



community mobilisation

principles and practices



INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME
TRINCOMALEE

PNA is the entry point for communication with village groups. Here, women discuss their interests and prioritise ideas for development projects, e.g. income generation, home gardening, sanitation, mid-day meal for school children



why community mobilisation?

Community mobilisation is the pivot for a people-centred development process. It encourages better use of own resources, establishing own capacities and willingness to contribute: passive recipients become active partners in development.

Community mobilisation is a process of empowering local communities and vulnerable groups and combining awareness creation, self-organisation and action.

Community mobilisation in times of war aims at contributing to stability at the local level. Promoting stability includes confidence building for investment and development.

Since its inception in August 1998, the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP) has made an important contribution to promote stability. IFSP supports people who are vulnerable and face food deficits

to diversify their livelihood and to improve their health and nutrition status. Community mobilisation is an instrumental part of the strategy of IFSP to promote food and nutrition security. It facilitates the re-integration of war affected people into the local economy.

The context of crises and conflict is distinctly different from peaceful areas. Community mobilisation has to take these differences into account. People do not know what will happen the next day, whether they can continue their day to day life or have to leave their homes because of an escalation of violence. Uncertainty and fear makes people reluctant to invest in the longer future. Instead, they focus on short-term needs. In addition, armed actors impose their own realms of power to which local people have to adapt in order to carry out their livelihood activities.

Community mobilisation is essential in the context of crises



Discussing to further improve water supply

and conflict to stabilise the livelihood strategies of people and to encourage their self-help potential.

Many aid organisations and state agencies provide assistance in the form of handouts and gifts. Free distribution of food, free supply of tools or financial aid for reconstruction discourage local initiatives and contributions. People become dependent recipients and even more vulnerable.

Though people need support, they do not need it in the form of relief and welfare, because these undermine self-initiative, self-dignity and encourage a recipient mentality. Relief and welfare undermine future development efforts. Instead, aid and assistance should complement the coping and adapting strategies of people to support their livelihoods.

In order to address the immediate needs of people, community mobilisation in the context of crises and conflicts has to be pragmatic and purposeful.

Action-oriented mobilisation is a process that links development support with capacity building and empowerment.

This paper illustrates the community mobilisation concept and approach that IFSP has developed. What is community mobilisation and how does it work?

- The first part sets out the basic concept of community mobilisation: closing the gap between services and people, strengthening local capacities and enhancing local governance.
- The second part explains how village projects are planned and implemented by local partners with the support of the community mobilisers.
- The third part reflects upon role, attitude and perceptions of community mobilisers as facilitators.
- The final part takes stock and discusses possible contributions to local peace building.

Reviewing progress and exchanging experience while cutting rock for the construction of a drinking water well



the concept of community mobilisation

IFSP promotes a concept of community mobilisation that strengthens problem-solving capacities on village level. IFSP encourages service providers to support local communities. Community mobilisation addresses the top and the bottom level to strengthen the capacities and capabilities of local communities and of service providers. Linking communities to services is the challenge!

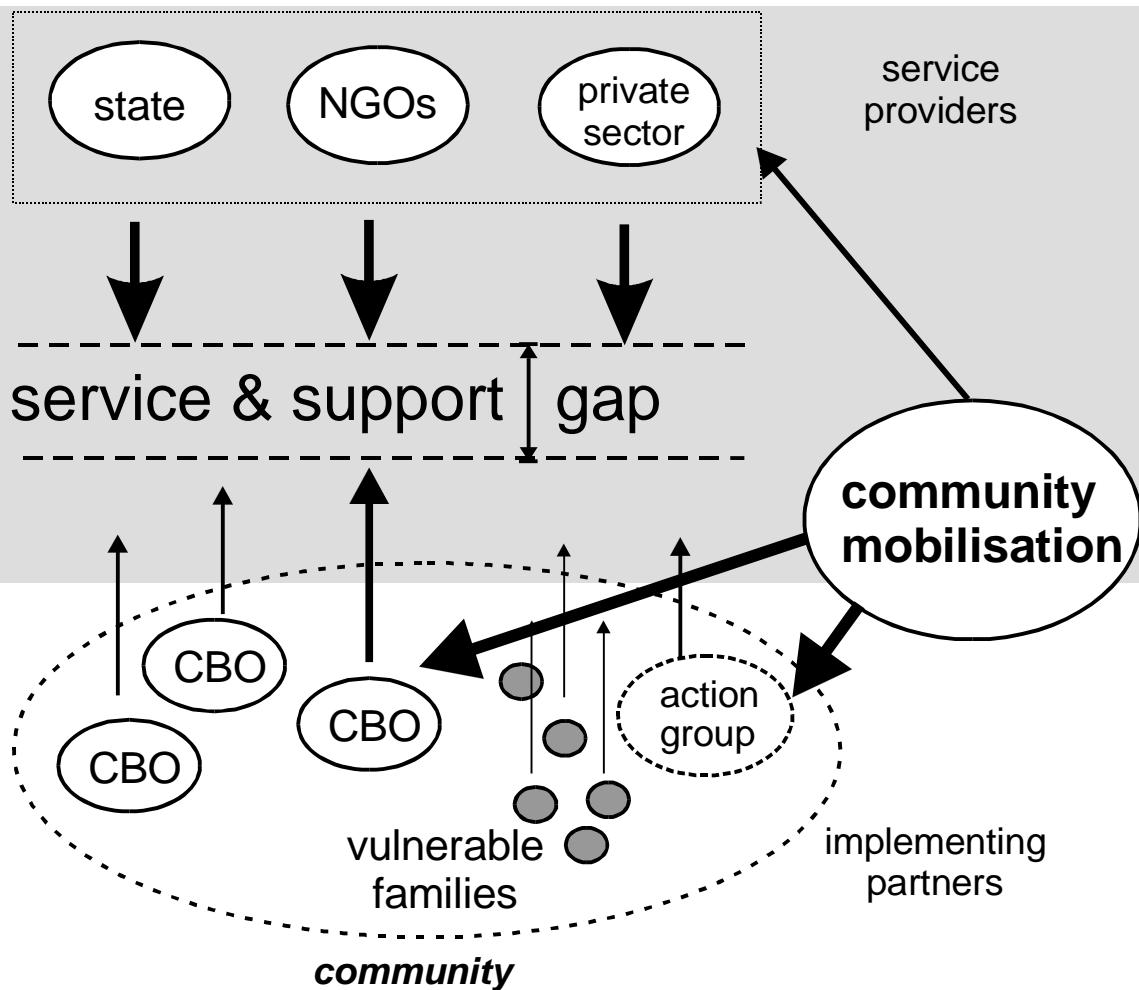
Community mobilisation aims at:

- Making people aware of their own potential.
- Encouraging them to sustainably use their resources.
- Improving self-help capacities (the ability to act) and capabilities (the knowledge how to act).
- Enhancing local governance.
- Facilitating the integration into the local market economy.

The basic idea is to strengthen the problem-solving and functional capabilities of community-based organisations (CBOs), informal local groups and vulnerable families 'on the job'. While they are taking over tasks and responsibilities in their projects they develop confidence and capacities.

Community groups are supported to take charge of their resources and the decision on how these are to be used. They are made aware about the system of service providers of the state, NGOs and private sector and how these can serve village development.

One of the main aim of community mobilisation in the longer term is to close the gap between service providers and people and establish constructive dialogue and working relationships. Local communities become partner instead of recipients.



Closing the gap between service providers and implementing partners

Community mobilisation is successful if,

- Villagers are more confident to demand services from the state, NGOs and the private sector. They themselves are more responsible and capable of han-

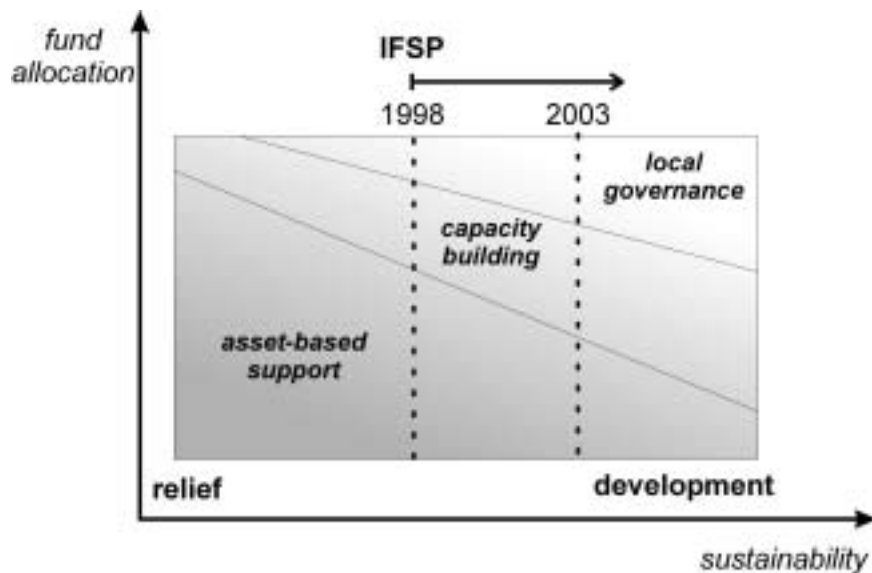
dling own projects. Their capacity to contribute to and to pay for services, increases;

- Service providers are capacitated to respond adequately to the demands from the village level.

three pillars

In the longer run, community mobilisation aims at enhancing local governance. Good local governance means that citizens trust the public administration and the state legislation. This

trust has been seriously undermined in Trincomalee due to the rule of violence and the weakened state administration to provide services.



Three pillars of community mobilisation

To promote development and governance, community mobilisation needs to address and balance three concerns.

Asset-based support: Resource-poor, vulnerable households may be unable to cope with a sudden shock and need temporary support to overcome an acute crisis. Community mobilisation supports vulnerable households with development packages for income generation and social integration in particular.

Capacity building: Institutional development and capacity building is the core. Community mobilisation assists in the organisational development of state and non-governmental partner institutions, strengthens social networks at the local level and encourages transparent and accountable community institutions. Furthermore, community mobilisation seeks to link the corporate sector (e.g. banks) to the village economy.

Local governance: Community mobilisation creates the demand for institutional accountability and responsibility from office bearers of government institutions, as well as from NGOs. This helps to establish local governance: People have trust in the work and decisions of office bearers.

Community mobilisation creates incentives at different levels to improve self-organisation and services. The principles and attitudes promoted by community mobilisation enhance problem-solving capabilities and promote mutual recognition between state institutions, NGOs and villagers who work jointly in implementing projects.

The instruments, principles and attitudes of community mobilisation need to be fully integrated into the work of partner institutions, such as government departments, NGOs and local leaders. This can be done through training, mainstreaming of best practices and joint learning 'on the job'.



Rural women and agriculture instructor listen to each other

seven principles

Dialogue: Community mobilisation establishes dialogue between all relevant persons and institutions. Dialogue is the basis for confidence, trust and thus development. Dialogue means open communication with all partners involved in the project cycle.

Capacity building: Community mobilisation aims at unfolding the capabilities and capacities of local partners and service providers. One explicit aim of any project is to increase the ability of partners to handle such projects with less assistance in the future.

Social responsibility: In communities, some have more than others. Community mobilisation demands that the elite care about the more vulnerable in the villages. Vulnerable families are to be integrated into the community.

Transparency and accountability: Every villager has the right to know about the technical procedures, the financial flows and the project progress. IFSP therefore signs contracts, selects beneficiaries in an open process, encourages documentation (project book) and opens an exchange of information.

Sustainability: Community mobilisation demands local responsibility, commitment and contributions to initiate ownership among those who benefit from the project. This is expected to improve the likelihood that those persons who benefit will take care of their project in future. People are expected to operate and maintain the projects when IFSP leaves the village.

Gender: Men, women, young and old people within a village experience different conditions and have different needs and capabilities which have to be addressed and taken care of.

Do no harm: Community mobilisation in a civil war has to take the conflict dimension into consideration. Do we increase existing tensions within and across communities? What is our role as development professionals in the conflict? What response could we expect towards our action from the conflict parties? Dialogue and transparency promote a certain degree of confidence and reduce friction among communities and also between service providers, communities and IFSP mobilisers.



community and poverty group projects

A village consists of many different social classes, caste and gender. Each needs a particular type of support. To reach those who are vulnerable and need support most urgently, IFSP takes a two-pronged development strategy.

- **Community projects** provide production assets and benefits to the wider community and largely improve the availability of food. The projects contribute to restore stability and normalcy on the local level.
- **Poverty group projects** focus on increasing the income opportunities of vulnerable families and improving their access to food. These projects support people so that they can afford to buy or produce sufficient food.

For each of these projects an appropriate local implementing partner is to be identified. IFSP works through established CBOs for community projects and through informal action groups for poverty group projects.

- CBOs are often influential and have the legal mandate and can thus more efficiently implement community projects, mostly for village and production infrastructure development. Local leaders can improve their skills in managing projects, in leading their community and in taking social responsibility.
- Informal action groups offer space for vulnerable groups to express themselves, to organise themselves, share ideas and experiences and learn together to improve their self-help capacities and income sources.

It is essential that the different projects and implementing partners act together. Local leaders should take responsibility for vulnerable families and encourage their poverty group projects. One can only support the most vulnerable with the consent of the local leaders. Community mobilisation promotes local leadership that takes social responsibility for the poor.



in the village



pna - ranking



opening the project book

the project cycle

Community mobilisation encourages and supports the implementation of village projects. Each project goes through a project cycle of seven steps. Community mobilisation cross-cuts subjects and comes in at all steps, however, at differing degrees and intensities.

In the **pre-visit**, a small team from IFSP and service providers becomes familiar with the village background, informs the villagers about the planned participatory needs assessment, explains objectives and the scope of it, establishes contact with village leaders and cross-checks whether the selection of the village corresponds with the poverty and vulnerability criteria.

Participatory needs assessment (PNA) is an intensive planning exercise. Staff from IFSP and service providers discuss current problems and the means to overcome them with village communities and vulnerable groups. Villagers analyse their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They rank project ideas, discuss first steps of cooperation and establish the

foundation for future support. Villagers raise common problems and identify community projects. Vulnerable groups receive a special forum to discuss their particular needs and to identify livelihood support, especially income generating activities.

Screening and prioritising proposals from PNA are essential to focus support at those who need it most urgently and to distribute scarce manpower resources of service providers and IFSP. Villagers take their part in PNA and rank their projects according to their priorities.

In the **planning** stage, technical details, roles and responsibilities and people's contributions are clarified with the local implementing partners. The planning phase is completed by signing a contract between the local implementing partner, the service provider and IFSP. The 'project book' determines responsibilities, flow of funds and technical details and contains the contract, all technical documents and all transactions. It ensures transparency and serves accountability.



constructing a community building



evaluation and re-assessment

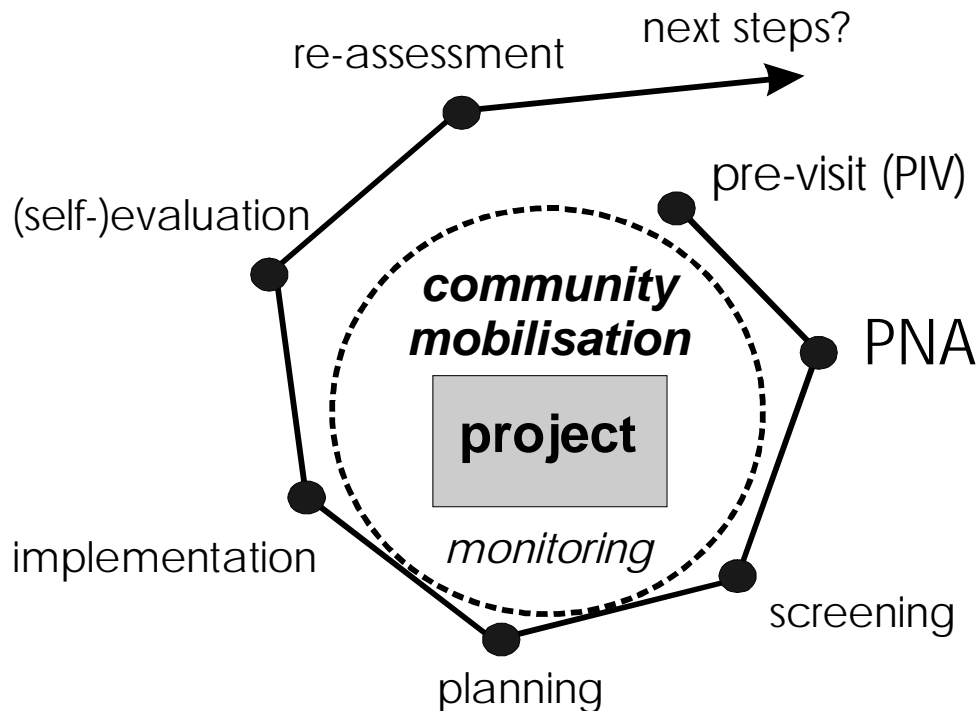


what next?

The local 'implementing partner' usually RDS, FO, SDS is responsible for project **implementation**. Support is provided by service providers and IFSP. The implementation phase demands particular attention and care from the community mobilisers. They encourage and assist the local partners to manage project implementation, they provide advice, training and direct support where necessary. At the same time, they have to make sure that service providers deliver their inputs in time and according to adequate standard.

When a project is completed, all stakeholders should sit down and evaluate their work. **Evaluation** is not about control, but about joint learning: What can we do better next time, where are our strengths and weaknesses as a local organisation or as a community?

After the evaluation, IFSP and local implementing partners can think about possible **next steps**, to deepen and widen the impact of a project or to start on a new one.



The project cycle



Signing an agreement for a pre-school and community centre in public - the community is informed about all technical and financial aspects

good practices - accountability

Community mobilisation encourages institutional change and promotes the involvement of people in decisions and action taken at village level. A new atmosphere of development is implanted in the community; projects respond to needs that are real, felt and expressed; projects are implemented to solve real problems. Funds are limited and thus a community will be wise to think about how to spend it sensibly to achieve significant impacts.

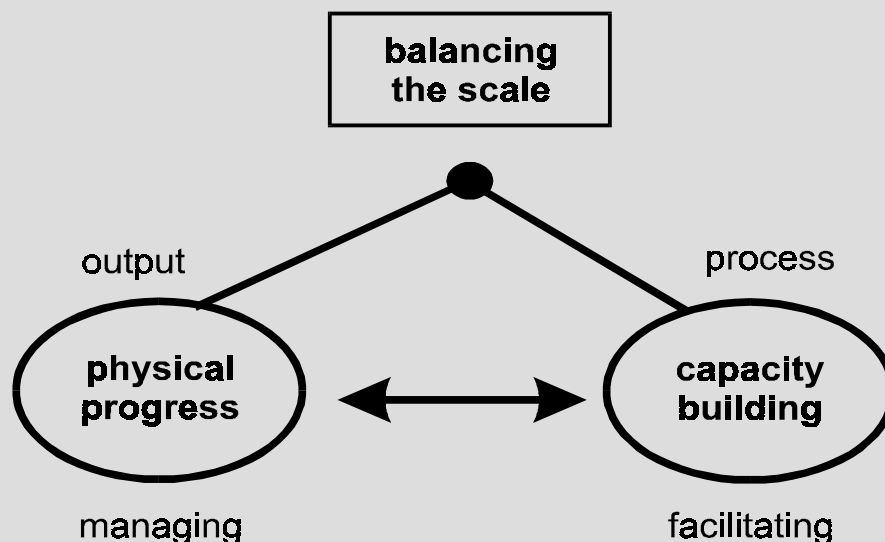
Step by step, responsibility is taken over by local implementing partners in a process of strengthening their functional capacities. This includes day-to-day support in project management, training and advice. Community mobilisation promotes transparency and accountability in village projects to induce a just and inclusive development process. A number of steps help to achieve this task.

- Tripartite agreement: IFSP, local partners and governmental service providers share costs and efforts of planning, implementing and monitoring.
- Project book: The project book contains the project agreement

and documents all steps and decisions taken for the implementation of the project.

- Eligibility criteria: criteria for the selection of beneficiaries are
- Self-defined rules: community groups and CBO develop self-defined rules about how they want to manage their project and other activities.
- Reinforcing rules and procedures: The facilitators encourage the reinforcement of agreed rules and procedures.
- Technical packages and standards: all major infrastructure works follow standard technical packages prescribed by the government or develop by IFSP to adapt to local needs.
- Sharing internal responsibilities: CBOs transfer specific responsibilities and tasks to smaller groups with the full legitimacy of the CBO.

Good practices evolve from the field work. Sharing such experience and lessons learnt with other development agencies is essential to establish a wider application of such principles in village development by state and non-governmental agencies.



Community mobilisation contributes to balancing output and process

community mobilisers as facilitators

IFSP promotes young development professionals as community mobilisers. They work with local communities and service providers and facilitate the project cycle. They are competent to dialogue with communities and to apply the relevant tools for good communication and cooperation.

Community mobilisers

- facilitate dialogue, establish contacts and working relationships, encourage contributions
- initiate, encourage, advise, but leave the main responsibility to the local implementing partners
- contribute to bridge the gap between service providers and local communities
- strengthen the self-confidence and capacity of people to voice their needs and interests
- encourage local entrepreneurs and leaders to invest into business and employment.

The community mobilisers role is to balance outputs and processes in the project cycle. They need to find an appropriate balance between facilitation and management or between capacity building and physical project progress.

On the one hand, capacity building, encouraging people to contribute, establishing working relationships between local implementing partners and service providers take time and might result in slow progress. On the other hand, people will expect that at the end of the day, the project is completed and is of good quality.



Feedback and review

perceptions and attitudes

Community mobilisers have to reflect on their own perceptions and attitudes.

Roles and responsibilities:

Community mobilisers are not 'heroes on the ground' who manage everything for 'their community'. Instead, they clarify which tasks are those of the local implementing partner, which those of the service provider and finally which are the ones for themselves. Teaching and training others to take individual responsibility is the key task of community mobilisation.

Negotiating space for local action:

Villages are no peaceful entities with everybody supporting each other. Village communities are diverse societies with different social classes, caste and gender. Different spaces have to be found for different social classes, e.g. public meetings, informal gatherings, private 'chatting'. Vulnerable groups have to be brought into communication with the village elite.

Self-reflection: Community mobilisers have to reflect on themselves and their values: "Do we have and show respect for the poor? Do we empathise with the poor? Are we prepared to de-

velop a close relationship with them?"

Relationship: Space and time are critical factors in building relationships with people. Open and warm relations have to be cultivated. For instance, one may play with children, establish communication with them and then reach out to their parents more easily.

Joint learning: Learning is an ongoing process, and it is a collective action. Joint learning takes place when community mobilisers, villagers and officers exchange ideas and discuss. Community mobilisers learn and improve their skills by sharing their field experiences.

Do's and don'ts': There could be a long list of do's and don'ts' in community mobilisation. Key principles are:

- "Avoid being a preacher and advisor, but listen in the first instance to what people have to tell.
- Create a culture wherein people unreservedly express their ideas, fears, needs and aspirations.
- Do not impose your advice and solution on people, but seek to jointly develop a way forward".



taking stock - looking ahead

After more than three years of field work, where do we stand at present? Community mobilisation has been conceptualised, tested and applied on a larger scale. The process of developing the concept is documented and shared with partner institutions.

Two main goals need to be further addressed:

- IFSP will phase out by the end of 2003. The transfer of responsibilities to partners is in progress. How can the concept, principles and attitudes of community mobilisation be integrated into government partner institutions and NGOs? This would be
- an important contribution to achieve **institutional sustainability**.
- The ground conditions have changed substantially: The Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE have signed a cease-fire agreement - memorandum of understanding - and are currently in the process of negotiating a peace settlement. Even though this will take time, the current transition phase offers new opportunities, but also new uncertainties about the future. How could community mobilisation contribute to **peace building**?



Good neighbourhood and social harmony, production and employment, access to markets and trade;
The Seed Cleaning Centre
Muthur

peace building

The Integrated Food Security Programme has been reflecting the political environment in which it works. Each of the major ethnic groups has its own perception of the current situation and of its own position within it. Mostly, people are still uncertain about what the future will bring and whether or not peace will deliver its dividend.

Peace building is a national task, and community mobilisation can contribute to establish dialogue across communities, share perceptions and encourage civil society actors to become active. Community mobilisation needs to balance these views and to provide local fora where different interests and perceptions can be exchanged. Community mobilisation also needs to reflect that projects could result in creating new problems and increase tension within communities.

Community mobilisation can contribute, on a limited scale, to balance different interests and perceptions and to promote an inclusive rather than an exclusive development process. Different social and ethnic groups are equally provided a forum to voice their needs and concerns.

In this context, community mobilisation can:

- Contribute to establish dialogue fora and cooperation with stakeholders,
- Continue dialogue with all conflict parties and ensure full transparency of the concept, strategies and activities,
- Support the rebuilding of social networks and local institutions, that are able to solve local disputes and social conflicts,
- Encourage responsible local leadership to promote cooperation instead of exclusion,
- Enhance negotiation and problem-solving capacities for constructive dispute resolution on community level,
- Facilitate the integration of local livelihoods into wider economic networks and thus promote economic opportunities '(the peace dividend)',
- Promote and demand transparent service from governmental and non-governmental partner institutions.

The long-term objective of community mobilisation is to encourage the development of a political and administrative system at local level that promotes inclusive and just development for all citizens, regardless of caste, class and ethnicity.

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Religious Affairs



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Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation
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