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# CONFLICT DIAGNOSTIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOOD FOR PEACE

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# CONFLICT DIAGNOSTIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOOD FOR PEACE

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Fragility and Conflict Technical Research Services (FACTRS)

## **DISCLAIMER**

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

# CONTENTS

- Overview ..... 1**
- Key Areas Where Conflict Sensitivity is Challenging..... 1**
- Conducting Conflict Analysis to Inform Conflict Sensitive Approach..... 3**
- Annex I: Illustrative Conflict Diagnostic Questions for FFP ..... 7**

## OVERVIEW

The key lesson of conflict sensitivity is that organizations and their activities become a part of the context in which they are operating and therefore impact and become impacted by that context. This interaction has the potential to exacerbate existing conflict dynamics, but also holds the potential to positively strengthen connecting factors in society. Impacts of the interaction – negative or positive – are important to understand as they ultimately affect an organization’s ability to achieve its objectives. Conflict sensitivity should be applied in all operational contexts, even those without overt conflict, but key concerns and entry points for a conflict sensitive approach will be different in different types of contexts.

Understanding conflict dynamics and how the project is impacting or being impacted by these dynamics is an essential component of being conflict sensitive. With sufficient understanding, organizations can adapt their activities in ways that minimize negative effects and build on positive effects. Project adaptation often does not require a major restructuring of a project; rather it often requires adjusting small project details which can have significant impacts on any programs’ interaction with the conflict context.

Given the importance of understanding the conflict context for a conflict sensitive approach, this document first outlines for the Office of Food for Peace (FFP) the key areas where conflict sensitivity is particularly challenging and provides recommended diagnostic questions that can assist FFP and its implementers to avoid or mitigate these challenges throughout the program cycle. The following section then provides recommendations for conducting conflict analysis to inform a project’s conflict sensitive approach. These recommendations include guidance on conducting an abbreviated “good enough” conflict analysis when there are time and resource constraints, as well as guidance on conducting a comprehensive conflict analysis using USAID’s Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF 2.0) when time and resources permit. Finally, Annex I includes diagnostic questions tailored for FFP using USAID’s CAF 2.0 framework.

## KEY AREAS WHERE CONFLICT SENSITIVITY IS CHALLENGING

Key areas of programming that pose particular challenges for conflict sensitivity given their potential to do harm include – targeting, access to assistance, and relationship with communities. Given the potential to do harm, these are priority areas that should be kept in mind when gathering information. Recommendations for diagnostic questions that can assist FFP and its implementers are provided below.

**Targeting:** How FFP targets communities for assistance<sup>1</sup> is a particularly important issue from a conflict sensitivity perspective. The decision-making process and resulting targeting decisions are significant since they can have a direct impact on the potential of a FFP intervention to cause, or exacerbate, tensions in communities. For example, assistance targeted to one group to the exclusion of another can augment already existing tensions between groups, or create new divisions between communities. The list of questions below can generate the information most helpful for FFP and its implementers when determining a targeting approach, and/or monitoring the impact of the selected approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that *assistance* refers to any type of resource transfer as a result of a FFP intervention such as skills, knowledge, commodities, cash, technical assistance, etc.

- Who are the key groups in proximity to the primary target groups who will receive assistance?
- Are there ongoing tensions between these key groups that may be exacerbated by assistance?
- Are there identity groups peacefully coexisting that could be reinforced by assistance?
- What are the options for consulting stakeholders in targeting decisions such as the development of selection criteria through inclusive, participatory mechanisms?

**Access:** Access to goods and delivery of those goods in an environment that is resource poor carries particular conflict sensitivity risks. For instance, procuring goods can contribute to conflict dynamics by unknowingly privileging one group over another group – for example, if your chosen supplier is closely associated with a party to the conflict, or if procuring outside the project location is considered to be undermining the local economy. How people access goods is another area for particular risk. For instance, if people need to travel large distances to access assistance it may create the unintended consequence of placing particular groups, women for instance, at a greater risk for gender-based violence. Access to information is yet another element of potential risk. Careful consideration should be given to how FFP distributes information about assistance, what are trusted sources of information, and who may or may not be getting access to that information. The list of questions below can generate information most helpful for FFP and its implementers when determining a distribution approach, and/or monitoring the impact of this selected approach.

- Who are the conflict actors in the community?
- Who are the actors who are trusted sources of information in any given community?
- Are armed groups present, and/or are there areas of heightened security risks for beneficiaries that will impact assistance distribution and/or monitoring?
- Are there existing patterns of exclusion (e.g., gender, identity) that may impact access to assistance or information?

**Relationship with communities:** From a conflict sensitivity perspective, it is important to take into consideration how FFP programming may include communities in decision-making and integrate feedback and accountability mechanisms. To the extent feasible, community members should be included in the selection of aid recipients, including the development of selection criteria. In order to do this in a conflict sensitive manner, it is critical to understand the various divisions and relationships in a community and how this affects access to, and distribution of, resources (see Targeting and Access above). The principle of accountability is central to conflict sensitivity as it touches upon issues of power in partner and participant relationships. Creating good feedback mechanisms is one way to foster better accountability, help reduce the potential for tension to be created or exacerbated by the project, and ensure ongoing monitoring of conflict issues during implementation. The list of questions below can generate information most helpful for FFP and its implementers when determining their approach to building/sustaining relationships with communities, and/or monitoring the impact of this selected approach.

- Are there opportunities to create safe spaces for feedback and complaints from participants and non-participants?
- What are the existing mechanisms for communication that could be leveraged?
- Who are trusted sources of information in targeted communities?
- Are there existing patterns of exclusion that constrain people from speaking freely?

# CONDUCTING CONFLICT ANALYSIS TO INFORM CONFLICT SENSITIVE APPROACH

There are many possible ways to gather information about the conflict context. However, as conflict is multi-dimensional with different causal paths and often with dynamics that are rapidly shifting and evolving, it is often difficult for organizations to maintain updated, current analysis, especially if time and resources are limited. As such, the goal for some assessments may simply be to compile a “good enough” analysis that takes into account information related to a set of basic conflict context questions. If, however, time and resources permit, a more comprehensive conflict assessment using USAID’s Conflict Assessment Framework 2.0 may be warranted. Regardless of the approach chosen, it is important to recognize that questions will shift depending on the stage of programming, as well as the type of conflict context the project is operating in (e.g., latent, active, post-conflict). Some questions may be best addressed in advance of any field assessment through desk research or targeted interviews, while other questions may be better addressed through interviews in the field.

## “Good Enough” Conflict Analysis

As noted above, in certain situations the goal for an assessment may simply be to develop a “good enough” analysis that compiles information related to a set of basic conflict context questions. Provided below are “good enough” illustrative diagnostic questions divided by context – latent, active, and post-conflict.

Latent Conflict (no active conflict): Every context can be characterized by having dividing and connecting factors<sup>2</sup> among groups of people, even if there is no conflict or violence present, and all interventions will have an influence on these factors. In contexts with no active conflict, it is important to monitor these factors and the intervention’s impact on them to ensure that latent grievances in society do not flare up into violence, or that the intervention does not diminish, overwhelm or undermine points of collaboration and trust among groups. In this context, key rapid assessment questions may include:

Illustrative Diagnostic Questions for Latent Conflict Context
Are there historical grievances, jealousies or inequities in society? How does (or may) the project interact with those?
What systems, structures, or mechanisms (formal or informal; national, regional or local) exist that people of all groups use and trust? Will the project build upon these? Will it undermine their effectiveness?

Active Conflict: In contexts of active, ongoing conflict, whether widespread or localized, the sources of tension and dividing factors are easier to identify. It is important to remember that in these contexts there are always connecting factors, although they can be very difficult to identify in the midst of violent conflict. Negative impacts on the forces dividing or connecting society (i.e. amplifying divisive forces and/or weakening connectors) can potentially worsen the conflict or increase violence among people. In these complex contexts, identifying and monitoring those forces that are dividing or connecting society can help

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<sup>2</sup> CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, May 2010. DNH Guidance Note: Using Dividers and Connectors. Dividers are elements in societies which divide people from each other and serve as sources of tension. There are also always elements which connect people and can serve as local capacities for peace. An intervention can have a negative impact, exacerbating dividers and undermining connectors. Interventions can also have a positive impact, strengthening connectors and lessening dividers.

when trying to track changes in the conflict context. In this context, key rapid assessment questions may include:

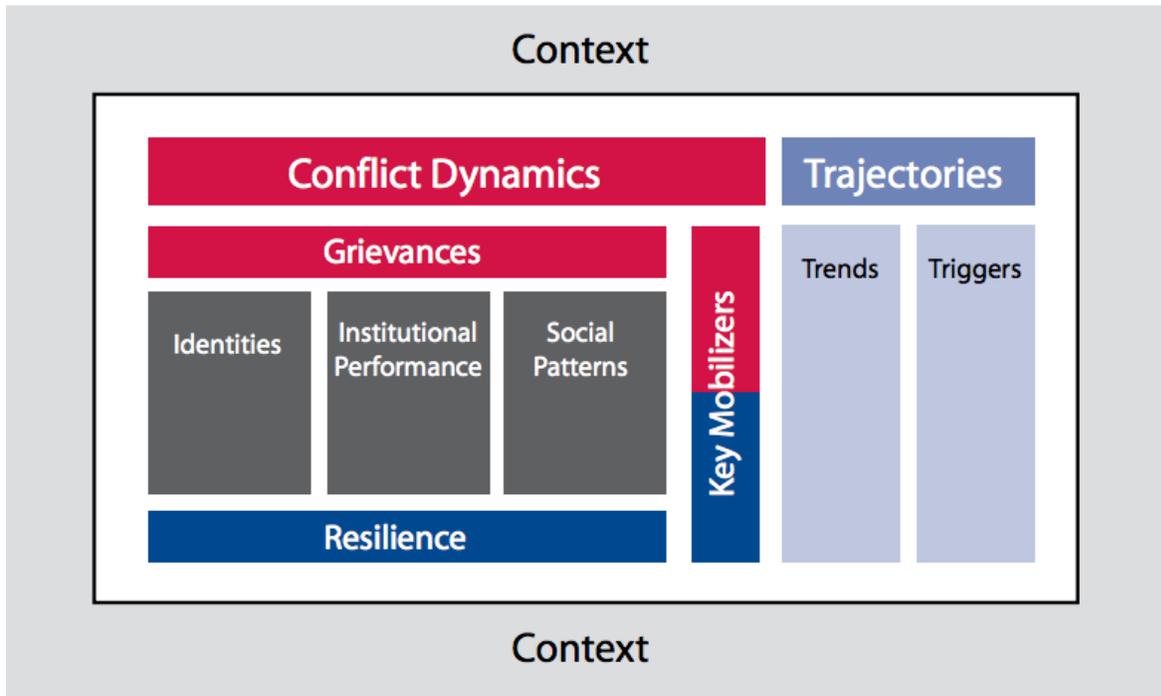
Illustrative Diagnostic Questions for Active Conflict Context
Which sources of division are most likely to draw more people into fighting or increase levels of violence?
How do people reach across the lines of fighting, even in seemingly insignificant ways? Who is able to do this? Are there ways the project could support those efforts?
How do escalations in violence change risks to project participants? To staff? To others in the community?
When operating environments become inaccessible due to violence, or when armed actors threaten the delivery of food assistance, what adjustments need to be made? How can implementation and monitoring of a project continue?

**Post-Conflict:** In post-conflict contexts, it is important to consider the residual effects of the conflict. The factors that drove fighting are likely to remain sources of tension, as are changed dynamics among communities. This is true in the case of returning refugees or internally displaced persons, who will have had a vastly different experience of the conflict than their neighbors. These populations often have different needs and different priorities. Similarly, the return of former combatants to their communities or civilian life more generally can cause tensions. In this context, key rapid assessment questions may include:

Illustrative Diagnostic Questions for Post-Conflict Context
Are the drivers of the original conflict still being played out among groups in the community?
Are aid resources being distributed along the lines of the conflict or equitably among groups?
How are the needs of various groups in the community different? Are there any shared needs and priorities?

## USAID’s Conflict Assessment Framework

When time and resources permit, or in instances where more comprehensive conflict analysis is needed, FFP may consider drawing guidance from USAID’s Conflict Assessment Framework 2.0 (CAF 2.0). The CAF 2.0 is USAID’s field-tested methodology for the collection, organization, and analysis of all relevant data necessary for a full understanding of country conflict dynamics. The CAF draws from the most recent research and state-of-the-art learning on what drives conflict and what we know about how to prevent its outbreak. It is also structured in such a way as to be most relevant to USAID and USG structures to ensure that analysis can be readily connected back into programming and policy formulation. Figure 1 (below) depicts the framework and each of its analytic components.



**FIGURE 1: USAID/CMM – CONFLICT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK**

**What are the CAF components?** The CAF starts by identifying the *current* conflict dynamics and determining likely *future* trajectories for these dynamics. The assessment seeks to clarify and explain the drivers of conflict in a society or region, while also highlighting bright spots, resiliencies, and other factors contributing to peace and stability.

The framework’s model for conflict dynamics is based upon a theory of how, when, and why violent conflict occurs. This theory argues that armed conflict is driven by key actors in society—individuals, but also organizational actors of all sorts—who actively mobilize people and resources to engage in acts of violence on the basis of **grievance**, such as a group’s perception that it has been excluded from political and economic life (see line of inquiry 3 below). **Key actors** may have different means and incentives that affect the methods they employ to achieve their objectives; violence is only one tactic among many. In this sense, the “rules of the game,” and the resources and factors that drive incentives and decision-making, are informed by the broader **conflict context** (see line of inquiry 1). Further, the theory behind the CAF 2.0 recognizes that when the **institutions** of society perform in ways that key **identity groups** consider to be legitimate and effective, then conflict-mitigating **social patterns** may emerge (see line of inquiry 2). In contrast, illegitimate and ineffective institutions can drive dysfunctional patterns of fragility and stress. Whether and how armed conflict breaks out depends in part, therefore, on the **resilience** of those institutions, mechanisms, or other factors in society that provide the means to suppress or resolve conflict through non-violent means. Thus, the CAF 2.0 takes both the latent and active dimensions of armed conflict into account, including the given system’s predilection toward conflict and the feasibility of sustained, large-scale fighting.

Finally, it is important to account for how these conflict dynamics are changing in order to effectively anticipate future circumstances. Identifying future **trigger events** and current **trajectories** (line of inquiry 4) is essential for this task.

In a typical conflict assessment, a team seeks answers to the questions below mostly through key informant interviews or group interviews. Every effort is made to seek out multiple perspectives in society. Whenever possible, secondary sources should be utilized to help fill in gaps in data.

As noted above, Annex I includes an illustrative list of diagnostic questions tailored for FFP programming. These questions follow the CAF 2.0 framework and associated lines of inquiry and could be integrated into already existing mechanisms used by FFP to collect context information such as in advance of, or during, Conflict Specific Information assessments.

# ANNEX I: ILLUSTRATIVE CONFLICT DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS FOR FFP

<p><b>Line of Inquiry 1: Context</b> This line of inquiry will provide the FFP assessment team with an understanding of the context in which any FFP intervention may be situated.</p>			
<p><b>Sample General Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the country or region undergone crises in its recent history, or periods in its history (e.g., colonization) that continue to shape attitudes?</li> <li>• What are the major formal and informal institutions in the country and how stable are they? How does the population view them?</li> <li>• What has been the recent history of economic growth?</li> <li>• What are the emergent or ongoing social issues that people are facing?</li> <li>• Are there specific areas (sub-national regions, neighborhoods, communities) that are conflict prone?</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Suggested FFP Specific Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there ongoing conflict in areas where FFP wants to implement programming that may impact implementation and access to targeted populations?</li> <li>• Is there ongoing conflict in areas where FFP wants to implement programming that may be affected by the FFP intervention?</li> <li>• Has conflict resulted in destroyed production equipment, and depleted livestock, seed supplies, and food stocks?</li> <li>• How does the population view the government’s ability to provide for their basic needs such as health care and food assistance?</li> <li>• Has conflict resulted in demographic or traditional role shifts in the areas where FFP might be working? E.g., are young men still present in the community? Have women, the young or the elderly taken on new roles and responsibilities?</li> <li>• Are there refugees or displaced populations of concern for FFP? Is this a new phenomenon or an ongoing one? What is the relationship between these refugees or displaced people and the surrounding communities?</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Illustration of Factors LOII May Reveal</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recent volatility in food prices</li> <li>• conflict resulting in destroyed production equipment, depleted livestock, seed supplies, and food stocks</li> <li>• lack of health services</li> <li>• previous instability around elections</li> <li>• presence of armed forces</li> <li>• regional instability</li> <li>• lack of opportunities for youth</li> </ul> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• violent extremism</li> <li>• violence against women</li> <li>• lack of confidence in government institutions and actors</li> <li>• underserved areas</li> <li>• pockets of marginalized populations</li> <li>• presence of refugee camps</li> <li>• areas characterized by intense ethnic division</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recent volatility in food prices</li> <li>• conflict resulting in destroyed production equipment, depleted livestock, seed supplies, and food stocks</li> <li>• lack of health services</li> <li>• previous instability around elections</li> <li>• presence of armed forces</li> <li>• regional instability</li> <li>• lack of opportunities for youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• violent extremism</li> <li>• violence against women</li> <li>• lack of confidence in government institutions and actors</li> <li>• underserved areas</li> <li>• pockets of marginalized populations</li> <li>• presence of refugee camps</li> <li>• areas characterized by intense ethnic division</li> </ul>
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**Line of Inquiry 2 - Identity Groups, Institutional Performance, and Social Patterns:** Provides the FFP assessment team with information to identify social and institutional patterns of grievance and resilience. Understanding these patterns is critical to ensuring FFP interventions do not exacerbate conflict while maximizing opportunities for positive impact.

**Sample General Questions**

<b>Identity Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the key identity<sup>3</sup> groups in the country?</li> <li>• Are there existing tensions between particular groups of people? Are there established examples of these groups coexisting well together? Are there identity groups that are seen as particularly privileged or disadvantaged?</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional Performance<sup>4</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of formal governance regime is in place?</li> <li>• What kind of informal institutions are in place, and what roles do they play?</li> <li>• Is there a system of checks and balances?</li> <li>• Are traditional political institutions important?</li> <li>• What role does civil society play (e.g., service provision, watchdog)?</li> <li>• Is reliable information accessible to the citizenry?</li> <li>• How effective is service delivery?</li> </ul>
<b>Societal Patterns<sup>5</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the various identity groups' perceptions concerning their security, identity and recognition?</li> <li>• How do groups express their frustration or anger regarding perceived or threatened deprivation of their needs?</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested FFP Specific Questions</b>	
<b>Identity Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there ongoing tensions between particular identity groups that may be exacerbated by FFP programming?</li> <li>• Are there ways that different identify groups peacefully coexist that could be reinforced by FFP programming?</li> <li>• Will benefits from FFP programming target one identity group to the exclusion of another?</li> <li>• Have all stakeholders impacted by FFP programming assistance been appropriately consulted or included in decision-making processes?</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional Performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there traditional, inclusive decision-making or accountability mechanisms in the targeted community that can be leveraged for FFP programming?</li> <li>• Who has access to information about FFP programming? How do they get this information? Do they trust the information?</li> </ul>
<b>Societal Patterns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there particular identity groups whose livelihoods may be threatened by the infusion of food resources in their community (e.g., traders, or farmers)?</li> <li>• Are there ways that FFP programming can help reinforce positive roles within a community (e.g., by supporting traders and their relationships with community members)?</li> <li>• What are the gender considerations to FFP program? How might FFP programming impact gender roles?</li> <li>• Will the inclusion of local government actors impact the perception of FFP programming for particular identity groups?</li> </ul>
<b>Illustration of Factors LOI2 May Reveal</b>	
<b>Identity Groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large groups of frustrated, unemployed youth</li> </ul>	of water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• state-run media outlets distrusted by the population</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> *Identities* are salient markers of similarity, distinction, or affinity among individuals and groups. Identity is not inherent, but rather emerges from one's relationships to others in a given context or situation...Not infrequently, there are multiple and overlapping groupings ("concentric circles of identity") that shift in relative importance or salience depending on the context in which individuals find themselves (CAF 2.0).

<sup>4</sup> *Institutional performance* refers to formal and informal institutions. Differences across different parts of the country or across identity groups should be considered (CAF 2.0).

<sup>5</sup> *Societal patterns* examine the interplay of context, identity, and institutional performance to identity patterns which characterize the relationship between the state and the population (CAF 2.0).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• long-standing tensions between groups over access to land (e.g., herders and farmers)</li> <li>• pockets of peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups</li> <li>• vulnerable women with no decision-making authority</li> </ul> <p><i>Institutional Performance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local government failures to provide basic services to the population or inequities in service delivery across identity groups</li> <li>• informal dispute resolution institutions function well at the local level</li> <li>• functioning water management associations governing access to and use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• poor service delivery in areas dominated by a particular ethnic group</li> </ul> <p><i>Societal Patterns</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some ethnic groups feel marginalized by a government dominated by an opposing ethnic group</li> <li>• farmers feel increasingly threatened by inequitable distribution of land</li> <li>• nomadic populations feel their identity and way of life being threatened by government policies</li> <li>• history of violent protests during periods of volatility (rising food prices, school and market closures, or pandemic health crisis such as Ebola)</li> </ul>
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**Line of Inquiry 3: Key Actors** This line of inquiry will assist the FFP assessment team to produce a sound understanding of the conflict context. As the team develops this understanding it is important to consider the relationship between key actors at various levels who actively mobilize people and resources. These actors may mobilize people to engage in acts of violence, but there are also actors in any context that play a positive role in maintaining stability and peace. Key mobilizers may have different means and incentives that affect the methods they employ to achieve objectives.

**Sample General Questions**

- Who are the main conflict actors (positive or negative)?
- What motivates these actors?
- How much influence do they have?
- What authority do they have that allows them to mobilize people (e.g., religious, traditional, political, economic)?
- What is their organizational or financial capacity to mobilize people?

**Suggested FFP Specific Questions**

- Are there trusted actors in the targeted community who can assist with the distribution of information about FFP's targeting methodology? Do they have the necessary capacity to assist FFP?
- Are there armed groups active in the area where FFP will be situated? How might their presence impact the distribution of food assistance?
- Who are the key actors that should be consulted or included in decision-making for FFP programming? How can FFP ensure that these consultations are inclusive and do not reinforce existing patterns of exclusion (e.g., absence of women)?

**Illustration of Factors LO13 May Reveal**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• armed militias recruiting young men to take up arms</li> <li>• religious leaders preaching messages of peace and tolerance</li> <li>• traditional leaders engaging in local level community mediation and conflict resolution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presence of violent youth gangs looking for social mobility, access to economic resources, and prestige</li> <li>• presence of international peacekeeping force</li> <li>• women's organizations mobilizing other women to improve their communities access to health care and education</li> </ul>
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**Line of Inquiry 4: Trajectories** This line of inquiry will help the FFP assessment team form an understanding of how some of these relationships between the context, identity groups, institutions and society patterns could be changing (or triggered to change) and the potential implications for future FFP programming.

**Sample General Questions**

*Triggers:*

- Are major government reforms (e.g., decentralization, anti-corruption) planned that could result in power shifts?
- Are contentious elections approaching?
- Is extremist ethnic or religious rhetoric increasing?

*Trends:*

- What are the best, worst, and most likely scenarios for the future? What forces are influencing these scenarios?
- How might these scenarios impact programming?
- Are there any expectations for future population migration that may affect programming?

**Suggested FFP Specific Questions**

*Triggers:*

- Are there particular climate change patterns that may increase the need of FFP programming in the targeted area? Will this increase fuel tensions related to who does or does not receive FFP support?
- Is there potential for an increase of refugees in the targeted area? If so, how might this impact relation with host communities not receiving assistance?
- Are there key political events that may trigger increased tensions between groups receiving FFP support and those who are not?

*Trends:*

- What are the best, worst, and most likely scenarios for levels of food insecurity in the future?
- How might these scenarios impact FFP programming?

**Illustration of Factors LOI4 May Reveal**

<i>Triggers</i>	<i>Trends</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decentralization is moving ahead, although fiscal decentralization is pending.</li> <li>• The presidential election is approaching.</li> <li>• A major religious holiday is approaching.</li> <li>• Sermons from clergy or other religious leaders in a targeted region increasingly use extremist rhetoric to mobilize youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• escalation or de-escalation of extremist rhetoric</li> <li>• decrease in inter-group violence</li> <li>• growing division/inclusion</li> <li>• renewed civil war</li> <li>• population displacement</li> <li>• peaceful coexistence</li> </ul>