded GIZ/Berghoff Foundation programme to provide stability through support to local administrative structures. Recently, a Stabilisation Working Group has met under the umbrella of the Humanitarian

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[9] http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/brief/an-overview-of-the-world-bank-projects-and-results-in-yemen-november-2018

[10] https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/WHS%20Commitment%20to%20action%20-%20transcending%20humanitarian-development%20divides_0.pdf. More information on NWoW can be found at: https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/

Coordinator (HC) in an attempt to define a common approach to Stabilisation in Yemen.

The key design decisions for Stabilisation programming in Yemen are: (1) how much focus is given to reinforcing the position of 'legitimate' local and national governments; and (2) the correct manner for doing so. Stabilisation is often conceived of as overtly 'political' (see Box 1), in that its activities are chosen in order to achieve a defined governance outcome, rather than providing assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles or on the basis of need. In a situation such as Yemen, where there is no military victor or nationally-accepted government (even if November 2011 Transition Agreement and the subsequent National Dialogue Conference – NDC – provided for one) this means that it is a challenge to set stabilisation goals that do not more starkly align assistance actors with the GoY, and hence undermine their ability to deliver humanitarian and peace programmes nationally.

> **Box 1: Stabilisation programming explained**
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> Stabilisation is a form of assistance in fragile conflicts, whose primary objective is a conflict settlement that enables sufficient stability to help an area return to civilian life following a period of violence. Stabilisation activities can either be used to reinforce or contribute towards a 'peace' that: (1) has been won militarily; or (2) negotiated through political means. In either case, a stabilisation approach usually looks to reinforce the legitimacy of a political authority in a target area; either the authority that has asserted itself militarily (as in Iraq, following the expulsion of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), or that has resulted from a political bargain or settlement (as in Sudan, in support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement).
>
> While there are different approaches to undertaking Stabilisation, it generally includes a set of activities that build the structural conditions required for normal development programming. Such activities can include those that help to prevent violence, protect and/or rebuild institutions providing basic services, rebuild local and national governance structures, and that increase public trust in the environment and local or national institutions.

Finally, Yemen has seen more limited programming in support of local and national peace processes, outside of the political negotiation led by the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (SESGY). This programming includes local dialogue work conducted by *inter alia* Crisis Management Initiative, Saferworld and Search for Common Ground (SFCG), as well as track 1.5 and track 2 initiatives that directly support the political process. A key question for peace assistance into Yemen, as in any conflict-affected context, is the degree to which it complements or contradicts humanitarian and development programming and vice versa. A range of studies have shown that without proper attention to the drivers

of conflict, it is very difficult to manage humanitarian issues or achieve sustainable development.[11] However, internationally it has proven a challenge to practically build collective action between humanitarian, development and peace actors given their different objectives and ways of working. The need for greater integration is most strongly promoted through the idea of a 'Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus', also born out of the NWoW, and is being tested most tangibly within the UN/WB Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative (HDPI). Importantly, HDPI includes Yemen as a pilot to: (1) identify collective outcomes among humanitarian, development and peace actors; and (2) undertake shared analysis, operations and advocacy, on the basis of collective data-gathering and lesson-learning.[12]

Negotiating conflict dynamics

As aid is provided into Yemen, it has to negotiate a set of five interlinked conflict dynamics:

▪ Political conflict over control of the government and state: A political conflict exists between the GoY, headed by Abdrabbuh Mansur, and the Ansar Allah movement and its executive, the National Salvation Government (NSG).[13] The conflict is both over 'who' represents the legitimate national government and 'what' territory the two competing blocks control, with Ansar Allah controlling a large swathe of northern Yemen. The political conflict translates into two forms of violence – a ground war between pro-Ansar Allah and pro-GoY forces along the line of control, and air strikes by the Saudi-led Coalition (SLC) inside Ansar Allah-controlled territory mirrored by missile attacks by pro-Ansar Allah forces into Saudi Arabia and GoY-aligned areas. The UN SESGY is tasked with resolution of the political conflict; but any agreement is required to abide by the results of the NDC and the UN resolution on the legitimacy of the Hadi Government as the GoY.

▪ Southern separatism vs. the central state:[14] The political conflict in Yemen has been complicated by an additional southern separatist movement since 2007, initially in the form the *al-Hirak al Janubiyy* ('al-Hirak'), and subsequently the Southern Transitional Council (STC). The southern movement has formed a fragile alliance with the GoY;

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[11] This learning is reflected in: (1) the April 2007 OECD-DAC 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States', http://www.oecd.org/development/incaf/38368714.pdf; (2) the June 2008 EU-UN-WB 'Joint Declaration on Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning', https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/joint-declaration-eu-un-wb-post-crisis-assessments-and-recovery-planning-2008_en, and (3) the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/.

[12] http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/the-humanitarian-development-peace-initiative

[13]The NSG was created under the auspices of the Supreme Political Council, a political alliance between the Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress. Following the death of former President and Congress leader, Ali Abdullah Saleh in December 2017, it appears that the Congress has become internally divided between those that continue within the alliance and those that have formed relationships with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. See section three.

[14] For deeper analysis of the Southern Separatist movement see, Salisbury P. (March 2018), *Yemen's Southern Powder Key*, Chatham House: https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-03-27-yemen-southern-powder-keg-salisbury-final.pdf

although STC-aligned armed groups have been at the forefront of the ground war with pro-Ansar Allah forces in Al-Hodeidah. However, there have been confrontations between the GoY and the STC over governance in the South, including violent clashes in Aden in January 2018.[15] The Southern Movement is also split; while the STC champions itself as the voice of the South, other political and armed movements reject the STC leadership, and can have greater authority on the ground. The conflict is about the ability of the southern governorates to govern themselves separately, and potently to for re-emergence of a separate southern Yemeni state. The more recent political development of the Southern Movement was in part driven by more limited acceptance of the outcomes of the NDC in the South; in part because of a new-found confidence stemming from a sense of injustice over the actions of Ansar Allah fighters in Aden in 2015 (reinforcing existing fears and stereotypes of northerners) and increased access to arms.in Importantly, the 'southern question' is not presently dealt with inside the UN-led political process; although the SESGY is looking to include it.

- Local tribal, community and sectarian conflict: the national political divide has tapped into pre-existing tribal and community divisions at the local level inside Yemen. This is because with the breakdown in service delivery and the inability of many Yemenis to access basic goods, disputes have developed over access to resources. Importantly, contest to access resources has contributed to the development of newer more sectarian conflict divisions, most evidently between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and between Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities.[16]

- Extremist groups vs. the central state:[17] The national political divide has also created a substantial opportunity for extremist Islamic groups – and most visibly Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) to gain a foothold of influence in Southern Yemen – focused in Abyan, Shabwa and Hadramawt. Their influence has grown since 2015 as: (1) national security forces have disintegrated or focused on the conflict with pro-Ansar Allah forces; and (2) local governance institutions have weakened or lost local legitimacy. AQAP and other extremist Islamic groups have set themselves up as the champions of both anti-Ansar Allah and anti-GoY sentiment. As such, the relationship between AQAP and Southern Movement groups is potentially conflictual.

- Conflict for influence by regional actors: The conflict has, particularly since 2015, also regionalised with neighbouring states looking to promote their political goals through intervention in the Yemen conflict. This is most evident with the overt military, political and financial support

[15] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-clashes/ten-dead-as-rival-yemenis-battle-for-control-of-aden-idUSKBN1FH06M
[16] See for example, Maktary and Smith.
[17] See for more analysis, International Crisis Group (February 2017) *Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base*: https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen/174-yemen-s-al-qaeda-expanding-base

from SLC to the GoY, although the NSG and Ansar Allah movement also has international support. Importantly, however, SLC members are internally divided in the focus and method of their support; with part focusing its support on the GoY and less likely to directly intervene in or attempt to steer the actions of local Yemeni partners; and part prioritising the STC and wider Southern Movement for support, and is more directive in how its assistance is used, working more closely with its local partners.

Delivery of international assistance into Yemen is challenging given this complex conflict environment. International actors are required to negotiate the interests of the various parties of all five conflict dynamics in order to deliver aid to those most in need. In practical terms, this means that aid actors need to negotiate with: (1) the GoY, NSG, and associated agencies (political conflict); (2) with the STC and related separatist groups when providing aid in the South (southern separatism vs. the central state); (3) with local tribal and community leaders, as well as associated political and security actors across the country (tribal, community and sectarian conflict);(4) indirectly with extremist Islamic groups if attempting to deliver assistance into areas where they are present (extremist groups vs. the central state); and (5) with the regional powers that have a strong stake in the conflict (conflict for influence). Indeed, since 2015, there have been a range of examples of parties to the different conflict dynamics -- intentionally or inadvertently -- preventing, diverting or capturing international aid flows. Restrictions on aid actors' ability to provide assistance to those in need are most visible in the parts of Yemen directly affected by the ground war; such as Taiz and most recently Al-Hodeidah.

There is also the potential for international assistance programmes to directly influence the level of violence used in the five conflict dynamics and the potential for their resolution. This is in part because of the importance of international aid as a critical human and political resource as the humanitarian crisis has deepened. There are question marks over whether aid has reinforced the respective positions of the GoY and the NSG, as well as their respective willingness to engage constructively in the UN-led political dialogue (political conflict). Importantly, there is a concern that aid has become a key tool used in the ground war to support the parties' military efforts. There are examples of local assistance programmes increasing tensions between community and tribal communities at a local level as they vie for access to resources (tribal, community and sectarian conflict), and of having the potential to influence the local authority of southern separatist and extremist groups (southern separatism and extremist groups vs. the central state). Importantly, there is also the potential for aid to become a tool for regional parties to project the foreign policy goals related to Yemen (conflict for influence). In 2018, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and United Arab Emirates (UAE) became the largest funders of aid into Yemen – contributing respectively US$ 911 million and US$ 747

million in 2018.[18] A significant proportion of this assistance is delivered through regional actors' national delivery partners, in addition to through multilateral funding formats.

Given this complexity, it is essential for international aid actors to be conflict sensitive in how they deliver assistance into Yemen. This means they need to understand, and plan to manage effectively: (1) the impact of conflict dynamics on their ability to delivery aid; and (2) the impact of aid on conflict dynamics. The rest of this report provides an analysis of how Conflict Sensitivity (CS) can be better integrated into assistance to Yemen.

1.2 Methodology

This report provides a framework for catalysing the conflict sensitivity of international assistance, so that it is better able to manage the complexity of conflict dynamics in Yemen. It does this by analysing:

- The two-way relationship between assistance and conflict dynamics, in terms of the impact of: (1) conflict dynamics on the work of aid agencies; and (2) aid being delivered and aid modalities on conflict dynamics (Section 4: Conflict sensitivity considerations in Yemen).

- The present strategies of donors and aid agencies for managing conflict dynamics and their capacity to be conflict sensitive (Section 5: Strategies and capacities to manage conflict).

- How CS could be improved: (1) internally within aid agencies through capacity enhancements; (2) through collective planning and action; and (3) through the development of strategy and policy on assistance into Yemen (Section 6: Integrating conflict sensitivity into assistance).

The approach to this analysis is provided by a summary of the core ideas of CS and international learning of CS practice (Section 2) as well as a summary of the conflict factors most relevant for CS in Yemen (Section 3).

The research looks not only at humanitarian assistance provided into Yemen, but also Humanitarian Plus, Stabilisation and peace programming. Importantly, when considering the conflict sensitivity of aid to Yemen overall, the research examines how the approaches taken by each type of actor to managing conflict can impact each other.

The research process included:

- An initial desk research of available conflict analyses on Yemen as well as public documentation of conflict sensitivity challenges.

- Interviews with 36 representatives of 30 donors or political bodies and delivery agencies, to understand their perspectives on the conflict sensitivity considerations in their work and how they manage them.

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[18] US Aid (09 November 2018), *Yemen Complex Emergency Factsheet #2*: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/yemen_ce_fs02_11-09-2018.pdf

- A review of internal organisational conflict analyses and CS planning documents, provided after the interviews.
- A final consultation workshop with 21international agency representatives to review the findings from the interviews and explore measures that could strengthen conflict sensitive practice; supported by ten exit interviews with key agencies.

A breakdown of participants in the research is provided in the following table (Table 1), according to whether they were a donor or political body, a humanitarian organisation, development organisation or peacebuilding organisation. Development organisations were on the whole 'mixed mandate', implementing humanitarian and development programmes.

Table 1: Breakdown of participants in the research

	Donor/Political	Humanitarian	Development	Peace
Interviews	13	7	7	5
Workshop	6	12	2	1

The research interviews were structured around the following questions:

- What are the main conflict-related challenges facing your work in Yemen? Can you provide examples?
- What kind of impact has assistance had on the conflict and the potential for violence? Can you provide examples?
- How do you manage these challenges at present? Do you have strategies and policies to guide you? How useful are they?
- How do you work with other agencies and donors to manage these challenges? How could this collaboration be improved?
- What capacity do you have to manage these challenges? What are the gaps and areas where you need support?
- What are the key conflict factors most relevant for aid in Yemen?
- How does your organisation analyse conflict dynamics? Is this analysis shared with others? If so, how and to what end?
- What are the key measures that could enhance the conflict sensitivity of your organisation and the wider sector? What thematic and geographic areas are most in need of support for conflict sensitivity?

The research was conducted under Chatham House rules, meaning that the participating agencies and individuals are not referenced, and that any examples provided are provided in abstract terms only.

The time available in the research only allowed for very limited research, and was dependent on the availability of donors and aid agency representatives, and their ability to share internal analysis and CS documentation. Only two organisations shared internal documentation on

conflict analysis and CS planning. This means that: (1) the analysis of key conflict factors is a summary of key issues referenced in the interviews and workshop, rather than a synthesis of available analyses as originally planned; and (2) that assessment of strategies and capacities to manage conflict dynamics is based on anecdotal evidence provided in the interviews and workshop, rather than a review of concrete policies and practices. It is also important to note that the research findings capture the perceptions of participants in the research. The methodology did not allow for impartial assessment of the individual cases of conflict-related challenges described by the research participants.

2. Conflict sensitivity – core ideas and learning

This section provides an explanation of CS and how it compares to other ways of responding to conflict-related challenges, namely risk management and Do No Harm (DNH), before highlighting four key learnings from international experience of conflict sensitive programming that are particularly relevant for Yemen.

2.1 Conflict sensitivity explained

At the heart of CS is the principle that whenever assistance is provided into a conflict-affected context, it influences the form and direction of the conflict and hence cannot be considered 'neutral'. Importantly, this influence can be negative as well as positive, even if the intention behind assistance is to ameliorate suffering and protect people. While there are many forms of unintended negative consequences, they can be loosely categorised into three primary groups, which are demonstrated through examples in Box 2:[19]

- Balance between conflict parties and the outcome of conflict (political conflict dynamics): Assistance can reinforce the position of a conflict party by purposely or inadvertently enhancing its legitimacy or power, and hence influence the outcome of the conflict.

- The impact of resources on local conflict dynamics and the relationships across divides (local conflict dynamics): Assistance provides important resources where they are lacking. As such, assistance can either reinforce divisions or be used as a mechanism to help bridge divides.

- Contextual and structural problems that reinforce conflict (contextual conflict dynamics): Conflicts often take place in fragile environments categorised by divisive social norms (e.g. ethnic prejudice), weak governance structures and conflict economies. How assistance is provided can reinforce the structural causes of fragility.

CS entails that organisations or interventions minimise the potential for assistance to have a negative influence on the conflict, but also that they identify opportunities to positively contribute towards conflict management and resolution – through what assistance is provided and how it is provided.[20]

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[19] There are other ways of categorising potential unintended consequences. For example, the GSDRC Topic Guide on conflict sensitivity describes: resource transfers, implicit ethical messaging, political impacts, exacerbating 'dividers' and weakening 'connectors'. Haider H. (2014) *Conflict Sensitivity Topic Guide*, GSDRC Applied Knowledge Services: http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/gsdrc_cs_topic_guide.pdf
[20]Conflict sensitivity consortium (April 2009), *Conflict sensitivity benchmarking paper*: http://local.conflictsensitivity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/CSA-Benchmarking-paper-full.pdf. 'How to guide to Conflict Sensitivity', February 2012; http://local.conflictsensitivity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/6602_HowToGuide_CSF_WEB_3.pdf.

Box 2: Conflict-insensitive assistance

Political conflict dynamics

Strength of conflict parties in Sri Lanka: Humanitarian relief into Northern Sri Lanka was manipulated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to help consolidate LTTE administrative capacity in the North. The Sri Lankan Government also manipulated aid so as depopulate areas held by the LTTE and to weaken communities linked to the LTTE; and following the Tsunami to ensure assistance was disproportionately delivered in government-held areas, consequently gaining a significant upper-hand in the conflict. Source: 'Humanitarian assistance in conflict and complex emergencies: conference report and background papers', United Nations World Food Program, 2009.

Local conflict dynamics

Competition over resources in Libya: In 2012, the UK Government supported the newly-formed revolutionary government of Libya to manage the growing liquidity crisis by printing currency, and assisting with its distribution. As the currency was delivered into the Southern town of Sabha, it helped fuel a new round of violence between an Arab tribe and Tebu groups. This is because it was understood that whoever controlled the local council would control the distribution of the currency and the corruption opportunities coming from it. Source: Learning from Conflict Sensitivity Process in Libya, Swiss Human Security Division and Peaceful Change initiative, 2012.

Weakening of traditional conflict management in Kenya: A project to build water wells closer to villages in Kenya led to an increase in conflict between community groups. This is because, previously, women collecting water would use the journeys to and from the wells, and periods collecting water, to negotiate community problems. Source: 'Manual: 3 steps for working in fragile and conflict-affected situations (WFCS)', HELVETAS, 2013.

Contextual conflict dynamics

Weakening of opposition governance capacity in Syria: Following the Syrian revolution and creation of an opposition government in exile in Gazientep, Turkey, international donors funded a range of local government development initiatives. However, these programmes were often in competition and overlapping. More importantly, they created strong relationships between opposition councils and international donors; and weakened rather enhanced relationships between local councils and the opposition government. International funding was consequently one of the contributing factors to the opposition government's inability to gain legitimacy in opposition areas. Source: Syrian Civil Society Workshop Reflections on International Assistance, Gazientep, 2015.

Beyond considering the potentially negative impacts of assistance interventions on a conflict, CS also entails looking at the risk posed to an organisation or intervention and its objectives by conflict. This can be understood as a 'two way interaction' between the conflict and aid.

Conflict considerations within wider risk management look to understand the *contextual* risks presented by the conflict for an organisation/intervention to achieve its assistance objectives (*programmatic risk*) or to the organisation/intervention and its staff (*institutional risk*).[21] Risk management is primarily focused on preventing conflict doing harm to the organisation/intervention and its objectives, and does not attempt to understand or manage the impact of the organisation/intervention on the conflict – its focus is hence 'one-way'.

DNH understands that assistance into a conflict context can influence the 'connectors' and 'dividers' between groups in conflict. When an organisation takes a DNH approach, it looks to understand this influence, and to ensure it does not undermine connectors or reinforce dividers.[22] This means there are three main distinctions between DNH and CS:

- CS entails going beyond trying to do no harm towards attempting to achieve a tangible peace dividend.
- DNH does not take into consideration the impact of the conflict context on an organisation/intervention and its objectives. As such, DNH also has a 'one-way' focus).
- Because of its focus on connectors and dividers between groups in conflict, DNH is also more useful in localised inter-communal or inter-tribal conflicts, categorised by clear identity groups that compete for access to, and control over, resources and opportunities. CS has proven to be more applicable for multi-level conflicts, or those with a strong political or religious dimension (see 'Key conflict factors' below).

Experience has shown, however, that the distinction between DNH and CS is not black and white, but one of degrees. Both DNH and CS understand that assistance can have a negative influence on the conflict. While CS actively looks to achieve a peace dividend, adoption of a DNH approach can also lead to measures that contribute towards conflict management, dependent on the context, organisation in question, and how the leadership within that organisation interprets DNH. The distinction between DNH and CS in practice, as well as with risk management, is provided in Table 2. The table summarises the types of conflict-related issues the three approaches are interested in and their approach towards managing these issues. The table includes indicative examples, so as to help highlight the

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[21] OECD (2011), *Managing risks in fragile and transitional contexts: the price of success?*: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/managing-risks-in-fragile-and-transitional-contexts/preface_9789264118744-3-en
[22] CDA (April 2004), *The "Do no harm" Framework for analysing the impact of assistance on conflict: a handbook*: https://www.cdacollaborative.org/publication/the-do-no-harm-framework-for-analyzing-the-impact-of-assistance-on-conflict-a-handbook/.

differences in the three approaches, and should not be considered to exhaustively cover the full range of management responses.

Table 2: Examples of Risk management, Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitivity

	Type of issue to be addressed	Risk Management response	*Type of issue to be addressed*	Do No Harm response	Conflict Sensitivity response
Examples issues and responses	- Armed groups purposefully threaten or harm international aid workers. - Conflict parties prevent access to at-risk persons, or manipulate assistance so it favours their group. - An increase in violence leads to indirect damage to assistance goods or aid workers. - .	- Reduce risk to workers through enhanced security and prevention. - Lobby for humanitarian space and independence of action through multilateral fora. - Establish notification processes with conflict parties, so that goods/workers are not victim of collateral damage; or removal of assistance/workers during periods of intense fighting.	- Aid distribution is felt to privilege a tribe, leading to tensions - A water well benefits only one village, causing tensions with neighbouring villages. - Credit for humanitarian assistance is claimed by one conflict party, reinforcing their position in the conflict. - Assistance delivery channels undermine cross-divide businesses. - Assistance recipients are targeted after delivery of assistance.	- Assistance is divided equally, rather than on 'basis of need'. - Adaptation of programme to ensure equal distribution, with wide consultation. - Communication work to clearly tie assistance to 'neutral' external parties, reducing the risk for capture. - Procurement process redesigned to favour cross-divide businesses. - Deliver assistance in a way that lessens risk of targeting and harm.	- Distribution is based on sustainable dialogue between groups. - Create joint ownership of well project between conflicting groups to strengthen ties. - Assistance is delivered through local 'peace constituencies' whose role is communicated widely in society. - Programme of support & capacity-building to cross divide-businesses. - Build relationships between at risk and threatening groups.
Purpose of response		Understand and prevent conflict dynamics causing harm to the organisation and its objectives.		Understand the potential negative impacts of assistance on conflict dynamics and adjust assistance accordingly.	Understand not just the risks to conflict dynamics, but also peace dividends from *what* and *how* assistance is provided.
Process of response		Assessment of threat to organisation, its goods and staff/partners, with mitigation strategies adopted.		Assessment of 'dividers' and sources of tensions between groups, and 'connectors' that prevent violence. Assess potential impact on planned assistance on both.	Deeper conflict analysis that maps parties to a conflict, root causes, and how conflict is managed. Looks at potential for assistance to help transform conflict.

Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding

It is important to note that being conflict sensitive does not amount to 'peacemaking' or 'peacebuilding' – understood as a wide range of programmes aiming to prevent and stop violence and reinforce peaceful societies.[23] An organisation/intervention that ignores conflict dynamics or treats them only as a negative externality that can create risks for it and its operations is said to be 'working around conflict'. An organisation/intervention that understands that it can negatively affect conflict dynamics (DNH) and also has the possibility to have a positive impact on conflict dynamics through *what* and *how* assistance is delivered CS is said to be 'working in conflict'. An organisation that has as its mandate the prevention and reduction of violence (e.g. peacebuilding or mediation support) is said to be 'working on conflict'.

Peacebuilding is not the goal of CS approaches and both DNH and CS operate within the restrictions of each organisation or intervention's mandate. This means that organisations/interventions would only take actions that help to deliver their mandate and are within their 'comfort zone' of action. DNH and CS should not entail mission creep into *working on conflict*.

2.2 International learning on conflict sensitivity

Conflict sensitivity as growing practice has developed substantially, including a range of evaluation case studies and supplementary guides and programme tools. There are, perhaps, four key learnings particularly relevant for Yemen as a protracted conflict context.

Conflict sensitivity needs to be applied at a sector level

CS is often applied at the programme level, where it can help to ensure that an individual organisation's programme can be delivered effectively. However, each organisation's understanding of, and capacity for, CS can differ dramatically; resulting in very different approaches on the ground. Experience has demonstrated that unless all programmes operating within the same location in a sector ascribe to conflict sensitivity and implement it in the same manner, then it is very difficult for individual organisations and interventions to be conflict sensitive. This is because conflict insensitive practices by one organisation in a sector (e.g. in how they recruit staff, purchase and transport goods, or work with local authorities) can undermine or negate measures adopted by other organisations to be conflict sensitive.

A good example of the need for a sectoral approach is the ongoing United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) managed Stabilisation Facility for

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[23] Woodrow P. and Chigas D. (October 2019), *A Distinction with a Difference: Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding*, CDA: https://www.cdacollaborative.org/publication/a-distinction-with-a-difference-conflict-sensitivity-and-peacebuilding/

Libya (SFL)[24], a multi-donor fund designed to rebuild damaged infrastructure in the country and, by doing so, to reinforce trust in the internationally-supported Government of National Accord. The SFL included an initial conflict sensitivity review of how the facility should act positively across all conflict divides (while still adhering to political mandates of the contributing nations). This led to the establishment of conflict management structures in each target area and a political agreement on how assistance could be delivered in areas held by the non-recognised alternative government[25]. A review of the Facility in 2018 demonstrated that it had limited success, and was only partially conflict sensitive.[26]While there were a number of factors undermining the conflict sensitivity of the Facility, a central problem was the parallel existence of other projects to rebuild damaged infrastructure in the same target areas; some of which had access to larger funds than under the SFL and with more flexible delivery mechanisms that were not constrained by conflict sensitivity restrictions. Any attempts to carefully manage local conflict dynamics or reinforce trust in central institutions were easily undermined by the practices of these parallel processes – for example in how they selected beneficiaries, or how they related to local leaders and armed groups.

Conflict sensitivity needs to be applied at the policy and strategic levels

As noted above, the international community has developed a strong set of skills for integrating CS into the design and delivery of individual projects. However, there has not been the same level of progress in ensuring conflict sensitivity is properly integrated into overall policies and strategies on assistance in conflict-affected contexts. Individual projects will struggle to be conflict sensitive if the overall policy and strategy context within which they are operating is not. This is especially the case in protracted conflict contexts, where donors can be divided as to how to (1) relate to the parties to the conflict, and hence on the correct modalities for delivering assistance; and (2) balance investments in humanitarian assistance against the development needs that increase as a conflict endures. Assistance in a protracted conflict context is inherently political and cannot be considered just a technical endeavour. This is especially the case when the host government is a party to the conflict and adherence to international norms[27] regarding host government participation in designing assistance challenges the ability of assistance to be neutral and conflict sensitive.

An attempt to implement conflict sensitivity at the policy and strategic levels was pursued during the Working Conflict Analysis (WCA) process in Georgia (2009-2013), established by the European Union (EU) after the 2008

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[24] http://www.ly.undp.org/content/libya/en/home/operations/projects/sustainable-development/stabilization-facility-for-libya.html

[25] The application of CS in the SFL was based on an established Libya Conflict Sensitive Assistance Forum, an associated Leadership group (including EU, WB, UNSMIL / UNDP) and a subsequent call-down facility funded by the EU.

[26] 'The Stabilisation Facility for Libya: An independent strategic and operational review', UNDP Libya, June 2018.

[27] See for example the (2005) *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* and follow-up (2008) *Accra Agenda for Action*:
http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm

war over South Ossetia, and subsequently assumed by the United Nations (UN). The WCA responded to the inability of the Post Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNA)[28] to address the underlying drivers of conflict, given the political position of the Georgian Government – that the conflict was international in nature and did not have a strong local dimension in the disputed areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The process enabled international actors to jointly assess and plan for conflict dynamics related to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and to subsequently develop a shared policy on assistance into the disputed areas. This involved difficult political discussions as bilateral missions to Georgia had different perspectives on the legitimacy of delivering assistance into the disputed areas. It subsequently required agreement from the Georgian Government and *de facto* authorities. Practically, an early output of the process was the flexible funding programme for small peace initiatives across the conflict divides – the Confidence building early response mechanism (COBERM).[29]

Importance of field-based capacity support that is collective and strategic

It is also important that CS is not understood as a process of analysis, but rather as an approach to strategic engagement and delivering assistance that requires strong capacity and skills specific to each context. As DNH and CS have entered the mainstream of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding methodologies, many donors and delivery partners have developed related internal standards. However, the knowledge of these standards is often held by thematic specialists or in dedicated teams at the headquarters level, rather than being readily mainstreamed through enhanced capacity of delivery branches. The capacity that does exist at the field level is usually restricted to individual organisations or programmes, rather than being collectively available – either because of capacity limitations, or a reluctance to share sensitive analysis and programme information. It is also essential that capacity development is linked to a shared strategic vision for CS particular to each context, so that the right type of capacity is built.

A concerted effort to develop a collective understanding of, and capacity for, CS has been demonstrated by the ongoing Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) for South Sudan,[30] funded by Canada, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). The programme includes a CS Resource Facility, designed as a shared platform to establish, monitor and disseminate conflict sensitive practices among donors and implementing partners. The Facility is supported by a CS Forum which is a policy and influencing body comprised of a wider range of international actors – DFID, USAID, the governments of Germany,

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[28] The PCNA was established by the September 2008 EC, UNDG and WB Joint Declaration on Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planninghttps://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/joint_declar-post-crisis_assessments_and_recovery_planning-_sept_2008-signed.pdf. The trilateral EU-WB-UN approach has since developed into Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments (RPBA): http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/recovery-peacebuilding-assessments-faqs.
[29] http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/projects/coberm.html
[30] https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/

Switzerland, Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Japan, UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The CSRF has finished its first round of activities and is presently undergoing assessment.

Balance between humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance

During protracted conflicts, the international assistance community has struggled to balance effective delivery of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance in a conflict sensitive manner. This is because the three respective communities can have very different perspectives on how assistance should relate to conflict:
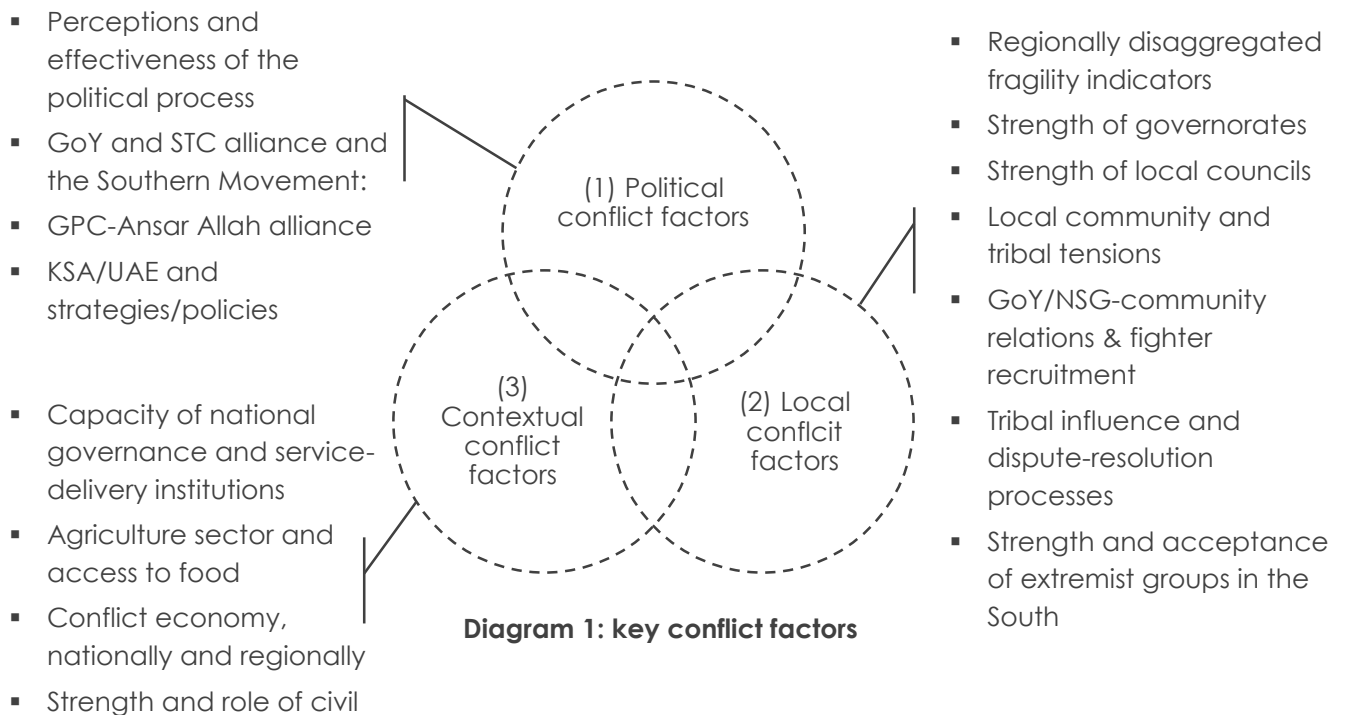
- Humanitarian actors will strive to follow the principles of neutrality and impartiality, and will advocate that humanitarian space is protected from political manipulation.

- Development actors will look to adhere to norms on effective aid delivery in fragile and conflict-affected contexts,[31] and will be more interested in the structural changes required for a sustainable impact. This involves de facto collaboration with national counterparts that will necessarily be aligned with one party to the conflict.

- Peacebuilding actors will strive to influence humanitarian and development work so that it addresses the root causes of conflict or helps provide momentum for peace agreements.

While protection of the humanitarian space is essential for those actors to be seen as neutral and to access in-need groups, as a conflict endures this type of assistance can contribute toward the degradation of national capacity, and hence there is increasing need for development-type programming. However, if donors shift to development-type programming without adequate protection of the humanitarian space, it can negatively impact critical human needs.

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[31] As well as the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda see the OECD DAC (2007), *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*: https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/38368714.pdf

3. Key conflict factors

The following section summarises some of the key conflict factors that should be tracked in order to plan for conflict sensitive assistance into Yemen. The factors are organised in accordance with learning on conflict sensitive practice – political conflict dynamics, local conflict dynamics and contextual conflict dynamics.

- Perceptions and effectiveness of the political process
- GoY and STC alliance and the Southern Movement:
- GPC-Ansar Allah alliance
- KSA/UAE and strategies/policies

- Capacity of national governance and service-delivery institutions
- Agriculture sector and access to food
- Conflict economy, nationally and regionally
- Strength and role of civil

- Regionally disaggregated fragility indicators
- Strength of governorates
- Strength of local councils
- Local community and tribal tensions
- GoY/NSG-community relations & fighter recruitment
- Tribal influence and dispute-resolution processes
- Strength and acceptance of extremist groups in the South

(1) Political conflict factors

(3) Contextual conflict factors

(2) Local conflcit factors

Diagram 1: key conflict factors

The factors are not based on a synthesis of analyses provided by organisations participating in the research; as such analyses were not readily available. Instead, these factors were identified in the individual research interviews. Identified conflict factors were used to assist analysis of key conflict-related considerations for aid and to assess the capacity of aid agencies to be conflict sensitive. It is recommended that a refined list of these factors is regularly tracked within any future conflict sensitive process.

3.1 Political conflict factors

Perceptions and effectiveness of the political process, by GoY/NSG and key community, tribal and sectarian constituencies: It is essential to understand the present attitude of the political parties to the conflict (the GoY and NSG/Ansar Allah) towards the political dialogue, in terms of: (1) the internal constituencies on each side and the leadership voices for and against constructive participation; and (2) the incentives/disincentives for constructive participation. It is also important to track the perceptions and interests of key community, tribal and sectarian constituencies, both as

providing momentum for a deal and to enable eventual implementation. For example, how will the STC and wider Southern Movement respond to a potential deal if it does not include a clear process for the 'southern question'? This is essential for assessing the impact of aid: (1) on the internal constituencies; (2) as an incentive for constructive participation; and (3) on community, tribal and sectarian constituencies.

Strength of alliance between GoY and STC, and development of the Southern Movement: The STC and other southern groups have to a large extent filled the space left by the fragmentation of government in the South. The GoY has built its ability to project authority in 'liberated areas' around its relationship with the STC. However, the January 2018 clashes demonstrated that the alliance between GoY and STC is fragile at best. In addition, the Southern Movement as a whole is fragmented, with alternative leadership groups that are not aligned with the STC and can have greater authority locally. There are strong voices within the wider Southern Movement to push for full independence via establishment of a separate government. This desire is based on the history of North-South relationships and communal memory of past atrocities committed by Sana'a-controlled armed groups. This constituency is presently constrained by: (1) a lack of a concrete strategy to achieve independence, without repeating the Ansar Allah-GoY dynamics; (2) lack of support from KSA and UAE for a separate Southern State; and (3) because the 'southern question' is not included within the political dialogue (but would be addressed as part of the constitutional process following any agreement). The ability of agencies to work in the South is dependent on the development of the GoY-STC relationship and the wider Southern Movement.

State of GPC-Ansar Allah alliance and impact on *de facto* institutions and communities: The status of the alliance between Ansar Allah and the GPC is unclear since the killing of former president Saleh in December 2017. Some GPC members have left Sana'a and appear to have built relationships with the GoY and KSA, while others appear to have committed to the alliance. Changes in GPC-Ansar Allah dynamics have a direct knock-on impact on the functioning of, and control over, *de facto* institutions established under the umbrella of the alliance – the Supreme Political Council (SPC) and the NSG. For example, through potential moves by Ansar Allah's leadership to remove GPC figures from the *de facto* institutions. The challenging relationship between GPC and Ansar Allah could also impact on the ability of Ansar Allah to project power into the local areas in the North more aligned with the General People's Congress (GCP).

Regional actors' strategies/policies developed towards governance and aid in Yemen: The role of regional actors is critical for the development of political and local conflict dynamics in Yemen. The KSA plays a leading role in the SLC, has a strong partnership with the GoY and is the leading funder of aid, both through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Centre and multilateral forums. The UAE has a strong partnership with the STC and the wider Southern Movement, and is the second largest aid donor, both through the Emirate Red Crescent and multilateral forums. In addition, both

the KSA and UAE provide support to armed groups fighting against pro-Ansar Allah forces, through financing, training and logistics. However, the level of attachment of these groups to the GoY and STC can vary substantially. As such, it is important to understand how regional actors' strategies/policies on governance and aid in Yemen are developed and how they are likely to change over time, as they will have a critical impact on the overall conflict sensitivity of international aid.

3.2 Local conflict factors

Regionally disaggregated fragility indicators: The governorates and regions (outlined by the NDC) differ substantially in terms of the level of fragility being experienced in them, and hence in their core conflict-related needs. For example, Al-Hodeidah is currently unstable given the ground war there; Ma'rib has achieved a superficial level of stability in spite of the inflow of IDPs given its direct control over oil revenues and KSA support; while Abyan, although not affected by air strikes or the ground war, has been starved of public funding. As such, it would be essential to develop a set of collective fragility indicators that point to the likelihood of local competition over resources and help to identify trigger events in advance.

Alignment, capacity and local accountability of governorates: The governorates are a key unit of sub-national governance, and their functioning is indicative of the level of fragility and potential for violence. The governorates in Ansar Allah-held territory have in effect been replaced by Executive Units now managed by the NSG. The southern governorates are mostly headed by military appointees closely linked to the GoY (e.g. Hadramawt). It is important to track the relative relationship between governorates and key political actors. This includes not only the GoY and NSG, but also *inter alia* the STC and AQAP. It is also essential to understand the relative capacity of these governorates and the level of accountability over them by the general public and local leaders. Understanding of this issue is critical to plan for the interaction between aid and the governorates as positive points of stability and conflict management locally.

Strength of local councils, including access to public finances: Local councils report to central authorities under the GoY and were the main local service provider prior to 2014. Local councils are the last remaining functional governance actor on the ground and generally have greater credibility that the GoY/NSG political authorities and governorates as they were the last elected public bodies; although levels of local legitimacy and effectiveness differs considerably across the country. Those in Ansar Allah-held territory are generally not receiving funds from Aden. In this area there is also a distinction between local councils aligned with the GCP and Ansar Allah, with the former maintaining higher levels of effectiveness. Support for local councils has also collapsed in much of the South as they have been starved of public funding and are associated with 'central government', whether based in Sana'a or Aden. Understanding of this issue is critical to plan for the interaction between aid and local councils as positive points of stability and conflict management locally.

Development of local community and tribal tensions: As the political conflict has developed and the humanitarian crisis deepened, Yemen has seen increasing examples of localised tensions between communities and tribes over access to critical resources. Within this dynamic, aid becomes another resource that communities and tribes can compete over. Conflict sensitive delivery of aid into Yemen consequently entails strong analysis of the existing community and tribal divides in each delivery locality. However, such mappings entail a substantial investment in local understanding and would need to be updated on a regular basis so as to remain valid.

Influences and levers of GoY/NSG over local communities, especially in terms of recruitment of fighters: Any conflict analysis of Yemen should look to develop a sophisticated understanding of how the political parties maintain their influence at the local level, in terms of historical relationships, use of grievances, political capital and the provision of finances and other goods. This is especially important for understanding the willingness of Yemenis to take up weapons within the ground war. Such an analysis is important for understanding how aid can play a role in promoting (or not) local legitimacy and in the recruitment of fighters. It is especially important for Stabilisation programming, which looks to create a positive link between communities and legitimate authorities.

Level of tribal strength and functionality of local dispute-resolution processes: Yemen relies on a mix of legislative, tribal and Islamic processes to manage disputes and achieve justice. For example, tribal mechanisms remain stronger in the northern regions (although some southern areas such as Abyan maintain strong tribal traditions) and have helped to keep inter-communal violence at relatively low levels. For example, prior to the resumption of violence in 2015, there was concern that Ma'rib would split due to tribal rivalries inside the governorate. However, the strength of tribal linkages and traditional approaches to diplomacy have been key to unifying tribes in the governorate, and to building the relative stability and economic growth presently enjoyed in Ma'rib. In southern areas that have seen a degradation of tribal mechanisms (such as Hadramawt), tensions can more easily escalate into the use of violence. Good conflict management in the country entails understanding the relative strength and functionality of local dispute-resolution processes. It also entails understanding the factors that help to strengthen them, and the potential role of aid.

The strength and acceptance of extremist groups in the South: The reach of extremist Islamic groups in Yemen was relatively limited prior to the present round of violence. However, the space for extremist ideologies and AQAP in particular has expanded in the South as central government institutions have dissolved, the influence of local councils has reduced and some have questioned the ability of the STC to promote the southern agenda. The relative strengths and acceptance of such groups differs area by area. As such, it is important to understand the underlying factors that enable AQAP and other extremist groups to gain strength and acceptance locally.

3.3 Contextual stability factors

Capacity of national governance and service-delivery institutions: Since 2015, the GoY and NSG have competed to control national governance institutions. While most national agencies were in Sana'a prior to the present war, the GoY has looked to establish a transitional state in the South, in effect duplicating the institutions that exist in the capital (e.g. the Central Bank of Yemen - CBY, the Ministry of Health - MoH, the Ministry of Education - MoE etc.). The end result is the existence of parallel sets of institutions, both of which are under-resourced and inexperienced. For example, while most civil service capacity was in the Sana'a prior to 2015, part of the Sana'a-based civil service has since left to continue working under the auspices of the GoY and another section has stopped working due to a lack of payment. Similarly, the newly-formed institutions on the whole lack the civil service experience and culture of those working in the *de facto* authorities. It is essential to track the relative strength of both GoY and *de facto* institutions, and the impact of aid on their effectiveness. It is especially important to consider:

- Which institutions continue to have the credibility and ability to work nationally and how can they be reinforced.

- The space that exists for cross-divide collaboration between institutions working on the same issue (e.g. health provision) and how can such collaboration be supported, both in order to enhance local service delivery and as a confidence-building tool.

- The capacities of the parallel institutions to be 'conflict sensitive' and how such capacities can be further developed.

Access to food and the state of the agriculture sector: Yemen has a long-standing reliance on the import of food and other critical goods, even prior to the 2015 war. However, importation has become more difficult with the SLC's sea and air restrictions, and the challenges in moving goods across the GoY-NSG divide and through areas experiencing ground wars. In addition, national food production capacity has been negatively affected by the war and the reduction in public support for the agricultural sector. The price of local commodities, developments in access to food, local agriculture production, and the impact of aid on them, should be tracked as a key indicator of fragility and as a driver of local tribal and community tensions.

Functioning of the conflict economy, nationally and regionally: Since 2014, Yemen's national economy has shrunk by 50 percent. In addition, access to jobs and income has reduced substantially as a result of collapse of critical pre-conflict sectors, such as the oil and gas industry. In the same period the conflict economy has grown, with increased importance of smuggling networks and the black financial market. The relative strength of the conflict economy varies across the country, with a relatively strong formal economy for example in Ma'rib. It is important to better understand the

conflict economy and its two-way interaction with aid. Key indicators include:

- The practices and local influence of businesspeople. While many businesspeople have left the country, some have kept their businesses running as a social good in spite of large losses.

- Functioning of the banking sector and how Yemenis make payments.

- The supply chain for goods. How are goods brought into and transferred around Yemen? What is the relative role of smuggling networks and formal businesses and how does this change across the country.

- The role of armed groups and political actors in economic activities.

Strength and role of civil society: Yemeni civil society can play a stabilising role in Yemen, with a proven ability to promote positive social change prior to 2015. Yemen has a permissive legal arrangement for civil society, saw an explosion of civic activism in 2011 and had developed a relatively strong civil society sector by regional standard prior to 2015 with funding available through a range of development programmes. With the outbreak of war in 2015 and the rising humanitarian need, funding shifted to INGOs experienced in emergency aid, with a concurrent reduction in funding for local organisations. As such, it is important to track relative development of civil society, its influence on political developments and the political dialogue, and the role of aid modalities in supporting or undermining civil action.

Table 3: Summary of conflict sensitivity considerations for assistance to Yemen

	1. Political conflict	2. Local conflict	3. Contextual stability
Impact of conflict dynamics on aid delivery	- There is a requirement for constant negotiation with authorities on access, beneficiary selection and operations. - The policies of regional actors in the conflict can restrict access and inhibit the delivery of aid. - Constraints on information gathering and coordination activities in the North reduce the effectiveness of aid design. - Inconsistent adherence to 'red lines' and standards during negotiations enable political leaders to capture aid. - There is a risk of intentional attacks on aid agencies and their staff if they do not make concessions.	- There is a requirement to negotiation access with community, tribal, political and military leaders; at the governorate, municipal and local council levels. - There is also a requirement to negotiate beneficiaries in a locality, leading to substantial risk for local aid diversion. - Aid workers and resources are exposed to intentional targeting and unintentional harm at the local level in delivery localities; although this rarely occurs. - International agencies have shown an inability to adequately provide for women's needs equitably and safely.	- The collapse of national services and institutions renders donors and aid agencies without consistent and capable national partners. - The conflict economy has had a significant impact on aid delivery, in terms of payments, supply and procurement. - The insecure environment creates a reliance on local staffing and downstream partners, which in turn can affect the quality of delivery and increase the likelihood of aid diversion.
Impact of aid delivery on conflict dynamics	- Engagement with authorities can confer legitimacy and reinforce their position in the national conflict. - The parties to the conflict, especially, the *de facto* authorities attempt to use aid to reinforce their position in the war and among local communities. - Aid is able to undermine or reinforce the political dialogue and local ceasefires (also experienced at the local level →). - Bilateral aid, especially Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation, can to undermine the ability of humanitarian actors to delivery aid across the country. - Regional actors in part use assistance to achieve their political goals in the conflict, challenging aid norms.	- Beneficiaries are sometime at risk from threat and harm, due to local tensions. - Aid and the process of aid delivery has been militarised locally, to the benefit of local armed groups and political constituencies (also present at the political level ←). - There is a widespread perception in local constituencies that aid is politicised, affecting relationships with aid agencies and across divides. - Aid distribution, and the design of aid programmes, has exacerbated local tensions inside communities. - Aid has exacerbation tensions between community groups, including between displaced and host communities.	- Present assistance modalities can reinforce the weakness of state structures and capacity. - The focus of donors on humanitarianism may reduce the role and effectiveness of Yemeni civil society. . - There is the potential that aid delivery modalities are strengthening the conflict economy and those benefitting from it, rather than the supply chains and businesses that play a stabilising role. - The potential for development across the country is restricted by a focus on the humanitarian needs in areas more affected by violence. However, there are risks in a shift towards stabilisation and Humanitarian Plus programming.

4. Conflict-sensitivity considerations in Yemen

The following analysis categorises the key conflict sensitivity considerations for assistance delivered in Yemen according to the schema outline in section 1 – the political conflict, local level conflict dynamics and contextual stability issues. The analysis looks at both the impact of conflict dynamics on aid delivery and of aid delivery on conflict dynamics. As such, it provides a 'two-way' way analysis in line with best practice on conflict sensitivity. A summary of these considerations is provided in Table 3 on the previous page.

4.1 Political conflict dynamics

Impact of conflict dynamics on aid delivery

Constant negotiation across the political divide to authorise access, beneficiary selection and operations: International agencies have two parallel processes for authorisation of access, beneficiary selection and operations in Ansar Allah and GoY-held territory. Access includes an agency's general presence on the ground, as well as its ability to work in particular geographic locations. Beneficiary selection refers both to the selection of target areas for aid, and the Yemeni populations included in beneficiary lists in each area. Operations encompass a range of measures to influence or directly control how an organisation works, including what projects it undertakes, who is employed, what NGOs are partnered with, and how aid is transported. In Ansar Allah-held territory, where most assistance actors are based, authorisation is conducted through the National Authority for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Recovery (NAMCHA) under the NSG. In GoY-held areas, authorisation is conducted through the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) under the internationally-recognised GoY. Both GoY and NSG agencies have presented significant challenges for authorisation of access, activities and beneficiaries.

- Authorisation in Ansar Allah-held territory: While NAMCHA is nominally responsible for authorisation, the Supreme Security Committee (SSC) also plays a prominent role and can block agencies' presence and activities even if they have 'official' authorisation. Both the NAMCHA and the SSC have demonstrated very limited understanding of international norms for assistance provision and a propensity to try to capture and politicise aid. Assistance into Ansar Allah-held areas has, on occasion, been substantially restricted due to authorisation and coordination requirements imposed by NAMCHA.[32] Importantly, as the conflict has protracted, and the economy and service provision deteriorated, Ansar Allah political leaders have become more

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[32] See for example the April 2018 Yemen Situation report of UNHCR and the Shelter and CCCM Clusters: https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-situation-report-april-2018-enar. The full range of UN agency situation reports can be found at https://reliefweb.int/updates?format=10&country=255#content

dependent upon international assistance to meet the needs of communities in the territory under their control, and hence for their legitimacy.

▪ <u>Authorisation in GoY-held areas</u>: MOPIC officials have greater experience of international assistance and are more aware of its norms, less likely to attempt to capture assistance or to politicise aid. This is partly due to the fact that that a significant proportion of development (rather than humanitarian) assistance is delivered in GoY-aligned areas and that international agencies undertaking non-humanitarian actions are still required to work through MOPIC as the internationally-recognised government. That said, GoY representatives have put pressure on donors and delivery partners to directly manage aid, rather than for it to be delivered through International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGO) and their national partners. Participants in the research also noted substantial challenges in obtaining permissions from MOPIC officials. Importantly, officials are not permanently on the ground in Aden and not consistently available for coordination and planning purposes. This can significantly delay authorisation processes.

▪ <u>Balance between aid into GoY and Ansar Allah-held areas:</u> Aid agencies describe pressures on them by the parallel authorities to balance activities in the Ansar Allah and GoY-controlled areas, with both Ansar Allah and GoY requesting that any project on the other side is replicated in their territory. It is, however, difficult to deliver assistance on a 50/50 split given the different needs in the North and South and the various geographic focuses of donors.

Box 3: Parallel visas and registration processes

<u>Visa requirements</u>: Aid agencies working in Yemen face bureaucratic requirements from both the GoY and the NSG for their activities to be 'legal'. International aid workers deployed to Yemen need to obtain visas from both GoY and NSG agencies. This can lead to substantial delays in the deployment of staff.

<u>Requirement to register in the Aden</u>: National government administration was centralised in Sana'a prior to 2015, and as such international organisations were previously registered there. The GoY has looked to reduce the influence of Sana'a based governance structures by creating a transitional state in the South. This has included the requirement for international agencies to re-register with MOPIC in Aden.

Research interlocutors pointed to increasing restrictions on aid agencies operations since mid-2018. This includes: (1) interference in complaints processes - for example, one organisation has its complaint boxes vetted by Hospital managers, to prevent them being used in international advocacy work; (2) the requirement for pre-approval of projects before their submission to donors; (3) participation in INGO staff recruitment and

accompaniment of INGO field visits; or (4) a requirement that agencies distribute aid items rather than international aid agencies.

Policies of regional actors in the conflict further restricts access and inhibits the delivery of aid: In addition to authorisation constraints from the two competing political blocks inside Yemen, aid delivery is also seriously restricted by the actions of regional actors in the SLC supportive of the GoY. Most importantly, the land, sea and air restrictions put in place by the SLC forces in 2015 (and reinforced in late 2017 following missile launches into KSA territory) has severely restricted the ability of aid agencies to import food and non-food items. These physical restrictions are reinforced by political pressure on agencies to ensure that any humanitarian transfers into Yemen are conducted with the knowledge of SLC forces.

Constraints on information collection and coordination in the North reduce the effectiveness of programming: Research participants expressed the view that constraints on the ability of agencies situated in the North to gather and analyse information, and to share such information and analysis within coordination platforms, has severely impacted on the effectiveness of their programmes. It was also felt that these constraints had weakened international humanitarian advocacy on the war in Yemen. Further, restrictions on information collection and coordination in the North make it more difficult to be conflict sensitive, as CS depends upon nuanced analysis of conflict dynamics and the two-way influence between them and international assistance.

▪ Coordination restrictions: The NSG has placed restrictions on coordination activities outside of UN processes and without NAMCHA oversight. A previous inter-agency coordination mechanism established prior to the war was closed down in 2015;[33] and there is a risk that agencies that attempt to coordinate will have their working permits revoked.

▪ Interference in information gathering: NSG authorities are unlikely to authorise any activities that do not provide immediate tangible assistance and are suspicious of information gathering and analysis activities. All assessment questionnaires need to be validation by NAMCHA before use. This has led to some agencies re-using validated questionnaires, even if they are not completely fit for task, due to: (1) the lengthy process of review and revision during the validation process; and (2) the potential that new research will raise suspicions about an organisation.

Inconsistent practice among international agencies enable political leaders to capture aid: Participants to the research noted several examples of how inconsistency in approach between international donors/delivery partners had enabled political leaders to capture aid. For example, there is no standard position among INGOs on the transparency of beneficiary lists.

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[33] The International Non-Governmental Organisation Forum was convened by CARE International with a dedicated coordination team.

Some organisations on occasions have made their lists fully available to authorities (in effect balancing a 'needs-based' with a 'conflict-based' approach to delivery – see Box 4), while others are less willing to do so. In addition, there was a common assessment that the international community had lost leverage over the provision of aid by continuing to provide assistance 'under the table' (because of the dire humanitarian need) even when 'red lines' had been breached. In the consultation workshop, INGOs advocated for a shift in approach from a focus on 'red lines' (which has felt to be proven ineffective), towards mutual accountability frameworks[34] supported by training and mentoring, so as to encourage better practice.

Intentional attacks on aid agencies and their workers: Intentional targeting is a particular risk when an agency does not make the concessions required by relevant authorities or is felt to be openly critical. This has included bans particular aid staff from working ('persona non grata') or attacks on agencies' property. For example, an aid agency's warehouse suffered an arson attack that was linked to a refusal to sign a contract with a transportation agency proposed by authority officials.

Impact of aid delivery on conflict dynamics

Risk that engagement with the internationally-recognised GoY or *de facto* agencies confers legitimacy and strengthens their position: Research interlocutors recognised the potential that engagement with either the internationally-recognised GoY or agencies established under the NSG will be taken to infer legitimacy and will lead to the politicisation of assistance. This was a central concern for humanitarian actors, who were more focused on protecting the humanitarian space. This has translated into wariness among international agencies as to how their actions and public statements will be interpreted. For example, there is a reluctance to visibly deliver assistance in or send representatives to Saada (an Ansar Allah stronghold in the Sada'a governorate) for concern it could be presented as support to the Ansar Allah movement. While core humanitarian assistance (e.g. food and non-food items) can be delivered relatively effectively without engagement with the Government and *de facto* agencies; this is not the case for more sustainable solutions (e.g. support for health and education delivery) and development activities.

Active measures by authorities to use aid to reinforce their position in the war and among local communities: Organisations described increasing attempts by authorities to influence who receives assistance in the North – both in terms of areas targeted for assistance and those included in beneficiary lists. This is coupled with controls on how assistance is delivered – in terms of the selection of delivery partners and who is employed by delivery agencies. In addition, apolitical aid delivery is difficult, as aid agencies are often dependent on local Non-Governmental Organisations

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[34] For background on mutual accountability frameworks in the international assistance sphere see, OECD DAC, *Mutual Accountability: Emerging Good Practice*:
https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/49656340.pdf

(NGOs) for delivery of assistance; and these NGOs can be closely politically aligned with the authorities. Attempts by national political leaders to divert aid occur in parallel to diversion locally by community, political and military leaders; with the two levels (local and political) often working together. Political interference is attributed to a desire by the authorities to reinforce legitimacy among recipient constituencies, so as to demonstrate effectiveness and to buy influence at the local level. In response, there is a tendency for aid agencies to balance delivery against humanitarian needs; making sufficient concessions so as to be able to continue operating.

Box 4: 'Needs-based' and 'conflict-based' approaches

At the heart of good humanitarian and development assistance is the intention to distribute assistance on the basis of an assessment of need. In conflict contexts, a needs-based approach can lead to tensions and violence. For example, in the case of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and host communities, IDPs might be in the most need; but if host communities perceive distribution to unfairly prioritise IDPs, this can lead to tension and even violence. As such, organisations face the challenge of providing assistance on the basis of both need and what will be perceived of as fair. Some organisations have demonstrated a greater ability to make this balance than others. Further, organisations have to engage with GoY and especially NSG attempts to influence selection of beneficiaries, and delivery modalities. This can mean that some form of concession is made and that assistance becomes a mix of what is needed and what is politically astute.

Mixed potential for aid to undermine or reinforce the political dialogue and local ceasefires: There were different perspectives over the impact of aid on: (1) the political dialogue; and (2) the achievement of local ceasefires. At the political dialogue level, there was some concern that assistance modalities are reducing incentives for the authorities to seek a political agreement. On the flip side, it was felt that there is a positive opportunity for aid to encourage engagement in the political process as authorities seek ways of demonstrating to constituencies that their leadership is delivering tangible benefits as the conflict continues. At the level of local ceasefires, there was a question as to whether changes in the delivery of aid could be used to encourage local parties to reduce levels of violence. For example, in Al-Hodeidah, it may be the case that aid delivery has influenced the armed conflict, and that it would be better sequenced to follow initial ceasefire discussions. Peacebuilding organisations in particular felt there was an absence of mechanisms to properly coordinate mediation and aid, and that this could be a potential area to explore through piloting. Evidently, any such initiative may be difficult as it could be perceived to challenge humanitarian principles.

Bilateral aid, and especially Humanitarian Plus or Stabilisation, can impact on humanitarianism: Yemen is challenging established assistance practice in several ways. This is most evident in the involvement of regional actors as both parties to the conflict and substantial funders of assistance. Equally important, however, is the experimental delivery relationship between the WB and UN agencies. Some interlocutors argued that this relationship entailed ongoing negotiations over the principles and practice of delivering assistance in a conflict context; with the WB maintaining strong relationships with the GoY, in accordance with partnership arrangements predating 2015, and UN agencies abiding more by principles of neutrality. As a result, bilateral aid modalities could undermine the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver aid across the country, as they entail a starker alignment of donors and delivery partners with the GoY. This risk needs to be properly understood and planned for as the donor community shifts towards Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation programmes, both of which require deeper levels of partnership with government agencies and hence greater levels of conflict sensitive planning.

Regional actors in part use assistance to achieve their political goals in the conflict and challenge international assistance norms: Regional governments in the SLC are also the most substantial donors to humanitarian and other assistance delivered into Yemen. There is a tendency by regional actors to use assistance, through national delivery partners, to achieve their political goals of strengthening the GoY and/or the Southern Movement. Interlocutors in the research also highlight concerns that regional actors' implementing partners were not transparent in their aid processes, demonstrate greater corruption, and are focused on superficial issues rather than core needs. Regional actors have further become the most substantial contributor to international pooled funding managed by the WB and UN agencies. Interlocutors in the research referenced attempts by regional actors to influence the overall approach to funding by the international community (for example, attempts to limit the scope of WB funding to 'liberated' areas), partly because they are not used to dealing with international norms. Those INGOs delivering assistance with funding from regional actors were concerned that this may negatively impact perceptions of them among leaders and communities in Ansar Allah-held territory.

4.2 Local conflict dynamics

Impact of conflict dynamics on aid delivery

Additional requirement to negotiate access with local community, tribal, political and military leaders: Even after the parallel national agencies (NAMCHA and MOPIC) have agreed for assistance to be delivered in target areas, access on the ground requires negotiation with community, tribal, political and military leaders – at the level of Governorate, Districts and elected Local Councils). Governorate, District and Local Council leaders are given a great deal of discretion by the GoY and NSG to make decisions on aid, and can contradict the position of NAMCHA and MOPIC.

This is due to the reliance of the GoY/NSG on local leaders for their influence and ability to project power. Local negotiation of access is most difficult in areas that are presently contested, such as around Taiz, Al Bayda and Al-Hodeidah. Several agencies noted that they have had to temporarily cease operations in these areas, or that the delivery of aid has been significantly delayed, because of the position of local leaders. However, this challenge also applies in the GoY-held areas, especially in areas where the STC is a stronger political force than the GoY. Local negotiations are essential for a number of reasons: (1) ensuring consistent routes for delivery of assistance (including entry and further overland transport); (2) ensuring that sufficiently-expert human resources are available at the point of delivery; (3) protection of those delivering assistance from physical threats; and (4) as much as possible trying, to ensure that assistance is not diverted, confiscated or taken over by local power-holders. Importantly, these negotiations can lead to concessions from delivery agencies on ways of working (e.g. a requirement to hire certain Yemenis) or influence over beneficiary lists (see Box 4 above).

Box 5: Negotiating reconstruction in the GoY-held areas

There have been examples of communities preventing or undermining planned assistance focused on reconstruction when it is conducted by private companies. This is because of a perception in communities that they are being deprived of job opportunities by the delivery company. In one example, reconstruction only recommended following negotiation between community leaders and the company in question on employment opportunities for community members. This issue is visible in the GoY-held areas during reconstruction works funded by regional actors. These challenges are due a lack of experience of regional actors' and hired companies on the potential for community hostilities.

Additional requirement to negotiate beneficiaries in a locality, and the resultant potential for local aid diversion: Even after a target area has been agreed with NAMCHA and MOPIC, beneficiary selection still needs to be agreed with leaders in each target area. In some cases, the parallel national authorities will provide beneficiary lists, which would then be verified locally. However, usually such lists are either provided by regional governors and/or community committees; or through local associations in the case of IDPs, as IDP families are not well known by community committees. In either case, international agencies often have limited or no ability to verify the status and level of need of those included in lists, as well as those excluded; especially when access to the delivery areas is more limited. All interlocutors recognised the risk of aid diversion because of this process of beneficiary negotiation. Aid diversion is not just a local risk for humanitarian assistance not reaching its intended beneficiaries and not having its intended impact, but also a DNH/CS consideration at both the local and political levels. This is because of the potential for diverted aid to

be used to reinforce the position (financially or through prestige) of local informal or military leaders and of the political authorities.

> **Box 6: Aid not reaching those most in need**
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> The conflict context means that aid is not getting to those most in need. For example, the December 2018 IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis demonstrated that 56% of the population is experiencing a food crisis, emergency or catastrophe; this is despite the substantial humanitarian effort. Even if aid is delivered, it can arrive too late to be of utility. For example, there are incidents when delivery of winter clothing has begun when it is already cold, or of agricultural seeds being delivered after the planting season. The two main reasons for aid not reaching those in need are: (1) the process of negotiation with national and local authorities, which can either prevent aid reaching those in need or mean it arrives too late; and (2) the diversion of aid to military efforts (see below). In addition, it could be argued that the focus on distribution of food and non-food items, rather than sustainable solutions, means that aid is only dealing with the most acute need.

Exposure of aid workers and resources to intentional targeting and unintentional harm: Assistance to Yemen is often delivered in very insecure environments with high potential for targeting of aid workers and goods (e.g. warehouses) or collateral harm. Interlocutors in the research argued that both intentional targeting and unintentional harm have been comparatively rare to date (for example, when compared to Syria). Local conflict parties are careful not to attack aid distribution centres or aid workers. It is relatively well understood that the overt threat of aid (rather than its manipulation and indirect capture) would potentially reduce aid flows – a critical resource given the protracted nature of the conflict. Similarly, international agencies have developed relatively strong working relations with the SLC and are able to agree on 'deconflicted' areas, meaning that they are put on list of areas exempt from airstrikes (even if temporarily). This arrangement has enabled assistance to be delivered without collateral damage to aid workers. That said, international aid agencies lack mechanisms to prevent local attacks, instead relying on their national (GoY and opposition Ansar Allah) and local interlocutors to manage potential risks. Similarly, aid agencies rely heavily on national staff and national partners to deliver aid, partly due to a fear of kidnapping of international staff members.

Inability to adequately provide for women's needs equitably and safely during the delivery of aid: Some interlocutors noted that the conflict context had made equitable and safe delivery of assistance to women challenging. Firstly, women cannot always access distribution points for food and non-food items. If separate distribution points are not established for women and the elderly, then they often have to organise for intermediaries, who take a cut of their assistance. Secondly, some cash

distribution programmes require a proportion of recipients to be either women or heads of households. This creates challenges, as while such allocations increase the opportunities for women to trade and interact with each other, they also increase the risk of domestic violence from male family members to take control of the monies received. Thirdly, there are examples of small construction works for women IDPs (e.g. bathrooms or communal areas) being badly designed so that they cannot be safely used. The importance of integrating good safety design into assistance is particularly important for *muhamasheen*[35] IDP women, who are more likely to be targeted for sexual violence than other women, due to the perception that perpetrators will not face violent social repercussions. Poor planning for equitable and safe access to assistance for women has been attributed to limited capacity to undertake gendered conflict analysis.

Impact of aid delivery on conflict dynamics

Potential risk of threat and harm to beneficiaries as aid taps into local tensions: Some aid representatives noted that there are consistent examples of beneficiaries being threatened or harmed following the delivery of aid. One INGO representative stated that the majority of complaints made through its complaint system related to targeting of beneficiaries. These risks are mostly related to the delivery of food, cash and petrol. Beneficiaries are threatened because others feel that they were unfairly privileged for assistance, or that they should not be able to access assistance given their tribal, ethnic, political or other affiliation. In addition, beneficiaries living in areas deconflicted for the purpose of the provision of aid might suffer collateral harm upon the departure of aid organisations and end of the deconflicted period. This consideration led to substantial discussion in the consultation workshop as to whether (and to what degree) delivery agencies hold responsibility for protection of beneficiaries after delivery of assistance; and whether this should be considered a CS issue. Generally, violence or threat of violence against beneficiaries demonstrates the existence of tense conflictual relationships pre-existing the delivery of assistance, and hence exacerbated by it. It was felt that a future CS process could develop an inter-agency agreement on protection of beneficiaries.

Militarisation of aid and the process of aid delivery locally, to the benefit of local armed groups and political constituencies: Research participants referenced a number of examples of assistance being used for military advantage in areas with ground fighting (e.g. Al-Hodeidah and Taiz). These examples had three main forms.

▪ Diversion to fighters and their families: There is a tendency for authorities to divert aid so that it primarily benefits fighters aligned with them, and their families. For example, one organisation received a beneficiary list directly from an authority institution (rather than via the regional governor or community committee). The list included families

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[35] Muhamasheen are a minority ethnic group in Yemen who often face racism and discrimination.

of soldiers actively engaged in combat and the widows of deceased combatants.

▪ <u>Threat that aid will be removed if a family is not 'on side'</u>: The potential to be refused access to aid is also used by political and military groups to ensure families actively support their cause. For example, one aid agency was made aware that an authority institution had threatened families living in a particular target district for aid distribution that they would not be entered onto beneficiary lists if they did not allow their children to fight.

▪ <u>Attempts to influence IDP resettlement</u>: There have been attempts to influence where IDPs from Al Hodeida are relocated to; seeming for military gain. These attempts have been resisted to date, with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator taking a lead on agreeing redeployment areas. However, it appears that administration representatives may have put pressure on communities not to move to the agreed areas, as they did not provide military benefit.

▪ <u>Use of deconflicted areas</u>: There have been examples of belligerents moving into deconflicted areas so as to gain protection from airstrikes, and then launching operations from them.

These four practices are in effect helping to fuel the ground war. This issue is hence not only a local conflict consideration, but also a political conflict consideration. Some participants in the research suggested that without the provision of humanitarian aid into Al-Hodeidah, it is unlikely that the fighting would have continued. Importantly, this active diversion of aid for military purposes is one of the principal reasons (along with a requirement to negotiate access) for aid not reaching those in need.

Perception by constituencies that aid is politicised, affecting relationship with aid agencies and across the divide: Recipient communities in Yemen often struggle to understand the motivations of delivery agencies and can be suspicious of their intent, often perceiving delivery agencies as being associated with one side of the conflict. There is also a substantial risk in areas of Abyan, Shabwah and Hadramawt where extremist Islamist groups have substantial operations, as international or internationally-supported actions can be seen as furthering a Western 'Worldview' that is considered to not comply with Islam. This has two significant results:

▪ <u>Reluctance to accept assistance</u>: Communities can be reluctant to accept or enable assistance if aid agencies are thought to politically support the 'other side' in the national political divide; for fear of facing repercussions for being seen to demonstrate support for the other. This is partially why some agencies have experienced significant delays in delivering assistance into areas affected by the ground war.

▪ <u>Reinforce negative perceptions of the other</u>: Communities in Ansar Allah-held areas can believe that the international community is supportive of the GoY and GoY-held areas, and hence believe that communities in these areas receive a greater proportion of support.

Similarly, communities and political leaders in the GoY-held can become frustrated with the high levels of humanitarian assistance delivered into Ansar Allah-held areas; viewing this as unbalanced. This can reinforce negative perceptions of communities across the national conflict divide.

Increased local tensions inside communities as a result of aid distribution and the design of aid programmes: Interlocutors noted that there are examples of assistance creating tensions within a community, either over the perceived 'fairness' of beneficiary lists – primarily regarding cash payments, food items and fuel – or due to weak programme design. As the humanitarian crisis has evolved and service delivery has collapsed, Yemenis have become more dependent on aid to maintain basic living conditions. Hence it has become a resource that individuals and groups compete over.

Box 7: When aid causes tensions inside a community

Beneficiary lists: Aid distribution against beneficiary lists has caused substantial tensions inside a number of communities, both between different community, tribal and political constituencies, and with local leaders. This has resulted in violence and moves to oust local leaders that provided or sanctioned beneficiary lists. As a result, some aid agencies have factored in greater preparation time before the delivery of aid for public communication and consultation on lists, and to make local leaders more aware of the potential tensions if lists are not well-thought through.

Programme design: Poorly-thought through programme design has also contributed to tensions on occasions. For example, one specific food voucher programme implemented by one of the research participants led to tensions in a community, as food supplies were insufficient for the amount of vouchers distributed. The programme was stopped by the local authorities. Aid agencies have, however, demonstrated the ability to learn from experiences of poor programme design. For example, the third payment cycle of the WB-funded cash distribution programme has received substantially less complaints regarding delivery modalities than in the first and second rounds.

Increased local tensions between communities, including between IDP and host communities on account of aid: As well as tensions inside a community, there were also examples of tensions between communities living in the same geographic area over visible assistance. For example, access to water is historically a strong driver of inter-communal violence in Yemen. Since 2015, there have been examples of water solutions providing water to one community, but not to another community in close proximity, resulting in tensions between the two. A particular manifestation of inter-community tensions is between IDP and host communities. This tension is due to a perception among host community members that their need is as significant as that of IDPs, but this is not recognised as equal. Areas with high numbers of IDPs generally receive fewer aid interventions due to their

stability; and hence why IDPs travel to them. The existence of tensions between IDP and host communities is evident in the challenges faced by some agencies in attempting to relocate IDPs from shelters to rental or purpose-built accommodation. Local property and land owners from the host community have proved reluctant to rent their property or land, partly because of social pressure, so as not to reinforce the position of IDPs in the community.

4.3 Contextual stability dynamics

Impact of conflict dynamics on aid delivery

Collapse of national services and institutions renders donors and aid agencies without consistent and capable national partners: Since 2015, creating parallel sets of institutions in the Sana'a and Aden. As noted in the previous section, both the GoY and *de facto* institutions are under-resourced and inexperienced. The international community consequently has to deal with two sets of weak governance actors that, on the whole, lack national authority and capacity.

- Government of Yemen capacity: GoY institutions based in Aden are not permanently staffed, with agency representatives present on the ground on an inconsistent basis, and demonstrating negligible capacity to delivery services given that the pre-2015 public agencies are based in Sana'a. For example, the CBY was virtually recreated following the decision to move it from Sana'a to Aden, with appointment of new staff. This means that the newly-hired staff did not have access to administrative procedures and experience of the CBY staff in Sana'a.

- NSG capacity: Some pre-2015 institutions in Sana'a are still functioning under the umbrella of the NSG. However, the functionality of these now *de facto* agencies is questionable given their division from the internationally-recognised executive, their lack of access to international support and their limited funding.

- Residual cross-divide capacity: Some agencies have demonstrated a limited ability to deliver services across the country in a professional manner, and could potentially provide a consistent national partner. An oft cited example of such agencies is the Social Fund for Development (SFD), which was established to be partially independent from government and has historically been perceived as less corrupt than other government bodies (partly due to its recruitment process and wage structure).

Box 8: Impact of parallel institutions on donors and delivery agencies

Donors: As the conflict continues, donors are increasingly focused on Stabilisation and Humanitarian Plus, rather than just humanitarian issues. Such programmes require bilateral agreements with national partners. Most donors recognise the GoY, which would mean partnerships with GoY agencies and resultant restrictions on programme delivery in the Ansar Allah-held areas. Some donors have found creative fixes to such restrictions. For example, one donor has developed new programmes (such as on support for decentralised governance north and south) within the parameters of bilateral assistance agreed before 2015.

Delivery agencies: Humanitarian aid can largely be delivered without partnership with government agencies; although, some authorisation from national agencies is required. It is more difficult for agencies working on more sustainable solutions – for example in education and health service provision – to be effective without national partners. One agency working on support for decentralised government as an entry point to Stabilisation has developed two sets of partnership arrangements with the respective authorities; and has looked to reinforce the capacity of both. This required careful political manoeuvring between the two institutions, and only partial transparency of the nature of the partnership held with the other side.

Impact of the conflict economy on aid delivery – payments, supply chain and procurement: Participants in the research identified a number of features of the conflict economy that are inhibiting aid delivery and require agencies to develop *ad hoc* solutions, some of which may in turn strengthen the conflict economy.

▪ The banking system and payments: The breakdown in the banking system and the complexity of formal transfers into Yemen has placed significant constraints on how international agencies work on the ground, in terms of what they can afford to pay for and how they make payments.

▪ Supply chain: Goods required by aid agencies are in short supply in the local economy and hence of a high cost, requiring importation of the majority of aid goods. However, the import and onward transportation to target areas is a challenge given the SLC's sea and air restrictions, as well as the subsequent need to negotiate transport through areas of open violence. This has led to a reliance on smuggling of goods into Ansar Allah-held areas.

▪ Procurement: The local business sector has substantially deteriorated, meaning that local contractors are in short supply. A significant proportion of those contractors that remain in Yemen are either linked with, or fully controlled by, armed groups.

Security constraints create a reliance on local staffing and downstream partners that affects delivery and increases aid diversion: The violent conflict and diversity of context across the country has meant that most organisations have not been able to deliver assistance directly through

established international staff and operational capacity. Instead, and similar to most violent conflicts in the region (e.g. Syria and Libya), organisations have had to establish 'remote delivery' arrangements that depend on local staff and downstream partners. This has an impact on the quality of aid provided, as local staff and downstream partners are less experienced with international aid norms and best practice in conflict sensitivity than international staff. The result is an increased risk of aid diversion, as local staff and downstream partners are part of local conflict dynamics.

- Local staff: Local staff members are part of local conflict dynamics and are politically aligned in any given area. This can lead to local staff assisting in the manipulation of beneficiaries. International agencies have on occasions been required to hire staff members suggested by local political, tribal, or military leaders, who then use these staff members to gain greater control over aid. Even if staff members are hired directly without local patronage, they can be influenced by local armed groups.

- Downstream partners: International aid agencies have in many cases devolved responsibility for aid delivery to local NGOs. However, it is a challenge to find neutral downstream partners, especially in Ansar Allah-controlled areas, where most NGOs are politicised. This means that downstream partners will provide a political view on local need and impact, even if they are not overtly attempting to manipulate aid.

Impact of aid delivery on conflict dynamics

Present assistance modalities can reinforce the weakness of state structures and capacity: Prior to 2015, the funding environment focused on development assistance in partnership with national institutions and Yemeni civil society, with a principle focus on building national capacity to deliver services in an effective and democratic manner. With the upsurge of violence in 2015, donors prioritised funding for INGOs delivering aid directly outside of partnerships with national institutions. As a result, assistance modalities were felt by some interlocutors to be weakening rather than reinforcing state structures and capacity; and that this would severely inhibit Yemen's resilience and recovery. However, the research also highlighted strong differences in perspectives, as to whether and how INGOs should work with national institutions, between: (1) donors and delivery partners; and (2) between humanitarian and non-humanitarian agencies. For example, one donor had pressured a delivery partner working in the field of education to engage with the MoE when delivering education programmes, rather than separately from national institutions, as it was felt that without this engagement the programme would not have sustainable results.

Impact of donor focus on humanitarianism and humanitarian delivery modalities on the role and effectiveness of Yemeni civil society: Some interlocutors with longer-term experience of working in Yemen argue that the donor focus on humanitarianism and international humanitarian

delivery modalities has also negatively impacted on national civil society. This is important as Yemeni civil society is considered a potential stabilising factor in Yemen. As noted in the previous section, the shift in focus of donors to the humanitarian crisis has led to a collapse in funding streams for civils society. In addition, the priority given to international organisations to deliver aid during the crisis may have reduced the role of national civil society on critical national issues, and hence its ability to make a positive contribution to social change and the peace process. When INGOs partner with national NGOs the relationship tends to be vertical with the national NGOs responsible for precise deliverables.

Potential that aid delivery modalities strengthen the conflict economy and national actors benefiting from it: As noted above, aid agencies' ability to operate in Yemen is severely impacted by the conflict economy. In response, agencies have developed a number of 'work around' delivery modalities, some of which have the potential to reinforce the conflict economy and those businesses, security and political groups that benefit from it.

▪ Use of the black financial market: It has become common practice for international agencies to use cash transfer agents to provide salaries to staff members or for local contracting. Such payments are not conducted through the formal banking system. Given the importance of the international aid sector for the Yemeni conflict, this approach has the potential to further undermine the banking system and to strengthen Yemeni reliance on the black financial market. The consultation workshop demonstrated different perspectives on whether aid agencies, and humanitarian agencies in particular, could meaningfully influence the black financial management, given the weaknesses of the banking system and importance of the cash economy prior to 2015. No common position was reached in the discussion.

▪ Strengthening of military-linked rather than civilian businesses: Interlocutors in the research acknowledged that they have only limited understanding of the national business sector and the impact of aid delivery on it. That said, a number of negative examples of aid contracts benefiting military rather than civilian businesses were identified. Security actors often control the trucks and fuel used to transport aid inside Yemen, and hence their economic position is strengthened through fulfilment of aid contracts. There was some discussion in the consultation workshop as to whether aid agencies should focus only on ensuring delivery of humanitarian goods, or if they should also look to concern themselves with how aid is delivered.

▪ Cross-divide businesses and supply chains: Finally, some research interlocutors were concerned that aid agencies' choices on how to supply humanitarian goods into Yemen were undermining Yemeni businesses and supply chains that operate across conflict divides, and play an important 'connecting' function between divided groups. It was argued that some Yemeni businesspeople have made a choice to

continue to operate and work nationally, even though they are accumulating losses, so as to play a stabilising role in the economy; and that it was imperative to support them rather than to provide contracts to security actors; with the consequent impact that the role of security actors is strengthened. In addition, humanitarian aid can be brought into the country through smuggling routes, and hence become part of the competition between Houthi groups for control of smuggling routes.

Box 9: Risks of a shift in aid to Stabilisation and Humanitarianism Plus

With the protracted nature of the conflict, there is a move towards stabilisation-type programmes and Humanitarian Plus, whereby there is an investment in national capacity and public infrastructure as a contribution to sustainability. However, Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation entails working with national agencies, reinforcing their capacity and, in the case of Stabilisation, their 'legitimate' as local and national authorities. As such, there is a risk that such programming will more clearly align international donors and delivery agencies with parties in local and national conflicts. This in turn can lead to: (1) a deepening of conflicts as the 'losing' party feels that it has been excluded; and (2) a reduction in the ability of humanitarian agencies to be seen to be impartial and hence to access those in need.

Development across the country is restricted by a focus on humanitarian needs, but a shift to Stabilisation and Humanitarian Plus has risks: Ground violence in Yemen is limited to a small proportion of the country, with airstrikes proliferating across the territory held by the NSG and pro-Ansar Allah forces. This means that a significant expanse of the country is either not directly affected by violence, or only sporadically affected; depending on the SLC air campaign. Assistance needs in Yemen consequently diverge substantially across the country, with some in need of urgent humanitarian assistance (e.g. areas experiencing violence or IDP influxes) and others more affected by the breakdown in governance institutions and basic services. Since 2015, the international community has primarily focused on delivery of humanitarian aid, partly due to the dire situation faced by Yeminis, and partly because of the complexity in undertaking development activities in Yemen's divided political landscape. This has resulted in a lack of resources for development in areas of Yemen less directly affected by conflict. As the conflict has prolonged, international actors have recognised that this focus on humanitarianism is not effective across the whole of Yemen and most donors are presently exploring Stabilisation and Humanitarian Plus programming. However, both these types of assistance pose risks for the political process (see Box 9).

5. Strategies and capacities to manage conflict

The following section provides an analysis of the strategies that aid agencies have adopted to date to manage the conflict considerations outlined in the previous section, and the degree to which these strategies are aligned with the principles of CS. It then goes on to assess the capacity of agencies to be conflict sensitive.

5.1 Strategies to manage conflict dynamics

Focus on risk management: While interlocutors identified a range of conflict-related considerations, as a group they clearly prioritised three issues, in the following order of importance: (1) ensuring access and activities (a) generally, (b) in the Ansar Allah-controlled areas, and (c) in specific contested areas (e.g. Al-Hodeidah); (2) reducing the potential for aid diversion by maximising discretion over the selection of beneficiaries; and (3) preventing local tensions in target communities. No participants in the research prioritised managing risks to political or contextual conflict dynamics. This means that the overwhelming focus of organisations when considering conflict is 'risk management'– reducing the risk that conflict dynamics pose for assistance objectives, or the organisation and its staff.

Enabling access, activities and control of beneficiaries

Individual negotiation to access beneficiaries and avoid aid diversion: Participants in the research stated that the only means they have of reaching those most in need, and of combating the risk of aid diversion, is through direct negotiation with MOPIC and NAMCHA. These negotiations were felt to be more difficult for work in Ansar Allah-held areas and some interlocutors expressed the view that 'they were on their own' in negotiating their assistance with NAMCHA (and other NSG agencies), as international coordination mechanisms do not want to risk their relationships with the NSG by intervening on behalf of individual agencies. The use of individual negotiation to ensure access and activity implementation, and to reach target beneficiaries, has three important repercussions:

- Aid agencies operating from Sana'a and in inside NSG areas have had to build relationships with individual Ansar Allah (and previously General People's Congress) leaders in order to gain traction. Research interlocutors argued that it is difficult to engage with the NSG agencies and secure access to beneficiaries without personal relationships, particularly if an agency's leadership is not present in Sana'a.

- Each aid agency defines its own strategy to access beneficiaries and red lines for negotiation with the parallel Yemeni institutions. This means that the national institutions (and NAMCHA in particular) are able to select those aid agencies that are granted access to particular areas or beneficiaries. Lack of coordination between agencies means that it is often unclear why one agency has been granted access and another refused.

- In their negotiations with the parallel Yemeni institutions, aid agencies balance a needs-based with a conflict-based approach in selecting beneficiaries and target areas.

Collective lobbying for access on high profile issues: While agencies generally feel 'on their own' in negotiating access to beneficiaries, especially for access in Ansar Allah-held areas, some collective lobbying on access issues has been possible in high profile cases – and most recently on Al-Hodeidah. The lobbying on Al-Hodeidah included sharing of information on access issues, and collective planning between the heads of mission and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator to Yemen on how to increase access. It also included INGO lobbying to regional actors through collective formats such as Crisis Action.

Actions to prevent local tensions

Do No Harm approach to preventing local tensions: As noted above, the dominant focus of organisations is on risk management. Those organisations that did raise prevention of local tensions as a priority, had this as a secondary focus to access/beneficiaries and did so through a DNH rather than CS lens. This means that the objective of organisations when managing local tensions is to conduct sufficient preparatory work so that assistance can be delivered without violence, rather than looking for opportunities to support sustainable peace capacity (such as systematic relationships across conflict divides or localised conflict resolution mechanisms).

Use of communication, consultation and mentoring as preventative DNH tools: The main tools used by agencies looking to do no harm when delivering assistance at the local level were communication, consultation and mentoring of local leaders. Communication and consultation were mostly conducted through public meetings, and placed an emphasis on communicating the role of local and national leaders in assistance (e.g. the development of beneficiary lists), so as to increase public accountability over them. Mentoring was mostly used in longer-term projects focused on development or sustainable solutions (rather than during shorter interventions to provide food and non-food items for emergency relief), when greater time was available to build relationships with local leaders. Some agencies have also invested in mentoring of local leaders responsible for developing or vetting beneficiary lists; so that they are better able to make an assessment of the level of need of people in the community and to manage tensions if they do arise. In addition to these preventative tools, most organisations have established feedback processes from beneficiaries to raise issues with aid delivered; most often in the form of 'complaints lines'.

Application of Do No Harm

Do No Harm in principle rather than practice: All organisations included in the research referenced DNH as an organisational priority embedded in their work. However, only a few organisations were able to identify concrete internal mechanisms and practices for promoting DNH across programming. Most organisations were reliant on the skill and insight of project staff to take account of conflict dynamics during the planning and delivery of assistance. That said, a few organisations demonstrated strong DNH practice within a specific thematic area (e.g. water, sanitation and education).

Inconsistent application of Do No Harm within social programming: While all interlocutors demonstrated a good foundational understanding of DNH, there was inconsistent application of DNH in social programming – those that look to deliver change in society, either in terms of peace promotion or other social issues (e.g. women's inclusion, minority rights, or justice standards). There was a sense that DNH means preventing harm to project participants (e.g. workshop participants do not face threats or social pressure). However, DNH and the broader concept of CS are tools for understanding and preventing <u>unintended</u> consequences. Some social programming challenges norms within a society (e.g. on inter-group dynamics or social relations), by their nature exposing conflicts in society, and there is an inherent risk that Yemeni activists or professionals engaged in such processes may be at risk. In these cases, correct application of DNH and CS frameworks enable Yemenis to understand risk and to make informed choices on what level of risk they are willing to bear in order to promote the desired social change; not to inhibit or prevent Yemeni partners from such activities. A particular concern expressed by one interlocutor with a peacebuilding background is that this misinterpretation is driven by donors' aversion to risk and that a change in donors' behaviour would be needed to enable better application of DNH in social programmes.

Position on Conflict Sensitivity

Reluctance to commit to delivering peace dividends, but willingness to explore the humanitarian-development-peace nexus: The individual interviews and consultation workshop demonstrated a significant reluctance among humanitarian agencies to have their work constrained by a requirement to contribute to achieve peace dividends. There were concerns that: (1) engagement on DNH/CS could have a negative impact on humanitarian agencies and the humanitarian space; and (2) achieving a peace dividend was too long-term a goal for humanitarian action, and that their contribution would at best be minimal. Non-humanitarian agencies were more open to the importance of conflict sensitivity and saw it as a natural progression of their work. Importantly, there was a recognition across all types of interlocutors that as the conflict continues, humanitarian assistance alone is not sufficient to address the range of need in Yemen,

and hence there is willingness to explore the nexus between humanitarianism, development and peacebuilding.

The focus on rapid response does not always allow for analysis and relationship-building required to be conflict sensitive: International experience has demonstrated that effective working relationships with informal leaders and armed groups take substantial time to develop. Similarly, time is required to develop a nuanced understanding of the context in a locality, and how it relates to the political conflict context. However, humanitarian actors indicated that they often have to respond quickly to escalating humanitarian need in Yemen without having the time to: (1) to conduct sufficiently robust analysis to ensure DNH/CS; or (2) build the relationships with informal or formal military actors to effectively negotiate with them. This is a particular challenge in Yemen given the diversity of context across the county. Organisations working on peacebuilding, stabilisation-type engagements, or Humanitarian Plus indicated that they are better able to build relationships that enable effective delivery due to: (1) the longer timeframe of their interventions; and (2) their focus on achieving a change in the capacity and actions of local leaders. Importantly, those working on peace, Humanitarian Plus or Stabilisation projects felt that they had greater opportunity to be conflict sensitive, as they could dedicate time and to relationship-building and planning.

Concern over capacity constraints and experiments with consortiums to access peacebuilding expertise: In addition to humanitarian agencies' concerns over committing to delivering peace dividends, all agencies identified gaps in their capacity to properly understand and manage conflict dynamics. For some, to invest in the CS capacity would take resources away from the delivery of aid and would consequently put their core business of easing human suffering at risk. Others, however, were exploring the potential for consortiums with peacebuilding organisations with a track work of managing conflict dynamics in Yemen, as a way of accessing expert capacity within shared programme frameworks.

5.2 Capacities to be conflict sensitive

Internal capacity

Few examples of dedicated conflict-management capacity: Only a few organisations have dedicated conflict analysis, management or sensitivity expertise within their team. A further number of organisations have some form of centralised expertise within their respective headquarters made available to country staff, either through an organisational commitment to mainstreaming DNH and CS, or through *ad hoc* on call facilities. For example, one organisation had organised for training of in-country staff in conflict sensitivity. The remainder rely on the professionalism and sensibility of their staff to negotiation conflict dynamics, based on past experience of doing so in other conflict-affected contexts. That said, there had been a noticeable shift in investments in internal capacity over the 12 months

preceding the research. This was in part driven by donor demands, and in part by experience of assistance going wrong. In this regard, the following factors were most frequently referenced as key drivers in recognising the need for greater capacity: (1) increasing burden to negotiate access and beneficiaries; (2) failure to properly manage the delivery of aid into areas affected by the ground war; and (3) challenges with IDP-host relations.

Focus on good enough risk assessment, not conflict analysis: Given the focus of organisations on risk management (the threat to an organisation, its staff and objectives), participating organisations focused their analysis capacity on security-based risk assessments. This means organisations have dedicated security teams that analyse the threats that exist to an organisation, how vulnerable they are, and to reduce the vulnerability as much as possible. No humanitarian organisations demonstrated dedicated internal conflict analysis processes, either at the national level, or at sub-national or localised levels. When conflict analyses were conducted, they were conducted at a programmatic level on an *ad hoc* basis and without standard methodology. In addition, contextual knowledge does not stay inside organisations when staff members do develop it, due to the high turnover and burnout rate.

Box 10: Examples of capacity for conflict sensitivity analysis

The most substantial attempt to conduct rigorous analysis of conflict analysis and to integrate it into programme planning is the joint UN/WB HDPI pilot. This pilot is attempting to: (1) identify collective outcomes among humanitarian, development and peace actors; and (2) undertake shared analysis, operations and advocacy, on the basis of collective data-gathering and lesson-learning. So far the pilot is has not been understood or used widely.

Aside from the HDPI pilot, organisations working on stabilisation-type projects or in peacebuilding demonstrated more regular and sophisticated conflict analysis; partly as a result of the longer time frame for their engagement.

Challenges in collecting, sharing and using information internally: Most organisations have not established formal processes to gather and share information relevant for assessing conflict dynamics and the impact of assistance on those dynamics. This is because of limited capacity -- with the focus on delivering quickly, limited expertise in gathering conflict related data, and nervousness regarding being seen to be collecting such data. Participants in the research also referenced the separation between security (who are mostly international) and programme staff (with the majority of those implementing activities being Yemeni nationals) as inhibiting internal sharing and use of information. Programme teams are not able to access security and risk information in a consistent manner so as to inform programme design.

Questionable approach to crisis management in delivery areas:
Irrespective of how much investment is made in trying to ensure that
assistance is perceived to be distributed fairly, crises will emerge during
delivery. Typically, this can involve the theft or diversion of assistance goods,
attacks on those providing the assistance or presumed to have decided on
who benefits from the assistance, or confrontation between groups (those
presumed to have benefit and those who feel they have not). As such,
each target area for assistance needs a pre-prepared crisis management
mechanism to: (1) diffuse tensions; (2) increase communication on
assistance and how it is delivered; (3) and adapt assistance accordingly.
This usually involves advance agreements with local influencers with the
knowledge and authority to act in the interest of the assistance agencies
and assistance objectives. No organisations included within the research
were able to point to crisis management mechanisms for when their
assistance 'goes wrong'.

The opportunities and risks of Yemeni staff contributions: Organisations
demonstrated mixed perspectives on the opportunities and risks of Yemeni
staffing in increasing conflict sensitivity. On the positive side, given the
limited access on the ground, Yemeni staff were thought to be essential to
developing organisations' understanding of local contexts and in
increasing their potential to DNH and be CS. On the negative side, Yemeni
staff were felt to be 'conflict blind' in that they are often not aware of their
own perspective and position on the conflict, and hence are not always
able to provide a good assessment of the likely risk to conflict dynamics of
the assistance that they are involved in delivering (and vice versa). In
addition, some organisations have a tendency to be staffed with Yemenis
from one area (especially urban areas). Given the diverse across the
country, Yemeni staff would not be familiar with many of the contexts in
which their INGO is operating, and may have a tendency to assume 'it is
the same as home'.

Remote management challenges for conflict sensitivity: The reliance of
international agencies on downstream partners has three substantial
impacts: (1) it reduces the potential for good conflict analysis, as
organisations do not have access to local interlocutors and sources of
information; (2) it creates reliance on downstream delivery partners' ability
to *do no harm* and be conflict sensitive; and (3) it makes it difficult to
monitor the impact of assistance on conflict dynamics and vice versa.
When third party monitoring has been organised it tends to focus on
beneficiary statistics and impact on *inter alia* vulnerability/poverty, rather
than conflict dynamics. A key challenge here is that downstream partners
and third-party monitors are likely to have weaker internal DNH and CS
standards than INGOs

Potential for collective action

Geographic spread of organisations and donors: The geographic spread of
INGOs and their donors was often cited by participants in the research as
one of the key factors undermining coordination and collective actions. In-

country organisations are split between those working from Aden and those working from Sana'a, with limited opportunities for coordination between them. A number of organisations maintain staff in Jordan, or are supported by regional teams based there. However, some projects are also run from donor capitals (e.g. London or Berlin). As the donors and aid agencies are in different geographic locations, it is not easy to organise for inclusive coordination sessions, and they have different coordination priorities – e.g. the organisations based in Sana'a may need to negotiate access with the NSG, while those based in Aden may be more interested in understanding dynamics between the GoY and STC.

Focus on coordination through country directors in Sana'a: As noted above, no formal coordination mechanisms between INGOs operating in the Ansar Allah-controlled areas are welcomed by the authorities there. A previous INGO forum was closed by the *de facto* authorities with a threat of expulsion for organisations that attempt to manage or participate in coordination. INGO coordination is conducted through country director meetings and through end-to-end encrypted platforms such as IMO to ensure confidentiality of discussions. However, this mechanism focuses on: (1) coordination of assistance resources; (2) access issues; and (3) risk and security management. It does not focus directly on conflict analysis and management.

Hesitation to share information and analysis: Those organisations engaged in the research also demonstrated a general reluctance to share the analysis that does exist. This was partly due to the time- and project-specific nature of the analysis, and a belief that internally-generated analysis would not be of use to other organisations. It was also due to a concern at the potential for internal analysis to be distributed wider than INGOs – e.g. to political actors. Generally, it was felt to be easier for international staff to share internal information and analysis, than Yemeni national staff, who could be exposed to risk in handling such sensitive information.

Inclusion of national voices: Further, it was felt that the INGO forums and processes presently running in Yemen provide an echo chamber for international perspectives on conflict dynamics and their relationship to assistance, as they do not provide opportunity for local NGO perspectives to be heard.

6. Integrating conflict sensitivity into assistance

This section provides a suggested framework for how to integrate conflict sensitivity into aid to Yemen. The framework is divided between recommendations that describe measures to enhance the individual capacities of aid agencies to operate in a conflict sensitive manner in Yemen, to enhance collective action on conflict sensitivity, and to integrate conflict sensitivity into policies and strategies on aid for Yemen. The recommendations were principally developed as a result of the consultation workshop at the end of the research; but reflect the analysis of the report author rather than reflecting a common position among all participants in the workshop. When clear guidance was provided by the workshop participants, this is noted in the recommendations themselves.

6.1 Conclusions

At the time of reporting, both the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen are deepening. As a result, in 2018, the country is the second biggest recipient of international aid globally. The protracted nature of the conflict has meant that humanitarian aid is no longer sufficient, and donors are investing more in Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation programmes. However, the effectiveness of aid, especially given this shift, is dependent upon proper investments in conflict sensitivity – both in terms of managing the impact of conflict dynamics on aid and the impacts of aid on conflict dynamics.

In terms of the impact of conflict dynamics on aid, the research demonstrates that aid agencies have to constantly negotiate their assistance with political and local parties to the conflicts affecting Yemen. These negotiations have resulted in the partial diversion of aid, as agencies temper a needs-based approach to aid with the requirement to sufficiently satisfy the interests of political and local conflict parties. Risks to aid workers and aid goods have resulted in a reliance on local staff and downstream partners that further increases the likelihood of diversion. Further, aid delivery is undermined by the weakening of national governance structures and the growth of the conflict economy.

In terms of the impact of aid on conflict dynamics, the parallel authorities attempt to use aid to reinforce their position in the war and their legitimacy among local communities. This translates into the militarisation of aid locally. Beneficiaries are sometimes exposed to risk after receipt of aid, and aid distribution has on occasion exacerbated conflict tensions inside communities, between communities and across the political divide. Present aid methodologies run the risk of reinforcing the underlying conflict context, in terms of weakening governance, reinforcing the conflict economy, weakening civil society's role as a driver of positive social change and ignoring the assistance needs of areas spared the violence of the ground war. Aid also runs the risk of perpetuating local violence and preventing constructive engagement of the political parties in the political process.

These risks are greater with a shift in focus to Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation programmes.

Aid agencies approach to conflict management is presently through a risk lens; to reduce the impact of the conflict on their assistance objectives. This means a prioritisation of access, reducing aid diversion and minimising the likelihood of tensions during delivery. Humanitarian agencies are concerned about the implications of integrating conflict sensitivity into their work on the humanitarian space, and whether they can meaningfully contribute to a peace dividend. The capacity of aid agencies to be conflict sensitive is presently low, in terms of dedicated expertise, the use of conflict analysis and crisis management procedures. The potential for collective action on conflict sensitivity is also limited by the geographic spread of donors and aid agencies, a hesitation to share information and analysis, and restrictions on international coordination in Ansar Allah-held territory.

6.2 Recommendations

Recommendations for strengthening internal capacity

All organisations recognised the need for greater support for internal capacity on DNH and CS, irrespective of whether at the time of analysis they received meaningful support from thematic specialists or dedicated teams based in their respective headquarters.

(1) Shared capacity development resource: There is the need for a shared resource that can provide capacity development support to INGOs on the ground that goes beyond standard training, to the development of internal practices and ongoing mentoring. This resource should focus on: (a) analysis processes; (b) programming design in conflict contexts, and; (c) facilitation and mediation skills for negotiating assistance with local and national counterparts. Where possible, this resource should also (d) establish safe processes to collect and share data internally in individual organisations in a consistent manner, and to learn lessons from past experience. However, participants in the research felt that information gathering and processing would be better conducted by third-party specialist organisations, so as to minimise the risk to delivery organisations and their staff (see below).

(2) Flexible delivery mechanism: Given the geographic dispersal of donors and aid agencies, and the challenges of establishing 'non-tangible' programmes and undertaking overt coordination in the North, this capacity support will need to be delivered in a flexible manner. Potential mechanisms include: (1) physical trainings and support in Southern Yemen; (2) temporary placement of expertise within agencies in Sana'a (although each organisation has a cap on the number of international staff that can work from Sana'a); (3) external training sessions in third countries; and (4) development of an online support platform.

Recommendations for strengthening collaborative responses

The diverse geographic location of organisations means coordination on CS between donors and aid agencies is challenging. There is also limited capacity and political space for additional burdensome processes. Hence it will be important to creatively integrate conflict sensitivity into existing coordination processes or to develop external support for coordination activities.

(3) Third-party data gathering and conflict analysis housed online: Given the hesitations articulated by research participants on data gathering and processes, it was felt that donors and delivery partners should collectively contract third-party organisations that specialise in research in conflict-affected environments. These organisations would provide regular reports to all participating donors and implementing organisations on key conflict indicators and available evidence on the two-way relationship between assistance and conflict dynamics. The contracting of third-party organisations would mean that individual organisations would have a lower risk of being exposed for holding sensitive information, and hence having their access restricted (or staff threatened) by the competing authorities. It was recommended by workshop participants that:

▪ Data gathering should include human rights and peacebuilding organisations. It was felt that access to the knowledge held by these organisations would lead to more informed actions by humanitarian agencies.

▪ Information gathered should be housed in a secure online analysis and planning portal. This portal would track not only conflict dynamics, but also learning from assistance delivered and progress in implementing collective CS responses.

▪ A mapping of procurement and supply chains, and analysis of how procurement could be done in a more conflict sensitive manner, is commissioned as a priority. This was felt to be important in order to achieve an inter-agency agreement on procurement/tendering (see below on strategic actions).

(4) United Nations-led joint planning on conflict sensitivity: While online platforms are a good start for coordination, they provide only limited opportunity for collective planning. Such planning was thought to be important to: (1) agree on joint approaches in particularly challenging geographic areas; (2) simulate and set-up collective plans for worst-case conflict scenarios; and (3) develop collective positions on key policy and strategy questions for international assistance into Yemen. It was recommended by workshop participants that:

▪ Physical coordination would be best placed under a UN agency relevant for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding issues, so that coordination would enable the nexus between these types of responses.

- ▪ Opportunities should be provided for national NGO voices to be heard in a CS coordination forum, albeit in a sensitive manner that does not reduce the willingness of INGOs to engage in sensitive discussions.

- ▪ Given the restrictions on coordination in Sana'a (where a significant proportion of organisations are based), the establishment of a CS coordination process needs to be handled creatively. Options to manage CS coordination under existing sessions in Sana'a should be considered, supplemented by *ad hoc* sessions in Amman.

(5) Shared mediation and crisis management capacity: The capacity of agencies to mediate local conflict dynamics and to manage crises as they emerge is presently limited. It was also felt that delivery agencies should establish shared mediation and crisis management capacity, especially in more volatile areas. Greater involvement of peacebuilding organisations in coordination activities could help to leverage such resources. Alternatively, a shared pool of mediators could be established through collective funding.

(6) Pilot conflict sensitivity in areas affected by the ground war: Interlocutors consistently stated that collective action on CS should be tangible on the ground, and should be tested in one or a small number of localities. Some interlocutors felt that a potential entry point for locally-targeted CS would be in support of any agreement around Al-Hodeidah. This could include a surge in support for analysis of localised conflict dynamics, pooling of local mediation capacity, and establishment of a shared crisis management mechanism.

Recommendations for strengthening policies and strategies for assistance

It is important to drive CS through practical incorporation into international policies and strategies for assistance into Yemen.

(7) Leadership group on conflict sensitivity: International actors should also consider the utility of forming a leadership group on conflict sensitivity to: (1) provide political backing to a revised set of principles focused on CS, and incorporating humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors; (2) drive application of conflict sensitivity within their own organisations and delivery partners, collectively and with parties to the conflict; and (3) influence the design, assessment, and monitoring of international, regional, national and organisational policies and overall engagement strategies. The leadership group would be comprised of key donors relevant for Yemen as well as multilateral agencies leading on key policy and strategic areas.

(8) Revise/develop and operationalise conflict sensitivity principles for Yemen: Humanitarian actors pointed to the existence of principles for humanitarian assistance for Yemen, but considered them to be dormant and not implemented in practice. There is the potential to review and update the principles through a conflict sensitivity lens, but so that they apply equally to Humanitarian Plus, Stabilisation and peace actors, as to humanitarian actors. If this is not possible, then these actors should look to

develop a new set of principles specifically for conflict sensitivity. Collaboration by humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors on a revised/new set of principles would be an entry point for defining what the humanitarian-development-peace nexus should look like for Yemen. While humanitarian participants in the research demonstrated considerable nervousness in formally engaging with development and peacebuilding actors, as it could undermine humanitarian principles, there was willingness to explore this nexus. It is recommended that these principles are further operationalised through:

- Widening of the HDPI pilot in Yemen, by including key humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations in establishing a shared set of outcomes, as the basis for collective data-gathering and lesson-learning. As such, a shared set of outcomes agreed under the existing HDPI could provide a benchmark for the third-party data gathering and analysis described in recommendation three.

- Inter-agency agreements on key shared CS challenges. Three immediate areas were identified for inter-agency agreements: (1) beneficiary protection and the handling of information related to beneficiaries (e.g. consistent practice on levels of transparency with Yemeni institutions on both sides of the conflict divide); (2) key operational processes, including procurement and payments (including, for example, whether there is opportunity to reinforce the limited banking system that exists; and (3) a Code of Conduct on how delivery agencies interact with the conflict parties. The latter would look to provide clear guidance for aid agencies on how to engage with GoY and *de facto* agencies, especially on more development type activities.

(9) Strategic communication on aid to the Yemeni public: Participants in the workshop placed particular importance on collective strategic communication on international assistance to the Yemeni public, as a key CS process. It was recommended by workshop participants that:

- An inter-agency Code of Conduct would provide a good basis for collective strategic communications, rather than more abstract principles that are designed more for international donors and delivery partners.

- Communication should not be 'passive' but rather entail training for Yemeni leaders in what the Code of Conduct means in practice for how assistance is delivered into Yemen.

(10) Mutual accountability frameworks with parallel authorities: Participants in the workshop also felt that a revised set of principles could provide a good entry point for revitalising Mutual Accountability Frameworks with the GoY and NSG. I was recommended by workshop participants that frameworks should be:

- Couched positively in responsibilities, rather than in the red lines held by international organisations as to delivery modalities (and vice versa).

- Broad in nature or focused on specific areas (e.g. Al-Hodeidah) or issues (e.g. education provision).

- Supported with training and written guidelines for national counterparts. Support for national counterparts could focus on those public agencies that have shown a greater capacity to continue to work nationally, for example the SFD.

- Made public, so as to increase the likelihood of public accountability over national counterparts on management of international assistance.

(11) Integration of principles into Humanitarian Plus/Stabilisation: A shift towards Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation could entail more direct work with political actors (rather than simply providing assistance). This both runs a greater risk of politicising and limiting the reach of humanitarian aid, and requires a greater investment in conflict sensitive planning so as to ensure a positive outcome. It was also felt that a revised/new set of principles would provide a strong foundation for integrating conflict sensitivity into nascent strategies on Humanitarian Plus and Stabilisation.

(12) Outreach to regional actors on conflict sensitivity: There is also the potential for direct engagement with regional funding actors on their conflict sensitivity. This potential is greatest in the southern or liberated areas where their investment is largest; also because of recent experiences in which community groups have blocked or undermined programmes funded by regional actors. This outreach should be based around the revised humanitarian principles and look to increase their internal capacity and that of their delivery partners.