5 Conflict-Sensitive Programming Across the Project Life Cycle

Design, Implementation, and Completion

This section highlights entry points for conflict-sensitive programming across the project life cycle. It draws upon experiences with projects supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the broader literature on conflict-sensitive programming. Its subsections address project design, implementation, closure, and evaluation and learning. Appendix 5.1, at the end of the chapter, presents the projects discussed in Chapter 5.

Project Design

Conflict-sensitive project design comprises four key steps: context analysis, consultation, the development of specific conflict-sensitive measures, and budgeting. These are discussed in turn, with particular reference to experience from GEF projects, supplemented by international good practice.

Context Analysis

Context analysis—including conflict analysis, environmental and social impact assessments, and stakeholder identification and analysis—is essential to informing project design. Generally, GEF projects already undertake stakeholder identification and analysis and environmental and social impact assessments; conflict analysis is less common. Several existing tools guide conflict analysis (UK Department for International Development, 2012);[1] these emphasize analyzing the profile (character), causes (structural, proximate, and trigger), actors (their interests, goals, positions, capacities, and relationships), and dynamics (current trends, possible scenarios, and opportunities for change) of a given conflict. The International Institute for Sustainable Development adds a further dimension, advising practitioners to consider what types of conflict may affect their work; examples include human/wildlife, park/people, institutional, protected area resource access, transboundary, intercommunity, political, and benefit distribution (Hammill et al., 2009). Once categories of risks are identified, project proponents can create priority criteria and rank their identified conflicts before brainstorming potential mitigation strategies.

Currently, the GEF asks proponents to account for possible risks through the use of risk tables in Project Identification Forms. These tables require project

proponents to enumerate potential risks to achieving their proposed objectives and strategies for risk mitigation. However, the Project Identification Form does not require consideration of risks related to fragility or conflict. In a review of Project Identification Forms for 62 GEF projects in situations affected by major armed conflict, about two thirds of projects identified conflict as a risk, and about half of the projects proposed measures to manage conflict-related risks.

The GEF Secretariat gives additional attention to conflict-related risks when reviewing projects proposed for funding under the Least Developed Country Fund and Special Climate Change Fund. For projects in fragile and conflict-affected states, the GEF Secretariat reviews project proposals to these funds with an expectation of reference to conflict risk and associated mitigation strategies. Interviews with GEF Secretariat staff members indicated that when proposals to these funds lack these elements, the proponent is generally contacted and requested to address conflict-related risks. Such consideration during project review appears less common for other GEF funding streams. However, some GEF agencies have created their own tools to standardize conflict-risk assessment in project design. For example, according to agency staff, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Conservation International have found that such tools and practices are necessary for properly managing risk in their portfolios, applying standardized methods across all projects, including those they have taken on with the GEF. For example, the African Development Bank (AfDB) has systematized the application of the "fragility lens" and a Country Resilience and Fragility Assessment (CRFA) tool to integrate considerations of fragility into Country Strategy Papers and Bank operations (AfDB, 2018).

Consultation

Agency staff designing GEF projects often consult with stakeholders. Consultation during project design broadens support for project implementation. It is also important because stakeholders often hold contextual information that cannot be obtained through desk research; hence, project design is usually more appropriate when stakeholders are consulted. For example, when implementing the project Mainstreaming Biodiversity Management into Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Production Processes in Lebanon,[2] project staff realized that the sites they had selected during design were actually not suited to their goals. They then had to undertake a thorough study to choose new sites. As part of this study, they involved local communities to inquire about their cultivation practices, an important element of the project's implementation. They also reached out to the Lebanese military for more information on the location of cluster bombs. This consultation with the military allowed the project team to actively avoid sites that would pose major security concerns to their staff.

Some projects implemented by UNDP have used a participatory process to develop a Map of Risks and Resources, according to interviews with agency staff. This involves a participatory approach with community members and laying out the significant risks and assets associated with the project site. UNDP Lebanon

adapted the Map of Risks and Resources tool, creating a local version known as Mechanism of Stability and Resilience. This version begins with the same participatory approach but further accounts for existing tensions in the community identified by the project staff and local NGOs. UNDP has leveraged its experience with this process to create reports encouraging other development agencies to take up similar practices (UNDP, 2003).

Development of Specific Conflict-Sensitive Measures

Based on the information from the context analysis—particularly the conflict analysis—GEF agencies have included a range of conflict-sensitive measures in project design. In some cases, this has meant modifying the project site or activities; in others, it has entailed the addition of specific measures such as scenario planning and contingency plans. This section discusses the broad range of conflict-sensitive measures.

GEF projects operating in fragile and conflict-affected countries have introduced five broad strategies to address risks related to conflict and fragility: the use of moderate objectives, flexible design, stakeholder engagement, dispute resolution, and engaging local customary norms and institutions.

In several instances, projects in fragile and conflict-affected settings have sought to establish realistic project objectives. In interviews, numerous key informants have emphasized the importance of this, especially in fragile and conflict-affected situations. These informants stressed that projects in such settings often needed to emphasize institution building, capacity building, and generally creating an enabling environment for interventions.

Some GEF projects have built in increased flexibility to address shifting dynamics associated with fragility and conflict. As such, creating space to be flexible is important to a project's survival. The project Support to the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation's Program for the Rehabilitation of the DRC's National Parks Network,[3] implemented by the World Bank, provides a useful example of simple and flexible project design. The project was approved in 2007, just a few years following the end of the Second Congo War and one year after the adoption of the current constitution (Cooper, 2013; Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). Project planning documents stated explicitly that the "current post-conflict and reunification context of the [DRC] calls for simple and flexible project design" (GEF, 2006, p. 15). Keeping this in mind, the proponents chose to focus on limited activities in a few locations. They also included time in the projected schedule for annual coordination meetings to adapt their project activities to the evolving conflict context. Notably, the choice to pursue this model was influenced by the proponents' dedication to learning from past projects implemented in this context. The project's documentation explains the rationale for the project design and uses lessons learned from past projects instituted by the World Bank, UNDP, and the GEF to help develop an inclusive and flexible model (GEF, 2006). In another example, the Burundi Agricultural Rehabilitation and Support Project[4] utilized different mechanisms to build in increased flexibility at the design phase. The project underwent

a careful process to select its project sites and limited localities to ensure better manageability. One of the project components focused on the selection, funding, and implementation of a variety of "subprojects." The project design included an extensive list of criteria to use in evaluating the potential subprojects. One criterion was for subprojects to be classified as "lacking in conflict" or "stable" prior to approval, giving project staff the option to reject subprojects they deemed too risky (GEF IEO, 2012a, p. 8).

GEF projects often rely on increased stakeholder participation to address conflict-related impacts. Some projects sought to involve stakeholders throughout the design and implementation stages. For example, the Congo Basin Strategic Program's Forest and Nature Conservation Project,[5] which was implemented in the DRC shortly after the country's 2008 peace agreement with Rwanda, incorporated local partners heavily into its project design to accommodate the rapidly changing conditions in the country. Recognizing the likelihood of lasting instability, the project adopted a "a simple and flexible design, involving partnerships with local and international NGOs that have continued to work on the ground during the recent conflicts and have the capacity to suspend and restart operations quickly" (GEF, 2008, p. 6). The proponents leveraged the experience of local organizations to improve project resilience.

Similarly, documents for another project in the DRC, Improved Management and Restoration of Agro-sylvo-pastoral Resources in the Pilot Province of South-Kivu,[6] identified that civil insecurity outbreaks would pose a significant risk that "cannot be mitigated by the project" (GEF, 2018b, p. 3). Accordingly, project staff used participatory approaches to address conflict where they could. For example, a participatory approach to land management both advanced the project's environmental objectives and sought to decrease the prevalence of conflict resulting from land disputes. Project staff stated in interviews that they believed transferring greater ownership of the project to local entities would improve its conflict resilience and its ability to operate in insecure contexts.

The project Developing an Integrated Protected Area System for the Cardamom Mountains[7] anticipated that project activities might face risk from the previous "protracted period of political turmoil" in the Cardamom region of Cambodia (GEF, 2001, p. 20). Its documents also identified concerns that vested interests in illegal logging and wildlife trade might hinder stakeholder support for the project. As a result, the project design included "stakeholder participation at all levels" as a "cornerstone of project implementation" (GEF, 2001, p. 20). According to its evaluation, the project was ultimately able to use stakeholder participation to address these risks: It achieved significant community buy-in and was able to improve law enforcement regarding illegal logging and wildlife trade both through outreach to the Ministry of Environment's rangers and through community-level law enforcement efforts (GEF, 2007, p. iii). Also in Cambodia, a project sought to engage with stakeholders who posed potential risks to the project's success, including unavoidable interactions with the Cambodian military (GEF, 2004b, p. 30).[8] To help manage this, the project laid out programming to increase investment by the military in project outcomes, including holding "environmental education awareness-raising

for armed forces" and increasing military involvement in local law enforcement efforts (GEF, 2004b, p. 32). Interviews with the project staff revealed that these activities helped create greater loyalty to the project among the members of the military that they worked with, aiding in project activities.

GEF projects have sometimes used peaceful dispute resolution as a risk mitigation mechanism. Although projects generally preferred to avoid conflict, some were able to leverage their connections to various stakeholders to actively reduce conflict risks through project design. For example, in preparing the project Establishing Conservation Areas Landscape Management in the Northern Plains,[9] the project staff worked with the Cambodian government to broker agreements with communities living on the selected project sites. These agreements were created with appropriate measures for land management and prevented the outbreak of conflict or disputes within the wildlife sanctuaries (GEF, 2004b, p. 21). Likewise, the Tonle Sap conservation project[10] anticipated potential threats from conflict in the form of land and resource disputes. To mitigate this, the project design included plans to broker agreements between stakeholder groups (GEF, 2003, p. 28, 2004a, p. 18).

Conflict-sensitive design can draw upon customary approaches and institutions. Such approaches to managing natural resources often have locally appropriate and legitimate means for conflict prevention, management, and resolution (United Nations Department of Political Affairs [UNDPA] and UNEP, 2015; United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action [UNFTPA], 2012a). Projects can thus readily tap into approaches that have been tested and validated. Box 5.1 presents a case study on designing a GEF project that incorporates the Islamic approach of the *hima* in Lebanon.

Budgeting

GEF project staff reported the need for budgeting for contingencies related to fragility and conflict-associated risks. Allowing project budgets to include a line for contingent costs is important to accommodate strategies to manage risks that may or may not materialize.

Several GEF agencies and intergovernmental organizations allow contingency budgeting. The World Bank, UNDP, and others allow for contingency budgeting in their central budgets. UNDP's regulation 13.10, for example, provides that "the Administrator may utilize the budgetary contingency provision of 3 percent of the approved gross appropriations for unforeseen requirements resulting from currency movements, inflation or decisions of the General Assembly" (UNDP, 2000, reg. 13.10). And the World Bank's budget for fiscal year 2020 included a "Corporate Contingency" of $10 million "to support unforeseen priorities and cost pressures" (World Bank, 2019, p. 58). UNDP also provides means for covering expenses when a contributor defaults or "in the face of unforeseen contingencies" by having the national or regional office cover the unexpected expenses (UNDP, 2000, reg. 5.08). However, while contingency costs are common in construction,

Box 5.1   Engaging Customary Approaches for Conservation and Conflict Management—*Hima* in Lebanon

Across the Arab world, the *hima* (or protected area) has been revived as a community-based system of conservation and natural resource management (Serhal, 2019). Rooted within Islamic law, the idea of the *hima* extends back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, who is said to have established a *hima* in the lands surrounding present-day Medina to preserve the area's natural beauty (Verde, 2008). In doing so, the Prophet transformed the landscape into a community asset in which all members of the public had a stake and share. In the latter 20th century, this community-based form of natural resource management was largely overshadowed by westernized systems that emphasized centralized resource governance.

More recently, the *hima* has been revived to encourage sustainable resource use, conservation, and the development of friendly relations among all stakeholders. The *hima* is powerful in part because of the importance that Islam attaches to environmental preservation, which creates a common starting point for people across the Middle East (Abboud, 2018). Its decentralized nature is also significant: The *hima* is predicated on the idea that conflict can be reduced by managing resources at the community level, rather than at a more centralized level (EcoPeace Middle East, 2012). In the words of Assad Serhal, director-general of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon, "the ultimate goal in creating Himas is to bring peace to both humans and wildlife" (Serhal, 2019, p. 85).

The *hima* was introduced into the Lebanon component of the GEF projects Mainstreaming Conservation of Migratory Soaring Birds into Key Productive Sectors along the Rift Valley/Red Sea Flyway, tranches I and II (GEF, 2017c).[a] Recognizing the importance of involving local communities in natural resource management and the conflict resolution potential of the *hima*, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon established Hima Ebel el Saqi in 2004 in southern Lebanon (shown in Figure B.5.1.1) and, in the following year, established Hima Kfar Zabad in the central Bekaa region.

To date, more than 15 *himas* have been established under the two projects, according to project staff, covering a total of more than 3 percent of Lebanon's land territory. These community-managed protected areas have served two important purposes: providing migrating birds with a safe habitat and promoting cooperation between conservationists, hunters, and local people. By bringing together people with disparate priorities—and a shared religion—and aligning them in the pursuit of a common goal, the *hima* functions as an important conflict management tool.

For example, the *hima* provides an opportunity for community members to discuss how conservation and related policies should be implemented while simultaneously encouraging cooperation between groups that is rooted in a

Figure B.5.1.1 Hima Ebel el Saqi

Source: SPNL

common attachment to the land (EcoPeace Middle East, 2012). This function is particularly important in a country such as Lebanon, where sectoral conflict has contributed to decades of fragility and conflict. With these projects, the *hima* has enabled the engagement of people from disparate backgrounds to proceed seamlessly, even while instability has affected the country.

a Project 9491

military projects, and humanitarian operations, relatively few development organizations currently allow contingency costs as a budget line in a project.

Outside the GEF context, the growing interest in resilience—and funding for resilience—seems to be increasing interest in contingency reserves and contingent budgeting. Contingent budgeting is a standard practice for disaster risk reduction (ADB, 2019; FAO, 2016; International Monetary Fund, 2018, 2019; Phaup & Kirschner, 2010; World Health Organization, 2017). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (n.d.) provides the following:

all projects may include a reserve for contingencies not exceeding 4% of the direct project activity costs to allow for adjustments necessary in the light of unforeseen requirements resulting from COVID-19, such as currency

movements, inflation, special programming and emergency issues on the ground during times of sudden unforeseen crisis. It can be used only with the prior written authorization of the UN Trust Fund, upon duly justified request by the Organization.

(para. 12)

The European Commission's Directorate-General for International Coopera-tion and Development (EC DEVCO, 2014) allows the use of contingency reserves under certain circumstances:

A reserve for contingencies and/or possible fluctuations in exchange rates not exceeding 5% of the direct eligible costs may be included in the budget for the Action, to allow for adjustments necessary in the light of unforesee-able changes of circumstances on the ground. It can be used only with the prior written authorisation of the Contracting Authority, upon duly justified request by the Coordinator.

(p. 65)

EC DEVCO (2014) provides additional guidance regarding the conditions for including and using a contingency reserve.

Working in fragile and conflict-affected settings is more expensive, and project budgets should reflect these realities. Staff are more expensive, with hazard and fragility pay for locally appointed staff and priority placement premiums for inter-national staff, additional compensation for eligible staff, and rest and recuperation benefits to enable staff to take breaks away from their duty station (e.g., World Bank, 2020). The costs for security and logistical arrangements are higher. Fragile and conflict-affected situations required more time for consultations to build confi-dence and agreement, necessitating additional labor and security costs. Budgets for conflict-affected and fragile situations need to be able to cover the additional costs of doing business in those settings.

Implementation

Considering the dynamic and fluid nature of fragile and conflict-affected situations, projects must go beyond conflict-sensitive design to implementation. Field Mar-shal Helmuth von Moltke famously noted "No plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force" (often paraphrased as "No plan survives contact with the enemy" [Barnett, 1963, p. 35]). Conservation programming in fragile and conflict-affected situations often struggles similarly in the transition from plan to implementation, requiring ongoing sensitivity, monitor-ing, and adjustment (e.g., FAO, 2019, p. 1; Haider, 2014, p. 9; Hammill et al., 2009; UNDPA & UNEP, 2015, p. 25; UNFTPA, 2012a). Conflict-sensitive implementa-tion can help identify conflict-related risks early so they can be addressed before they escalate; it can also help projects adjust to changing dynamic conditions and prevent projects from exacerbating problems.

To account for the dynamic context, GEF projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations have employed three broad categories of conflict-sensitive implementation measures: ongoing sensitivity in programming, monitoring and early warning, and adjustment. In contrast with the proactive orientation of conflict-sensitive design and planning, conflict-sensitive implementation combines both proactive approaches (such as ongoing sensitivity in planning and monitoring) and reactive approaches (in particular the adjustment of projects). This section outlines these approaches, drawing upon both experiences with GEF projects and the broader literature.

Ongoing Conflict Sensitivity

In fragile or conflict-affected contexts, attention to details can make large differences to successful implementation. Extra care in day-to-day implementation can help avoid and mitigate conflict (International Alert, 2004).

Hiring of staff can generate tensions and undermine project legitimacy if not done in a conflict-sensitive way. In situations with social conflict along ethnic or other identity lines, projects that hire people from only one group can generate tensions (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012; Haider, 2014; Hammill et al., 2009). At the same time, integrating staff from these groups can be delicate, and care needs to be taken—as seen with the hiring of park rangers in Gorongosa National Park in post-conflict Mozambique (Pritchard, 2015). Another source of potential tension is hiring for the higher paid (and higher status) technical jobs, which often go to people who are perceived as outsiders, whether they are from the capital city and not the community or from another country (UNDPA & UNEP, 2015). For these reasons, many GEF projects hire local staff whenever possible and over time build up the capacity of local staff to manage and otherwise staff the higher value jobs.

In fragile and conflict-affected settings, procurement also needs to be undertaken in a conflict-sensitive manner. Procurement rules often seek to ensure that procurement is efficient (going to the lowest bidder) and has integrity (not supporting corruption); they generally do not consider whether the process is conflict sensitive (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012). If members of one group consistently win contracts to provide food, equipment, or services, procurement can reinforce social divisions and generate tensions. At the same time, efforts to bring in all the necessary materials can create a "compound" mentality, aggravating relations with the neighboring communities (UNDPA & UNEP, 2015). Procurement can be made more conflict-sensitive through local procurement, transparent criteria and selection process, inclusion of local community members, and providing feedback to those who did not win the procurement opportunity (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012).

Transparency and communication are central to conflict-sensitive implementation. GEF projects have used a wide range of transparency and communication tools, both to help stakeholders understand the project (its objectives, activities, benefits, and scope) and to enable projects to understand concerns before they escalate to risks that could threaten a project (see Chapter 3). The most effective

communication operates in both directions, from the project to the stakeholders and from the stakeholders to the project, in contrast to public relations and propaganda.

Participation is also central to conflict-sensitive implementation. As noted in Chapter 4, GEF projects have adopted a wide range of participatory approaches to build support and ownership, embed the project within local institutions and processes, and enhance long-term sustainability of the project outcomes.

Some GEF projects have managed unexpected conflict impacts by bringing in new partners. For example, a project focused on reducing conflicting uses in the Artibonite River watershed shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti[11] faced significant difficulty because of political instability (Pallen, 2016). In five years, project staff saw five changes of environment ministers in Haiti and three in the Dominican Republic. For the duration of the project, external issues regarding the movement of refugees led to increasingly tense relations between the two countries. The project was further impeded by the lack of experience of both countries in approaching a binational process to create a water treaty. To address this experience gap and improve relations, the project called upon the government of Mexico to facilitate trainings on such processes for the Haitian and Dominican governments. Assistance from this new partner helped mitigate further conflict between the other parties (Pallen, 2016, pp. 7–8).

Security and the potential use of force are among the most challenging aspects of conflict-sensitive implementation. In some instances, security forces supporting conservation efforts have committed human rights violations, creating serious reputational risk both for the project and for the conservation organization. Efforts to hire ex-combatants as game guards in Mozambique (simultaneously supporting conservation and reintegration) raised serious questions about the risk of the ex-combatants reverting to past behaviors that had harmed local communities and fighting with one another (Pritchard, 2015). The project was able to manage most of the risks, but the park continues to have difficult relationships with the neighboring communities that want to use the resources in the park. Security must be considered: without security forces, competing demands for resources, armed criminal groups, and others can put project staff at physical risk. But efforts to address these security risks have generated serious new risks. For example, a project subject matter expert described providing rangers in the Albertine Rift with automatic weapons and paramilitary training, only to see a number of them join a rebel group when the project funding ended and the government did not adequately pay their salaries. Approaches to managing the risks related to security forces include defining clear security procedures; training in those security procedures; providing means for potentially affected people to easily and confidentially submit complaints of abuses; timely, independent investigation of complaints; and holding security forces accountable (see International Finance Corporation, 2017).

Monitoring and Early Warning

Monitoring is "the continuous or periodic, standardized process of collecting and analyzing data on specific indicators to provide decision-makers, managers, and

stakeholders with information on progress in the achievement of agreed objectives and the use of allocated resources" (GEF, 2019, p. 6). In the context of fragile and conflict-affected states, monitoring is important for three key reasons. First, as with other projects, monitoring helps to track whether project activities are proceeding as planned. Second, because the security and social context in fragile and conflict-affected situations can change dramatically in a short period of time, monitoring helps to ascertain if and when the security situation degrades. Finally, monitoring can help to identify any unexpected negative impacts of the project early on before it becomes a trigger for conflict. All three of these reasons may necessitate adjusting the project activities.

Some GEF projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations have adopted enhanced monitoring systems to track social and conflict dynamics. More robust conflict monitoring allows project implementers to track the changing dynamics of conflict and respond rapidly, before a situation escalates or before there are devastating impacts. Monitoring often relates to the broader security context, but it can also focus on tensions related to the project. The use of these monitoring systems can give project staff more time to prepare for upcoming crises as well as serve as a tool for contingency planning. For example, documents for a project in Burundi noted that "unstable political conditions" posed a significant security risk to the project (GEF, 2016c, p. 30).[12] Before commencing implementation, UNIDO planned to "carefully keep tracking the political conditions in the country" as part of its risk mitigation strategy (GEF, 2016c, p. 30).

Indicators for GEF projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations may appropriately focus more on procedural aspects than environmental outcomes. As noted in Chapter 4, GEF projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations have often had to focus more on basic institutional capacity building to create the necessary enabling conditions for the environmental benefits to be realized. Indicators for such projects accordingly focus more on procedural and institutional aspects and less on environmental outcomes.

Real-time monitoring can support enhanced monitoring in fragile and conflict-affected settings. In situations not affected by fragility or conflict, episodic monitoring may suffice to track progress on a quarterly or annual basis. To be able to respond better to rapidly evolving circumstances, GEF projects could consider adopting a form of real-time monitoring. Real-time monitoring constantly tracks developments, uses both qualitative and quantitative analyses, and draws heavily on local informants (Krummenacher & Schmeidl, 2001).

The experience of the ADB can provide guidance for real-time monitoring in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The ADB Peacebuilding Tool provides a matrix that asks project staff to consider the distribution of power, local acceptance, social capital, traditional institutions, participation of interest groups, intergroup relations, and impacts on differential access to resources (ADB, 2012). ADB recommends using this tool to inform monitoring updates during the implementation phase of a project. Project staff can regularly return to this matrix and assess changes in local conflict dynamics and (if necessary) create new monitoring criteria that address risks revealed by this updated matrix. This ongoing monitoring can

give project staff an opportunity to adjust earlier to evolving issues (ADB, 2012). In assessing pilot testing of the tool in Nepal, ADB noted various indicators that projects can use to monitor the relative security of an area or relative improvements in the conflict context (ADB, 2012).

GEF projects have used early warning systems in tandem with enhanced monitoring to enable project personnel to know about risks before they have escalated and when adjustment is possible. Early warning is "a process that (a) alerts decision makers to the potential outbreak, escalation and resurgence of violent conflict; and (b) promotes an understanding among decision makers of the nature and impacts of violent conflict" (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, 2009, p. 22). These early warning measures can enable staff to know about risks and adjust course in a timely manner—whether that is ensuring staff safety, addressing project-related tensions before they escalate, or otherwise adapting. Organizations such as the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response monitor a series of conflict indicators to help rapidly detect and respond to conflict flare-ups.[13] Some GEF projects operating in fragile and conflict-affected contexts likewise monitor conflict indicators directly or rely on the reports of other groups doing this work. For example, a project in Colombia noted that it will rely on the UN Department for Safety and Security's country risk assessments and will follow its advice regarding the security of project staff (GEF, 2016b, p. 25).[14]

Fragility and conflict can cause difficulty for project staff in accessing the necessary sites and people needed for monitoring. The security risks associated with conflict-affected contexts can sometimes make regular access to a project site difficult or impossible, agency staff have reported. Such irregularities can affect the quality of monitoring data and thus the potential for early warning. Hence, when planning monitoring criteria and practices for a project in these contexts, project proponents should be thoughtful of potential interruptions and suggest alternative criteria and methodologies as contingencies. In some cases, project staff reported using remote monitoring via WhatsApp and other modalities to overcome these impediments.

Some projects that did not account for conflict sensitivity in their monitoring systems faced difficulties during project closure. Although environmental projects often rely more heavily on quantitative and scientific indicators focused on outcomes in the physical environment, a fragile or conflict-affected context often requires the introduction of more socially oriented indicators. As such, traditional conservation indicators alone may be insufficient. For example, the project Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Andes Region[15] was executed by the Instituto Alexander von Humboldt, a biological research institution with more experience in natural sciences than in development work. The project produced substantial scientific data, but its development outputs, including livelihood improvements, were not as robust. The evaluation noted that the "project design had an ineffective M&E system, and it underestimated key financial and political risks to sustainability" (GEF IEO, 2008, p. 7). The ineffective monitoring system weakened the ability of project staff to market and communicate the project results,

leading to an inability to secure further funding to help supplement project closure activities (GEF IEO, 2008, p. 4).

A systematic approach is required for applying standardized tools, processes, and norms for conflict-sensitive monitoring in projects. Monitoring of GEF projects is conducted pursuant to its Policy on Monitoring (GEF, 2019). Although many GEF projects used similar methods of monitoring in fragile and conflict-affected situations, these methods need to be more systematic and allow project staff to feel comfortable changing monitoring criteria to reflect new knowledge, new dynamics, and unintended consequences. Fragile and conflict-affected situations seem to have a higher number of unintended consequences, and many of those are negative. This is due to the greater social cleavages and sensitivities associated with fragile and conflict-affected settings, where modest problems can escalate quickly and in unexpected ways.

Adjustment

One of the most important and difficult steps in conflict-sensitive programming is adjusting projects to reflect developments and learning. It is important both because fragility or conflict can change rapidly, posing new risks to the project, and because monitoring may highlight that a particular activity or approach is not as effective as previously thought. An operational tension may arise between committing to the approved project plan and having the flexibility to adjust to a new reality or to a better understanding of the reality in which the project is being implemented, when procedures to allow for the change in programming are cumbersome and require re-approvals.

GEF projects increasingly anticipate at least the possibility of adjustment. In Afghanistan, for example, project staff established two baseline requirements for activities to continue operating in a given area: continuing "local political support for the project" and "acceptable security in project sites" (UNEP, 2017, p. 34).[16] Throughout the duration of the project, staff monitored for both local support and security. By the review at the project's midpoint, project staff observed:

> security situation . . . has deteriorated significantly in recent months and it may be become difficult or even impossible for the project to engage in this part of Badakshan. In general, in the volatile Afghan context, there is always a certain risk that this can change in the future.
>
> (UNEP, 2017, p. 34)

The inclusion of this reflection indicates that project staff did carry out ongoing monitoring of conflict dynamics and did intend to adjust their activities if necessary.

Some projects have changed project sites, notably when local conflicts began to affect project activities. For example, in Colombia, a project had to relocate and restructure four years after implementation began, in reaction to a growing "situation of social unease" when a "public security situation made it impossible for any of the Project's key partners to work in the area of Las Hermosas" (GEF

IEO, 2012b, p. 9).[17] Consequently, the project had to move operations out of the site specified in the initial project design. The total cost of this disruption and subsequent restructuring was $3.5 million. Notwithstanding the additional costs, the project was able to conclude with satisfactory outcomes (GEF IEO, 2012b, p. 9).

GEF projects have also made adjustments by bringing in new partners and resources. For example, as described earlier, when political tensions between Haiti and the Dominican Republic stalled the Artibonite River Basin project,[18] project staff engaged experts from the Mexican government who were able to facilitate trainings necessary to negotiate and adopt a bilateral water treaty governing the river (Pallen, 2016, pp. 7–8).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of adaptive approaches to GEF programming. Informants in particularly challenging situations stated that before the pandemic, they regularly navigated crises that prevented them from traveling, from meeting, and from undertaking other activities essential to GEF programming. The adaptive approaches they had adopted for programming generally enabled them to adapt to the emerging pandemic and thereby continue to advance their projects. The GEF STAP has noted that "reforming the GEF rules and procedures to allow for more adaptive programming in fragile and conflict-affected situations can make GEF programming more resilient in pandemics and other crises" (2018, p. ix).

Project Completion

Project completion practices are important to ensuring the sustainability of a project's benefits over the long term. Benefits that are not sustained beyond the life of the project yield few, if any, global environmental benefits. It matters little how many trees are planted to fight land degradation if the vast majority die (The New Humanitarian, 2008). Although a project may only last a few years, it can take a significantly longer period of time for a project's impacts to be consolidated. For example, the project Unlocking Biodiversity Benefits through Development Finance in Critical Catchments[19] was budgeted and approved for four years of operations; however, the improvements and impacts on South Africa's biodiversity the project envisioned would likely take ten years or more (GEF IEO, 2019). Closure is particularly important in fragile and conflict-affected situations, where attention often focuses on institution building, capacity building, and otherwise creating an enabling environment; gains realized during the project must be sustained for the global environmental benefits of the project to be sustained (Hammill et al., 2009).

Conflict-related impacts often delay project closure. A variety of factors connected to conflict dynamics can lead to delays throughout the life of a project, ultimately leading to delayed closure. Conflict can cause difficulty for project staff in accessing project sites or make sites inaccessible for periods of time. Building trust also is often more difficult in conflict-affected communities.

Projects need to plan for and create the conditions for a smooth transition. This includes ensuring that local structures are in place to sustain the benefits of the project after the project funding ends and project staff leave. Project staff should

consider early on when project activities can be transitioned to local organizations or institutions and work with these partners to create the necessary capacity for the transition. Planning should start at the design stage, with measures undertaken throughout the project (FAO, 2006; UNDP, n.d.).

Building relationships with local institutions early in the project can ease transitions. By identifying local institutions that can carry on project operations early, project staff have a greater opportunity to orient aspects of the project activities to suit the transition to the future partner (FAO, 2006). Likewise, local institutions have more opportunity to become familiar with the activities they will assume responsibility for. This additional time can help to improve the fit between the project and the local community, strengthen the local investment in project success, and improve sustainability. Along with building relationships, a project may also need to build the local capacity for problem solving related to project activities. Project staff can collaborate with local stakeholders to create an action plan that includes post-closure activities to prepare for a smooth transition (FAO, 2006).

Communicating the transition strategy to all stakeholders early on can help to manage expectations. Ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of the plan and their potential role in it can help to create a smoother transition (FAO, 2006). As with early relationship building, communicating and coordinating early in the project can yield additional benefits. A longer timeline for communication creates opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and for plans to be adjusted accordingly.

Evaluation and Learning

Evaluation of projects in fragile and conflict-affected in environments can be particularly challenging (Menkhaus, 2004; Nanthikesan & Uitto, 2012; Pearson d'Estrée, 2019b; Woodrow & Jean, 2019). Understanding conflict dynamics requires a complex systems view (Patton, 2010, 2020; Pearson d'Estrée, 2019a): An evaluation must consider multiple actors, interests, and interactions. Attributing the effects of a project can be challenging, leading to a shift of emphasis on contribution rather than attribution (Patton, 2020; Pearson d'Estrée, 2019b). Moreover, projects in fragile and conflict-affected settings lack counterfactuals (i.e., a comparable situation without fragility or conflict), complicating causality to a particular actor or intervention. Time also complicates evaluations: Fragile and conflict-affected situations change frequently and rapidly, and the effects of a project may not manifest themselves or be consolidated until years after a project has closed. For example, in the context of land degradation, the GEF IEO has observed that "a lag time of 4.5–5.5 years was an important inflection point at which impacts were observed to be larger in magnitude" (2018, p. ix).

Tailoring evaluation to conflict-affected and fragile contexts is important (Nanthikesan & Uitto, 2012; Woomer, 2018). In recognition of the complexity and dynamism of programming in fragile and conflict-affected situations, evaluators have shifted to using an adaptive management framework for framing evaluation (Woodrow & Jean, 2019). Further, evaluations have increasingly focused on

theories of change, rather than on quantitative metrics (Patton, 2020). Evaluators and program staff working in these fluid settings have noted that evaluators may miss important considerations if they adhere rigidly to a theory of change constructed in the project design phase, years prior to current conditions. Considering the complexity and dynamic nature of situations affected by fragility and conflict, rigid theories of change may not be appropriate in such situations. Accordingly, some evaluators have developed an open theory of change that considers the project's broader context over time (Uitto, 2019).

Real-time evaluation can help agencies to better adapt projects to fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Real-time evaluation is "a timely, rapid and interactive peer review of a fast evolving . . . operation . . . undertaken at an early phase" (United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR], 2002, p. 1). Real-time evaluations provide project staff with quick and immediate feedback that allows them to reconsider how well their project design works in an evolving situation, often one affected by conflict or other disasters. Providing real-time evaluations can create an early opportunity for project staff to make key adjustments. In 2000, UNHCR adopted real-time evaluation for use in conflict zones, following experiences in Kosovo. UNHCR considers real-time evaluations a key tool to "provide suggestions for improvement . . . while they can still make a difference" (2002, p. 4). UNHCR has since used the process successfully in interventions in Afghanistan, Angola, Iran, and Pakistan.

Projects can have unintended consequences and evaluation needs to capture them. In interviews, project staff commented on both unexpected co-benefits and negative impacts. They also noted that evaluations did not always adequately capture the unintended consequences, especially when they were negative. Agency staff also commented more broadly on the challenges of adapting indicators to programming in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. They noted, for example, that programming in these contexts tended to emphasize institution building and required a more qualitative approach to evaluation.

A growing number of GEF agencies have been learning from experiences in designing, implementing, and evaluating environmental projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations. They have taken stock of experiences and published reports and guidance drawing upon their experiences, often supplemented by best practices (see Chapter 4, Box 4.1). Some, such as the World Bank and Conservation International, have established centers to provide training and technical assistance on conflict-sensitive programming.[20]

Cross-Cutting Issues

Indigenous Peoples

Consideration of indigenous peoples is important in GEF projects, and in fragile and conflict-affected situations, this consideration becomes even more significant. The seven fragile and conflict-affected situations examined in detail and presented in the case study chapters, as well as other GEF projects considered, present many

instances in which a GEF project affected or was affected by indigenous groups. The GEF has long engaged with indigenous groups, funding projects implementing three MEAs that directly affect them.[21] The GEF updated its Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards in 2018 to reflect best practice standards regarding indigenous peoples (GEF, 2018d). GEF Minimum Standard 5 provides a set of procedural and substantive protections ranging from free, prior, and informed consent to respect for rights to land and other resources, to traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. These protections are particularly important in fragile and conflict-affected situations, where weakened government capacity can leave indigenous peoples at greater risk.

GEF project designs have benefited from consultation and consideration of perspectives of indigenous communities. At "the request of indigenous leaders," a project in Colombia shifted its original intention after indigenous communities voiced their preference (GEF IEO, 2006, p. 6).[22] Initially, the project had intended to create a new national park, but after consultation, this became a community-managed reserve. Based on the experience of the National Parks Association's creation of Tuparro National Park, local communities in Matavén Forest rejected the option of creating a national park because the previous case "generated conflict with the region's indigenous people over the degree of co-management to be allowed and resulted in the death of various indigenous people as well as of the park's administrator" (GEF IEO, 2006, p. 14). The project was particularly noteworthy for choosing to support a government initiative to create protected areas under indigenous management instead of a national park that would not involve local inhabitants (GEF IEO, 2006, p. 7).

GEF projects have considered particular vulnerabilities and perspectives of indigenous groups when developing a project's conflict prevention methods. One project, to protect Mali's elephants in key sites and enhance the livelihoods of local communities living along elephant migration routes by reducing human-elephant conflict,[23] recognized that the project area had a diverse range of natural resource uses by different ethnicities and communities (GEF, 2018c, p. 10). To ensure their inclusion in the community's natural resource plans, a project planned to create an Indigenous People Plan to guide the project's conflict prevention methods.

Learning from indigenous communities about current resource use and community objectives for land management has been critical in laying foundations for working with the community on resource management issues. In the DRC, a project identified land-use conflicts between indigenous communities and park authorities as one of the primary barriers to the project's achievement (GEF, 2017d, p. 7).[24] Much of the tension arose from the origin of the park, when indigenous communities were removed from their ancestral lands; a related source of ongoing tension is indigenous communities' continued use of the park for hunting and fishing, pursuant to tradition but in violation of statutory law. In developing simple management plans, the project aimed to understand current economic activities, livelihoods, and aspirations among local communities, including indigenous groups. To build a representation system that was rooted locally and could be consolidated on a larger geographical scale, the project involved a local NGO that was

well connected to the communities and traditional authorities at all stages of the project design (GEF, 2017d, p. 7).

Gender

Gender dimensions to environmental management have shown higher negative impacts on women and girls, an issue that can be exacerbated by conflict or fragile settings. The GEF's Gender and Equality Policy was updated in 2017 to promote gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming in programming through guiding principles, including program elements that do not exacerbate gender inequalities, inclusive engagement with both men and women in relation to their roles associated with the environment, and the implementation of gender-responsive approaches at all project phases (GEF, 2017a). The GEF has identified three gender gaps that are of most significance to GEF programming: access to natural resources, decision making, and access to benefits (GEF, 2018a).

Access to and management of natural resources is often unequal when viewed in terms of gender differences, and it is one of the GEF's vital concerns in alleviating gender inequality. As part of its Gender Mainstreaming Plan, a biodiversity project in Colombia[25] incorporated efforts to identify the roles of men and women in relation to production and the gendered limits to credit or other incentives (GEF, 2017b, p. 30). Not only do women have inequitable access to management, but gender equality has been linked to positive economic growth and development. Gender mainstreaming, then, became part of a Burundi hydropower project to support a sustainable energy initiative (GEF, 2015, p. 13).[26] In the project on Improving Women and Children's Resilience and Capacity to Adapt to Climate Change in the Democratic Republic of Congo,[27] international institutions were engaged to support women's access to natural resources and their management (GEF, 2013).

The decision-making space for natural resource management has historically excluded women, opening an opportunity for GEF projects to promote gender equality. In some communities, women are essential to natural resource sectors targeted by projects but are historically absent from decision making on resource management. The Burundi hydropower project, although considered to have limited gender dimensions, ensured that all decision-making processes would be built with a gender consideration as well as engagement with stakeholders at the implementation level concerning gender inequality and women's empowerment (GEF, 2015, p. 27). The Colombia biodiversity project's Gender Mainstreaming Plan tackled this gap by identifying female participation in decision making and by designing ways to engage women in multi-stakeholder discussions (GEF, 2017b, p. 114). In Serbia, a project set out to alleviate gender disparities by encouraging more gender-balanced participation (GEF, 2016e, p. 83).[28]

Another way the GEF projects alleviate gender inequality is to make women a large percentage of beneficiaries of project outputs. For example, an adaptation project in the DRC set a goal of ensuring 40 percent of project investments would be for women (GEF, 2014b, p. 14),[29] and the capacity-building project in

Serbia monitored the gender balance of beneficiaries of project implementation (GEF, 2016e, p. 23).

Human Rights

The GEF's Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards de facto addresses and protects a number of human rights. These include rights of indigenous peoples (including free, prior, and informed consent), gender-related rights, labor rights, cultural rights, procedural rights related to stakeholder engagement, and prevention and mitigation of involuntary resettlement (GEF, 2018d, 2019). If a violation of the protections in the Environmental and Social Safeguards occurs, a person may submit a complaint to "a local or country-level dispute resolution system, a GEF partner agency or the GEF Resolution Commissioner."[30]

GEF projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations have intersected with human rights considerations at various phases of project design and implementation. The in-depth analyses of the seven conflict-affected situations underpinning the evaluation on which this book is based (see Chapters 6–9) present projects with both positive and negative impacts on human rights. For example, the project in Serbia to build capacity to implement MEAs[31] included consideration of respect for human rights as part of its social and environmental risk screening (GEF, 2016e, p. 79). Discussed in the indigenous peoples section, the biodiversity project in Colombia[32] is a notable example of a project adjusting to address human rights considerations, particularly indigenous rights to autonomy and governance over their historic lands (GEF, 2017b).

Private Sector

The GEF's Private Sector Engagement Strategy recognizes the importance of the private sector to leverage funding and transform both markets and economic systems—all of which are necessary to scale up global environmental benefits and ensure that those benefits are sustained (GEF, 2020). Moreover, the GEF's Policy on Non-Grant Instruments provides guidance for the use of non-grant instruments to strengthen partnership with both the private and public sectors (GEF, 2014a). The private sector is a key stakeholder in many of the transformations that the GEF seeks to achieve because it is central to trade that drives environmental degradation.

GEF projects have sought to engage the private sector yet have experienced challenges in doing so. For example, a project in Cambodia sought to improve livelihoods by increasing smallholders' access to and uptake of renewable energy technologies.[33] Despite noting that the Cambodian government was "actively pursuing private-public contracts to keep consistent streams of capital flowing in" (GEF, 2016d, p. 28), interviews with key informants described a reluctance by the government to provide "a playground where private sector can test approaches." This presented difficulty in pilot-testing approaches that could then be scaled up. Further, fragile and conflict-affected situations can undermine efforts of GEF projects to engage the private sector. For example, the energy efficiency project in

Burundi[34] included infrastructure services for private sector development as one of its themes for building local capacity to provide energy efficiency advice to public institutions and private sector companies (GEF, 2016a, p. 2). However, the project after completion was rated unfavorably overall, largely because of the legacy of the past conflict.

Conclusion

This chapter stressed the importance of conflict-sensitive programming across the project life cycle—from the design stage through implementation, completion, and evaluation—drawing on the experiences with projects supported by the GEF and the broader literature on conflict-sensitive programming. It also highlighted the importance of addressing cross-cutting themes, including indigenous peoples, gender, and the private sector. Learning from indigenous communities about current resource use and community objectives for land management is critical in laying foundations for working with the community on resource management issues. Access to and management of natural resources is often unequal when viewed in terms of gender differences and is of vital concern in alleviating gender inequality. GEF projects ensure these important cross-cutting issues are addressed through its safeguard and gender policies.

Notes

1 For a comparison of 15 conflict analysis toolkits, see International Alert, 2004, pp. 12–15, Table 3.
2 Project 3418
3 Project 2100
4 Project 2357
5 Project 3772
6 Project 9515
7 Project 1086
8 Project 1043
9 Project 1043
10 Project 1183
11 Project 2929
12 Project 9056
13 Forum on Early Warning and Response, www.fewer-international.org/veroeffentlichungen/.
14 Project 9441
15 Project 774
16 Project 4227
17 Project 2019
18 Project 2929
19 Project 9073
20 For example, World Bank Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Group.
21 www.thegef.org/newsroom/blog/partnering-peoples
22 Project 1020
23 Project 9661
24 Project 9802
25 Project 9663

26 Project 9056
27 Project 5226
28 Project 9114
29 Project 5226
30 www.thegef.org/projects-operations/conflict-resolution-commissioner
31 Project 9114
32 Project 9663
33 Project 9103
34 Project 4133

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Appendix 5.1 GEF-Supported Projects Referenced in Chapter 5

Project ID	Name	Region	Dates
774	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Andes Region	Colombia	2000–2008
1020	Conservation and Sustainable Development of the Mataven Forest	Colombia	2001–2004
1043	Establishing Conservation Areas Landscape Management (CALM) in the Northern Plains	Cambodia	2004–2012
1086	Developing an Integrated Protected Area System for the Cardamom Mountains	Cambodia	2001–2007
1183	Tonle Sap Conservation Project	Cambodia	2004–2011
2019	Integrated National Adaptation Plan: High Mountain Ecosystems, Colombia's Caribbean Insular Areas and Human Health (INAP)	Colombia	2005–2012
2100	Support to the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN)'s Program for the Rehabilitation of the DRC's National Parks Network	DRC	2006–2018
2357	Agricultural Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management Project	Burundi	2004–2012
2929	Reducing Conflicting Water Uses in the Artibonite River Basin through Development and Adoption of a Multi-focal Area Strategic Action Programme	Haiti and Dominican Republic	2008–2012
3418	Mainstreaming Biodiversity Management into Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Production Processes	Lebanon	2009–2013
3772	CBSP Forest and Nature Conservation Project	DRC	2008–2015
4133	SPWA-CC: Energy Efficiency Project	Burundi	2010–2015
4227	Building Adaptive Capacity and Resilience to Climate Change in Afghanistan	Afghanistan	2010–2018
5226	Improving Women and Children's Resilience and Capacity to Adapt to Climate Change in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	DRC	2014–present
9056	Promotion of Small Hydro Power (SHP) for Productive Use and Energy Services	Burundi	2015–present
9073	Unlocking Biodiversity Benefits through Development Finance in Critical Catchments	South Africa	2017–present

(*Continued*)

Appendix 5.1 (Continued)

Project ID	Name	Region	Dates
9103	Building Adaptive Capacity through the Scaling-up of Renewable Energy Technologies in Rural Cambodia (S-RET)	Cambodia	2015–present
9114	Capacity Development for Improved Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)	Serbia	2016–present
9441	Contributing to the Integrated Management of Biodiversity of the Pacific Region of Colombia to Build Peace	Colombia	2016–present
9491	Mainstreaming Conservation of Migratory Soaring Birds into Key Productive Sectors along the Rift Valley/Red Sea Flyway (Tranche II of GEFID 1028)	Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan	2016–present
9515	The Restoration Initiative, DRC child project: Improved Management and Restoration of Agro-sylvo-pastoral Resources in the Pilot Province of South-Kivu	DRC	2016–present
9661	Mali- Community-based Natural Resource Management that Resolves Conflict, Improves Livelihoods and Restores Ecosystems throughout the Elephant Range	Mali	2016–present
9663	Colombia: Connectivity and Biodiversity Conservation in the Colombian Amazon	Colombia	2015–present
9802	Promoting the Effective Management of Salonga National Park through Creation of Community Forests and Improving the Well-being of Local Communities	DRC	2020–present