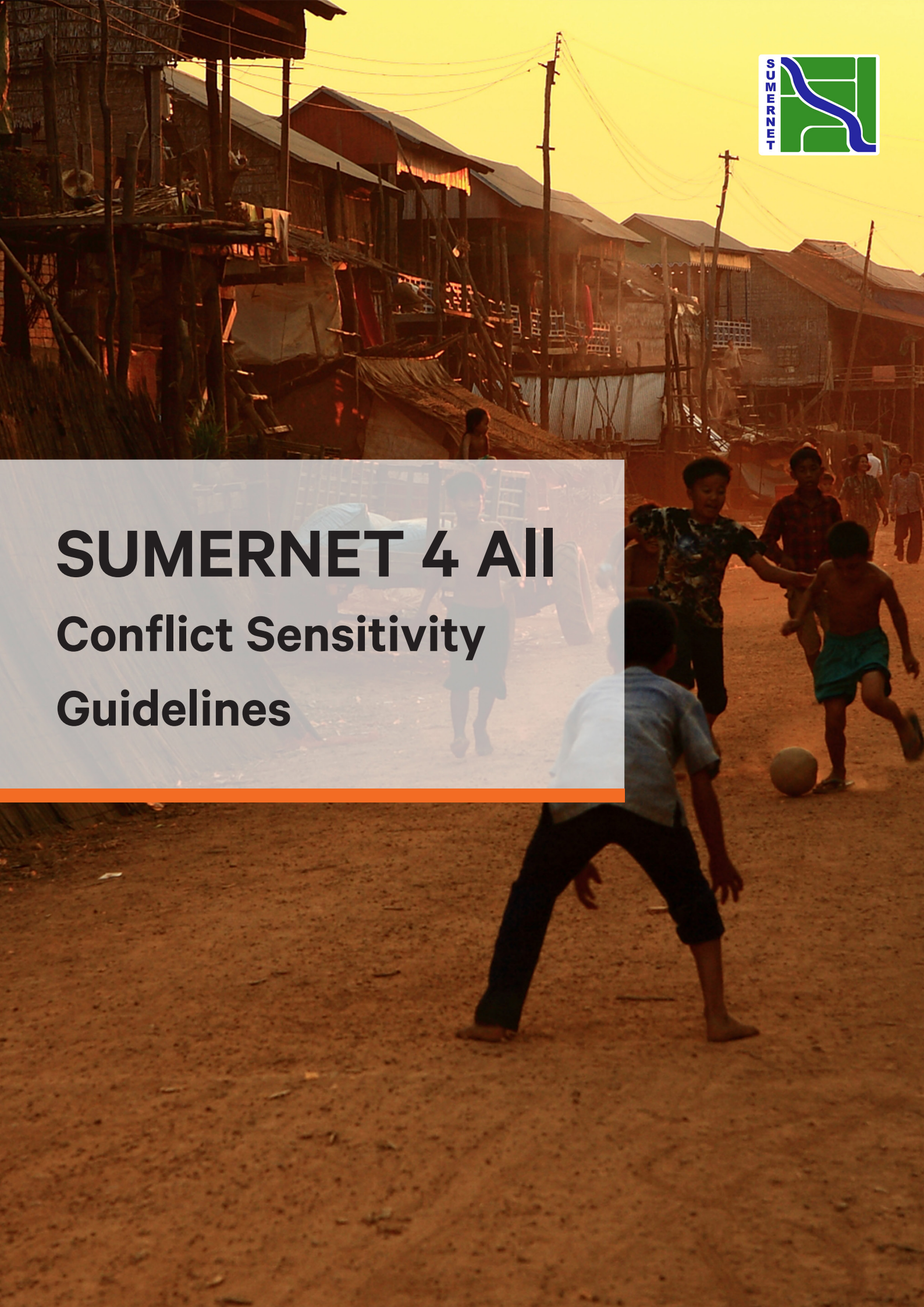


SUMERNET 4 All

Conflict Sensitivity Guidelines

Conflict Sensitivity Guidelines

Building a culture of conflict sensitivity

There is a two-way relationship between research and conflict. As researchers, we are not only adversely affected by conflicts, but inevitably also affect the dynamics of conflict where we conduct our research. Ideally the effect will be positive: researchers will contribute to knowledge and development. However, in some cases, our research interventions may increase the risk of violent conflict.

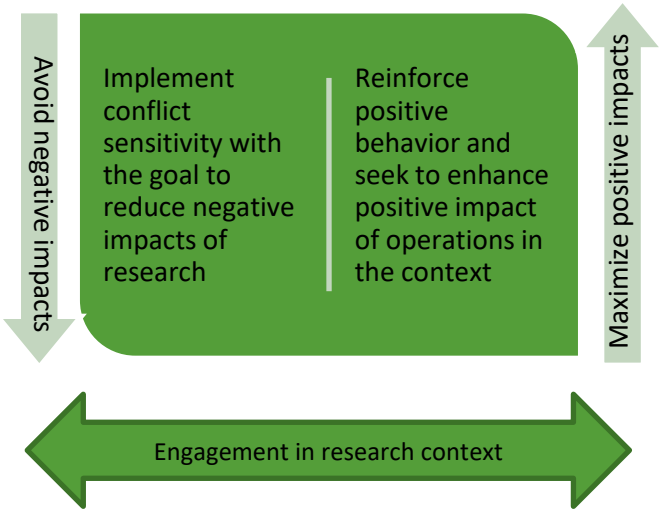
Conflict Sensitivity is a tool for researchers to enhance the quality of our research network. Conflict sensitivity refers to the ability to

1) Understand the context in which research is operating, particularly the dynamics of relationships between people and groups in the research context.

2) Understand the interactions between research interventions and their contexts. This mean focusing on not only the outcome of research interventions, but also the entire research process.

3) Act upon the understanding of these interactions through planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating your intervention in a conflict-sensitive fashion to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts

Conflict Sensitivity in SUMERNET



Do No Harm Analysis and Assumptions

Do No Harm (DNH) is a tool that can be integrated into research for the application of conflict sensitivity. In general, DNH consists of four main parts of analysis includes context analysis, behavior analysis, program analysis, and option analysis. DNH is based on six important assumptions, which are also known as the relationship framework (CDA, 2016).

Approach	Tool	Analysis	Assumptions
Conflict Sensitivity	Do No Harm	1. Context Analysis	1. When we enter a context, we become part of the context.
			2. Every context is characterized by dividers and connectors.
			3. Our research will interact with both dividers and connectors.
		2. Behavior Analysis	4. There are behavior patterns by which we interact with conflict.
		3. Program Analysis	5. The details of a research intervention matter.
		4. Option Analysis	6. There are always options.

1. Context Analysis.

Assumption 1: When we enter a context, we become part of the context. As a researcher, becoming part of the context is unavoidable. When we enter the context, we or our activities will begin to have effects, even beyond our intentions.

Key Questions to consider:

Q1: Do I understand my research context? If not, how can I learn and account for governing policies, institutions; local economy, technology, or cultural system in my research context?

Q2: What services that I transmit to the context can either rise or reduce equality in that context?

Assumption 2: Every context is characterized by dividers and connectors. Dividers are the factors that separate people and increase inequality in a society. Connectors are the factors that bring people together and increase equality in a society.

Key Questions to consider:

Q1: What are the dividing factors in this situation? What are the connecting factors?

Q2: What are values that may differ between groups? What are values that are shared among groups?

Assumption 3: Our research will interact with both dividers and connectors. Our research can have a negative impact such as increasing tension among people or it can have a positive impact such as increasing the connections among people. Likewise, researchers need to be aware of unintentional influences on dividers and connectors, which can undermine the positive outcomes of the research.

Key Questions to consider:

Q1: Which political, economic, technological, or cultural systems increase tensions between groups?

Q2: Have groups impacted from a historical event in a different way?

2. Behavior Analysis.

Assumption 4: There are behavioral patterns by which researcher interacts with conflict.

How our behavior interacts with participants, partners, and other researchers has direct consequences on the context. These pattern behaviors are also called Implicit Ethical Messages includes respect, accountability, fairness, and transparency are useful in identifying how positive and negative pattern of behaviors can have an impact on our research projects.

Key Questions to consider:

Q1: Do you track behavior patterns of your research team over the course of the research project? How?

Q2: Do you identify which marginalized groups are not engaged in the project? How?

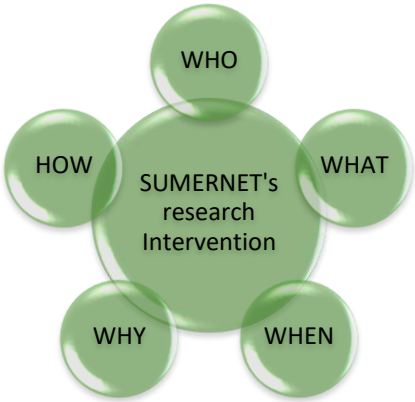
Implicit Ethical Messages			
Principles	**Negative Behaviors**	**Positive Behaviors**	**Transparency** contributes to all above positive behaviors
Respect	Competition Suspicion Indifference to local concerns	Collaboration Trust Sensitivity to local concerns	
Accountability	Ignore questions and concerns Use force Impunity	Listen and investigate Engage in partnership Responsibility	
Fairness	Respond to specific groups Ignore Rules Overlook different value	Respond to needs equitably Follow Rules Recognition of value	

3. Program Analysis

Assumption 5: The Details of a research intervention matter. A program analysis helps us understand the details of research interventions so that we may begin to understand how research interact with the context such as participant selections, sites and time of the research, and policies.

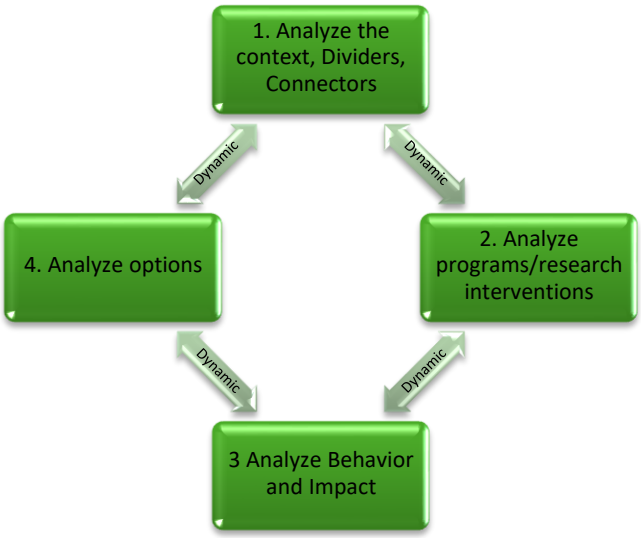
Key Questions to consider:

Q1: **WHO** are we working with? Who will benefit from the research and who will not?
Q2: **WHAT** are we doing? What we are doing acceptably for all group in the context?
Q3: **WHEN** is our intervention taking place? Are we starting activities at an appropriate time?
Q4: **WHY** are we doing it? Why we are not doing something else? Why us?
Q5: **HOW** we will do all of these things? How do we know when to finish the research?



4. Option Analysis

Assumption 6: There are always Options. We can always do things differently. We can also learn and improve. If we anticipate a potential negative impact, we can adjust. If we expect a positive impact, we can continue and make the most of what we are doing right to build upon it.



Key Questions to consider:

Q1: What is working well for research implementation and conflict sensitivity in this context?
Q2: Should we analyze new dividers, connectors, behavioral patterns, and interventions?
Q3: What are current conflict trends? What are windows of opportunity?

Responsibilities for implementing conflict sensitivity

Every one of us are responsible for implementing and upholding conflict sensitivity practice in SUMERNET. It is the professional responsibility of all individuals and institutions involved in SUMERNET to uphold the highest conflict sensitivity standards, and to identify areas of concern. The SUMERNET Steering Committee and Secretariat are available to work with all partners, grantees, researchers, and participants to address any concerns – but ***it is everybody's responsibility*** to enact good conflict sensitivity practice and research.

Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET)

Conflict Sensitivity for research in Mekong

SUMERNET is a network owned by its members. Currently its mission guides its activities, however research and development organizations across the globe has conflict sensitivity standards. ***Any project that is funded by specific bodies may have conflict sensitivity guidance for consideration. Any research that is undertaken on the ground has conflict sensitivity policy or guidance that must be met.*** Below are a set of links to helpful resources that SUMERNET participants must be aware of if receiving or doing funding through the network.

- The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (2017). Conflict Sensitivity in Programme Management. Retrieved 10 August, 2019 from https://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/eng/partners/peace-and-conflict-tool-box/s209461_tool_conflict_sensitivity_in_programme_management_c3.pdf
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