

**Far beyond a tool: Do No Harm as spiritual (trans)formation
for interfaith cooperation and action**

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis
in *Development in Practice* on 1 August 2022,
available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/09614524.2022.2102580>.

Abstract: This article explores recent research on uses of Do No Harm within faith communities. Drawing on case studies from Kenya, El Salvador, and the Philippines, the authors argue that there is an important nexus among conflict sensitivity, personal growth and spiritual (trans)formation. The research focuses particularly on World Vision's Do No Harm for Faith Groups (DNH4FG), a resource for introducing Do No Harm to faith actors within inter- and intra-religious settings. The authors conclude that the integration of DNH practice has significant potential to deepen and expand the work of interfaith cooperation and social action.

Key words: Do No Harm, conflict sensitivity, spirituality, religion, peacebuilding, social change

Acknowledgements: There are many people and groups that have contributed to our learning. In addition to those named throughout the article, we gratefully acknowledge Dilshan Annaraj, Kathryn Kraft, Bernard Okok, Hezron Masitsa, Patricia Morales Tijerino, Evelyn Tania Góchez, Davao Ministerial Interfaith, UJIFO, and the World Vision national and regional offices in El Salvador, Latin America Caribbean Region, Kenya, East Africa, and the Philippines.

Faith actors, including religious leaders, are commonly involved in humanitarian, relief and development activities in their communities whether under the auspices of religious institutions such as mosques or churches or as part of faith-based organisations. More broadly, faith actors play significant roles in distributing material, spiritual and social support, shaping public ethics and norms, and influencing interactions among diverse social groups, including religious and ethnic groups. Yet, most faith actors do not receive training on how their religious service might exacerbate the sources of tension within their contexts, or strengthen local capacities for peace. This article explores recent research on the uses of Do No Harm within faith communities and faith-based initiatives, and their implications for conflict sensitivity practice. Drawing on case studies from three sites, we argue that there is an important nexus among Do No Harm (DNH), personal growth and spiritual (trans)formation. For example, DNH has helped faith leaders to consider how their own spiritual beliefs and religious behaviours can contribute to violence and injustice. The case studies also point to a high level of ongoing innovation among faith actors in the Global South, who often hear about conflict sensitivity from international sources and then exercise creativity in making it their own. We conclude that the integration of DNH practice has significant potential to deepen and expand the work of interfaith cooperation and social action in many contexts including the Global North when specific conditions are present.

Background and Key Literature

In the early 2000s, faith-based development workers in Southeast Asia were among the first to introduce DNH to local faith leaders. In the Philippines, the national office of World Vision (WV), an international Christian relief, development, and advocacy organisation, began hosting

workshops on DNH for their community partners. One of those partners, the Davao Ministerial Interfaith (DMI) in Mindanao, made DNH practice foundational to its work. Michelle Garred (2011), who previously oversaw WV's Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding work in the Asia Pacific Region, began action research with DMI in 2007 to expand and document their work adapting DNH to the religious sector. Later, as part of a new faith and development strategy for the Middle East and Eastern Europe focused on cooperation and social responsibility among faith communities, WV continued contextualising DNH for faith leaders, leading to the creation of DNH for Faith Groups (DNH4FG), a tool to equip faith leaders with conflict sensitivity principles and skills while enhancing cooperation within and across religious communities in contexts of both violent and latent conflict.

A three-day workshop, DNH4FG introduces the DNH methodology to ordained congregational leaders, congregational lay leaders, and leaders of faith-based organisations, particularly Christian and Muslim faith actors. In addition to work by World Vision staff and consultant Esther Silalahi, the process involved Lucy Salek, a staff member of Islamic Relief Worldwide. Published in 2016 after pilot testing in Lebanon, Bosnia, and Kenya, the DNH4FG module follows the standard DNH framework and training with two significant variations. First, the workshop was made more accessible for faith leaders by moving it away from a technical humanitarian approach, shifting the focal point of analysis from projects to actions through which faith leaders serve their communities. Participants also analyse a specialized case study that explores how a faith-based development organisation might impact ethno-religious conflict. Secondly, the curriculum integrates instruction and interfaith reflection on sacred texts (typically, the Bible and the Qur'an for Christian and Muslim groups) that emphasise conflict-sensitive principles and themes of peace.

Using the DNH4FG framework, faith-based actors learn to apply DNH as a way of evaluating and changing their own decisions, behaviours, and activities. After five years of workshop implementation, WV staff came to believe that DNH contributes most notably to faith leaders' personal transformation, consistent with Garred's earlier research. In 2019, WV launched a two-part research project to investigate this thesis, contracting a team of university-based researchers to lead the project. Two case studies were developed from evidence gathered in Soyapango, El Salvador and Mombasa, Kenya. In the sections that follow, we present the findings from these DNH4FG case studies, followed by a retrospective look at earlier research from Mindanao, Philippines as a point of comparison. We conclude with the implications of this body of research for conflict sensitivity theory and practice.

Woven throughout the article is an important distinction between using DNH as a lens for viewing one's work and using DNH as an analytical tool, which was originally documented during CDA's DNH reflective case studies phase (e.g. CDA 2008; Dittli *et al.* 2009). This insight resonates with Neufeldt's distinction (2007) between "logical frameworks" and "complex circlers" in peacebuilding planning, monitoring and evaluation. While Frameworkers focus on linear cause-and-effect analysis, Circlers emphasise the relational, multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of causality, and the need for flexibility and adaptation. While much of the conflict sensitivity literature approaches DNH as a framework tool, following a linear step-by-step analytical process, this article demonstrates how faith actors often approach DNH as a lens, carrying the assumptions of a Circler. The Circler approach is associated with focusing more on contextual Dividers and Connectors than other components of the DNH tool (CDA 2008), and with emphasizing uptake at the individual level before broadening outward. Individual DNH uptake has been conceptualized as a three-part triangle comprised of three processes:

conceptualisation, personalisation, and operationalisation (CDA 2001). We therefore give sustained attention to the process of personalisation, that is, the ways in which DNH uptake involves changes in individual behaviours, attitudes, values and decision-making.

Do No Harm for Faith Groups in Soyapango, El Salvador

Soyapango is an urban municipality in the San Salvador region of El Salvador with high rates of homicide and gang violence. To unite Soyapango's faith leaders in youth violence prevention and child protection efforts, World Vision El Salvador (WVES) promotes working across religious and denominational divisions to improve the lives of children and youth. In 2019, WV International initiated an action research project on DNH4G in which the DNH4FG workshop was implemented with faith leaders serving in Soyapango, and accompanied with collaborative data collection and analysis led by WVES' faith and development team. In addition to assessing DNH4FG's potential contributions to the personal transformation of faith leaders, the research examined if faith leaders' education in conflict sensitivity through DNH4FG might prepare them to transform destructive social conflict and reconcile divided social groups.

WVES hosted two DNH4FG workshops for faith leaders in San Salvador – one in August 2019 attended by 20 Evangelical faith leaders, and a second in March 2020, attended by 20 Catholic clergy and lay leaders.¹ Though the first workshop was intended to bring together Catholic and Evangelical leaders, only Evangelical faith leaders attended it thus a second workshop was held. Members of the WVES Faith and Development Office set up two WhatsApp groups for participants in each workshop as a monitoring mechanism due to distancing requirements and other challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and collected survey data assessing

¹ Garred facilitated the first workshop with WVES staff, who exclusively facilitated the latter.

workshop participants' self-perceptions of their understanding and application of core conflict sensitivity skills such as awareness of the impact of their actions and behaviours on others.

Trained in Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology by the university-based research team, a research team composed of World Vision El Salvador staff also carried out MSC interviews with DNH4FG participants as well as story coding, analysis and selection.² Altogether, 35 faith leaders, including WVES staff also new to DNH, shared 40 stories of change. Of the 40 stories collected, 28 were categorised by the storyteller as indicative of personal transformation, seven of intra-religious collaboration, four of institutional change, and one was not categorised.³ The external research team also further analysed the MSC interviews using thematic coding. Rather than applying DNH to operational planning, faith leaders' application of DNH primarily manifested in new or renewed values, beliefs, ways of being, attitudes, knowledge and skills. An Evangelical pastor who participated in DNH4FG said: *"I feel that I am growing as a person and am more conscious of my words and expressions, avoiding hurting others."* According to WVES staff, the most significant change from the project was a shift in faith leaders' attitudes and perspectives (including their own) toward those of a different denomination i.e. Evangelical or Catholic.

² Most Significant Change is a participatory narrative methodology for monitoring and evaluation. Participants and staff share the most significant change resulting from the project, from their perspective, and why. In addition to identifying unexpected changes, MSC elicits the values accorded to a given project by participants and staff. The external research team was comprised of Johonna McCants-Turner, Amy Knorr, Andrew Suderman, Andrea Moya Uruena and research assistant Crisol González García. Internal data collection and analysis was carried out by WVES Emmanuel Program staff Karla Cañas, Oscar Flores, Ana Georgina Flint, and Abigail Ramírez, and WVES Faith and Development staff Silvana Audía, Rebeca Menendez, Edwin Míra, Jean Paul Ortíz, and Eric Basurto, with support from Kenia Rodríguez and Karen Hernández.

³ These domains of change are not exclusive of one another. Storytellers were asked to choose a single most representative domain.

Faith leaders engaged DNH as a menu of options, applying specific dimensions of DNH to their relationships, and their approach to religious activities. Key patterns included:

- Deepened awareness of social dynamics. For example, a Catholic teacher at a parochial school shared, *“As a member of the clerical team, we are more sensitive to the things that happen in the context and the community due to gang violence.”*
- Consideration that their actions and ministry activities might lead to unintentional harm. An Evangelical pastor who chairs the board of his church said, *“My change was to start thinking about whether what we do unites or divides people and everything has a consequence.”*
- An emphasis on creativity in planning religious activities, and solving interpersonal challenges. A participant who serves as a youth leader and a member of the music ministry at his Evangelical church reported, *“The workshop helped me acquire new values and strategies for problem-solving.”*
- A shift in communication and behavioural patterns to minimise harm to others, for example by working to be more inclusive. *“We changed a music teaching project that we had only for the youth of our church, and we extended the invitation to the youth of the whole community,”* said a Pentecostal pastor who leads her church’s women’s and children’s ministries.

Faith leaders described changes in how they thought about and acted toward members of their own families⁴ and households, members of their own faith groups, and people with differing

⁴ DNH often increases awareness of familial tensions, particularly among faith actors. However, DNH was not designed for family contexts, so caution is warranted. Addressing serious family distress requires a different approach.

religious beliefs and perspectives. Members of the WVES faith and development team, also new to DNH, were most likely to conceptualise and utilise DNH as a technical tool to improve the design and redesign of institutional activities: *“Since our participation in the DNH workshop as a team, we are more conscious of analysing our actions taking into account Do No Harm methodology.”* WVES faith and development staff planned to distribute food baskets to religious leaders without regular income when religious institutions were closed due to the pandemic. After concluding that their initial plan might harm relational dynamics among religious leaders, and between leaders of religious institutions and other community-based organisations, they developed new criteria for the selection of recipients, and revised their approach to food delivery. Ongoing operationalisation will involve bringing DNH to core aspects of their work, including ongoing efforts to build partnerships with Catholic clergy and lay leaders as a faith-based organisation rooted in the Evangelical tradition of Christianity.

Do No Harm for Faith Groups in Mombasa, Kenya

The second phase of the two-part research project on DNH4FG took the form of a retrospective case study conducted in 2019 with faith leaders who participated in a 2015 pilot phase workshop in Mombasa, Kenya. A majority-Muslim city-county in a predominantly Christian country, Mombasa, Kenya is a rapidly growing urban metropolitan area with a rich history of ethnic and religious co-existence. Ethno-religious conflict in the region is linked to long-standing legacies of colonialism, disputes over land and water, lack of viable sources of livelihood, and inequitable access to political power. In 2015, WV Kenya’s Area Development Program (ADP) in Mombasa, hosted a pilot DNH workshop for Christian and Muslim faith leaders as part of local programming to improve the lives of children and youth and address issues that negatively impact their lives.¹ Most participants (12 out of 20) were members of Upenda Jomvu Interfaith

Organisation (UJIFO), a local peace and development organisation formed in 2011, and regular partner of the ADP. In 2017, World Vision Kenya staff developed an initial follow-up report on the workshop informed by focus groups with 5 members of the Chagamwe ADP and UJIFO's seven-member leadership team, as well as one-on-one interviews with five additional workshop participants. In 2019, an external research team contracted by World Vision engaged 67 diverse participants through focus groups, surveys, and semi-structured interviews to learn about their continued usage of DNH. The first phase of the research involved document review and interviews with members of the workshop leadership and facilitation team. The second phase, conducted over one week in Mombasa, involved direct engagement with 10 workshop participants, nine of whom were UJIFO members; 35 congregational and community members connected to participating faith leaders; and 17 community elders to learn about their perceptions of conflict in the Chagamwe area. The Chagamwe ADP staff organized each of the focus groups, with support from UJIFO. The research team created English-language transcripts and summaries of the focus groups and interviews, then manually coded the content in relation to each research question and its various components.⁵ Limitations of the research process included primary reliance on rapid data collection four years after the initial workshop, and the potential for self-reporting bias.

The research found that education in conflict sensitivity through DNH4FG was personally and spiritually formative for faith leaders in UJIFO. Faith leaders expressed ethical shifts toward greater compassion, mercy, acceptance and open mindedness; an ability to consider longer-term impacts within their work for child protection and family violence intervention; and increased

⁵ Most focus groups and interviews were led by Kenyan members of the research team, and conducted in a blend of Kiswahili and English, with Kiswahili as the predominant language.

inclusion within community service. In combination with additional education and training from World Vision and other sources, DNHFG also led to increased sensitivity to gender injustices, greater awareness of escalated tensions between religious groups, and expanded understanding of the role religious leaders play in minimising or exacerbating tensions within their communities. Education in DNH also increased faith leaders' collective willingness to engage with and learn from an especially stigmatised and marginalised segment of their community. Not long after participating in the DNH4FG workshop, UJIFO received an unexpected invitation to meet with a local LGBT advocacy organisation about the exclusion of LGBT people from faith communities. UJIFO's leadership team ascribed their decision to accept the invitation to their education in DNH, which opened their eyes to the importance of moving away from judgment and listening to others' experiences and perspectives. These shifts in attitude motivated them to honour the invitation for dialogue with the LGBT advocacy group.⁶

Based on survey data collected from workshop participants in UJIFO, DNH was most helpful in shaping their understanding of the contexts where they serve, engaging conflict in their personal lives, and in enhancing their spiritual lives and theological understandings. They also rated it as very useful for application within their churches or mosques, and for improving relationships between groups of other faiths. DNH's usefulness in improving relationships between churches and mosques of the same faith was rated the lowest.

Faith leaders in UJIFO operationalised DNH within the leadership structure and organisational culture of UJIFO, ensuring that leadership positions are evenly shared between Christian and Muslims, and as well as leadership of shared prayer during meetings. Through narrative and

⁶ Faith leaders of various religions have been recognised as key contributors to violence against LGBT people in Mombasa, who have a high risk of being violently attacked. Human Rights Watch and Pema Kenya 2015.

storytelling, faith leaders also imparted principles and lessons from the DNH4FG workshop to members of their own faith institutions and communities – sharing both personal stories and historical case studies of conflict exchanged during the DNH4FG workshop. Community and congregational members retold specific stories and lessons learned from them during focus groups. It is important to reiterate that these various changes were only evidenced among the DNH4FG participants who were members of UJIFO, which functioned as a community of practice. UJIFO members, meeting regularly as an interfaith association, were able to refresh and deepen one another's learning and application. They also participated in other workshops and trainings offered by World Vision as well as programming led by other entities. Some of the additional factors that contributed to the uptake from the DNH4FG workshop include Mombasa's history of religious coexistence, existing interfaith efforts on the Coast, World Vision Kenya's interfaith stance and interfaith commitments, religious and spiritual formation from other sources such as formal theological training, and the strong pre-existing relationship between the Changamwe ADP and UJIFO.

Do No Harm for Faith Groups: Consolidated Findings

The case studies from Soyapango, El Salvador and Mombasa, Kenya were two parts of a single research project on DNH4FG. Overall, faith leaders perceived that the DNH4FG learning process increased their conceptualisation (conceptual understanding) and personalisation (personal application) of conflict sensitivity. Operationalisation (group/organisational usage of DNH) was more limited. The evidence from El Salvador and Kenya points to DNH4FG as a vehicle for personal formation, including spiritual (trans)formation, through which faith leaders engage conflict-sensitivity as a faith-rooted philosophy and praxis.

Faith leaders linked three dimensions of personal formation to their engagement with DNH:

- *Practical formation* - increased abilities for critical analysis and self-reflection, inquiry into others' perspectives and feelings, constructive dialogue to address conflict, systems thinking, and collective action.
- *Ethical formation* - new or deepened values of respect, tolerance and acceptance, and reconciliation and inclusion.
- *Faith formation* - new or greater emphasis on peacemaking and justice within their faith tradition, and individual and collective social action as forms of religious service.

Faith leaders indicated that the DNH4FG approach supported their embrace of new values, attitudes, and behaviours by connecting them to the teachings and sacred texts of their faiths.

Both cases also point to DNH as a resource for inter-and intra-faith reconciliation, Introducing DNH to faith leaders within an interreligious or intrareligious setting further enhanced its effects in this area. Faith leaders' developed or deepened commitments to intra- and inter-religious cooperation, and practiced connecting across religious barriers within the workshop setting.⁷ In the absence of intentional follow-up, DNH4FG may not support continued self-reflection among faith leaders, which is key to effective interreligious action. In Mombasa, participants regularly identified how the behaviours of other religious leaders contributed to social tensions or weakened connections, but did not continually analyse their own activities. Woodrow and Jean synthesise over 20 years of learning on this theme by stating that DNH training, and the development of individual champions, are necessary but not sufficient to support consistent DNH application within groups and institutions (Woodrow and Jean 2019). What does work,

⁷ As noted, intra-faith connection in each workshop was quite limited in the El Salvador case.

they say, is institutional mainstreaming as well as sustained coaching, mentoring and the provision of stand-alone resources that can be utilised by learners in an ongoing fashion. Interreligious introductions to DNH can also lead to unintentional harm when the groups hosting or introducing DNH education have limited knowledge and experience in applying DNH to its own work, including its outreach across religious divides. In both case studies, the WV offices that hosted DNH training lacked prior knowledge of DNH and existing experience applying DNH to its own programming, which was a key limitation. However, the context of workshop implementation in El Salvador made this limitation even more significant. In Kenya, DNH was introduced to an existing interfaith association of Muslim and Christian leaders. However, in El Salvador, World Vision, which has longer-running ties to Evangelical Christianity, sought to engage both Evangelical and Catholic faith leaders in conflict sensitivity principles and skills while simultaneously seeking to expand their relationships with Catholic faith leaders. The external research team recommended that WV mainstream DNH within its own offices and programs before introducing it to community partners.

Looking Back to Do No Harm in Mindanao

The action research findings from Mindanao, Philippines are one decade old, yet they illuminate the foundations of DNH usage among faith actors and provide an indispensable point of comparison for the recent findings from Kenya and El Salvador. Mindanao's ethno-religious conflict is rooted in the dominance of incoming migrants (predominantly Christian) over the local Bangsamoro (predominantly Muslim) and indigenous Lumads (who practice indigenous beliefs or Christianity). When the Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. (DMI) was launched in 2002, contextual violence was episodic as political leaders struggled to salvage a failing 1996 peace

agreement.⁸ DMI united fifty Roman Catholic, Evangelical Protestant and Muslim religious leaders to support community-based social action in partnership with World Vision Philippines. DMI went on to establish its own systems and programs, including the mentoring of sister interfaith groups in four nearby provinces. WVDF provided DMI with DNH training and mentoring from 2003 onward, making DMI a DNH pioneer long before the participatory action research of 2007-2009 (as described in DMI 2010; Garred 2011, 2013; Garred and Castro 2011).

The research explored the extent to which DNH was applicable to helping religious civil society organisations improve their social impact in multi-faith contexts. Together Garred and DMI's action research team⁹ engaged 143 diverse participants through surveys, semi-structured interviews and participatory DNH analyses. The first phase retrospectively examined DMI's own DNH usage, concluding that DNH was highly relevant and useful but needed further religious contextualisation, particularly of its impact analysis components. The second phase therefore examined 100 impact analysis examples created by religious actors external to DMI during participatory DNH workshops facilitated by DMI's own team of 13 DNH trainers.

The Mindanawon participants used DNH more as a lens than as a tool for project impact analysis – a pattern common among religious actors, yet notably absent in parallel action research in Singapore.¹⁰ Among the 81% of Mindanawon participants who had observed significant changes

⁸ Fortunately the subsequent Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2014) has been more successful in creating the conditions for lasting peace.

⁹ This team was composed of Sister Joan D. Castro (team leader), Ustadz Ahmad Guinar Ampuan Al-Hadj, Pastor Rueland Badoy, Sister Joan D. Castro, Pastor Shirley E. Papio, Pastor Alan Richa and Brother Salvador O. Veloso, Jr., with guidance from Pastor Ereberto Gopo.

¹⁰ Garred's action research in Singapore paralleled the Mindanao process. It addressed a much newer application of DNH on a much smaller scale - but nonetheless provided a useful source of triangulation.

through DNH, four out of five spoke mainly about their own personal growth, including changes in beliefs, values and behaviours deeply entwined with their spirituality. Key patterns included:

- A deeper awareness of one's own proximity to the contextual dividers, particularly pervasive identity-based segregation and deep tensions around proselytism;
- A shift from exclusive toward inclusive mindsets and behaviours, which was interpreted as being highly compatible with the core teachings of their own faiths;
- The formation of interethnic and interfaith relationships that did not previously exist, and a deepening of existing collaborations; and

These religious leaders were highly aware of how their own DNH-inspired changes could influence growth among their followers. However, they made little use of DNH to inform activity planning in their religious institutions.

The deep 'operationalisation' happened within DMI itself, described by DMI as follows:

“Though we began with a majority Evangelical membership, LCP¹¹ analysis of our multifaith context continually challenges us to seek out more Catholic and Muslim members” (DMI 2010, 19). DMI required new members to undergo DNH training to “prepare their minds and hearts” (DMI 2010, 19-20). They applied DNH to plan all core activities – from choosing meeting venues to facilitating joint prayers. DMI's flagship Neighbourhood Intergenerational Care Groups were originally inspired by Evangelical home Bible studies – but DNH quickly revealed that such groups would be perceived as exclusive or conversion-oriented. DMI re-shaped the program to actively include people of all religions in formats that supported their own faith practices. These counter-cultural changes proved particularly transformative in the deeply

¹¹ This article uses 'DNH' terminology, but DMI uses 'Local Capacities for Peace' or 'LCP.'

troubled intra-faith relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics. Yet they were also an unfolding work in progress, involving some lagging unmet goals around incorporating the Koran into learning materials and increasing Muslim participation.

In comparing this case to Kenya and San Salvador, the effects of DNH on individual spiritual development through ‘conceptualisation’ and ‘personalisation’ appear remarkably similar. However DNH ‘operationalisation’ went significantly deeper in Mindanao, and it is worth exploring why. DMI’s experience unfolded over a longer period of time - yet their deep DNH operationalisation began early, so timing alone does not explain the difference. Instead, the key difference appears to be the type and level of support offered by WV.¹² WV Philippines supported DMI’s launch¹³ as part of its own DNH-informed diversification of partner networks, such that DNH was literally DMI’s founding ethos. WV followed with consistent DNH training and mentoring over time, facilitated by staff who had themselves already experienced personal and organisational change through DNH.

WV also introduced DMI to ‘Culture of Peace’ training (based on Ledesma 1998), which explores injustice as a key driver of conflict in Mindanao. This helped DMI’s majority Christian members to understand the historical dividers of dispossession and marginalisation, an awareness which boosted DMI’s progress. Even so, it was noted that some majority DNH practitioners attempted to use DNH to smooth troubled relationships without critically examining how their own behaviour – such as land use and proselytism practices – might exacerbate underlying

¹² Additionally, civil society is strong in the Philippines, and indigenous peacebuilding runs deep in Mindanao. Metaphorically speaking, DMI grew up in a ‘hot house.’ For perspective on DMI within this context see Garred and Goddard 2010.

¹³ Key staff mentors included Herminegilda Presbitero-Carrillo and Bonifacio Belonio.

dividers. The action research team recommended that social justice awareness be continued and increased in future DNH efforts.

Implications for Conflict Sensitivity Theory and Practice

This body of research provides several implications for conflict sensitivity theory and practice. It affirms that **conflict sensitivity can contribute to individual change as well as institutional change**. Relatedly, it highlights the relationship between personal and institutional change, a relationship that may be even more salient in the context of religious communities. One Salvadoran faith leader articulated their implicit theory of change thusly: “The application starts with oneself because that is where the ideas of the church come.” Of course, DNH is one among many conflict sensitivity tools, and it cannot be assumed that all tools will lead to the same level of personalisation generally and among faith actors in particular. We suspect that this potential arises mainly among relatively simple conflict sensitivity tools that emphasise personal responsibility and are used at the local level - but this hypothesis has not been tested.

The ethical emphasis of **DNH makes it especially resonant with religious worldviews**, and there may be a deepened embrace of its core principles and lessons among faith leaders for this reason. DNH’s emphasis on dualistic social impacts, either peaceful or conflictual, provides religious actors with a way to conceptualise, give language to and then confront what they already know about religion’s “ambivalent” potential for help or harm (Appleby 2000; see also Garred and Abu-Nimer 2018). Once DNH introduces the question of religion’s ambivalent impacts, this new consciousness taps into a deep well of theology around personal accountability and individual change, in the context of one’s ethical duty to help others. Furthermore, the

centrality of scripture, theology and spiritual practice within the DNH4FG training methodology strengthens the uptake of DNH among religious actors.

The case studies also suggest that conflict mainstreaming as an analytical process is inconsistent and neglected, an insight evidenced in earlier research (for example, Woodrow and Jean 2019.) Perhaps one reason that institutional efforts struggle is because of the lack of transformation at the individual level. Individual transformation is inadequate in the absence of institutional application, and DNH4FG practice will need to grow in this area to meet its full potential. Yet the reverse may be equally true: perhaps institutional mainstreaming cannot fully succeed without the presence of personally transformed individuals – at the grassroots level and beyond.

The research also illuminates specific conditions in which the personalisation of DNH wanes or flourishes. Inadequate resourcing, capacity-building and mentoring after initial training is a significant limiting factor. In contrast, enabling conditions include the acceptance and nurturing of a lens (circler) approach, prior work applying DNH within an organisation's own programming and operations before seeking to engage others, the active integration of social justice themes within the local context within training content and providing conflict sensitivity and education to existing groups and communities of practice (such as DMI in Mindanao and UJIFO in Mombasa). In fact, WV's introduction of a contextualised DNH framework within existing communities of practice (Philippines and Kenya) and among groups with latent conflicts (El Salvador) offers rich insight for the integration of conflict sensitivity within the broader development and peacebuilding sectors.

The case studies point toward a significant level of **grassroots experimentation and innovation among faith actors in the Global South**. The cases also represent - but do not capture - a

broader circle of creative faith actor engagement that can only be described through anecdotal evidence. Garred has repeatedly encountered other small-scale DNH applications, each arising spontaneously and independently in a pattern of faith actors repeatedly ‘discovering’ DNH.¹⁴ This reflects just how deeply DNH principles and concepts such as Dividers and Connectors resonate with local faith actors as naturally relevant to their contexts. Garred has heard countless times the sentiment captured in the aforementioned CDA Uganda case: “That is so obvious. We have been doing that; we just did not give it a name.” (Dittli *et al.* p.6.) This recognition of intimate proximity also helps in understanding why for some grassroots leaders using DNH, the distinction between personal behaviour change and organisational change may be minimal. At the hyperlocal level, if a key leader in a small organisation behaves more inclusively, it may well be on the road to organisational change.

Additionally, while the case studies involve international NGO support to local actors in the Global South, there is no reason to assume that the potential of DNH is limited to such contexts. Indeed Garred’s Singapore action research involved no INGOs; it was locally hosted by the Harmony Centre at An-Nahdhah, an interfaith hub supported by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore. This highlights the intriguing possibilities that local faith actors could mutually mentor each other with little or no external intervention, and/or that DNH could resonate well with faith actors in high-income contexts. It is worth exploring the potential of DNH among faith actors grappling with social identity-related social tensions in the Global North.

¹⁴ Early innovators included Chandra Mohan and Richard Devadoss (India) and Esther Silalahi (Indonesia), the consultant who went on to author the DNH4FG modules for WV. There are no doubt many others whose names are unknown to us.

Finally, this research points toward **a greater need for the contextualisation of DNH patterns of impact for the religious sector.** In Mindanao, the data strongly confirm the presence of the two conflict impact mechanisms found in the original DNH framework. The first, Resource Transfers, refers to impacts resulting from the provision of goods and services. The second, Implicit Ethical Messages (IEMs), refers to impacts resulting from the ethos communicated through the actions of project implementers. However, IEMs were identified far more frequently in DMI's work than in a typical humanitarian program, indicating that some religious actors place more emphasis on the intangible, even when delivering material services. Additionally, the data evidence new impact patterns not found in the original DNH framework, which point to the spiritualised nature of a religious leader's work and its relationship to social exclusion. One of the more provocative new patterns is "washing my hands of social impact," in which religious actors act on the implicit belief that if they have good intentions, the divine will prevent or fix any unintended negative impacts, thus absolving them of responsibility for the ways in which their actions impact inter-group relationships (DMI 2010, 55). This pattern is a prime example of why further research is needed to uncover DNH impact patterns unique to the religious sector.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates an important nexus between Do No Harm, personal growth and spiritual (trans)formation in the lives of faith actors navigating tense intra- and inter-faith relations in which religion has ambivalent effects. DNH4FG's curriculum and pedagogy offers language and lenses, philosophy and principles, scripture and theology, storytelling and narrative, and at times, a community of practice, that (trans)form faith actors. The change encompasses practical, ethical and faith-related aspects, encouraging shifts toward acceptance, inclusion, relationship formation and collaboration across lines of religious difference,

undergirded by the (re)discovery of peace and justice themes within their own sacred texts, religious traditions and spiritual experiences. Key enabling conditions include adequate capacity building with ongoing mentoring over time, and an active integration of social justice themes relevant within the local context. The process is not necessarily fast, but the deep integration of DNH practice has tremendous potential to deepen and expand the work of inter-faith cooperation and social action. There is also potential to upend traditional power structures within international development by encouraging conflict sensitivity usage in the Global North and developing peer-to-peer mentoring.

Faith actors often use DNH in ways different than their secular counterparts, pointing toward some higher-level observations about conflict sensitivity. Faith actors tend to use DNH as a paradigmatic lens more than a formal analytical tool, centering their practice around contextual Dividers and Connectors and placing more emphasis on personal application than on operationalisation at the organisational level. While often weak on institutional mainstreaming, faith actors do show significant promise in their efforts to transform small organisations by transforming key people inside of them. Undoubtedly both institutional and individual change are needed - yet most conflict sensitivity efforts focus squarely on one or the other. There would be great value in expanding both research and practitioner resources on how to interweave individual and institutional change together in conflict sensitivity practice.

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