



Tropentag, October 5-7, 2011, Bonn

“Development on the margin”

## Planning in Conflict – Experiences with the Conflict-Sensitive Programming Approach “Do No Harm” in Pastoralist Settings

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### Abstract

How may aid be provided in conflict settings in ways that, rather than feeding into and exacerbating the conflict, help local people disengage from the violence that surrounds them and begin to develop alternative systems for addressing the problems that underlie the conflict? With conflict sensitive programming, aid agencies are enabled to deliver relief and, at the same time, ensure that their aid does not worsen conflicts and moreover provide alternatives to conflict. The two main ethnic groups that have been studied using the ‘do no harm’ approach are the Gabbra and the Dasanach. Both are living to the East of Lake Turkana in Northern Kenya in a harsh environment that does not allow much else than keeping animals in a pastoralist way. The issue of violent conflicts was found to be one of the major causes for the vulnerability. During the participatory exercise a reciprocal agreement on the sharing of pasture and water resources was achieved, the establishment of joint committees looking at water use and at peace issues, and the planning of common activities.

As environmental changes directly affect the livelihood of pastoralists, they are highly vulnerable to climatic events such as droughts, which lead to competition over scarce resources. As a result, most pastoralist environments are also marked by a high degree of inter-ethnic conflict, in which the access to water and pastures becomes a continuous object of tension. Relief projects working in such situations have to be aware of these aspects and assure that their interventions, whether in form of social services, economic assistance or infrastructure, are implemented in a conflict-sensitive way. This demand for the following considerations:

- Take an explicit decision to integrate conflict-sensitivity into programming.
- Determine the steps of an accompanying process for the staff leading to practical application.
- Develop conflict-sensitive indicators for measuring the success of a project.
- Decide on guidelines for the organisational presence in the field.
- Take an informed decision on whether peace-building should become an objective in itself.

**Keywords:** Conflict sensitive programming, disaster preparedness, do-no-harm methodology, humanitarian aid