



4. APPLY A CONFLICT-SENSITIVE YOUTH LENS IN CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS

This section summarizes the literature on best practices in youth inclusion that are relevant to Feed the Future activities in conflict-affected environments. The guidance here pertains to environments affected by conflict, violence, and/or violent extremism, but where there is a sufficient level of stability to assume that youth are able to contribute to the (re-)building of the agriculture sector.

Integrate youth-specific information into the project's conflict analysis. Because youth can play an important role in the peacebuilding process, to the extent possible, project design and implementation should consider the role youth have in the conflict and peacebuilding efforts. Engage youth at all stages of the conflict analysis process (refer to the guidance on youth assessment in Volume I Section 3.4).

Leverage the agriculture sector as a conduit for stabilization. In cases of youth violence and extremism, engagement in the agriculture sector may provide an opportunity to address the “pull factors” that attract young people to joining a violent group. The research indicates that youth are most often attracted to violence and violent groups because of the respect, status, identity, or sense of purpose they cannot find elsewhere.⁴¹ Furthermore, providing economic opportunities to youth may help address underlying drivers of conflict related to experiences of injustice (e.g., marginalization, disenfranchisement, discrimination) and increase social cohesion.^{42 43} Feed the Future projects can:

- Create a sense of belonging by encouraging youth to be part of an agricultural cooperative or organization committed to youth empowerment, such as 4H.
- Support positive self-identity by emphasizing youth's role as an important actor in the household and/or in the larger food system.
- Develop a sense of purpose by engaging youth in meaningful work based in practical experience, such as an apprenticeship, internship, service learning, or volunteerism.
- Strengthen bonds between youth and their community by promoting youth leadership in activities related to environmental protection, climate-smart agriculture practices, or advocacy for agriculture sector reform.

Emphasize ongoing monitoring and adaptive management. A major theme emerging out of youth and conflict programming is the importance of flexible program design that allows for operations and management decisions to adapt to the changing environment. As one leading report on youth and conflict programming states: “Longer-term programs with adaptive management allow development actors to respond to the complex and dynamic systems in which youth programs operate. Adaptive approaches are iterative. They require donors to build flexibility into program design and budgets, empowering implementers to evolve quickly.”⁴⁴ Such approaches rely on continuous project monitoring, including rapid feedback, qualitative mini-evaluation, participatory methods, and other innovative approaches to assessing performance. Best practice recommends at least 10% of youth and conflict activity funds be used for internal monitoring. Qualitative information gleaned from project activities should take precedence over the achievement of countable indicator targets.



Table 10 illustrates a list of considerations and options when addressing youth livelihoods and agriculture programming in conflict-affected areas.

Table 10. Conflict-Affected Environments – Considerations and Approaches

Elements	Considerations	Illustrative Activity Design Options
Youth	<p>Many youths have been traumatized as a result of being a witness to, victim of, and/or participant in violence and conflict.</p> <p>School-age youth have likely experienced disruptions to education.</p> <p>Youth may be engaging in risky sexual behavior and be at greater risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI) including HIV. Sexual and gender-based violence, particularly for girls and young women, may be prominent in conflict settings.</p>	<p>Most youth programs in conflict environments consist of five or more cross-sector components in education, employment, health, mental health, and civic engagement. Interventions should be accompanied with or linked to literacy and numeracy training and/or accelerated education programs that provide learners with equivalent certified competencies in a relatively short timeframe.</p> <p>Psychosocial services, typically those using a community-based rehabilitation model, help youth address the trauma that they have experienced as a result of conflict. Programs targeting high-risk youth often use a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) approach to help them increase self-control, improve interpersonal relationships, and avoid resorting to violence.</p>
	<p>Youth who have experienced conflict are often focused on short-term livelihood opportunities and less likely to invest in and plan for the long-term.</p>	<p>A household-based livelihood approach—one that promotes a diversity of income streams, savings, and the restoration of economic assets—is likely to be appropriate for addressing poverty and food security in a conflict-affected environment.</p> <p>Consider short-cycle crop value chains and/or other short-term income generating activities for youth as an entry point into longer-term approaches. Include goal setting and planning as part of a skills development package.</p>
Family and Community	<p>Death and displacement may have disrupted traditional family structures, with youth often serving as heads of household.</p> <p>Community trust has often been damaged.</p>	<p>Interventions that build youth-to-community connections—such as those that build mentoring relationships, offer positive role modeling, and enhance youth’s social networks—help strengthen the personal relationships that shape young people’s values and identities.</p> <p>Repeat interactions between conflicting groups of youth help reduce stereotypes and increase empathy.</p>
Institutions, Policy, Standards, and Norms	<p>The functioning of value chains has been disrupted, usually with severe market distortions and “spoilers” who take advantage of the disruptions.</p> <p>Armed groups may be seizing (or have seized) harvests or land. A maldistribution of agricultural assets (access to land, inputs, water, credit, infrastructure, technical assistance) may benefit certain groups over others.</p>	<p>Youth can take advantage of new market opportunities that open new access to food supplies through increased production and trade.</p> <p>Secure tenure on communal pastoral lands.</p>



<p>Illicit crop production (e.g., coca, poppy), exploitative labor, and/or environmentally damaging practices may be pervasive.</p> <p>Consider the safety, security, and well-being of youth participants, as market actors may have a stake in perpetuating conflict/violence.</p>	<p>Conflict analysis should consider the effects of young male/female participation in markets.</p> <p>It is important for youth to have a “safe space,” such as a school, local youth-serving organization, club, or community center, to access opportunities and connect with other.</p>
<p>Youth can play an important role in the peacebuilding process and in the re-building of agricultural markets following conflict.</p>	<p>Consider complementary interventions that increase youth political participation, such as national youth advocacy efforts that promote youth-friendly agriculture policy, land rights reform, access to finance, or a more favorable business-enabling environment for youth agri-business startups.</p> <p>Promote positive leadership roles for youth in the agriculture sector.</p>

