

# Water and conflict

**Making water delivery conflict-sensitive in Uganda**



CECORE, REDROC,  
SAFERWORLD, YODEO

**AUGUST 2008**

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## Acknowledgements

This report is an edited version of four separate reports prepared for Saferworld by Katie Harris, as part of a detailed process of documenting lessons learned from a project by Saferworld, CECORE, REDROC and YODEO on 'Building civil society capacity to enable conflict-sensitive development in Uganda'. It was edited and revised by Hesta Groenewald (Conflict Adviser, Saferworld, and project manager of this project) and Sonia Rai (Advocacy and Communications Co-ordinator, Saferworld).

**COVER PHOTO:** Women and children at a water point in Kasese district, Western Uganda; KATIE HARRIS.

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# Water and conflict

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# Executive summary

Promoting development is a complex process involving many different players and often new resources, which impact on the lives of beneficiaries both in predictable and unpredictable ways. These can inadvertently contribute to divisions or fuel violence – particularly in environments already affected by conflict. Conflict-sensitive approaches to development aim to maximise the potential positive impact of development and minimise the potential for fuelling conflict.

This report documents how two development projects in Uganda became more conflict-sensitive, and as a result, brought many benefits to the recipient communities. It highlights the experience and lessons learned from promoting conflict-sensitive development in two water projects (Kasese district, Western Uganda and Arua district in the West Nile region), and seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how these approaches can be used by development actors.

The process involved two district-based civil society organisations accompanying local government authorities in the installation of two different types of water provision – a gravity flow scheme and a water borehole – as well as broader work on promoting conflict sensitivity with civil society and in civil society/district policy dialogue.

Taking a conflict-sensitive approach to the gravity flow scheme in Kasese district resulted in a revision of initial plans for the scheme after the local NGO partner (REDROC), the District Water Office (DWO) and the beneficiary communities worked together to identify existing divisions and how the water scheme could help reduce these. Likewise in Arua, this approach helped to solve issues relating to land ownership and the borehole location by working through the issues with the local NGO partner (YODEO), the communities and the DWO. It also supported beneficiaries of the borehole to proactively address potential conflict issues, including how best to ensure peaceful borehole operation and maintenance.

Undertaking these projects in a conflict-sensitive way clearly brought many benefits. Beneficiaries greatly appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues dividing them and to agree on ways in which the water projects could most benefit everybody. District officials felt that the quality of beneficiary participation was much increased and that a conflict-sensitive approach helped them identify and solve problems proactively. The relationship between beneficiaries and those responsible for services became more consultative and transparent and increased the number of feedback mechanisms.

While neither of these communities appear to be at immediate risk of larger-scale violent conflict, the process clearly helped strengthen their ownership of the water projects and their ability to influence decision-making affecting them. They were also better able to identify particular individuals or structures that could address any conflicts that may arise. In this way, it strengthened their ability to manage conflicts non-violently while maximising the effectiveness of the water interventions which were intended to benefit them.

Furthermore, the broader work undertaken in each district to introduce conflict-sensitive approaches to a range of civil society organisations has resulted in several of them successfully starting to integrate conflict sensitivity into their work. Both district local governments have also taken a number of important steps to ensure that conflict-sensitive development is taken forward in water and other district planning processes and projects.

The lessons learned from this project clearly indicate a need for more practical work on implementing conflict-sensitive approaches within different sectors, and developing a more sophisticated understanding of how best to adapt conflict-sensitive development to different levels and types of conflict. Saferworld and partners hope that this report will support broader sharing of experiences on these issues.

The project work was undertaken by Saferworld and three civil society partners in Uganda: the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE); the Rwenzori Development and Research Centre (REDROC) and the Youth Development Organisation (YODEO).

# 1

## Introduction

Promoting development is a complex process, involving many different actors and impacting on the lives of beneficiaries in predictable and unpredictable ways. Development programmes bring additional resources into cities or rural communities, introduce additional social services and in many cases, change power relations in the community by creating service management structures or targeting certain people or groups over others. For this reason, it has been increasingly recognised that development is inherently political and that, when it occurs in societies suffering from conflict, it can impact on conflict dynamics, often unintentionally.

Conflict-sensitive approaches (CSA) to development aim to promote more thorough thinking on the intended and unintended impact of development interventions on conflict dynamics in beneficiary societies. Conflict sensitivity starts with a thorough conflict analysis to understand the history, the causes of conflict, the actors and relationships driving or mitigating conflict, and the dynamics between these different factors. Based on the conflict analysis, any interventions should attempt to strengthen those factors or relationships promoting cohesion and the non-violent management of conflict. They should also avoid strengthening those factors or relationships that drive conflict.

Conflict is a normal part of any society and requires mechanisms and processes that enable competing interests to be managed constructively and non-violently. However, in many societies, conflict is allowed to escalate into violence, creating serious divisions and undermining development.

Water delivery is one of the most prioritised development sectors, due to the centrality of water to so many aspects of people's lives, from daily health and sanitation to a range of livelihood activities, including subsistence farming, cattle keeping, fishing, and industrial uses. As such, access to water can be contentious and can feed into other conflict dynamics, such as disputes over land or grazing.

This report looks at an example of CSA in water projects in Uganda.

Recognising its importance to poverty reduction and development, the water sector in Uganda is well-funded. In the late 1990s, water service delivery officially changed from supply-driven to demand-driven, resulting in greater emphasis on decentralised service delivery and requiring water users – and those in need of access to water – to lobby for investments to be made in their areas. While decentralised service delivery offers important opportunities for more appropriately addressing people’s needs and promoting local-level accountability for services, it also assumes sufficient capacity within local service provision institutions to actually deliver these services. Furthermore, shifting the responsibility to users to request the services they need, assumes that communities have access to all the information they need about services and what they can demand. It also presumes that they are in fact able to mobilise and demand these services. Some of the challenges of this approach are highlighted in the rest of this report.

Saferworld has been working with civil society partners in Uganda to apply existing approaches to conflict-sensitive development to the water sector, linking decentralised service delivery at the district level to national level sector policies and strategies. Over the course of a two-year project, Saferworld worked with the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) at the national level, the Rwenzori Development and Research Centre (REDROC) in Kasese district in Western Uganda and the Youth Development Organisation (YODEO) in Arua district in the North-West. Both districts had experienced conflict in the past, although the likelihood of renewed, large-scale violence there is now much reduced. Lessons learned from the district level work were used to influence policy and practice at the national sector level and beyond.

In each district, work was undertaken with district local government, local civil society organisations and beneficiary communities to apply a conflict-sensitive approach in practice. In Kasese, the mountainous terrain is well-suited to gravity flow schemes, whereby a system of pipes and taps are installed, drawing on a particular water source higher up in the mountains. Saferworld, CECORE and REDROC therefore accompanied a water gravity flow scheme for the Mahango and Rukoki areas of Kasese. Arua is more water-stressed, despite the presence of a branch of the Nile river. Boreholes are often used in Arua as a way to provide water to rural communities. Saferworld, CECORE and YODEO therefore accompanied a borehole project in Aroi sub-county.

Another aspect of the district level work has been capacity-building on conflict-sensitive development, mainly targeted at civil society, but also involving district local government. This component of the district level work was a key aim of the project and in recognition of the important role that local civil society play in supporting and facilitating local service delivery.

This report documents the process of the district accompaniment and capacity-building work, and outlines the main lessons learned from it.



## 2

## Conflict-sensitive approaches and their benefits

Conflict-sensitive approaches to development and humanitarian assistance were born out of a realisation that external interventions can inadvertently contribute to conflict dynamics, thus at best not meeting its objectives, or at worst aggravating a conflict situation on the ground. Initial reflections on this focused mainly on situations of violent conflict. But given what we know about different stages of conflict and the possibility for conflict to become latent (i.e. move away from visible violent conflict), without it being resolved, there is also a recognition that conflict-sensitive approaches may be needed even in the absence of openly violent conflict.

**A girl carries water in North-Eastern Uganda, a region that has suffered a history of violent conflict** →

EUAN DENHOLME, IRIN



Experience from this project has shown that applying conflict sensitivity to the water projects in Arua and Kasese clearly generated benefits in terms of:

- higher quality beneficiary participation
- beneficiaries themselves appreciating the opportunity to discuss what issues divide them and how planned interventions could mitigate or aggravate these
- increased opportunity for feedback and influence of the interventions by beneficiaries
- increased understanding by outsiders (district authorities, private sector actors and CSOs) of beneficiary communities, and the actors and dynamics that influence them
- increased sense of responsibility on the side of the service providers about the impact they could potentially have through the decisions they make and the way they work.

In the particular local areas where the project worked, the risk of violent conflict at a broader, inter-group level turned out to be quite low (even though individual level conflict was a clear risk). However, these communities lived in districts which had suffered serious violent conflict in the past and some unresolved conflict causes still appeared to be present. Given the tendency for violent conflict to re-emerge in societies that had experienced it previously, some attention to conflict potential is probably justified.

Applying conflict-sensitive approaches in this context is therefore perhaps more about preventing re-emergence of larger-scale future violence, by strengthening people's resilience to resolve (non-violently) any disputes or tensions that may arise – including those linked to development interventions – and thus also reducing the possibility of them being mobilised by anybody seeking to incite violent conflict.

In terms of promoting development, conflict sensitivity can help to ensure that the benefits of development interventions are realised instead of being undermined by disputes and tensions among beneficiaries, or between them and others. In this way, service delivery becomes more efficient, but also more accountable, as constant monitoring of beneficiary feedback and the impact of the service delivery (and the way it is being delivered) is central to conflict sensitivity. Other mainstream development approaches also seek to promote principles of accountability, participation, ownership and transparency, but even participatory approaches could be conflict-*insensitive* if the nature of the participation is discriminatory or manipulated by certain individuals with harmful agendas.

However, were these same water projects undertaken in areas with more pronounced (and possibly violent) tensions within or between beneficiary groups, conflict-blind development or service delivery could have easily hastened such tensions towards more violence. This appears to be one of the reasons why for instance water provision in Karamoja – an area of North-Eastern Uganda affected by pastoralist conflicts – is affected by so many problems.<sup>1</sup> In such volatile situations, the same steps for integrating conflict sensitivity that were taken in Arua and Kasese (outlined below) may have been appropriate, but with some significant

modifications in terms of approach, timing etc. For example, if a new water point was constructed to serve two communities who are sporadically in violent conflict with each other, community consultations would have to be a much more in-depth process, perhaps involving many meetings with each community separately before bringing them together into a joint meeting. The 'step' is still the same, i.e. consulting communities, but the way in which it is done needs to be adapted to the fact that serious divisions and violence exist between these groups.

When applying CSA therefore it is important to recognise the types and levels of violent conflict affecting communities as well as what they are able to influence. For example, a more local-level conflict could be within the power of local groups to start addressing, but they may have no or little influence over a larger macro-level conflict (e.g. like the macro conflicts in Sri Lanka or Somalia). This will influence their understanding of what aspects of conflict are being addressed through CSA.

**A man at a water point in  
North-Eastern Uganda**

KATIE HARRIS



## 3

# Case studies on conflict-sensitive development accompaniment

## **Kasese case study**

### **Kasese background**

Kasese district in Western Uganda shares a border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and belongs to a region with a history of armed conflict and displacement. Underlying most of these conflicts were animosities and rivalries between different ethnic groups wanting self-governance in one form or another. These tensions over ethnicity are still relevant today, playing out in local politics, influencing the relationship between the district and central government, and informing attitudes when people compete for access to natural resources.

In the 1960s, tensions between the two largest groups in the region, the Batoro and Bakonzo, peaked over the position of the Bakonzo within the larger administrative unit of the Toro kingdom. The kingdom was socially, economically and politically dominated by the Batoro, and the Bakonzo and other groups felt marginalised and under-represented with limited access to jobs and resources. The Rwenzururu Movement sought to counter this through a violent rebellion in which many people were displaced. The rebellion resulted in the region being divided into five districts along ethnic lines, and in 1974, Kasese was formed with a Bakonzo-majority population. The Banyabindi and Basongora comprise the two other large groups in the district.

However, despite the creation of smaller districts, the region remains deeply divided. Many of today's tensions over competing for access to resources and rights between the Batoro, Bakonzo and other ethnic groups, derive from the previously unaddressed legacies of conflict and dissatisfaction with current governance systems. Activities by external development actors, including international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), have sometimes inadvertently aggravated these divisions, highlighting the need for all interventions to be conflict-sensitive.<sup>2</sup>

### Water and conflict in Kasese

Although over three quarters of Kasese is dry land, only one third of it is legally habitable. Over 60% is taken up by nature and wildlife conservation and government projects such as prison farms, mining and irrigation farms<sup>3</sup>. Access to water sources is therefore limited. Competition for access to water points is further being exacerbated by the increased demand from the rising population, itself becoming a catalyst for conflict.

With only around 40% of the district having access to safe and clean water – dropping as low as 7% for populations around Lake Katwe – many development actors in the district, including Kasese District Local Government (KDLG), national and INGOs, have recognised the urgent need to construct water points. But demand far outstrips service delivery. Limited KDLG resources mean that supply is based on a prioritisation of those most in need. With the provision of water points often interpreted to be based on socio-cultural ties, this is leading to a politicisation of service delivery. This has severely affected and damaged the minority ethnic groups' perception of KDLG, in many cases inciting conflict, once again deriving from perceived, or real, marginalisation.

Conflicts often arise in Kasese as a result of competing demands on the available water sources, for example between domestic use and use for economic livelihood activities. Over 80% of the population are employed in agricultural activities, predominantly smallholders practising subsistence farming in low yield crops such as maize and cotton and animal rearing. Given that livelihood activities are closely related to ethnicity, competition over scarce resources for different uses, particularly between agriculture and cattle rearing, are therefore often played out along ethnic lines.

Where water schemes have been constructed, it is common for conflicts to be encountered:

- over the location of the tap stands
- from landowners wanting compensation for the destruction of crops and/or allowing access through their land
- from a failure of Project Management Committees (PMCs) to collect user fees or carry out operation and maintenance checks

- because of a lack of support given to beneficiary communities about how to manage the new water scheme.

### Water and the Mahango and Rukoki communities

Residing in a remote part of Kasese district, in the foothills of the Rwenzori mountain range, rural communities in Mahango and Rukoki had experienced problems with access to safe water for the past 20 years.

Existing water sources such as seasonal springs and small rivers start higher up in the mountains in Mahango sub-county and serve a large surrounding area which far exceeds their capacity. On the lower parts of the mountains, Rukoki sub-county inhabitants experience serious water scarcity, relying on a single seasonal spring and a few periodic shallow wells. This forces Rukoki residents to travel up the mountain to Mahango sub-county to collect water.

However, regular disputes often occur around water points as the two communities argue who should have first access to the water. Rukoki residents believe they should because of the long distances travelled to reach the water point. In contrast, Mahango residents believe they are entitled to access the water first given the location of the source, and on the basis of how long someone has been waiting. It is estimated that the few sources available are each serving around 600 people/100 homesteads. Queues at these water points are exceptionally long and users can wait for hours to access water. For most, collecting water means leaving their village at 6am and not returning until 2pm. This can cause household conflicts and domestic violence as husbands become suspicious of their wives taking so much time to fetch the water, accusing them of adultery.

At the water points, fights frequently occur between water users and landowners on which the water sources are situated, as users are sometimes considered by landowners to be trespassing. Moreover, poor sanitation and hygiene around the water points cause users to complain and fight with the landowners. As a result, landowners' gardens and crops are often destroyed by users who lack respect for their land and who perceive the water point as a communal resource which they have the right to access. The competition for scarce water intensifies during the dry season when the rivers and springs reduce or run dry completely.

Both communities had raised the issue of water scarcity in the participatory development planning process through the local council structures<sup>4</sup>. For the past ten years the Rukoki sub-county had been more proactive in complaining to the district and raising their concerns, but the response has always been the same: the district does not have sufficient funds to construct a water scheme. Mahango and Rukoki are also disadvantaged as their mountainous terrain and relative remoteness from Kasese town means that any prospective scheme would be costly compared to other schemes in the district. Finally in 2005/6, KDLG included a water distribution scheme into their annual work plan and budget.

## Conflict sensitivity and the Kiywebe gravity flow scheme

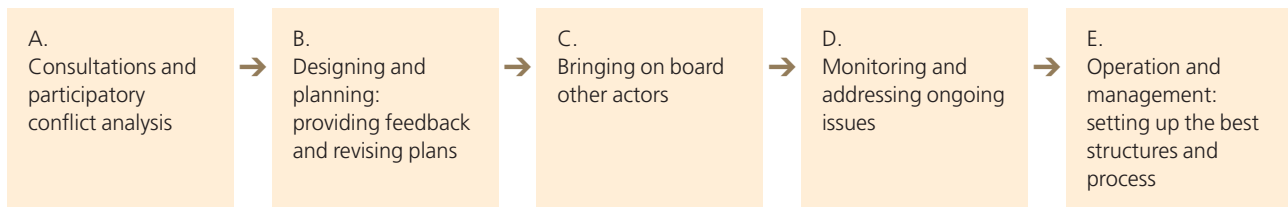
To help promote conflict sensitivity in the work of the KDLG District Water Office (DWO), Saferworld and partners CECORE and REDROC, together with the DWO, selected to accompany the gravity flow scheme (GFS) for the Rukoki and Mahango communities, later named the Kiywebe scheme. This GFS is huge, expecting to serve approximately 10,000 people.

Through ongoing consultations and support, Saferworld, CECORE and REDROC worked with district water officials and Rukoki and Mahango communities during every stage of planning, design and implementation to ensure that a conflict-sensitive approach to this water scheme was adopted. At the time of writing, the GFS was not yet completed, but REDROC is committed to follow the process through to completion and also monitor the subsequent operation and maintenance of the scheme.

In practice, the process of conflict-sensitising the gravity flow scheme focused mostly on understanding the dynamics and needs of the target communities and how these could be most positively addressed by the proposed scheme. Kasese-based partner, REDROC, therefore worked closely with both communities and relevant district decision-makers, as well as private sector contractors, during the implementation phase. In this way, the accompaniment process enabled many issues to be addressed that may not otherwise have been identified<sup>5</sup>.

The types of conflict issues that emerged in these communities were mostly about relationships within and between the communities, and the relationships with, and trust in, local government institutions and private sector contractors. If left unaddressed, some of these issues could certainly have resulted in at best, the scheme not being managed and maintained to its full potential, or at worst, being sabotaged or vandalised if one of the communities felt unhappy about its design. It is also still possible that individual level violence could occur, either in terms of domestic violence (if for example, women are blamed for any future failures in the scheme by their husbands) or if water user committees are not perceived to act responsibly and accountably.

The process and main conflict issues emerging over the course of the accompaniment of the Kiywebe scheme are outlined below.



### **A. Consultations and participatory conflict analysis**

Before starting the work in Kasese, a broader analysis was conducted about the conflict-generating issues in the district. The first step in the accompaniment process was to get to know the people in Mahango and Rukoki communities, as well as the key people from the DWO. A consultation meeting was held bringing together the two communities and DWO staff to gain a better understanding of the existing relationships and dividing issues within and between these two communities. In particular, discussions were targeted at finding out how the proposed water scheme could potentially aggravate some of these existing divisions or indeed, could contribute to strengthening links between the communities.

During the participatory conflict analysis<sup>6</sup>, community members, local leaders and political representatives from both Mahango and Rukoki shared issues of conflict present within their communities and expressed concerns over new conflicts that may arise because of the proposed water scheme. The analysis highlighted that the existing conflicts were mostly focussed on access to, or lack of, water sources, causing people to compete for the same water sources with no effective mechanisms to manage this constructively. During this first meeting – and reinforced in subsequent consultations – concerns were raised about the surveying and construction process of the scheme, including:

- the exact and final position of the taps
- fear of design changes being made without their consent
- the lack of information and clarity about the tendering process
- the hiring of outsiders for casual labour
- the failure to pay local casual labourers if they were employed
- poor quality construction.

The relationship between the Mahango and Rukoki people during these initial consultations was tense, with both communities sitting apart and not really interacting during break times. However, simply bringing the two previously segregated communities together to discuss a common problem was an achievement in itself. One of the elderly participants commented that he was amazed how REDROC and partners had managed to get the two communities to even eat the same food.

### **B. Designing and planning: providing feedback and revising plans**

The initial consultations and conflict analysis clearly indicated some areas that needed to be monitored and followed up at different stages of the project. It was therefore important that REDROC, the DWO and the beneficiary communities were able to communicate regularly, so that decisions could be explained to the scheme beneficiaries and the latter could raise any relevant problems or complaints. In addition to the issues specifically dealt with here, it is worth noting that almost all the issues emerging from later phases of constructing the scheme, could have been foreseen and to some extent addressed or at least prepared for at this early stage.



### ■ Using one water source to serve a different community

The first water scheme designs from DWO used the Mahango water source to supply water to Rukoki only. Mahango community members strongly rejected these plans since they would neither benefit from the scheme nor receive any compensation – financial or through taps for Mahango residents. Having requested water infrastructure themselves, and living at the source of the water to be used for the scheme, Mahango residents felt very unhappy about the proposed scheme and threatened to refuse access to their land and cut any pipes that would be laid for the scheme.

To de-escalate this situation, local leaders were called upon to relay these complaints to KDLG. Mahango appealed for the scheme to be redesigned to include them, whilst Rukoki raised concerns about the Mahango threats to sabotage the scheme. To overcome escalating tensions, the DWO decided that both communities should benefit from the proposed scheme and the proposed map and tap stand locations were reviewed.

### ■ Getting clear and agreed service demands to decision-makers

During one consultation on the improved scheme, much confusion and contention was voiced from both communities. It emerged that instead of one community map<sup>7</sup> highlighting an agreed position for the water taps, two had been drawn up through separate participatory planning processes led by different local leaders, but covering parts of both Rukoki and Mahango communities. DWO had only been aware of one version and presented this, but the people who were not involved in this version thought that the position of the taps on the maps had been changed without their consent.

The DWO tracked down the second map and compared them in a public meeting to identify areas of similarity and, more importantly, areas of difference. The DWO agreed to reassess the water yield to determine whether it could supply a larger population and so merge the two maps to appease both groups and avoid further confrontation and escalation of tensions. The merged map was later named Kiywebe, after the source. This merger increased the cost of the project, since the project would now serve more areas, and yet a large area of Mahango sub-county was still left un-served. A compromise was reached whereby both sub-county authorities would contribute to the surveying costs of an additional scheme to cover the un-served areas of Mahango<sup>8</sup>. The District Water Officer saw this as a real achievement in terms of promoting positive sub-county relations<sup>9</sup> and very unusual for a sub-county to contribute towards a scheme that their constituents are not directly benefiting from. From a conflict perspective, this was a very positive step in terms of improving relations between the Mahango and Rukoki residents, so that water provision became a factor connecting rather than dividing<sup>10</sup> them.

### ■ Identifying and correcting mistakes

At a later consultation meeting, it was discovered that two taps – previously agreed to for Kisuka village and Mughenge trading centre – no longer appeared on the scheme design. At a subsequent meeting involving the District Water Officer, the surveyor and representatives

from Mughenge and Kisuka, the latter was put down to human error and was dealt with quickly through an apology and a date arranged to survey the area. The Mughenge tap was accidentally left off when the maps were merged, and residents insisted to have it restored. Although financially and logistically difficult to incorporate a tap at this late stage, DWO went through a long and protracted process (including requesting and waiting for additional funding from central government) and included the tap.

#### ■ Communicating decisions and changes back to beneficiaries

After incorporating these issues, the Kiywebe GFS draft design was shared amongst targeted local leaders from Mahango and Rukoki. For technical reasons, only 38 of the requested 42 taps were in the draft design and of these, a number had to be relocated but ultimately were not far from the locations requested on the community map. The Mahango local leaders felt aggrieved with the reduction of four taps – all located in Mahango – and complained furiously. The Project Designer explained that two of the taps in question were placed at a higher gradient than the water source, so were not technically viable (the other two being Mughenge trading centre and Kisuka village, which were rectified). It was strongly emphasised that the proposed design was based purely on technical data from the surveyor and local leaders were satisfied.

Copies of the draft design were sent to both the Mahango and Rukoki local leaders who actively shared this information with their communities and explained the minor changes. In Mahango, leaders spent a long time explaining the technical rationale for the omission of the two taps<sup>11</sup>, until people were satisfied that there was no other option.

Due to the complexity and cost of the scheme, it was decided to implement it in two phases over consecutive financial years. REDROC and the DWO identified that if beneficiaries did not fully understand the timing of the two phases of construction, it could spark conflict between them. Every opportunity was therefore used to communicate this information, including during the ground-breaking ceremony (referred to in D below), where more than 300 people from the beneficiary area were present.

These examples highlight the need and value of community consultations, without which these issues would not have been identified and addressed. Moreover, adopting a conflict-sensitive approach meant that the design process needed to be flexible and the design itself revised to avoid the omissions becoming triggers for conflict before completion of construction.

### C. Bringing on board other actors

The initial stages of the conflict-sensitive water project involved investing a lot of time and effort into establishing consultative and trusting relationships between the beneficiary communities and the decision-makers/service providers. However, constructing a GFS is a complex process that involves other actors – including from the private sector – and they can equally have a positive or negative impact from a conflict and peace perspective.

### ■ Adapting the survey process

Previous water schemes in Kasese have experienced conflict during the surveying process. To avoid this, REDROC suggested that beneficiary residents be introduced to, and work with, the surveying company. This allowed them to air their concerns, seek clarity and request additional information which provided valuable insight for the District Water Officers on preventing conflict around the survey process.

A team of five ‘guides’ was selected from each community to accompany the surveyor. They agreed to work on a voluntary basis, thereby laying to rest any false expectations about financial remuneration. Given the remoteness of the area and the regular movements of criminals and alleged rebel group members<sup>12</sup> in the DRC/Uganda border area, it was important that the surveyor did not simply roam around the area by himself, particularly since he was from Kampala and did not speak the local languages. The guides were known to the landowners, and in particular, helped to:

- reassure landowners that the surveyor was not in any way a threat
- assist the surveyor to understand the community map, given the inaccessible terrain
- prevent potential corruption through private individual interaction with the surveyor
- enable the community to better understand and keep up to date with the progress of the survey
- accustom the surveyor to community participation in the surveying process
- create a mechanism for the community to identify when the surveyor had failed to assess the area fully.

### ■ Interacting with the construction company

As with the surveying company, REDROC insisted that the construction company also be introduced to the two communities. Although the community was aware that construction would shortly be starting, it was felt that a construction company, unknown to any of the community members, arriving with heavy equipment and machinery would cause unnecessary friction – as with other water schemes in Kasese.

When the communities met with the construction company, landowners and other community members raised their queries and concerns. These included the need to hire local casual labourers for construction work and the potential for the construction company to buy local materials to construct the sedimentary and reservoir tanks – especially given that the beneficiary communities mine sand and make bricks and concrete stone. These requests were agreed to by the DWO and the construction company.

Learning from the experience with the surveyor and the construction company, the DWO realised the value of having the private sector actors themselves explain to the beneficiaries, their intentions and commitment to the scheme. Of particular significance was the fact that the contractor stated their commitment to the terms and conditions stipulated in their

contract, which reassured the beneficiaries that the quality of the construction would not be sacrificed. Therefore, a potentially conflict-generating issue, as identified by the beneficiaries at an earlier stage, was avoided.

#### **D. Monitoring and addressing ongoing issues**

Even when certain issues are identified at the beginning of an intervention, they need to be monitored throughout implementation, as new problems – or new versions of existing problems – could still arise.

Documenting the potential conflict-generating and divisive issues raised in the first consultation meeting enabled REDROC and partners, the DWO and the beneficiaries themselves to monitor how these issues were addressed (or not). It therefore became common practice for the beneficiaries to request meetings to monitor and address conflict issues that were arising.

For example, a follow-up meeting (held in September 2007) was organised to monitor conflict issues raised (during the August 2007 meeting) in relation to the ongoing construction/hardware phase. In this example, the meeting concluded that some concerns about the hardware phase had indeed been effectively addressed, namely the use of local labour and the provision of local materials. But this could only be monitored because a mechanism was in place to track how the potential conflict-generating issues were developing and being addressed. Some of these ongoing issues are outlined below.

##### **■ Managing land-related disputes**

In addition to the disputes relating to the location of the water source, the location of the components of Kiywebe GFS was identified from the start as an important potential trigger of conflict. The issue of compensation to the landowner of the source, and to landowners where the pipes were to pass, became a recurring issue.

Despite having been addressed through community meetings, where the DWO laid out the conditions of the scheme and landowners gave their consent, individuals often changed their minds. The Terms of Reference, signed by the sub-county authorities and the DWO, specified that communities must donate the required areas of land as part of their contribution to the water scheme (as is the policy for rural water provision) and the sub-county authorities would process land agreements to confirm this arrangement. Having learned from other GFS projects in Kasese of the dangers that can occur when this fails to happen, REDROC and the DWO strongly argued for this to be implemented. As a result, both Mahango and Rukoki sub-county authorities had land agreements signed and completed prior to construction.

However, during a community meeting to monitor the hardware<sup>13</sup> activities, it emerged that the construction company had ceased working as a result of a landowner refusing to let them enter his land to construct the reserve tanks. The landowner insisted that he had agreed for

the source to be accessed and pipes laid, but not for a reservoir tank to be erected.

The land agreement was used to convince the landowner to allow construction to continue and as a compromise the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) agreed to provide some financial compensation (from the fees collected from prospective scheme users as ‘capital contribution’ to the scheme). An addendum was added to the land agreement stating that the landowner allows the reservoir tanks to be installed. A copy of this agreement was taken to the DWO and the sub-county authorities for use in the future, should a similar case arise.

The DWO and sub-county authorities learned from the experience that they need to fully explain the extent of construction that would occur on the land at the source of the scheme.

#### ■ Dealing with politicisation of the gravity flow scheme

Local politicians sometimes claim credit for development projects to strengthen their support base. This can lead to increased tensions and potential conflict, particularly when politicians use existing divisions (e.g. ethnic, religious, political party affiliation) to mobilise political support. These dynamics emerged in Kasese.

The initial discontent of Mahango residents about the original scheme that was to exclude them, was further enflamed when certain individuals with political ambitions in the sub-county, claimed that Mahango were being discriminated against as they are predominantly Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) supporters, while Rukoki are largely National Resistance Movement Organisation (NRMO)<sup>14</sup> supporters.

When Kiywebe was designed, the scheme continued to be politicised as local leaders and sub-county council members from both Mahango and Rukoki claimed, and at times, publicly boasted, that they had brought the GFS to the communities on the basis of their political affiliations.

Recognising the increasing potential for conflict, REDROC and the DWO agreed that a public statement needed to be made, by someone in authority, higher than the sub-county level to de-politicise the situation.

The LCV Chairperson was identified as the only person with any real clout given that all political leaders sit within the same council under his authority. The ground-breaking ceremony that formally started the construction of the scheme, was used as a forum in which the LCV Chairperson warned local leaders, politicians and the sub-county authorities against making false claims and politicising the scheme. He emphasised that this was a KDLG-funded project for the benefit of the entire area and that it was not being constructed or funded by the politically active individuals.

#### **E. Operation and management: setting up the best structures and process**

Although the Kiywebe GFS is not yet finished, some issues around the eventual operation, management and maintenance of the scheme have already emerged. Experience shows that

many problems and potential conflict issues emerge at this stage, as the realities of what the scheme brings (both positive and negative) become clear in practice.

■ **Explaining and managing financial contributions to the scheme**

When the DWO software team were first introduced to the Mahango and Rukoki communities, beneficiaries questioned the reasons for them paying capital contributions before being able to access water from the facility. This was interpreted as a warning sign to REDROC, the PIC and the DWO that the financial commitments of the communities may not be upheld, which could potentially lead to conflict between the aforementioned stakeholders.

To address this, a number of by-laws were formulated by the community to enhance, support and govern the operation and maintenance (O&M) of the scheme, with specific by-laws aimed at enforcing the financial payments due by users. It was also agreed that the PIC would be responsible for monitoring the conflict dynamics, specifically any tensions arising as a result of the O&M finances. The PIC would then seek to address these through the authority bestowed by their positions and to keep the DWO and REDROC informed.

With the support of the by-laws, collections towards the capital contributions began. However beneficiaries, particularly from Kabala village, soon started to question why the DWO had not identified the number of users per tap stand – given that the capital contribution is supposed to be calculated on the basis of users per tap stand. This confusion escalated to the extent that prospective users refused to contribute, at least until they saw the water flowing, suspicious that the fees charged were inaccurate.

A community meeting resolved that the DWO would identify the number of water users per tap stand. In addition, the District Water Officer, the REDROC accompaniment officer and the beneficiaries agreed to more community meetings to reiterate the rationale behind the collection of funds prior to completion of the scheme. Local leaders would set an example to the rest of the community by paying their capital contributions and encouraging others to do so too.

■ **Sequencing components to ensure maximum benefit**

Many of the conflicts encountered by the PIC and Tap Stand Committees (TSCs)<sup>15</sup> could arguably be ascribed to the DWO's failure to effectively sequence the hardware and software activities. For example, growing discontent emerged through a fear that the O&M funds could be misappropriated whilst being held by the PIC Treasurer<sup>16</sup>. These concerns were fuelled by the knowledge that the PIC had yet to open a bank account for the capital contributions that were being paid by prospective beneficiaries<sup>17</sup>. Although the PIC was collecting funds, it was due to cease at the end of the implementation phase, when O&M would be taken over by an elected Project Management Committee (PMC). The failure of the DWO to provide software activities in sequence meant that the PMC had not been formed, or roles and responsibilities clarified. Prospective users thus questioned what would

happen to the funds they have contributed once the PIC ceases. This in turn was increasing people's reluctance to pay fees in advance. Despite the failure to provide adequate software support it was agreed, through encouragement from REDROC, that the DWO would assist the PIC to set up a bank account and account for the collections to date.

Similarly, inadequate sequencing meant that active community members began to enquire why the hygiene and sanitation trainings were delayed, yet they were a fundamental element to tap stand O&M<sup>18</sup>. It became clear that although the DWO should have hired personnel prior to construction to conduct the software activities relating to the O&M of the scheme, delays in receiving funds from central government meant this had not happened. Given that communities often take a long time to understand and act on the O&M software recommendations, these activities ideally need to occur well in advance of construction and/or completion. Moreover, the success of the PMC is believed to be greatly influenced by the level of morale within the communities, which is generally high at the beginning of a project. There is a need to target the formation of committees at this point, not during the latter stages of implementation when people become more reluctant to engage. It must also be realised that the software delays served to enhance the perception that Kiywebe GFS is a central government-owned project, as Mahango and Rukoki were unable to move forward with certain activities, such as initiating the hygiene and sanitation practices.

Inadequate sequencing and delays in conducting the software activities increased the potential for discontent. And due to the financial and budgeting mechanisms of KDLG, planning and implementation processes occur over quite a long time span, which again increases potential for misunderstanding or manipulation of information to sow divisions. If all funds were available, the Kiywebe GFS could have been completed in six to eight months instead of over a year.

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### Achievements in Kasese

Since the gravity flow scheme has not yet been completed, achievements of the scheme in terms of improving water access in a conflict-sensitive way, are still unknown. This section therefore focuses on achievements with the Kasese DWO and local government.

Throughout the accompaniment process REDROC attended the fortnightly DWO planning meetings to discuss the progress of Kiywebe GFS and the challenges it faced. The REDROC accompaniment officer advised the DWO on how a more conflict-sensitive process could be adopted by highlighting existing tensions, tracking conflict dynamics and identifying areas of concern to avoid potential conflict.

In addition to the DWO conducting certain, previously unplanned, activities, other achievements were:

- **The accompaniment officer became a member of the District Water and Sanitation Committee** (comprised of CSOs and KDLG representatives, meeting monthly). REDROC use this forum to promote conflict sensitivity as a concept, influence the development of planning and implementation processes to be more conflict-sensitive, and where possible, advocate for the approach to be explicitly incorporated by other development actors. During 2007, the accompaniment officer was able to share the experience and lessons learned from the Kiywebe GFS during two committee meetings.
- **The accompaniment officer has since been asked by the DWO to participate in shaping the hygiene and sanitation software activities for Kiywebe GFS**, to be conducted in the latter part of 2008.
- **The DWO has committed to conducting a conflict analysis prior to the development of any new schemes.** By actively making conflict analyses part of their way of working, the DWO hopes to better understand the prevailing conflict dynamics within communities, track any changes and be alert to existing and emerging tensions and conflicts.
- **KDLG have incorporated conflict sensitivity as a cross-cutting issue in the latest District Development Plan (2007/8–2009/10).** A district focal point person has also been nominated to lead the integration of conflict sensitivity throughout KDLG's activities. This will help maintain the momentum to implement conflict sensitivity, beyond the current project.

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### Challenges for the future

Taking into consideration the experiences of the Kiywebe GFS, the tensions that have arisen and the potential conflict issues that have been resolved, it is important that the DWO continue to maintain a conflict-sensitive approach throughout the remainder of the project. A number of potentially conflict-generating issues have been identified – as outlined below – that must be factored into future engagements with Mahango and Rukoki, to ensure conflicts are minimised or well-managed and sustainable peace promoted.

- **The remaining software activities need to take place as a matter of some urgency.** Given the unhappiness about the collection of water user fees without a treasurer and bank account, this issue urgently needs addressing. Similarly, beneficiaries require support in the transition from the PIC to the PMC and with the introduction of other structures, such as the TSCs and Water User Committees (WUCs). Support is needed both to those elected to be members of the committees in their roles and responsibilities, and to the beneficiaries to ensure they engage with these structures and adhere to the rules and regulations set. If these structures are well set up and capacitated, they have the potential to contribute to constructive management of any potential future disputes, while ensuring the continued functioning of the GFS.
- **The sensitisation meetings focusing on sanitation and hygiene around the tap stands must take place.** Requested by the beneficiary communities, and due as part of the DWO software



activities, it is important that these take place soon given that construction is near complete. Furthermore, it must be ensured that common standards of sanitation and hygiene are maintained near the tap stands to avoid the risk of conflict arising if some pollute the water.

- **Concerted effort by the DWO must be put into sourcing and awarding the software contract.** Although intended to be awarded in July 2007, this has yet to happen in order for software activities to be carried out. Similarly, the District Community Mobilisation Officer, who had been accompanying the software activities in Kiywebe GFS, resigned in January 2008 and has not yet been replaced. Given the lessons learned about the necessity of having continued community consultations, it is paramount that this post is filled to avoid the software work continuing to lag behind the hardware work.
- **Clear communications on the outcomes of community consultations** to those who did not participate is important to retain the full benefit of consultation. Community members have suggested using radio programmes for this. Specifically, information must be disseminated to clarify the capital contributions and user fees per household, and the two-phased nature of the construction process, to reassure all beneficiaries that they are not being neglected.
- **Continued engagement and mobilisation of beneficiaries.** It is important to maintain the intense mobilisation that REDROC has spearheaded so far. Given the size of the Kiywebe GFS both in terms of geographical area and coverage, and its physical isolation from the district headquarters, it is important that as many beneficiaries as possible continue to engage with the progress of the scheme – especially now they are entering the O&M phase. Both Mahango and Rukoki have become accustomed to a high level of interaction with the process and decision-making aspects of the Kiywebe GFS and it would therefore be insensitive – and against the spirit of demand-driven service delivery – for this level of community involvement to decrease. Moreover, ceasing frequent interaction with Mahango and Rukoki residents now could cause them to become suspicious of decision-making processes taking place without their knowledge and lead to resentment towards and potential conflict with the DWO.
- **It is essential that the DWO take over the role of promoting and integrating conflict sensitivity.** Although REDROC will continue to work with the DWO, the district must also be able to promote conflict sensitivity independently. They must maintain their focus on identifying conflict issues and using these to influence the way they engage with communities, the processes they employ, and to ensure conflict-sensitive approaches permeate their other interventions.

## Arua case study

### Arua background

Arua in the West Nile Region of Uganda has been relatively stable for the past few years but, like many districts in Uganda, suffers from a turbulent past which has left a number of deep-rooted underlying conflicts without redress.

In the 1970s, conflict erupted in the region as the government of Idi Amin – who himself comes from the area – was thrown out of office by a military invasion. In response, the Former Uganda National Army was formed, which tried to overthrow the subsequent government of Milton Obote, apparently partly out of fear that Amin loyalists would be targeted. During the 1980s and 1990s, West Nile became a haven for a variety of armed groups with increased cross-border movements into Sudan and the DRC. Of most significance was the division and re-grouping that occurred within (and between) rebel groups, and the emergence of the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) and the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF).

The Arua population has witnessed much displacement, with up to 500,000 fleeing to Sudan during the 1980s and many more living in exile in the DRC<sup>19</sup>. In the mid-1990s the UNRF and WNBF surfaced from their bases in Sudan and the DRC. Allegedly with financial backing from the Sudanese government, the WNBF along with other insurgencies wreaked havoc and violent unrest in which the civilian population became caught between rebel and army cross-fire. It was not until the end of the 1990s that the West Nile witnessed a sustained period of peace and security following negotiations by the government and rebel groups. This eventually led to the signing of a peace deal, including a ceasefire agreement in December 2002<sup>20</sup>.

The majority of Ugandan refugees have since returned to the region, but Arua district is now home to a substantial proportion of Sudanese refugees displaced as a result of rebel insurgencies in their homelands. Furthermore, there remains a constant threat from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and their movements between neighbouring Sudan and DRC. Peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA have struggled and the potential for future conflict remains.

### Water and conflict in Arua

The Arua District Water and Sanitation Work Plan and Budget for 2006/7–2008/9<sup>21</sup> claims that 63% of the district has access to safe drinking water, but acknowledges that the coverage figures are highly variable depending on geographical location. While 80% of the district benefits from relatively good drainage, areas within and around the Nile belt suffer from

poor drainage and land that is unsuitable for a variety of water technologies. Water that is accessible is not safe for drinking and is often contaminated with diseases, related, in part, to the lack of adequate sanitation provision in the district.

Further from the Nile belt, springs are seasonal and are often rendered unusable because of high salt concentrations. Arua's climate and topography – Arua is predominantly flat plateau – means that boreholes are the most viable and most widely used means of providing access to water. However, it is not uncommon for a borehole to dry up within six months of being sunk.

Today, the conflicts emerging in Arua are arguably a reflection of the district's underdevelopment and relative isolation, both physically and politically, from Kampala. Overwhelming support for the opposition FDC during the last elections seem to confirm people's distrust in or disappointment with the performance of central government. Although Arua and the West Nile in general, have benefited from some government-led and international donor development programmes, levels of development remain low. Poor service delivery and inequitable distribution of social services – associated with urban favouritism and perceived high levels of corruption in the district local government – is increasing pressure on limited resources. Moreover, even when social services are available, there is a high level of reluctance to access these as communities characterise service provision as government-owned, rather than for their benefit and entitlement as citizens. The prime economic activities in Arua are agriculture, cattle keeping and tobacco growing, but poor farming practices and limited fertile land means that agricultural production remains low and food insecurity is rife – most people survive on one meal per day.

Given how central natural resources are to people's livelihoods, it is not surprising that many conflicts in Arua are over access to these. In particular, it is believed that 80% of the resource-based conflicts in Arua are between refugee and host populations over access to water points as a result of the increasing number of refugee settlements without an adequate increase in water supply<sup>22</sup>. Agencies like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have drilled boreholes in refugee settlement areas, but host communities have not received many new water points, and are having to continue to rely on central government resources and implementation through Arua District Local Government (ADLG) or NGOs. Moreover, where development agencies – including local and INGOs and religious groups – fund and implement water points, there is often poor co-ordination and each agency has different target groups, implementation practices, monitoring tools and evaluation criteria.

Conflict issues that often arise over water provision around and near refugee communities are:

- perceived favouritism by host communities of the government and international actors towards the refugees – sometimes feeding into broader ethnic conflict
- increasing populations around water points including host communities crossing to refugee settlements to access water and vice-versa

- ineffective and unrepresentative Water Management Committees (WMCs), particularly where water points are shared between refugee and host communities
- both the refugees and host communities claiming ownership of the water borehole. For example, refugees believe that water points were installed because of their presence, therefore they own them and they have been dismantling and taking equipment from the boreholes with them when they are resettled. This has caused widespread animosity from host communities.

Apart from refugee/host conflicts over water, other water-related conflicts also occur in Arua, including:

- people and cattle encroaching on somebody else's land to access water
- the use of another community's water points, without paying user fees
- droughts which are becoming more prevalent and decreasing the yield of many water sources
- disparities in water coverage, whether due to natural or technical reasons – this is often interpreted as deliberate marginalisation of certain groups
- dysfunctional water points due to poor quality and inadequate financial and software investment in operation and maintenance of water facilities
- a lack of funds or late release of funds to meet people's demands for better water provision
- inadequate staffing, particularly for software components, resulting in hurried, simplified or abandoned community engagement with district processes prior to, during and after the completion of new water schemes
- poor co-ordination between NGO service providers
- domestic violence linked to the length of time it takes women to collect water and/or if no water is available in the household.

The district has recently prioritised interventions that target the development of safer water sources, improvement and promotion of sanitation/hygiene, capacity-building for DWO staff and other actors and the provision of water for production.

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### **Water in Nyai community and Ajara village**

Nyai villagers have been facing water shortage problems for over 20 years. The River Enyawu is the main source of water in the area but it is unfit for human consumption and the only springs in the near vicinity are seasonal. Water scarcity and the lack of safe drinking water have forced the Nyai community to go to the neighbouring village, Ajara, to access safe drinking water from their borehole.

**BOX 1 Applying CSA to a water intervention involving conflicting host and refugee communities: an example from GOPA/GTZ in Arua**

GOPA Consultants, supported by GTZ, has been implementing a Food and Nutrition Security project in the West Nile, in which they integrated specific peacebuilding aims. At the beginning of their project, GOPA, with support from CECORE, conducted a conflict analysis to identify the existing conflicts associated with resource access, utilisation and ownership. The analysis revealed that 80% of the resource-based conflicts in the region were associated with access, or lack of access, to water points. The analysis highlighted that this related particularly to the fact that agencies such as the UNHCR were supplying water points to refugee settlements but with limited or no services for host communities<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, host communities were being refused access to certain water points, as they were prioritised for use by refugee populations. In retaliation, refugees were subjected to inflated prices for food and other essential items in the local market.

More localised conflict analyses around existing borehole sites provided detailed information, which in turn informed joint community dialogue meetings between refugee and host communities to identify possible ways forward. It was agreed that additional boreholes would be sunk to address the inequitable resource distribution and to relieve tension and conflicts.

In a similar exercise, GOPA identified a number of conflicts that erupted seasonally, as pastoralists moved their cattle to the nearest water source during the dry season. To address these water conflicts, GOPA erected valley tanks which can retain water for up to three months during the dry season. This has reduced the volume of livestock being moved during the dry season and significantly reduced the prevalence of conflicts in these areas.

By adopting a CSA and using a conflict analysis to inform the way they designed their interventions, GOPA learned that:

- Refugee service-delivery programmes need to include management of the relationship with host communities.
- Joint programme strategies that work with refugees and host communities are the most effective, creating an opportunity to incorporate peacebuilding activities.
- Poor relations, anti-social behaviour, negative attitudes towards certain groups, verbal abuse and denial of access to services are often the visible ways of expressing underlying hidden needs, desires and perceived (or real) social injustices.

Using tools such as conflict analysis helped GOPA to better understand the dynamics that determine social behaviours and enabled GOPA to predict, and take action, to mitigate against the escalation of violence and potential conflict. These tools helped them to remain flexible and continually review their programme design, which could be amended in light of changing circumstances. In contrast, GOPA withdrew from implementing a different project that was pre-designed without implementing a conflict-sensitive approach and where unknown and unresolved conflicts within beneficiary communities were undermining the project's potential to achieve its intended objectives.

Depending on the villagers' homes, this can be up to two kilometres away and the borehole is often so crowded that upon reaching it, villagers have to queue for up to two hours to access water. The weak, elderly and/or disabled community members who cannot travel these distances, and other individuals who cannot spare this time away from their livelihood activities, often resort to using water from the River Enyawu. This poses a constant threat of contracting cholera, typhoid, worms and diarrhoea.

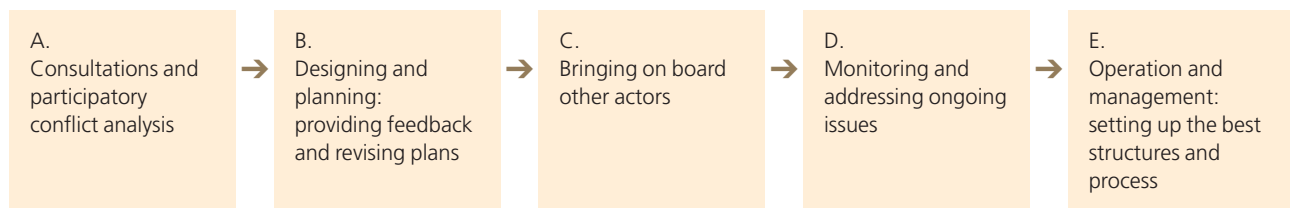
At the Ajara borehole, people from Nyai were often the last to be served, no matter how long they had been waiting in the queue. Priority was given to Ajara residents who were reluctant to allow 'outsiders' to access their water, particularly since Nyai inhabitants did not pay towards operation and maintenance. Often, individuals from Nyai would be sent back with empty jerry cans and told to find their own water source. At times these situations became violent.

Because of the escalating hostilities between the two communities, the Ajara borehole was intentionally locked to prevent 'outsiders' from using it, and only opened at certain points during the day. This further limited Nyai villagers' access to safe water and forced them to continue using the river.

### Conflict sensitivity and the Nyai water borehole

In Arua district, Saferworld and partners CECORE and YODEO approached the DWO to identify possible projects that may benefit from integrating a conflict-sensitive approach. The construction of a borehole in Nyai village was chosen since the DWO had already approved the project, but initial consultations and software work had not yet taken place. This created an opportunity to integrate conflict sensitivity from the start. YODEO took the lead, with support from Saferworld and CECORE, on consulting and liaising with all the relevant actors involved in the construction of the borehole, as well as the beneficiaries in order to make the borehole more conflict-sensitive.

A borehole construction project has a much shorter timeframe than a gravity flow scheme – mostly only a few weeks for hardware<sup>24</sup> and software work. Consequently, the Arua accompaniment work took place over a much shorter timeframe and involved less distinctive (or at least much shorter) 'phases' of work than the Kasese GFS.



### **A. Consultations and participatory conflict analysis**

Prior to Saferworld and partners coming on board, the Nyai community had been seeking a solution to their water problem. Initially, they asked the Ajara community how they obtained their borehole. The Ajara borehole was constructed under the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) programme, following an application from Ajara community. Nyai residents then applied to NUSAF as well, but their application failed.

Through the decentralised ‘bottom-up’ development planning process, local leaders and influential elders led Nyai community through a consultation process, during which they identified the lack of access to safe water as the main barrier to their economic and social development. A formal application for a water borehole was then submitted to the DWO, who themselves identified Nyai from their own needs assessment as a water-stressed area qualifying for investment. Yet it still took more than a year<sup>25</sup> before the DWO informed Nyai leaders that funds were agreed to sink a borehole there.

At the start of the accompaniment project, YODEO held some consultation meetings with the DWO and met the Nyai village residents. A formal consultation meeting was then organised, bringing together the Nyai village inhabitants, the DWO, YODEO, Saferworld and CECORE, to discuss the conflict issues people faced in Nyai village and how the borehole could potentially impact on these. The DWO also informed people of the plans for construction.

Some of the initial conflict issues that emerged from these discussions and the participatory conflict analysis were:

- There was a clear need to provide Nyai with its own water source as the conflict with Ajara community over the use of their borehole was slowly escalating.
- Clarity was needed over the responsibilities of the Nyai community, including contributions they were expected to make to the new borehole and their role in operation and maintenance.
- Clarity was needed over the location of the new borehole and the implications for the land owner on whose land this would be constructed.

### **B. Designing and planning: providing feedback and revising plans**

At the start of the accompaniment process, software work had not formally started for the borehole, and the history of contact between Nyai village and the district about water had already created some negative perceptions in people’s minds about district service delivery.

#### **■ Poor communication and delayed decisions**

The delay in informing the Nyai community of the outcome of their initial borehole application reinforced the community’s perceptions of marginalisation and discrimination by government authorities.

It strengthened community suspicions that ADLG had little concern for their water problems and strengthened their negative attitudes towards them. But a motivated minority, led by the Parish Chief, pursued progress on their application. Despite formal procedure that communities should be informed of the fate of their applications, the Parish Chief was referred back and forth between the sub-county authorities and the DWO, and simply told to wait. It only emerged later that the sub-county was prioritising applications according to submission date, but this was never communicated to Nyai residents or leaders.

Even after the application was approved, many community members struggled to understand the processes required for qualifying for district-funded projects and did not realise that they were required to pay a capital contribution when the borehole is constructed. This caused much unhappiness among community members, particularly since NUSAF boreholes require only manual contributions, not financial ones. Many community members therefore assumed the borehole would be provided free of charge by central government or the ADLG. Of course the LC I Chairperson, the Parish Chief and the Parish Nurse who completed the application to the district, acting on community wishes to apply for water provision, knew what the terms and conditions were, but they unfortunately did not realise the importance of communicating all of this information to the rest of the Nyai inhabitants. One of the first interventions from the District Water Officer was therefore to explain that community contributions were aimed at instilling a sense of community ownership towards the water point.

#### ■ **Agreeing and establishing good conduct and local by-laws**

During the pre-construction phase of water borehole projects, communities are advised by the District Water Officer to establish by-laws to ensure proper conduct of the WUC, good management of the water point and to agree penalties for those who break the rules. Although the establishment of by-laws is recommended to all communities within the DWO software activities, many communities choose not to establish them. In Arua, YODEO encouraged the DWO to promote these village-level by-laws to ensure good order around water points and so help to prevent conflicts around them.

DWO explained the benefits of the by-laws to local leaders, key influential elders and sub-county authorities which resulted in a number of community consultations to establish new by-laws. Nyai's by-laws are today enforced and upheld by the LC I Chairperson and his committee, and according to Nyai community, are well respected, since they agreed these together.

#### ■ **Dealing with confused expectations**

One issue that emerged particularly strongly during the implementation of the Nyai borehole was the confusion caused by the different practices of water service delivery between the district, NUSAF and NGO service providers. Whether communities are expected to contribute to capital costs or provide manual contributions, whether land owners receive compensation or not, the training that WUCs can expect and so forth are all handled differ-



ently by different service providers. For the DWO this means that they often have to explain things repeatedly to ensure that everybody is clear about what is expected from beneficiary communities. Yet some unhappiness may remain if beneficiaries perceive the district's way of working as less beneficial to them than what other service providers would do.

### **C. Bringing on board other actors**

Borehole construction is simpler than gravity flow schemes and therefore involves fewer actors. In Nyai village, the behaviour of the surveyor and the construction company had the potential to cause frustration and deepen mistrust of local government.

#### ■ **Explaining survey results to communities and land owners**

As per the DWO guidelines, the Nyai community identified three potential sites for the borehole. However, the surveyors found all three sites unsuitable for technical reasons and identified an alternative plot on land belonging to the son of the LC I Chairman. This created a situation where people may suspect political interference in the surveying process, while not having the borehole where they requested it to be. YODEO therefore encouraged the surveyors to hold a community consultation and explain the technical rationale for the selected location. The District Water Officer also reminded them that they had been warned that if their chosen sites were not suitable, then the borehole would have to be relocated. This dialogue helped to reduce suspicions and the community agreed to allow the borehole to proceed in this alternative location.

However, the landowner – aware of compensation schemes with NUSAF-funded boreholes – did not want to agree to the borehole without financial compensation. YODEO supported the District Water Officer to re-explain the terms and conditions of district-funded projects i.e. the donation of land for free, and after working through an actor analysis, YODEO decided to target the LC I Chairman and Committee to resolve the situation. After a series of meetings the landowner was persuaded to give his consent for the benefit of the community.

#### ■ **Communicating reasons for delays**

The borehole construction company – based in Kampala – failed to arrive on the day scheduled for sinking the borehole, and instead arrived one week later. Some Nyai residents became suspicious that the DWO did not intend fulfilling its commitment to construct the borehole. Nobody informed the community of the delay, and this deepened their distrust towards local government, thus missing an opportunity to improve relationships.

### **D. Monitoring and addressing ongoing issues**

Given the short timeframe of borehole construction, most of the ongoing issues that needed to be monitored and addressed in the Arua accompaniment work, relate to the operation and maintenance of the scheme.

#### ■ **Setting up a representative Water User Committee**

Nyai village were particularly responsive to adopting the software guidelines on what

constitutes a representative WUC and elected a well-balanced committee. It is fairly unusual to have a female WUC chairperson, male vice-chairperson, and at least three other female members on the committee, all of whom are extremely proactive in their roles. According to community members<sup>26</sup>, they all agreed on electing these WUC members. People trusted those that had been chosen and felt that the Parish Nurse, who was elected WUC Chairperson, was the most educated on the link between water, sanitation, hygiene and disease, and thus most suited to the lead role.

#### ■ **Training Water User Committee members**

Before the borehole was constructed, the WUC was set up and given training on operation and maintenance. WUC members have not, however, shared this knowledge with others in the community, and as a consequence, new members have since been elected onto the WUC without having received this training. There is therefore a need for follow-up training in order to avoid lack of skills to conduct effective operation and maintenance of the borehole.

It also needs to be made clear to Nyai community members that the DWO trains only a set number of pump mechanics in each sub-county, with the expectation that all communities in the area should use (and pay for) their services. Nyai residents should therefore be introduced to the mechanics in their sub-county.

#### ■ **Setting up rules and regulations for the borehole**

On advice from the DWO, the WUC consulted with the Nyai community to set up a series of rules and regulations through which the borehole could best be managed. From a conflict-sensitive perspective, this is an important way to proactively manage potential issues that could cause conflict around the borehole.

In Nyai, regulations were agreed about queuing, collection schedules<sup>27</sup>, borehole protection, sanitation around the borehole and punitive measures if rules were broken by users. The LC I Chairperson is to be the final authority in cases of repeated breaches of the regulations.

### **E. Operation and management: setting up the best structures and process**

The issues outlined below detail some of the lessons particularly related to operation and maintenance, including some lessons gathered several months after the completion of the borehole.

#### ■ **Ensuring community ownership from the start: capital contributions**

At the time of construction, Nyai residents had not yet paid the full 180,000 Ugandan Shillings (USh)<sup>28</sup> community contribution to the DWO. Construction was not to start prior to payment, but work on the borehole began anyway.

Because DWOs have their own spending targets to meet within the financial year, construction often continues regardless of whether communities had paid the full contributions. In some cases, communities end up paying nothing. From a conflict-sensitive perspective, although it is important to be mindful of the DWO's own annual targets, the practice of

proceeding with construction without capital contributions needs to stop. There is a danger that communities might think they can get away with not paying, which in turn contributes to the confusion about community contributions and conditions for water provision. Such a situation should serve as a warning to the DWO that community management of the borehole may not be efficient in future.

#### ■ **Caretakers of the borehole**

To ensure the borehole was supervised and the WUC's rules and regulations followed, the community agreed to nominate two members as borehole caretakers. However, if misused, for instance by not unlocking the borehole at the scheduled collection times, this power has the potential to cause conflict. Having recognised that this is an avoidable source of tension, the DWO and YODEO have been working with the WUC to encourage them to instil a sense of duty in the caretakers and help them to realise how their behaviour could impact on their fellow community members. Encouragingly, the caretakers have since become informal mediators for conflicts that arise around the borehole, often about who was first in line.

The caretakers are also responsible for ensuring that only fee-payers access the borehole, according to a list given to them by the WUC. This arrangement aims in part to help avoid the potential for conflict that could erupt if fee-payers discovered that non fee-payers were accessing water. But in some cases, individuals who had not paid the WUC Treasurer would pay the caretaker instead when they wanted to use the facility. These fees went unrecorded by the WUC Treasurer and provided an opportunity for funds to be misappropriated. In Nyai, one of the caretakers began to use fees for his personal benefit and was replaced by the wife of the LC I Chairperson. In hindsight, this was deemed to be conflict-insensitive as conflicts soon emerged between her and the other women, who accused her of using the borehole out of hours, for herself and the benefit of her friends and family. YODEO brought this to the attention of the WUC Chairperson, who called a community meeting, and two new caretakers were elected.

#### ■ **Agreeing tariffs**

Drawing on lessons learned from other district borehole projects, the DWO and YODEO wanted to avoid conflict caused by setting high user fees without community consultation. YODEO and the DWO advised the WUC to decide the fees collectively with the community according to their means.

Arriving at a community consensus was no easy task and discussions became heated as differences in household incomes meant that a standard fee could not be matched by all. However, the fee could not be set at the level of the poorest household, as this would make it impossible for the WUC to cover operation and maintenance costs. It was therefore agreed that some community members, including widows, would pay less.

#### ■ **Maintaining a proactive and representative Water User Committee**

The district officials are impressed by how well the Nyai WUC has been functioning,

particularly by continuing to meet regularly, documenting which users have paid and which not, keeping minutes of all community meetings and decisions, and responding quickly to any issues that arise before they could escalate into more serious conflicts. The District Water Officer also believes that there is particular benefit in having a woman Chairperson, as in her experience, water points where this is the case are generally cleaner and better maintained.

The WUC still needs support in some areas – as outlined elsewhere – but it appears that the efforts of the DWO and YODEO to constantly reiterate the WUC's roles and responsibilities, apply lessons from other water points where problems developed around specific issues and maintain regular contact with the Nyai WUC and community have greatly contributed to its success.

### Achievements in Arua

Since the installation of the borehole, problems associated with water scarcity in Nyai have reduced and the conflicts that used to arise are not as prevalent. However, new issues have emerged throughout the process of construction and operation and maintenance.

While most community members use the borehole, a minority do not, either because they do not wish to pay the user fees or cannot afford to (and have not been given exemption). They either continue to use water from River Enyawu and seasonal springs, or simply attempt to obtain water from neighbouring villages – particularly Ajara – which antagonises the villagers and continues the aforementioned conflicts.

However, for those who do use it, there is high compliance in paying water user fees – reflecting the fact that the users are comfortable with the tariff – and a good adherence by the community to the rules and regulations set by the WUC. Community members have expressed gratitude for the borehole project and the women are particularly happy not to travel long distances for water anymore.

Improved sanitation and hygiene practices around homesteads and at the borehole seem to have contributed to a significant decrease in diarrhoea and typhoid. Although it is not yet evident, the community believe that levels of poverty are improving as more time is spent on livelihood activities rather than fetching water.

Other achievements include:

- **Improved effectiveness of the work of ADLG and the DWO.** Both ADLG and DWO found the accompaniment process with YODEO and the application of conflict sensitivity to their work extremely enlightening. The District Water Officer and the Senior Engineer both reported that adopting a conflict-sensitive approach had made their interventions more effective and increased the level and quality of community participation and ownership. For example, Nyai community members have been working with the caretakers, on a rotating

voluntary basis, to help keep the borehole area clean, which the district officials have never seen done elsewhere. They also praise the WUC for being so proactive and for continuing to meet so regularly.

- **Conflict sensitivity incorporated into the standard working practices of the DWO.** Thanks to the lobbying efforts of the YODEO accompaniment officer, conflict sensitivity is now managed in the same way as other mainstream issues such as HIV/AIDS, gender and the environment. The District Water Engineer has been a very proactive ambassador for CSA, ensuring his staff adopt conflict sensitivity in implementing all activities in their annual work plan and promising to incorporate conflict sensitivity into DWO community training activities.
- **The introduction of conflict sensitivity to local mechanisms of conflict mediation.** Conflicts in Nyai are often managed by the LCI Chairperson and village elders. The introduction of conflict sensitivity by YODEO and the DWO in the software activities has served to strengthen these local mechanisms for dealing with conflict whilst bringing in a new structure (the WUC), specifically to deal with water-related issues.
- **The WUC dealing with broader community issues.** The WUC not only deals with borehole issues but also the decisions taken within community meetings. Even though Nyai is a small community, there have been cases where individuals who do not attend meetings cause conflict by disagreeing with the decision. Encouragingly, Nyai community members play an active role in explaining the decisions made and the rationale behind them, leading to an improved understanding of the issues and more community consensus.
- **An improved understanding by the local community of local conflict issues.** Nyai residents believe<sup>29</sup> that the community consultations and dialogue meetings held as part of the DWO software process (and supported by YODEO and partners) have helped to strengthen their ability to better understand prevailing conflict issues in their community and to identify new issues that may be emerging. In particular, discussing potential conflict issues collectively has encouraged the community to be more proactive in taking measures to prevent any escalation to violence.
- **Integration of conflict sensitivity across YODEO's work.** Adopting a conflict-sensitive approach to their other areas of work has enabled YODEO to identify community members who are key to effecting change and manage conflicts in the beneficiary communities.

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## Challenges for the future

The experience in Nyai allowed the DWO, YODEO and other actors to test to what extent adopting a conflict-sensitive approach to providing the borehole both increased the effectiveness of the borehole and started addressing some of the issues causing conflict in/with the community. Some challenges remain:

- **Access to water remains a problem.** Demand for water from the borehole is becoming too high as Nyai residents use this single water point and the volume of additional and unforeseen users from the surrounding area is also increasing. Although outside users are required to pay user fees, tensions are beginning to escalate as Nyai villagers – perceiving themselves as having priority over users from neighbouring areas – sometimes fail to access water within the given time slots. This could well repeat the pattern of previous Nyai/Ajara conflicts.
- **The need to manage community expectations.** Nyai residents are surprised that the borehole did not solve all their water needs. The WUC and the LCI Chairperson now plan to appeal to the DWO for more water services that can address outstanding issues, for example, valley dams could help provide water for cattle and rainwater harvesting from rooftops could supplement household supply. While the borehole therefore improved the situation, additional interventions may be needed to address all the water needs in Nyai.
- **The community's contribution of land to the water project needs formalising.** Despite initial grievances, the Chairperson's son was persuaded to agree to the borehole being on his land. However, no formal agreement has yet been signed to confirm that the land is part of the community's contribution towards the ADLG-funded borehole. Experience has shown that this could generate future problems. The sub-county authorities urgently need to draw up a legally-binding agreement confirming this, with signatures from all relevant parties.
- **Protecting the borehole.** To date, the borehole has no solid fencing and is vulnerable to vandalism and to wandering cattle fouling the area. The community have erected posts around the borehole to prevent this, but have raised concerns about whether they will be able to maintain this fence. The need for constant repair to the fence is starting to cause tension between the users and the WUC. A more permanent protection structure is needed, with support from the DWO or sub-county authorities.
- **Recognising and addressing the capacity issues of the Water User Committee.** A number of issues relating to the WUC's funds and training capacities need attention if the borehole is to continue to operate effectively and not cause tension.

The DWO has recognised that conflicts often arise when WUCs fail to design and implement annual O&M plans, containing estimated costs for the coming year. Once these are clearly outlined, communities can save enough money through the collection of sufficient user fees. The plans help to avoid conflicts that can result from a lack of understanding about the costs likely to be incurred or the lack of surplus funds for repairs. Currently, Nyai WUC does not have an O&M plan. This needs to be addressed urgently with support from the sub-county Health Assistant and the Community Development Officers to avoid potential for conflicts to arise in the future. In Nyai, concerns about funds for repair have already been voiced and at present, the WUC do not have any surplus funds to cover the cost of repair if the borehole malfunctions. The WUC is also responsible for carrying out minor repairs, but has not yet been trained on this. While the sub-county is responsible for major malfunctions, experience has shown that sub-counties often invest very little in borehole rehabilitation due

to lack of funds and differing development priorities. To avoid future conflict over inefficient operation and maintenance, the DWO and sub-county authorities need to work with the WUC and Nyai beneficiaries on a plan of action to address these issues.

- **Ongoing monitoring of the water scheme is a long-term issue and is required long after construction is completed.** Water scheme malfunctions are often due to ineffective scheme management, rather than some irreparable technical problem. Nyai residents do not feel that the DWO monitoring visits are sufficient and want more routine checks to address maintenance issues early.

Currently, ADLG software staff have no written agreement or requirements to revisit water points once they are constructed and although the DWO aims to make biannual monitoring visits, in reality, they tend to only return to a water point if there is a technical problem. As a result, monitoring has become de-prioritised and there are already concerns that problems may develop due to a lack of monitoring visits.

Other WUCs in Arua have experienced a loss of motivation to hold community meetings as a means to discuss and resolve arising conflict issues, a reluctance to pay user fees and a failure to replace committee members. To avoid this happening in Nyai (and elsewhere), monitoring of software elements must be prioritised and the sub-counties in particular must be more active in fulfilling their official monitoring role as intermediaries between beneficiary communities and the DWO.

A woman fills her jerry cans  
in Moroto, North-Eastern  
Uganda

KATIE HARRIS



## 4

## Building capacity for conflict-sensitive development

Alongside the project-focused work at the district level, a number of activities were undertaken to strengthen the ability of a broader group of civil society in each district to implement and advocate for conflict-sensitive development. This included some district-level trainings, awareness-raising on conflict-sensitive development with civil society and local government actors, policy dialogue meetings with district authorities and some practical follow-up and experience-sharing. The experiences from this work are summarised below.

**A training workshop on  
conflict-sensitive  
development in Arua** →

KATIE HARRIS





## Training on conflict-sensitive development

In both Kasese and Arua, training needs assessments were conducted for CSOs at the beginning of the district level work<sup>30</sup> in order to target and design the first training workshops appropriately. The first needs assessment targeted a wide range of CSOs in both districts to find out more about what was already being done in terms of conflict sensitivity, who was already familiar with the terms and who would be interested in learning more about it.

In Kasese, although many organisations were familiar with some type of conflict-related work, only two individuals had been introduced to the concept of conflict-sensitive approaches. Some others already had previous introductions to conflict analysis, but in general did not feel very confident that they knew how to use it.

In Arua, several of the CSOs involved in the assessment had received training in conflict resolution skills before, but only one organisation was already aware of conflict-sensitive approaches and indeed applying it in their work.<sup>31</sup>

The first two-day training workshops therefore focused on discussing conflict-sensitive approaches in relation to other conflict-related methodologies. For instance while conflict analysis is common to most conflict-related methodologies, CSA methodologies do not generally provide skills for conflict mediation. In both districts, some training participants understood the concepts well and tried to take it forward, while others either did not understand the concepts well or struggled to get their organisations sufficiently interested. The general capacity of CSOs in Arua in terms of institutional organisation and activities was weaker than those in Kasese, which in turn was weaker than those at the national level. This necessitated some close monitoring and creative follow-up to provide appropriate inputs that CSOs could absorb and use effectively.

After almost one year of activities with CSOs in each district, a second training needs assessment and round of trainings were conducted, focusing on those CSOs who already showed some willingness to take forward CSA in their work. The findings of the second needs assessment included:

- Some CSOs in both districts had lost the previously trained staff and therefore wanted to have a new staff member trained
- In Kasese, several CSOs felt that, although they were more familiar with the concepts of conflict sensitivity, they still did not feel confident to conduct a comprehensive conflict analysis or use scenarios to inform their own project planning and implementation.
- In Kasese, some organisations saw CSA solely as an avenue for funding – Saferworld/CECORE and REDROC received several requests from CSOs for funding ‘to do conflict sensitivity’, but not linked to anything concrete.

- In Arua, while some CSOs made good progress on starting to apply CSA, some previously trained organisations failed to get any projects off the ground. Their knowledge of CSA thus remained theoretical with no opportunities to learn from their own practice.
- A higher number of CSOs in Arua still felt that they did not completely understand conflict sensitivity and wanted more training on the main concepts and tools, including conflict analysis.

Given the training needs assessment, the second training workshops:

- targeted CSOs who had attempted to implement conflict sensitivity and/or who had sufficiently established projects in which they could apply conflict sensitivity and/or influence the district authorities through their work
- targeted CSOs where the previously trained staff member had left
- made creative changes to the methodology of the training, such as using role plays of actual conflict issues from each district and brainstorming project approaches based on this, to assist participants' understanding of what conflict sensitivity looks like in practice.

Feedback from participants at the second training indicated a higher level of confidence that people could now apply more of the tools. This training is only the beginning and more exchanges and support will be needed to deepen these initial successes.

## Sharing experiences and peer mentoring

In each district (and at the national level) informal 'CSA coalitions' were set up after the first training to provide a space where trained CSOs could share their experiences of how they were starting to apply conflict sensitivity to their own work, and also eventually as a forum for joint work on influencing the district local authorities to be more conflict-sensitive.

REDROC and YODEO acted as the lead organisations for these coalitions in each district, and were charged with following up with members and providing advice or support where possible. Lessons from the coalitions are expanded on in the sections below. During coalition meetings, organisations shared some examples of how adopting conflict sensitivity had helped them improve some of their projects (see boxes 1–4).

**BOX 2 Conflict and conservation: Good Hope Foundation and Kagando Rural Development Centre in Kasese**

Good Hope Foundation and Kagando Rural Development Centre are jointly implementing part of the CARE International, Rights, Equity and Protected Areas project, aimed at improving the relationship between Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP) authorities and adjacent communities. Part of this work is to demonstrate the economic value of QENP as a resource for these communities. By law 20% of the park gate fees are ring-fenced for development projects within the bordering sub-counties. Working in three sub-counties – Munkunyu, Karasandara and Nyakiumbu – Good Hope and Kagando have established community-based monitoring groups to track the government's revenue-sharing initiative.

After receiving CSA training, Good Hope and Kagando adopted a conflict-sensitive approach to their monitoring programme with support from their partner CARE International. A conflict analysis was conducted prior to implementation to highlight the socio-cultural and resource-based conflicts impacting upon the area, which would then be factored into the programme design<sup>32</sup>.

Of particular importance to Good Hope and Kagando was the tendering process of KDLG's Contracts Committee, as this appeared to be completely insensitive to local conflict dynamics. The analysis revealed that once tenders had been awarded, more often than not, contractors launched straight into implementation.

Many failed to adequately introduce themselves and/or the project to the beneficiary communities, which created unnecessary tensions between the two parties as communities become highly suspicious of the contractor's potential hidden agendas. Moreover, the conflict analysis identified that the Contracts Committee (and arguably the CSOs) fails to effectively communicate the tendering process and its results to the beneficiary communities. For example, if a five million USh project has been awarded to a contracting firm, communities expect to see five million USh worth of development. In reality, a substantial portion of these funds will be deducted for tax and other purposes. A failure to communicate this to beneficiaries has resulted in conflicts between the park authorities, the contractors and beneficiary communities, as assumptions of misappropriation or corruption arise.

Having identified these conflict-generating issues, Good Hope and Kagando worked with KDLG – both with the Contracts Committee and the Environment Office – to promote a more conflict-sensitive approach to the revenue-sharing initiative. It was agreed that an additional 3% would be charged to the contractor to be ring-fenced purely for software activities. These software activities would include communicating the tendering processes and details about any forthcoming project to the beneficiary communities. This mechanism has been scaled up and will shortly be implemented in all 11 sub-counties that border QENP.

The conflict analysis was also used to inform the composition of Good Hope and Kagando's community-based monitoring groups, to ensure they are representative. The analysis identified that inadequate representation of minority groups and women had, in previous programmes, led to conflict. Furthermore, the insight provided by the conflict analysis was used to create a specific set of guidelines for field staff to act as a checklist for how to be conflict-sensitive when interacting with communities.

Both Good Hope and Kagando are continuing their conflict-sensitive approach to the revenue-sharing initiative by attempting to create mechanisms which will enable communities to more fully participate in the decision-making processes. This is helping to empower communities to be viewed as fundamental stakeholders in the revenue-sharing initiative, rather than purely beneficiaries.

## 5

## Lessons learned from promoting conflict-sensitive policies and practice

The practical project-focused work in Kasese and Arua generated some interesting lessons about what conflict-sensitive development looks like in practice, supported by the capacity-building work aimed at broader uptake of conflict sensitivity among CSOs and district authorities. This section presents lessons from the practical accompaniment as well as the capacity-building work.

**Women carrying water from a borehole in Northern Uganda** →

MANOCHER DEGATI, IRIN



## Lessons from accompaniment processes

### Conflict-sensitive approaches must be adapted to different actors and levels of working

There is a great need for skills and tools that would enable people to deal with conflict. Some of the people introduced to CSA through the project therefore saw CSA as a tool that should enable them to deal with all conflict issues that they encounter. This is beyond what CSA is designed to do. Yet, undertaking projects (or larger interventions) in a conflict-sensitive way creates opportunities for peacebuilding, while helping project managers think through the peace and conflict impact of their work. Experience from the accompaniment work clearly demonstrates how conflict sensitivity as an approach brings different benefits to different stakeholders.

#### a) DWO and the district local government

Due to their policy commitment to working in consultative and community-driven ways, the DWO and broader district local government in Kasese and Arua see CSA as a useful tool to improve the quality of community participation and ownership of the district-provided water and other services. In particular, they see CSA as helping them:

- **Better understand what conflicts, divisions and alliances exist in the communities.**

The Kasese District Water Officer commented that CSA ‘... softens the way you approach conflicts’<sup>33</sup>, meaning that crisis situations are avoided as potential conflict issues are identified and tackled from the onset. The Kasese DWO felt that adopting a CSA to Kiywebe GFS has provided a means to understand the factors that cause water schemes to fail and to identify what the DWO’s role should be in minimising potential conflicts and using their interventions as a means to promote sustainable peace.

- **Better understand the local politics** and how this influences communities’ interactions with the district authorities

- **Identify key stakeholders in communities who can be allies for them to work with**, e.g. the LC Is in communities can be powerful allies if they are on board early on in the process, but can also play a very negative role if they choose to work against the district authorities

#### b) Civil society organisations

CSOs active in the district-level water sector play a dual role of influencing policy while helping local government deliver services. In this respect, learning about and applying CSA is a valuable tool for CSOs to evaluate and influence district-level decision-making, policies and programmes, as well as to guide and improve their own work.

In both Kasese and Arua, CSOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) were keen to learn more about CSA as they clearly saw the benefit of this approach to increase the

effectiveness of their projects and the depth of community participation in these.

For REDROC in particular, some specific challenges emerged relating to their role as ‘accompanier’ to conflict-sensitise the Kiywebe GFS. Many individuals from Mahango and Rukoki communities viewed REDROC’s role as mediating conflicts, listening to community problems and explaining them to the DWO and KDLG. Part of the reason for this is that, while from the perspective of REDROC and the DWO, they were applying a conflict-sensitive approach to their project, from the community side they understood the role of REDROC in terms of the effects they witnessed, which were primarily the reduction (and mediation) of conflicts.

In addition, the PIC had not been established during the initial months, and as a result, the DWO took advantage of any other actors who could assist in resolving conflict issues on their behalf. But it also highlights the difficulties of distinguishing different roles, understanding expectations from all sides, and the need for handing over certain responsibilities to community members, water-related structures (like WUCs or PICs/PMCs) or the DWO.

Similarly, community expectations for the success of the Kiywebe GFS and Nyai borehole were high from the onset and needed to be managed accordingly. With these expectations came a number of misunderstandings about the ability of different stakeholders to influence and/or control the process. It was important to continually differentiate the role of REDROC, YODEO and Saferworld/CECORE as accompaniment organisations, from the role and decision-making power of the DWO.

### **c) Private sector actors and service providers**

Private sector actors like surveyors, construction companies and borehole drilling companies provide more technical aspects of water projects. These actors are normally unaware of their impact on communities or how their hardware work relates to the software work that should be carried out with beneficiary communities. Yet their work is sometimes undermined or they are even targeted or threatened if beneficiaries are unhappy with some aspect of the water provision projects. Understanding their conflict impact can be a useful tool for such private actors to maximise their own efficiency.

In Kasese, REDROC introduced the private sector actors involved in the GFS to the concepts and overall approach of conflict sensitivity. This helped them to be more aware of how their presence and the way they work could feed into some of these local level conflict dynamics or tensions. REDROC also provided background information on Mahango and Rukoki communities and reiterated that gaining community confidence is key to facilitating their work.

The surveyors and construction companies were then willing to communicate with beneficiary communities (through introduction and feedback meetings) and to change the way they work to accommodate concerns. In Kasese, this helped make the work of the

private contractors easier and put them under greater pressure to deliver high quality work, since beneficiary communities are more aware of their obligations and monitor their work more closely. In Arua, the surveyor was also willing to meet with the beneficiary community to explain why the borehole could not be on the sites they preferred.

While they made a positive contribution in Arua and Kasese by for instance, hiring local workers and buying locally-produced materials, the overall management responsibility for these water projects did not rest with the private sector actors. Had this been the case, they may have had to take more of a lead in doing their own conflict analysis and making their work more conflict-sensitive.

#### **d) Communities/beneficiaries at the grass-roots level**

In terms of what CSA means at the local, grass-roots level, some important conclusions emerge from the experience of this project.

The first step in implementing conflict sensitivity is to undertake a participatory conflict analysis. Communities involved in the project work in Kasese appreciated the opportunity to discuss the conflict issues that existed in their societies and how this related to the GFS. They also appreciated the fact that this helped them talk through problems as well as identify areas where they had shared interest and could collaborate to the benefit of all.

At this level, it is critical that the conflict analysis is continuously monitored, updated and linked back to the water project that is being implemented in the area. In this sense, CSA is a 'project management tool' to the extent that it helps project managers focus on the peace and conflict impact of their work. But for communities as the beneficiaries – and in a demand-driven system, the initiators – of projects, conflict sensitivity brings increased or better quality participation in project decision-making and monitoring. In this way, CSA becomes a change process that can increase the power and influence of beneficiaries to ensure that the projects meet their needs and help them address their own conflicts.

This raises a number of challenges relating to: who represents 'the community'; what skills, mechanisms and processes are needed for them to build on the experience of this water project and apply it to all future social service delivery or projects in their areas; and how they will manage the shifts in power relations that this type of engagement brings.

It also highlights the need to complement this type of CSA work with strengthening the ability of beneficiary societies to solve problems in a consultative and accountable way and, where necessary, to mediate and transform negative conflict dynamics. In Kasese and Arua, emerging issues had to be resolved. In Kasese, the most serious conflict was about the design and reach of the scheme, and this conflict was actively mediated by a combination of REDROC and the DWO. In Arua the most serious conflict was about the use of the land for the borehole, and this was mediated by a combination of the land owner's father (also a local councillor) and the broader community.

The capacity for mediating conflicts could thus be provided by external or internal stakeholders, but must be sustainable. In the case of Kasese, it will not be possible for REDROC or the DWO to sustain its current high levels of engagement in the Mahango and Rukoki sub-countries, so the responsibility for solving problems arising and mediating future conflicts is likely to shift wholly to either the scheme-related structures (WUCs, PMCs) or to other prominent members of those communities such as local leaders or MPs. It is of course necessary that such individuals are trusted and genuinely act for the benefit of the whole community. Currently in Arua the WUC is able to effectively resolve arising conflicts relating to the borehole and in this way, support the efforts of the local council in managing conflicts in the community.

#### e) Sectors vs projects

CSA has most often been adopted at the project/programme level. However, development assistance is increasingly channelled through sector-level strategies and funds, creating the need for better understanding how conflict sensitivity can be implemented at this level.

The Saferworld and partners project generated some learning about this by linking the district level work to national and sector level policies and programming.<sup>34</sup> The water sector was selected because water access feeds into different conflict dynamics in Uganda, and the sector is well-organised, facilitating national/district exchanges. The key lessons from taking this approach is that a sector like water and sanitation has so many components and facets to it, that in the space of such a short project, it was only possible to influence specific aspects, i.e. raising awareness of the concepts of CSA and their importance, and improving software policies and guidelines at the national level. Much more work can still be done at the national level on integrating CSA in other aspects of the sector. At the district level, the water offices became committed to integrating conflict sensitivity in practice, but broader interest was also created among other sections and the leadership of district local government .

District beneficiaries also indicated the need for conducting similar work in other sectors – particularly those relating to land. This would also support comparative processes to identify best practice in conflict-sensitive sector support.

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### CSA can be a tool for deepening beneficiary participation

Adopting a conflict-sensitive approach to the GFS in Kasese has resulted in a high level of mobilisation of the beneficiary communities – higher than is usual in such schemes<sup>35</sup>. The Kasese DWO valued REDROC and Saferworld/CECORE's involvement in the Kiywebe GFS and believed the presence of new external parties helped to revitalise many stakeholders' willingness to address issues jointly. But important lessons<sup>36</sup> have been learned about the difficulties of in-depth and representative beneficiary participation and how to support this in an accompaniment process.



**BOX 3 CSA and information technology in agriculture: an example from Bwera Information Centre in Kasese**

Bwera Information Centre (BIC) has been implementing a project which aims to strengthen the information, communication and technology capacity of its farmer groups through village information-sharing activities. The aim is to target twenty farmers in ten sub-counties to become 'progressive farmers'. They would own and manage demonstration farms that are in turn used as examples of good practice to other farmers in the area. The knowledge and skills acquired through these progressive farms are shared at the community-level through public notice boards and public pay phones.

During the initial phases of the project, BIC distributed phones and notice boards to three of the 20 farmers who would act as chairpersons to farmer groups. The intention was that the equipment would be used by all farmer groups, until the next tranche of funding for more equipment was released. However, tensions arose between the progressive farmers, the farmer groups and BIC, but it was not clear why. The CSA-trained BIC representative shared his knowledge of CSA with colleagues and they all agreed to carry out some form of conflict analysis to find out more.

An informal conflict analysis was conducted through a series of interviews and meetings with communities which revealed that political rivalry between two of the chairs was at the root of tensions. The phones were being shared on a discriminatory basis, with the chairs refusing to let some farmers use them due to their political allegiances. This created conflict between the farmers, who quarrelled as a result of their access, or lack of access, to the equipment, and between them and the chairs. Even when neither of the chairs were elected to the positions they had stood for, managing the BIC equipment, gave them some authority.

BIC subsequently provided additional equipment to the farmer groups, enabling each to have their own phone and notice board, but realised that this could potentially reinforce the segregation of the farmer groups. By adopting a conflict-sensitive approach, BIC addressed this by appointing a neutral chairperson and parish-level coalitions. BIC believe that adopting a CSA has helped them to devise alternative ways to bring these conflicting individuals together and implement their work more effectively. Moreover, it was decided that the chairs of the farmer groups had to step down from that position if they decided to stand for a political position.

A key lesson BIC learned was the need to fully understand local level conflict dynamics. At first, finding it difficult to uncover the cause of tensions, through consultations with various stakeholders and with people outside of the project, they uncovered the real truth behind the phone usage and did not stop at the chairpersons' reasons for why certain members used the phones more often. BIC also learned that, while they can still remain politically unbiased, in this case they needed to understand the local political dynamics.

In light of this experience, BIC has made a commitment to conduct participatory conflict analysis for all their new activities and to use this insight to inform programme design. More specifically, BIC plan to hold consultative meetings with beneficiary communities and farmer groups before distributing new equipment, to explain to all stakeholders the objectives and implementation schedule for the programme. Previously, they only shared these details with the Chairperson, who was responsible to communicate this information to the communities. BIC are now more aware of the risks of manipulation by individuals which can cause conflicts and plan to actively monitor this in their projects.

As a result, BIC has informed donors that the next phase of the project will be delayed by one month. This will allow BIC to disseminate information detailing the equipment to be received, the mechanisms for accessing the phones and providing trainings on operation and management of the phones, prior to distribution of the equipment. BIC hopes this will help make their programmes more conflict-sensitive, and thus more effective.

**a) Reaching consensus, compromise or agreement**

As experience with development methodologies such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA) has shown, gaining community consensus is near impossible – compromise must always be reached. What complicates the process of trying to achieve compromise, particularly in the case of a large scheme like the Kiywebe GFS, is that different community members will attend different community consultation meetings. As a result, consensus or compromise may be reached during one meeting, but issues (perceived to be dealt with previously) will be raised again by those who did not attend previous meetings. It is necessary therefore to reiterate the agreements and compromises of previous sessions and attempt, where possible, to use this as a starting point for further discussion.

Sufficient ‘space’ also needs to be created for a wide variety of community members to air their views and to address their concerns as much as possible. This is vital to avoid the risk of dissatisfied stakeholders sabotaging the scheme or using their concerns to cause wider conflict. For larger beneficiary groups in particular, an initial ‘mapping’ of key actors and groups may be useful to support broad participation.

**b) Getting beyond the ‘loud voices’**

The Kasese DWO felt that the project work helped them to realise the extent of political influence that permeates community opinions, particularly of individuals involved in the upper levels of community decision-making processes, i.e. those that speak out during consultations. They have learnt there is a need to intensify mobilisation at the true grassroots-level and encourage all community members to air their views, given that they are the direct beneficiaries of water schemes and the most affected when programmes fail and/or bring about conflicts.

Using a conflict-sensitive approach has also enabled the Kasese DWO to identify and appreciate the impact of a number of weaknesses associated with their software activities. In particular, the Kasese Community Mobilisation Officer realised, and is concerned about, the level of community representation and the quality of participation within their consultative meetings. Bringing communities together for collective discussions will, unless well facilitated, result in outspoken individuals dominating the conversation. Despite being aware that the issues raised are not necessarily the concerns of the whole community, creating the right environment in which all views can be fairly aired is a challenge the DWO software staff are trying to overcome.

At the same time, the ‘loud voices’ can also be important allies in achieving community participation. For the Kasese DWO, conducting the actor analysis as part of the conflict analysis process has helped them realise the value of identifying, and seeking to work with key individuals who have the power to enhance community participation. For example, the District Water Officer realised the value of getting the LC I Chairperson on board from the onset, to use his influence to mobilise communities and to collaborate with him in keeping

interventions as de-politicised as possible. In Arua, the LC I Chairperson has been a strong ally in the work, as he is a proactive and respected leader, and has helped address problems arising.

### **c) Getting to the 'right' people**

While all members of a beneficiary community will potentially be affected in some way by a new water scheme or borehole, it is important to recognise that some will have a primary role or be impacted upon more significantly than others.

In particular, women are generally responsible for collecting water and making sure that there is enough water available to cater for their family's needs. The presence of new water points therefore has a potentially huge benefit for them as it may cut down the time it takes for them to fetch the water. It is therefore important to get women's views on the best location of the water points and how best to manage their use.

For example, in Kasese, in a short play performed during the ground-breaking ceremony in August 2007, a group of women demonstrated how in the past they fought and struggled to get water at the springs. Now, as they have established better relations with their neighbouring communities, the women line up and await their turn. Yet it is not always easy to have many women present at the community consultation meetings, due to the many household duties they have to perform. Some efforts therefore have to be directed towards ensuring that the consultation process includes the opinions of women and that they are able to participate – even if they are unable to attend consultation meetings. Interviews could instead be conducted at their homesteads. In Arua, the participation of women is very effective since four of the members of the WUC (including the Chairperson) are women. The Chair in particular enjoys strong and trusting relationships with most of the women in the community, and together they have strongly influenced the process.

Another important group that needs targeting is the land owners. In Kasese and Arua, problems arose relating to land and ways had to be agreed to compensate land owners, as well as agree ground rules for using the facilities.

## **Practical issues**

All the above lessons have an impact on how one conducts any accompaniment process with a view to conflict-sensitising interventions. This section highlights a few practical lessons.

### **a) Timing of accompaniment work**

Timing of undertaking conflict analysis and making sure it feeds into project design, implementation and monitoring is crucial to conflict-sensitising projects.

By its very nature, accompanying somebody else's project to be more conflict-sensitive is challenging in terms of the timing of the accompanied project and how it fits with the time-

frame of the funding received for the accompaniment work. In the case of the Kiywebe GFS, the accompaniment process was able to start more or less at the same time as the planning and design phase of the scheme, which worked well. But since the scheme will take so long to complete, the funding for the accompaniment work will end well before the completion date of the GFS, thereby potentially missing out on opportunities for further follow-up into the operation and maintenance phase of the scheme. REDROC is planning to follow this process further.

Similarly, some of the district CSOs highlighted the difficulties of integrating conflict sensitivity when they are implementing partners for district-level or INGO projects. This often means that they come on board for implementation and do not input into project design – flexibility to change ways of working or the priorities of the project are then very much reduced.

### **b) Financial cost of CSA**

For the DWO in Kasese, adopting a conflict-sensitive approach to the Kiywebe GFS meant an increase in costs, since the scheme had to be expanded and more funds requested from central government. In this case, implementing the project in a conflict-sensitive way costs more. However, this scheme is likely to work better and be well-managed due to the quality of the process to set it up, thus potentially saving other costs in future. In Arua, adopting a conflict-sensitive approach to the Nyai borehole did not entail additional costs, but did require more time spent on consultations and software-related work.

The accompaniment work was not expensive for REDROC and YODEO, with the main costs relating to travelling to and supporting community consultations and communications with communities, the district and other actors. In Kasese the travel costs to communities were high, since a 4x4 vehicle and experienced driver was necessary for every visit.

Using plantain as a jerry can stopper in Kasese →

KATIE HARRIS



## Strengthening adoption of conflict sensitivity: some lessons

Learning new skills and applying them to one's work always requires time and a variety of inputs and support. This section presents some lessons about strengthening capacity for conflict-sensitive development in Arua and Kasese, focusing on civil society, but also including those they work with.

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### Whose capacity needs to be built?

#### Actors other than civil society

For civil society to effectively advocate for conflict sensitivity to be taken up by decision-makers, the latter also needs some basic understanding of what CSA means. Engaging the district was thus crucial in terms of the civil society-focused aim of the work.

Trainings were provided for local government staff. In Kasese, support for this from the top district leadership was very high, resulting in some concrete successes, including a commitment to mainstream CSA and to constantly collaborate with civil society.

Similarly, brief introductions on CSA were made to relevant private sector actors.

A specific challenge in this work relates to funding mechanisms. If conflict sensitivity is not a requirement under specific grants, or if there is no flexibility within the grant to allow extra time and/or resources for conflict analysis, it is very difficult for civil society to take this forward. More work is therefore needed on getting funding agencies, including international donors and INGOs, to value CSA.

#### Individuals within civil society

Integrating conflict-sensitive approaches into an organisation requires both institutional and programme change. The individuals trying to implement CSA in their organisations therefore require both sufficient understanding of programming to know when and how to apply it, and sufficient decision-making authority to make it happen.

For some of the organisations trained on CSA this was the case and they made quite good progress on integrating and testing the approach. For others, it did not work so well. For example, a particular CSO in Arua sent an intern to the training and although she tried her best to raise interest within her organisation for undertaking CSA, she simply did not have the 'clout' to move it forward.

#### Institutional capacity of civil society

Probably the biggest challenge to the capacity-building work was the institutional strength –

or the lack of it – of many CSOs in Kasese and Arua. Those who had a clear structure with clear management responsibilities were most able to manage projects effectively, and therefore most effectively integrated this approach with positive effect.

However, many organisations, particularly in Arua, were ‘brief case NGOs’<sup>37</sup> or did not have effective institutional structures in place. This meant that they either did not have projects into which they could mainstream CSA, or even if they did, a lot of their time was taken up instead by internal conflicts and dysfunctional institutional processes. This not only undermined their efficiency as CSOs, but also set a bad example in terms of managing conflict. Given the project’s focus on strengthening civil society capacity, much time and resources therefore needed to be spent on general institutional support for key organisations.

Similar challenges arose in terms of the CSA coalition. While this successfully created a space where experiences on implementing conflict sensitivity could be shared and created a support mechanism for members, the quality of the learning that can take place within the coalition depends on the ability of member organisations to extract the learning from their own work and convey it to others and of others to translate such lessons into their own work. This was a challenge to some of the coalition members.

### **Position and role of civil society**

In the water sector, many local-level CSOs are implementing partners for projects of local government or INGOs. Given their reliance on this funding, many district-level CSOs were hesitant to provide critical feedback to those who employ them, in order to make the programmes more conflict-sensitive. The capacity-building activities therefore tried to maintain a spirit of constructive dialogue – particularly between CSOs and the district – rather than present this interaction as ‘campaigning’, which may be perceived more negatively.

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## **What was useful learning for those new to CSA?**

### **Terms and definitions in the ‘conflict’ field**

As can be expected, CSO staff members in Arua and Kasese have heard of different definitions of ‘conflict’ and what it means, and the various responses to it, including prevention, mediation, resolution, transformation etc. It was therefore important to include in project activities discussions about people’s different understanding of these terms – particularly ‘conflict’ and ‘peace’ – in order to situate CSA within a broader range of responses.

Participants in Arua responded particularly well to the term ‘negative peace’, as an idea that while there may be no large-scale violence occurring, there are latent conflict issues that could again escalate in future. Arua CSOs have found people to perceive ‘peace’ as negative, due to the problems that were still present, and ‘negative peace’ therefore matched their

experiences on the ground. Some Arua CSOs used this idea to reframe their approach to conflict in their work.

On the other hand, some participants remained confused about the terminology and continued to try and apply CSA to whatever their needs were, i.e. if they needed conflict mediation skills, they tried to use CSA to address that need. This is a perpetual challenge and requires those promoting CSA to help stakeholders identify which issues cannot be addressed through conflict-sensitive development, and how and by whom these can be addressed.

### **Tools for analysing and understanding conflict**

Many different tools exist for doing conflict analysis and, to a lesser extent, to link the analysis to programming. But of course these tools need to be appropriate to different audiences and the purpose for which they will be used. So, for example, the Saferworld and partners Resource Pack<sup>38</sup>, is clearly very useful to those trying to develop an in-depth understanding of conflict sensitivity as a methodology. But for small NGOs, local communities or more technical actors like the DWO, the Pack is probably too theoretical and complex.

The experience from the project has shown that using case studies, role plays and practical examples is an excellent way for participants to feel confident about undertaking conflict analysis and implementing CSA.

In particular, participants in Arua and Kasese appreciated the fact that the conflict analysis exercises they participated in, helped them to link different types of conflict issues (social, political, economic, security), as well as plot the interaction between these issues and the actors influencing and/or affected by these conflicts. Most also said that doing the analysis in itself was a useful process – particularly the idea that one should keep asking ‘why’ in order to get to some of the more underlying issues. It also made them realise the need for conducting one regularly to constantly monitor changes in the context.

Some participants in Arua particularly appreciated doing an actor analysis, as they had not previously tried to understand the motivations of certain actors to enflame or address conflicts. They felt that this understanding would make their work much more efficient. For some Kasese participants, while they found doing an actor analysis useful, they also recognised the challenges of finding enough information about these actors in order to really understand their motivations and hidden agendas.

Saferworld and partners also plan to do more work on developing lists of guiding questions that can be adapted for different uses at different levels. This will seek to avoid an unthinking ‘check list’ approach and instead provide simple guidance to support genuine reflection and review.

## How did learning about CSA help civil society organisations?

### Added value of CSA to programmes

CSO participants in district activities provided feedback on what they felt the added value was of learning more about and applying conflict sensitivity:

- Many Arua participants were able to relate insight about conflict sensitivity to projects where they had encountered difficulties. Some subsequently reviewed and revised aspects of their work. Many participants highlighted the importance of being conflict-aware from the beginning of a project to minimise the problems that may crop up later. REDROC and YODEO, and some of the other CSOs who participated in project activities, are therefore adopting CSA as an overall institutional approach across their programmes.
- Some participants in Kasese felt that learning more about CSA has exposed how narrowly they have been defining the impact of their work, missing out on the links to conflict or peace and any unintended negative consequences.
- Several CSO representatives felt that it was important to introduce conflict sensitivity to the beneficiary communities, to enable them to identify when they think an intervention in their area may exacerbate conflict – or indeed how best an intervention can promote peace. One suggestion from REDROC was to train ‘CSA ambassadors’ in each community, who could take the lead on ensuring that all future interventions in their area are conflict-sensitive.
- Learning about conflict sensitivity had a more individual impact on some participants, who saw the principles of conflict sensitivity as applying not only applied to programming, but to the entire way an organisation works and also to them as individuals. They questioned their own biases and subjectivity that they did not previously acknowledge, and committed to be more aware of this in future, while taking responsibility for the conflict impact of their projects.

Some participants picked one or two CSA principles, like the importance of participation, and assumed that since they were already working in a participatory way, they were therefore being conflict-sensitive. However, CSA is about consistently applying a conflict lens to one’s work – even participatory work can have a negative conflict impact if conflict dynamics are not well understood and for instance, only one of two conflicting groups participate in consultations. At the same time, it is worthwhile to build on similarities between CSA principles and what organisations are already doing, as it makes it easier for them to integrate CSA.

### Influencing others to be conflict-sensitive

The dual approach of capacity-building on conflict sensitivity whilst influencing local government policies and programmes, provided additional learning to CSO participants in particular.



**BOX 4 Realising the added value of CSA to a Participatory Rural Appraisal (RPA) programme: an example from SEFORT in Arua**

SEFORT is a local organisation in Arua, which has been working with PRA methodologies for about 15 years. After participating in one of the project trainings on conflict-sensitive development and one of the dialogue meetings, the SEFORT representative decided to investigate the potential added value of CSA to their work. As SEFORT have interpreted it, PRA-based programmes deal with community-based issues in a collective manner, using a local facilitator. However, this approach does not include explicitly analysing the situation from a conflict perspective or considering the potential conflict issues that could arise. Nor does PRA seek to unpack the specific actors affecting a given context and the motivations, needs and/or power dynamics that may be influencing their behaviour. For SEFORT, CSA is an approach that has the potential to help them better understand, and plan in accordance to, the conflict context in which they work. They therefore believe adopting CSA as well will improve programme design and ultimately programme success. For SEFORT, learning about the differences between their own version of PRA, and CSA, has been a learning experience in itself. And, having been convinced of the added value of CSA, SEFORT are planning to conduct CSA trainings for the entire organisation.

Some CSO participants in Arua admitted to having never considered it necessary to understand policy-making or build relationships with local leaders or other key individuals to influence district-level programming. By sharing experiences on conflict-sensitive projects and learning more about conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive programming, they came to realise the potential benefit of such relationships to their work.

The district dialogue and awareness-raising activities, the CSA coalition meetings and their increased participation at district meetings contributed significantly to the understanding of some participants of district decision-making processes and how best to influence them. In both Arua and Kasese, district local government was enthusiastic about more CSO involvement in promoting CSA and felt that experiences from the field (that can be shared by CSOs) are crucial to informing district development plans and programme implementation.

# 6

## Conclusion

The experiences outlined in this report clearly indicate the complexities of implementing conflict-sensitive development at different levels. They also highlight the importance of understanding the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries of development, and what contribution each of the actors involved in this endeavour can make to peaceful development on the ground.

This work in Uganda provides us both with some answers and with more questions about the most effective ways in which a conflict-sensitive approach can promote peaceful development and what types of conflicts it can help to address. Perhaps one way of analysing its potential is to consider how conflict sensitivity addresses different types of conflict causes. For example, adopting conflict sensitivity helped prevent triggers of violent conflict in Kasese by enlarging the scheme and approving a second one to serve all Mahango and Rukoki residents. It also helped to tackle proximate/accelerating causes of conflict by stopping the politicisation of the gravity flow scheme in Kasese which was used to escalate socio-political divisions. And it contributed to addressing structural/underlying conflict causes by improving the relationship of distrust that existed between Nyai community in Arua and the district local government through accountable and participatory service delivery.

But the areas where CSA accompaniment work took place in Arua and Kasese do not seem to be at immediate risk of large-scale violent conflict, even though undertaking CSA has clearly generated some benefit. More sharing of lessons from different types of conflict situations is needed in order to explore some of these questions in more depth.

Similarly, this project aimed to take forward thinking and practice of conflict-sensitive sector assistance – a relatively new field where a lot still needs to be learned. Saferworld is committed to continuing work on sector-related conflict sensitivity in a variety of sectors.

**A boy drinks from his jerry  
can in Kasese** →

KATIE HARRIS



While this particular project is coming to an end, important policy commitments and practical steps have been taken in Arua and Kasese that sow the seeds for ongoing implementation of conflict sensitivity – both within civil society and at the district government level. It now remains for the national level sector actors to capitalise on this learning and ensure that water delivery across Uganda promotes peace while effectively addressing water needs.

## Acronym list

<b>ADLG</b>	Arua District Local Government	<b>O&amp;M</b>	operation and maintenance
<b>CBO</b>	community-based organisation	<b>PIC</b>	Project Implementation Committee
<b>CECORE</b>	Center for Conflict Resolution	<b>PMC</b>	Project Management Committee
<b>CSA</b>	conflict-sensitive approaches	<b>PRA</b>	participatory rural appraisals
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organisation	<b>REDROC</b>	Rwenzori Development and Research Centre
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo	<b>TSC</b>	Tap Stand Committees
<b>DWO</b>	District Water Office	<b>UNHCR</b>	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>GFS</b>	gravity flow scheme	<b>UNRF</b>	Uganda National Rescue Front
<b>GTZ</b>	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit	<b>USh</b>	Uganda Shilling
<b>INGOs</b>	international non-governmental organisations	<b>WMC</b>	Water Management Committee
<b>KDLG</b>	Kasese District Local Government	<b>WNBf</b>	West Nile Bank Front
<b>LC I–V</b>	Local Council I to V	<b>WUC</b>	Water User Committee
<b>LRA</b>	Lord's Resistance Army	<b>YODEO</b>	Youth Development Organisation – Arua
<b>NUSAF</b>	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund		

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- Various project notes and reports from different activities between October 2006 and March 2008, as well as interview notes (see list of interviewees).

## List of interviewees

### Kasese

The consultant conducted a series of interviews with representatives from REDROC and the DWO, during two visits to Kasese: 10–14 March 2008 and 21–27 March 2008. These were followed up by meetings in Kampala with REDROC staff on 23 April 2008, and with telephone conversations and email communications to verify information collected within the field. Interviewees included:

- Jackie Mbambu, Accompaniment Officer, REDROC
- Emmanuel Sikiryabosi, Coordinator, REDROC
- Charles Police Mugisa, Board Member, REDROC
- Lambert Olweny, District Water Officer/KDLG Water Engineer
- Mary Bwambale, Kagando Rural Development Centre (KARUDEC)
- Timothy Balikenga, Information Officer, Bwera Information Centre (BIC)
- William Nzoghu, Programme Officer, Kasese District Development Network (KADDENET)
- Alice, Kasese District Development Network (KADDENET)
- Paul Kamalha, Good Hope Foundation
- Habibu, Bwera Gravity Flow Scheme and Chairperson of Mid-Western Umbrella for Water and Sanitation
- Wilson Asaaba, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Kasese District Local Government
- Representative from Mt Rwenzori Initiative for Rural Development (MIRUD)
- Tumwine Yasin, Coordinator, National Youth Organisation for Development (NAYODE)

### Arua

The consultant conducted a series of interviews with representatives from YODEO, the DWO and Nyai community, during two visits to Arua, 20–24 February 2008, and 2–6 March 2008. These were followed up by telephone conversations and email communications to verify information collected within the field. Interviewees included:

- Gladys Adiru Drasi, Accompaniment Officer, YODEO (meetings conducted throughout the two visits)
- Cosmos Adomati, Coordinator, BIRUDEAS
- Mercy Letharu, District Water Officer, Software, on 22 February and 5 March 2008.  
Plus phone interview on 28 April 2008
- Albert Orijabo, District Water Officer, Senior Engineer, on 23 February and 5 March.  
Plus phone interview on 29 April 2008
- The consultant held a Community Consultation Meeting in Nyai, open to all community members in Nyai village on 21 February 2008
- Nyai Parish Nurse/WUC Chairperson, and Parish Chief on 21 February 2008 and 23 February 2008
- Robert Anguzu, District Development Office, Arua District Local Government
- Samuel Eduni, Coordinator, ARIPEZU
- Charles Waga, Coordinator, MAFORD
- Sammy Owama, Coordinator, Arua Rural Community Development (ARCOD)
- C Embatia, Chairman, SEFORT
- Martin Andama, Executive Director, Participatory Initiative for Real Development (PRID)
- Betty Omuk, Expert for Conflict Management, GOPA/GTZ
- Kulanyi Rashidah, SNV, on 18 February 2008 (in Kampala)

## Endnotes

- 1 A forthcoming report by Saferworld and CECORE for the sector annual review will consider some of these issues in more detail.
- 2 For more detail on how this plays out in some minority rights projects, see CARE and Saferworld, *Conflict Analysis in Kasese District: The Interface Between Queen Elizabeth National Park and Adjacent Communities*, May 2007
- 3 Kasese District Local Government, *Kasese District Development Plan 2007/8–2009/10*.
- 4 This begins with Local Council (LC) I at the village level, LC II at the parish level, LC III at the sub-county level, LC IV at the county level and finally LC V at the district level.
- 5 These were extracted from meeting notes, project activity reports and documentation on the process of accompanying the Kiywebe GFS and supplemented by interviews with the DWO/KDLG Water Engineer, Lambert Olweny on 26 March 2008.
- 6 Culminating in the community consultation and participatory conflict analysis meeting on 31 January 2007.
- 7 These are the results of bottom-up, participatory planning processes, indicating where people would like taps or other installations to be constructed.
- 8 The areas un-served by Kiywebe GFS were later to become served by a similar GFS named Mukole GFS.
- 9 Interview with DWO/KDLG Water Engineer, 26 March 2008.
- 10 The terminology of 'dividers' and 'connectors' was first introduced through the Do No Harm methodology. For more information, cf. [www.cdainc.com](http://www.cdainc.com).
- 11 And apparently even demonstrated in practice how water cannot flow uphill.
- 12 It is believed that there are still rebel groups or remnants of such in the DRC, who could pose future security threats to Uganda.
- 13 The term 'hardware' refers to actual construction, while 'software' refers to working with communities, training, consultations etc.
- 14 The FDC is one of the opposition political parties, while the NRM is the ruling party.
- 15 Tap Stand Committees are formed for each tap stand, from members of the community who reside nearby. Their role is to monitor the O&M aspects of the tap stands and assist the PIC/PMC in collecting user fees.
- 16 This was identified during the 6 December 2007 community meeting to follow up on the software activities.
- 17 The initial capital contributions being paid were 40,000 US\$ per tap stand, an average of 1,000 US\$ per household (about 0.61 US\$).
- 18 This was raised at the 6 December 2007 meeting to follow up on software activities.
- 19 Gersony, Robert, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda Results of a Field-Based Assessment of the Civil Conflicts in Northern Uganda*, 1997.
- 20 Refugee Law Project, *Negotiating Peace: Resolution of Conflicts in Uganda's West Nile Region*, June 2004.
- 21 Arua District Local Government, Government of Uganda, *Arua District Water and Sanitation Section Annual Workplan and Budget and Three Year Development Plan 2006/7–2008/9*, prepared June 2006.
- 22 Omuk, Betty. *Case Study – Management of resource-based conflict in refugee hosting communities*, 2007, for GTZ/GOPA.
- 23 Omuk (2007)
- 24 The hardware component of the Nyai borehole construction was 3 days' work in total, spread over 2.5 weeks.
- 25 According to the District Water Officer, it was one year, but according to the Parish Chief and the WUC Chair, it was 2–3 years, interviews with the District Water Officer on 22 February, 5 March and 29 April, and with the Parish Chief and WUC Chair on 21 and 23 February 2008.
- 26 As shared during the consultation meeting with Nyai residents on 21 February 2008
- 27 The agreed schedule was 7–10 am and 4–6 pm.
- 28 This is about US\$110.
- 29 As shared during the consultation meeting with Nyai residents on 21 February 2008
- 30 This was in October 2006.
- 31 The GOPA/GTZ programme – see box 1
- 32 CARE International and Saferworld, *Conflict Analysis in Kasese District: The Interface Between Queen Elizabeth National Park and Adjacent Communities*, May 2007.
- 33 Interview with the DWO/KDLG Water Engineer, on 26 March 2008
- 34 Lessons from this work are not included here, but are reflected in other project publications, namely Saferworld and CECORE, *Water provision as a peacebuilding tool: Developing a conflict-sensitive approach to water delivery in Uganda*, June 2008, [http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/325/water\\_provision\\_as\\_a\\_peacebuilding\\_tool](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/325/water_provision_as_a_peacebuilding_tool) and a forthcoming publication targeting the water and sanitation sector annual review process.
- 35 For example, over 300 people attended the ground-breaking ceremony on 24 August 2007. According to the Kasese DWO, this is much more than what they would normally see.
- 36 These were highlighted by the DWO/KDLG Water Engineer and Community Mobilisation Officers, interviews during the field trips in March 2008
- 37 The term is often used to describe 'organisations' that actually consist of one person, i.e. has very little or no organisational structures or resources (human or otherwise).
- 38 Africa Peace Forum (APFO), Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE), Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), International Alert and Saferworld, *Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace building. A resource pack*, 2004.

## Profiles of organisations



The Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) is a not-for-profit NGO founded in 1995 to promote alternative and creative means of preventing, managing, and resolving conflict.



Rwenzori Development and Research Centre (REDROC) is a non profit making organisation which works to contribute to the improved livelihoods of the disadvantaged groups of people in the Rwenzori region.



Saferworld is an independent non-governmental organisation that works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote cooperative approaches to security.

We work with governments, international organisations and civil society to encourage and support effective policies and practices through advocacy, research and policy development and through supporting the actions of others.



Youth Development Organisation – Arua (YODEO – Arua) is a registered NGO aiming to promote peace and development for all the people of Arua. YODEO works in the water sector on community mobilisation and conflict-sensitive development.

Development projects impact on the lives of beneficiaries both in predictable and unpredictable ways. In societies in conflict, they can inadvertently contribute to divisions or unintentionally fuel violence, or they can help address the causes of conflict.

This report documents how two water projects in Uganda became more conflict-sensitive, and as a result, brought many additional benefits to the recipient communities. It highlights the experience and lessons learned from promoting conflict-sensitive development in two water projects, and seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how these approaches can be used by development actors in water and other sectors.



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