

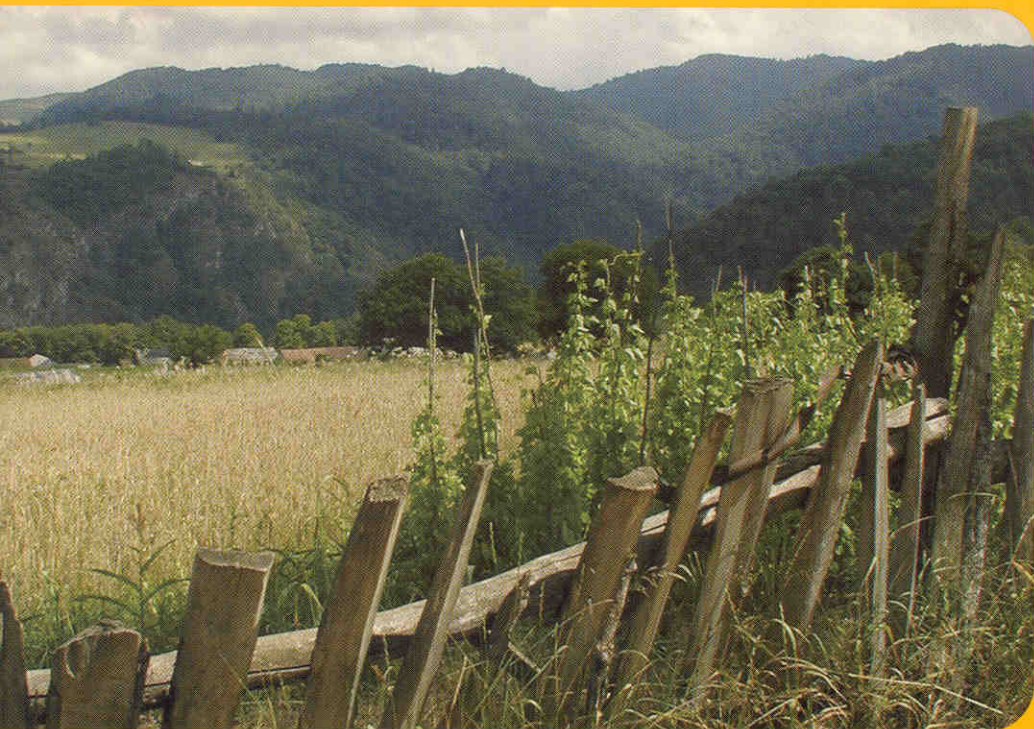
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# Development of a Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment for Communities in the South Caucasus



SLE CENTRE FOR ADVANCED TRAINING IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT



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## **Executive Summary**

### **The Background**

Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), a monitoring and evaluation tool focusing on peace and conflict impacts, has been a result of intensified endeavours in development cooperation since the 1990s in the field of conflict transformation and peace building. It is seen as a helpful instrument to monitor the activities and interventions of political decision-makers and development agencies with regard to their work's impacts on peace and conflict in the environment. The Programme to Promote Food Security, Regional Cooperation and Stability in the South Caucasus (FRCS) implemented by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) with the Ministry of Social Welfare in Armenia, the Ministry of Economic Development in Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Georgia have seen the development of a PCIA as necessary in order for their local partners to implement projects in a conflict sensitive manner.

FRCS is a food security programme with strong components of crisis prevention and conflict transformation working in the conflict prone environment of the South Caucasus. It gives meaningful subsistence materials and fosters professional skill development among local government institutions, civil society and political decision-makers with the hope to contribute to peaceful social and economic development.

The PCIA was to be assimilated into the project management operations of local Community Unions (CUs). CUs are regional associations of elected officials. Monetary support for their activities is provided initially by FRCS and other donors to carry out small projects mainly in the sectors of infrastructure, agriculture and capacity building. The CU approach introduced by FRCS means supporting civil society through NGO interventions with empowerment, responsibility, and ownership.

A local entry-point and participatory approach were chosen by the SLE team for the PCIA development in order to leave responsibility for local conflict transformation and peace-building in the hands of local actors and create ownership for the process and the developed tool.

## The Key Questions

With this in mind a number of key questions were set down to frame the work on the PCIA:

1. How can the present peace and conflict situation be characterised with special focus on its impacts on the local population?
2. What are the assumed impacts that the activities of the CUs have on peace and conflict and vice versa?
3. What are the suitable indicators to make these impacts observable and measurable?
4. What are suitable methods for developing a practical PCIA at the community level in the present context of the South Caucasus?
5. How can all important stakeholders be incorporated in the development and implementation of a PCIA?

## The Steps

The preparatory phase in Berlin had a strong focus on the analysis of the project region. It served to get a deeper understanding of the overall political, economic and cultural setting of the three countries. Substantial background information was gathered through a number of discussions with experts who have been working in the project region or been involved in the project with different assignments. This preparation helped to identify tensions, conflicts and peace potentials and their dynamics while looking at the similarities and differences between the three countries. Based on this information a first set of impact hypotheses was developed which were meant to be checked using interview guidelines designed at a later stage of the process. A general outline of the field research including the selection of working partners and stakeholders, methodologies, interview partners, logistic planning and team design served as a point of reference for the field work in the South Caucasus.

The major challenge in the field phases was to make the developed concept applicable to the local context. Furthermore, the relevance of generating awareness in the local communities about peace and conflict issues became more and more obvious while working in the field. This was a fact that had far reaching adjustments to the interview and workshop design as a consequence. The development of a PCIA can not be separated from awareness creation. The sensitisation of CUs to tensions and conflicts was part of the ongoing activities of the SLE team. The reflection of the CU projects in relation to peace and conflict through interviews, focus group discussions, workshops and

presentations were activities which raised this awareness. This constituted the framework for the assessment of local positions to peace and conflict in the project region, the identification of peace and conflict fields and of the population's peace needs. This served as a basis for the establishment of impact hypotheses (intended and unintended, positive and negative) and indicators for the work of the CUs with their relevant stakeholders.

The transfer of results and responsibility for the PCIA testing and implementation process to FRCS staff, local trainers and CU members was undertaken through a workshop and presentation with representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

## **The Results**

Local definitions of peace and conflict: Local residents had a varied understanding of what the terms peace and conflict were about. Especially in the post war context in the region conflict was often defined as "open" violence and referred mostly to frictions at the national level. Following that, local residents described peace as the "absence" of open violence. Other definitions were much closer to the academic understanding of peace and conflict used in the concept of PCIA. Here conflict is defined as differences of opinions between two persons or groups of persons. Peace is defined as mutual understanding and the ability to work through conflict. This includes day-to-day conflicts at the local level.

Peace and conflict fields: The information gathered during the conflict analysis led to the identification of the five most striking peace and conflict fields which were defined as: struggle for power, access to resources, corruption, information and transparency and regional cooperation. For Kvemo Kartli in Georgia with its ethnically heterogeneous population, cultural diversity was identified as an additional peace and conflict field.

Impact hypotheses and indicators: Based on the experience made at the local level with projects that had already been implemented, impact hypotheses were developed for each of the defined peace and conflict fields. An emphasis was put on the positive intended impacts, those impacts that CUs wish to achieve through their projects, but unintended negative ones were also included in the list. In order to keep the resulting monitoring system practical, emphasis was put on a small number of impact hypotheses with an indicator attached to each peace and conflict field. A second set of Community Union level indicators was established which serves to observe the broader trends of impacts of the CUs' work over time.

The monitoring system: The core of the monitoring system is a set of check lists which

serves as a basis for collecting information on each of the indicators. Check lists exist for the different sectors the CUs are working in: infrastructure, agriculture, capacity building and food for-work measures. Separate versions of the lists were developed for projects in Kwemo Kartli where cultural diversity had been identified as a peace and conflict field which does not exist to such an extent in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The information gathered with these check lists will be analysed using evaluation sheets which indicate changes in the peace and conflict situation occurring due to CU interventions.

Recommendations were given to the CUs for the interpretation and incorporation of PCIA results into their project management cycle and for the reflection on overall CU approaches and processes.

The manuals: The monitoring system is designed as a manual with instructions for the monitoring process and references for evaluation. In addition, a trainers' manual gives guidelines for the training of monitoring officers and adapting the suggested PCIA after testing. The manuals were handed over to the three FRCS offices and accepted by representatives of the CUs from the three countries for testing and implementation.

### **Reflecting on the Concept and Applicability of PCIA**

The SLE team's experience has shown that the development of a practical PCIA with applicability at the local level requires that all persons involved in the development and use of the PCIA must be sensitive to conflict and peace issues. Notwithstanding time constraints, the creation of awareness among the local populations is a critical point for successful implementation and must be seen as an important process which needs to be integrated into the development of a PCIA.

It was also noted that it is tempting to integrate as many components as identified into the PCIA (especially the peace and conflict fields) and to take any local or regional specificity into account. With this, the PCIA easily becomes too complex and sophisticated for implementation. In order to keep the PCIA practical, one needs to prioritise and focus constantly; the number of issues to be observed must be limited. Furthermore, the instrument must leave room for easy adjustments by the local users to changed circumstances or new priorities and needs.

The assessment of impacts of the conflict environment on development projects (risk monitoring) can be a part of a PCIA. It was included as an option in the operating manual. It was also determined however that existing knowledge among the local population concerning the risks the environment holds for them was quite high. Integrating the local knowledge from the onset is recommended.

It is always desirable to work in a participatory manner. Participatory PCIA development has its opportunities depending on the local context, after all the PCIA is to be owned and implemented by local people and is being developed to support local level projects. But limitations exist because of the complexity of the tasks to be done, the time needed, the cultural differences between groups, the sensitivity of the subject of conflict, and the level of commitment and diverging interests of local stakeholders. Many of these constraints can be overcome if time is taken and if team members are experienced in working with conflict and differences of opinions. The SLE team saw this as a positive and necessary part of the work and this attitude allowed for a supportive participative process.

Taking into account the potentials and limitations of PCIA mentioned above, it is a useful tool for development initiatives working in or on conflict and peace. The development of a PCIA involving local stakeholders is an opportunity to open the floor for discussions around peace and conflict related topics. Once the PCIA is put to use it can serve as an important instrument to generate and analyse information and to create awareness on development impacts on conflict environments and peaceful civil societies. Thus it can assist decision-makers to adapt their work to such environments.