

Addressing social cohesion in urban humanitarian response

WEBINAR
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Social Cohesion Webinar (84 minutes)

Leah Campbell: Hello everyone, and welcome to the 14th in ALNAP's series of urban webinars. We are very thrilled to have with us speakers from World Vision and CRS today, and very thankful to all of you who've joined us as our audience. I wanted to start off by introducing the topic of social cohesion a little bit. I know Aline is going to address this in her presentation in a moment, but I just wanted to mention a few things, because social cohesion has been an issue that has come up in a variety of different ALNAP webinars and presentations since we've started looking at this issue four years ago. As we all know, urban areas contain a wide variety of social and economic backgrounds, differing ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, and different social structures that all occur in really dense spatial areas that we know as cities. The result of this mixture of social relations, structures and hierarchies is really quite crucial in terms of their influence on a city's social cohesion.

One of the main challenges for humanitarians trying to work with a geographically defined urban area is a lack of social cohesion, and this challenge is two fold, really that of understanding the level of social cohesion, and then also of working with a population who may share varying levels of cohesiveness as well as vulnerabilities. Social cohesion can determine how information and resources are shared, it can influence how neighbourhoods are organised, including the strength of the social fabric and social capital of an area, as well as the amount of social control, and the

level of social cohesion is often influenced by relationships between host and displaced populations. The level of support available, including aid, can also play a role, and while a lack of social cohesion is a challenge for urban humanitarian response, sometimes it's suggested that the heterogeneity of a population isn't necessarily the problem, that sometimes the challenge is that people don't have a way to come together rather than a lack of willingness to do so.

While we've seen in many different cases the documentation of the difficulties of understanding social cohesion in urban areas, there's been few tools or guidance materials available for humanitarians to work from, and that's why we were so thrilled when World Vision published their recent research on this issue, and that we also found the valuable experience of the CRS team in Central African Republic to draw from in this webinar. I'm going to start in a minute by introducing the three speakers, and while I do this, I also wanted to introduce our audience, and to do so I'm going to launch a quick poll. So our three speakers today, the first is Aline. She's the Urban Programming Advisor with World Vision International's Center of Expertise for Urban Programming. Based in Beirut, she currently holds a global portfolio, while in the past she's played multiple roles within Lebanon, and in the Middle East and Eastern Europe region. Aline has eight years of experience in the humanitarian development field, focussed on urban programming with a background in public health, health promotion, and community development, as well as a passion for urbanism.

Also from World Vision we have Denis Brown, who is currently the Operations Manager for World Vision's Syrian crisis response in Jordan. He brings 12 years of experience managing humanitarian programmes in nine countries across all the continents in the world. Denis has overseen programming in all major humanitarian sectors, and has been working specifically on the Syrian refugee crisis for three years, for one year in Lebanon with DRC, and most recently now in Jordan for two years with World Vision International. Finally we have Robert or Bob Groelsema, who's the Africa Justice and Peace-building Working Group team leader for Catholic Relief Services, or CRS. His interest in social cohesion has been inspired by his work on politics, conflict, peace-building and stabilisation in fragile state contexts, including Central African Republic, the DRC, Guinea, South Sudan, and Northern Kenya. He has an MPA in public and international affairs from the University of Pittsburgh and a PhD in political science from Indiana University.

Now we've heard a bit about our speakers, I'm going to share the results of this poll. Today most of our audience has some understanding of urban social cohesion, that's 50% of you. The second highest was 22% with 'I'm completely new to understanding social cohesion'. We also have 8% with some non-urban understanding of social cohesion, and 17% who know a lot about social cohesion, but not necessarily in urban contexts, with a final 3% who are very knowledgeable about urban social cohesion. So without further ado, I'm going to pass over to our first speaker, and here she is, Aline.

Aline Rahbany: Thank you Leah. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening everyone. Thank you Leah and ALNAP for the opportunity to be part of this webinar. As Leah introduced, in the next five minutes or so I'll be speaking about why social cohesion matters in urban settings, and what World Vision has done about it, and then I will hand over to my colleague Denis Brown, the Operations Manager in our Jordan office, who will speak more about the topics from an operational and practical perspective. Let's start with the facts, there's not a widely-held, theoretically derived, clearly articulated, and reasonably operationalized definition of social cohesion. We loosely define social cohesion as the nature of the relationship between individuals and groups in a particular environment, which we're calling horizontal social cohesion, and between those individuals and groups and the institutions that governed them in a particular environment, which we are going to refer to as vertical social cohesion.

What we know is that changing and multiple identities interfere with social cohesion. Social cohesion requires an understanding of social networks, and in situations of deteriorating or low social cohesion, the manifestation will include tensions, instability, social fragmentation which can be measured by using indicators like frequency of violent inter-group incidences, such as harassment, bullying, discrimination, isolation, or communication of negative feelings, like negative stereotypes, scapegoating, inter-group anxiety and perceptions of threat. Having this in mind, why does social cohesion matter in urban settings? Five years of civil war in Syria have generated a massive protracted displacement of over 7 million internally displaced, and over 4 million refugees, the majority of whom are residing in non-camp and urban settings in countries like Lebanon and Jordan. This is causing new and diverse challenges to authorities, humanitarian actors, and host communities. The influx of Syrian refugees to Lebanon particularly is contributed to a situation of rapid, unsustainable urbanisation in an already fragile context. This situation has worsened existing vulnerabilities, and has increased pressure on underfunded and under equipped local municipalities to provide basic urban services.

Because the urban context is characterised by complex, fluid, diverse, and inter-connected communities, the underlying structure of vulnerabilities can intensify inequality, the resource scarcity, competition, social conflict, and protection challenges during crises. It's no surprise therefore that tensions have emerged between refugees and host communities, and between local communities, and those who administer them. Studies now show that rising social tensions between communities have multiple, critical consequences. Among them are two very important ones, which are the potential to generate a secondary conflict in host countries, and the second one is the huge consequence on equitable access to public spaces, urban governors, and access to basic services, as well as livelihood opportunities, and humanitarian development assistance. So for example, as tensions rise, so does the isolation of refugee families from the fabric of urban social life. So for example, Syrian women preferring to avoid harassment or negative

stereotyping in public spaces remain at home, an unfortunate coping mechanism that reduces access to social capital in the community.

Children who are adversely affected as families prefer not to send their children to school for fear of discrimination or harassment, which in turn can increase segregation and further social tensions. It's also widely held that humanitarian and development interventions can directly or indirectly contribute to increase tensions in the communities. Poorly planned aid can contribute to increased tension between competing groups, it can also undermine conflict resolution institutions, and exacerbate power inequities. In urban environments for example, where displaced communities often reside alongside the non-displaced, but in many ways equally vulnerable urban poor, and where complex, heavy monetised systems mean that health, education, housing and food are deeply embedded in market systems, response efforts can no longer be sector or beneficiary centric. So opportunities exist, new research suggests that refugee economies can positively contribute to the environments, generating vibrant, thriving economic systems, and that humanitarian programming could unlock ways to enable those economic systems to be channelled to the benefit of refugees, host states, and donors.

Education provides another opportunity. On the one hand, conflict disrupts the education system, destroys the physical infrastructure, the schools, and promotes a culture of violence that impacts classrooms, but when available can also influence and reduce political instability and cyclical violence. So, having all of this in mind, what have we done about it? Over the course of the past year, we embarked on an exit process of trying to answer two questions. First, how is social cohesion in urban settings in Lebanon currently understood, and second, how is social cohesion currently operationalized in the context of the Syria response? We started what we called a multi-year action-learning project, what I just shared with you, and I will be sharing with you during the Q&A today, is the outcome of the first phase of the project, which contained a literature review that you can access in the hand outs. The literature review aims to identify gaps, and accordingly come up with evidence based programme designs for further exploration. So direct implementation and continued research. So, we identified a preliminary database of over 635 sources, we then narrowed them down to 66 prioritised documents. It's by no means meant to be an exhaustive study, but rather a guiding framework for approaching social cohesion in urban humanitarian emergencies and settings. So it's a current and on going studies, policies, projects and tools that can be used to make decisions on how to mobilise best practices when such practices exist, and address gaps where identified.

What did we find out? If you allow us to understand that drivers of social tensions can be organised into three main categories. There are structural vulnerabilities that pre-date the Syrian crisis, such as the high level of poverty, resource scarcity, and lack of effective governing institutions, or weak governing institutions. The second category is socio-economic, religious and cultural norms, differences between refugees and host communities, as well as lack of social networks, and the third one

includes proximate causes, which are the core issues resulting from the demographic shifts driven by massive displacement. So by proximate causes we mean access, affordability, and quality of housing, economic competition over livelihood opportunities, access to, and quality of basic education and basic public goods and services, so we're talking about water, electricity, solid waste collection, health care. Also included in proximate causes is the role of international aid in terms of perception of fairness of distribution, availability, and perception of inequity, unfairness, and even corruption, and the role of social, local, and international media, and framing those issues.

In addition to this we learned that history and context are crucial for understanding the tensions and developing strategies to address them. In Lebanon past events, sectarian and political identities, the role of media, or geographical region, gender differences account for variance in level of perceived security threats over time. Second, social cohesion requires thinking beyond refugee/host community dynamics. First social tensions are multi-directional, as I mentioned earlier about the horizontal versus the vertical definition. It's important to understand that the drivers of social tensions at the micro level, such as economic competition, housing challenges, tend to generate horizontal tensions, that is tensions between groups, whereas factors at the macro level, like the access and quality of public services, contribute to vertical tensions, that is the tension between the groups and the governing body. Second, it's needless to say that tensions existed in Lebanon as a function of political affiliation and religious identification way before the Syria crisis. The Syria refugee crisis does complicate an already fragile political balance at the national level.

An example of the influence of media on matters of social cohesion in host countries, one of the studies that we looked at explained how increasing contact with people back home, through social media and exposure to local and international media significantly influences attitudes towards violence among increasingly isolated Syrian refugees and host communities. We also learned that perception of humanitarian assistance also matters, understanding those perceptions is especially useful for aid agencies to begin thinking about how their response is intimately linked to community dynamics, and may catalyse frictions, escalate tensions, and increase negative perceptions of assistance. External factors also matter. One of the studies we looked at presented a security focus by investigating regulatory incidents, such as curfews that are imposed on Syrian refugees by local municipalities, and discussing the securitisation of the Syrian community as perceived by Lebanese nationals. The study captured different manifestations of social tensions, but also presented external factors that affect security, including that events in Syria, as well as clashes between the Syrian conflict actors and the Lebanese armed forces could impact their inter-community perceptions. So I'll stop here for now, and I'm looking forward to sharing more during the Q&A, and I'll hand over now to Denis to talk about the experience in Jordan.

Denis Brown: Thanks Aline. Hello everyone, I will be discussing a bit about World Vision Jordan's work in the Syria response here inside Jordan as it pertains to social cohesion in an urban/host community context. World Vision Jordan has not implemented specific projects to address social cohesion to date, however we do have a grant that is in the start up phase, which I will touch upon later in the presentation. I will speak mainly about how World Vision Jordan is taking some of the recommendations from the recent literature review that Aline previously mentioned, and moving forward with them, but first a brief background of World Vision in Jordan. We've been working on the Syrian crisis in Jordan since May 2013. The sectors we work in include WASH, children in emergency, with a focus on education, food and NFI, cash based programming, and livelihoods. We work both in refugee camps and host communities. In Jordan approximately 80% of the refugees are in host communities, and 20% in camps.

In terms of social cohesion, World Vision Jordan is currently working towards strengthening our programming in this regard. As for the recommendations from the literature review and how World Vision Jordan is using them, let me first start with the final recommendation. Mainstream social cohesion in strategies and operational plans. The organisation should envision social cohesion as it pertains to current mandates across humanitarian emergency affairs, peace-building and development departments. As this literature review was being done, World Vision Jordan was in a process of revising its strategy, and one of the things that we did was embody social cohesion into our overall strategic goal. Our current strategy has an overall goal to enhance well-being and promote stability through social cohesion. The underlying objectives are included on the slide:

- Ensure equitable and inclusive access to quality services
- Improve socio-economic conditions and psycho-social care, of children in particular
- Promote and integrate gender, resilience, social cohesion, participation and protection including child protection

World Vision Jordan considers as a key overall goal that Jordan maintains its social and economic stability, which is critical to the region. Though encircled by turbulent geo-political events, Jordan has been stable through various turmoil. One of the contributing factors is of the King's strength in the country, through tolerance, but also firmness. Factors of stability include a steady growth in GDP, strong security forces, stable employment level, a national identity, a legitimate government and social cohesion, however the sudden increase in population has had an adverse impact on Jordan's economic, social, as well as institutional stability. Because the increase of risk of incidents of violence and conflict between communities, that could undermine Jordan's social stability, World Vision's strategy is built on a core of enhancing children's well-being, as well as preserving Jordan's economic and social stability.

In addition, social cohesion matters cut across all the objectives, and already focus on ensuring access to, and quality of services, improving the socio-economic conditions, as well as promoting and integrating gender and resilience. World Vision therefore can contribute directly to stability and mutual acceptance of different communities, and their ability to share resources, as well as services, strengthen social relations and extended social protection, including child protection services are also important. World Vision Jordan can indirectly pursue social cohesion through a resiliency approach that focuses on enhancing overstretched infrastructure, socio-economic conditions, and building the resilience of refugees and host communities at the community level. So what does this practically mean?

Our past and on going projects have emphasised two approaches to influencing social cohesion. The first and main method is indirectly improving communal infrastructure such as schools, and also through improving socio-economic conditions for both refugees and vulnerable Jordanians by providing provision of services and items such as cash. The second is through more direct, secondary activities within larger projects that address tensions, and encourage cooperation and understanding. These include community WASH committees, parent teacher associations, also the work that is done with youth in schools as an aside to the education component. This included a film project where youth were taught how to use film equipment to empower them to tell stories. Topics chosen by youths and filmed included bullying in schools, discrimination among the various groups. These films were screened in various schools and community events. There were also numerous inter-school events including sports events. All of these activities included Syrians and Jordanians.

There has also been a significant portion of vulnerable Jordanians included in our programming, anywhere from 30 to 50% when working in the host communities. This I have to mention is a requirement from the Jordanian government. The government plays a strong role in ensuring humanitarian aid is also directed towards vulnerable Jordanians, much more than many other countries I've experienced, which leads to the diminishing of tensions often caused by aid. All projects targeting refugees require approval from the government, and there is a requirement that a minimum of 30 to 50% of beneficiaries are vulnerable Jordanians. May I ask, why the range? Well, it's something that isn't set in stone. There's often a push to see the limits of the NGOs and the donors, but there is the idea from the government that all projects contribute to the balancing of aid between refugees and host communities. Also World Vision and many other NGOs are coordinating more and more with ministries, either by choice, or guided through government systems. The ministries are playing a greater role in coordinating actors alongside the UN. Granted, some ministries are stronger than others, and I should also mention that the highly centralised nature of this process can lead to tensions between various levels of government, the local and the central.

So moving forward, our plan is to focus efforts wherever possible to design and implement programs that target social cohesion directly, while maintaining our

indirect influence as well. World Vision Jordan attempted in the last couple of years to secure funding for projects that directly focus on social cohesion, however it wasn't until recently that we were able to secure funding for three years, and taking a more direct approach to social cohesion with programming targeting youth in schools as agents of peace-building, but even this project also has an element of strengthening common infrastructure, with rehabilitation of community centres, and WASH infrastructure in schools. This project will also form committees that will be housed within the renovated community centres. They will be trained in various peace-building tools, and will work towards various social cohesion campaigns at the local level. This will also provide World Vision with an opportunity to gather more information to monitor the situation in these communities and provide guidance to feed into future programming.

As was mentioned in some of our past programmes, there have been secondary activities that have attempted to build cohesion among the refugees and host communities, but we haven't been systematic in mainstreaming it across all our programmes, which basically means putting a filter of social cohesion for all of our projects, which includes really analysing what has worked previously, and how can we replicate and adapt throughout our programmes. This is the next step for us, and having a project that focuses on this issue will assist us in gathering those best practices in a more systematic way. Now under the recommendation to strengthen social cohesion research, there are two sub recommendations, the first being conduct more in-depth, longitudinal research on the impact of matters of reduced social cohesion across multiple vulnerable demographics. Previously World Vision has project specific monitoring and evaluation questions that sometimes address issues of tension and cohesion, but it varied from project to project based on whether there was a component of social cohesion or not.

Sometimes we collect anecdotal feedback through focus group discussions, but we haven't been systematically collecting data on this issue. World Vision is looking into how we can incorporate more on going and systematic data collection of tension and social cohesion within our programmatic areas. Part of this included a recently completed impact assessment across our operational and programmatic areas, which will even be combined with other World Vision offices across the Syria response, which includes Turkey, Lebanon, KRI, as well as Jordan. This impact assessment included questions on community relations, discrimination, etc. This can serve as a baseline for us moving forward here in Jordan. We've also recently conducted a Making Sense of Turbulent Context assessment, which is a participatory tool to analyse elements of tension and conflict at the country level for planning purposes, which we'll use to help guide our strategy.

Moving forward we're looking to developing a few questions, indicators that can be incorporated into all our assessments, monitoring and evaluation exercises, so that we can gradually collect information throughout our operational area without doing a specific assessment on social cohesion. This would then be strengthened by more detailed information gathering on our project elements, focussing specifically on

social cohesion. Collecting this kind of information however is a sensitive issue here in Jordan, and these types of inquiries require careful framing. This can be a challenge for NGOs here in the country.

The second recommendation under strengthening research is to highlight positive case studies or case studies of good practice. World Vision has been collecting positive case studies, but not so much for the purpose of developing communities of practice. They've been more anecdotal and meant to highlight the positive impact of our projects. The next step for us now is to move towards case studies of good practice, which is more analytical of our methodologies versus simply highlighting our successes. Starting our new project will help us in this regard of designing a more analytical approach to assessing our impact on social cohesion across all our projects. Then we need to link this up to World Vision's global structures that already exist. The final recommendation that I would like to highlight is to improve programming approaches to social cohesion, specifically collaborate with NGOs and other partners that are members of regional and national strategic response plans.

World Vision has been participating at various working groups, both at the national and the local level in order to harmonise approaches and set standards for working together and dealing with overlaps. Here, Jordan World Vision also feeds into the RAIS, which is the Refugee Assistance Information System. This is a database managed by UNHCR that is meant to track all assistance to registered refugees. It is meant to eliminate duplication and facilitate the provision of aid by multiple actors in a context urban context. Part of the difficulty is that it doesn't take into account the vulnerable Jordanians, which account for a significant percentage of beneficiaries in the host communities. Also, as I mentioned before, more and more NGOs are coordinating with government structures. While all these structures assist in the coordination of aid in host communities, which have an impact on hopefully addressing social cohesion, I guess the question moving forward is how can social cohesion have a more prominent role through these coordination mechanisms?

In summary World Vision Jordan has understood the importance of assisting in maintaining stability in Jordan at various levels. We have attempted to incorporate programming when possible, to positively influence social cohesion, however we haven't mainstreamed it into our operations. We are currently in that process now, and have been using this report basically, to assist us in moving forward and taking on those recommendations, and bringing them into our operational framework moving forward.

Leah Campbell: Thanks so much both to Aline and to Denis. We really appreciate hearing about your work so far. I'm going to hand over straightaway to Bob to tell us a bit more about the work that CRS has been doing in Central African Republic.

Robert Groelsema: Well thank you Leah, and let me say thanks to Denis and Aline for a very interesting presentation. I really like the emphasis on the studies and the documentation of social cohesion initiatives, because I think there's a lot to share

across the theoretical field as well as those who are on the ground implementing, and the practitioners that really can benefit from this information as they implement programmes, so thank you for that. Good day to everyone who's tuned in, I really appreciate your being with us today. I'm going to talk a lot about our experience in the Central African Republic, which I will refer to as CAR, and as with any case study, the tendency is to get almost lost, if you will, in the richness of the case, and I could speak really for hours about the Central African Republic and social cohesion, but I've done my best to try to sculpt this and craft it in such a way that we focus more on the urban context than the rural context, even though we implement social cohesion activities in very rural setting, but we've also done a considerable amount of work in Bangui, the capital, as well as in three or four urban centres around the country, including Bossangoa, Bouar, and Boda.

I'm going to briefly set the scene of the Central African Republic, it's probably not a country many of you are deeply familiar with, I certainly wasn't until I started working there. My first trip was there in 2006, and we've been conducting social cohesion work there for the last few years. I joined CRS about 18 months ago, and so my role at headquarters has been to lead a team that provides technical support and backup to our country programme in Central African Republic, and to work closely with them on our social cohesion initiatives. I was recently there in February with a team to assess and review the work we've done over the last couple of years on social cohesion, and so some of that will figure in my presentation. A few quick facts about the demographics, the physical, social characteristics of the country, it's a country of about 5 million people, roughly the size of the US State of Texas. It's landlocked, located in the heart of Africa. It became independent from France in 1960, and there are some 80 ethnic groups in CAR, but only four of which can claim to have greater than 10% of the population. You probably could distinguish three large groupings of ethnic groups in the country, but basically the bottom line about ethnicity is that there is no one single dominant group, so you don't have that type of cleavage in the country, and from an ethnicity standpoint there's a lot of overlap and similarity, intermarrying in the country, and people stand really to benefit from harmonious relationships, and getting along with each other, cooperation.

There is a national language, Sango, which unites the country, and a small portion of the population also is fluent in French, which is the colonial national language, and tends to be the language of government and business in the capital. Approximately, and this is very approximate, 60% to 80% of the population self identifies as being Christian. About 10%, 20%, 30% as Muslim, and then there's the underlay of African traditional religion, and like most African countries, CAR has a very youthful population, about 40% of the population is 15 or 14 years and under. The urban/rural split is about 45 urban, and 55 rural, with several urban centres that probably have 30-50,000 people. The capital of Bangui has about 500,000 people. Now for physical and social geographics, I think it's important to know here, because of the conflict, the recent and still on going conflict in the country, that CAR ranks 187th out of 188 on the UNDP's human development index. There's a life expectancy of about 50 years at birth, and most people are just living above the

poverty line. You have literacy rates as low as about 50% on average, and far lower for women. In this area, the neighbours, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, you have similar conditions, similar rankings on the UNDP's HDI, and so in some people's view, this is not a good neighbourhood to be living in. It's very much the root causes of violent disputes and conflicts.

Let me say a brief word about the crisis in CAR. The country's most recent crisis began in November of 2012 when a loose coalition of rebels called Séléka, which means 'alliance' began attacking and occupying the north and central parts of the country. Peace deals were eventually struck, but mostly failed, and then the rebels took over Bangui in March of 2013. The counter to the Séléka rebels, or guerrillas if you will, are the Anti-Balaka forces, and Anti-Balaka means 'anti-machete'. They countered the Séléka forces in clashes in upcountry as well as in Bangui. The fighting at times has been extremely vicious, and marked by looting, pillaging, indiscriminate killings, and at the peak of the fighting in 2014, some 3,000 people were killed. Close to a million people were displaced, and some 200,000 have sought refuge outside the country. In the most recent outbreak of violence, which was in September of last year in Bangui, some 75 people were killed. Many homes were destroyed, and about 42,000 people were displaced, so you can see that it's an extremely volatile environment, characterised by a lot of instability, displacement, movement, people that have had to flee and leave their homes and property, and it's been devastating for the economy as well.

Presently the situation is that the government still lacks full control of the countryside. There's a fair degree of lawlessness that persists. The militant group, the Lord's Resistance Army, LRA, continues to destabilise parts of the country, especially in the south-eastern part of the country, and there's been a fracturing and a factionalisation if you will, of some rebel forces, and new rebel groups have formed, and may still be forming, joining with remnants of the Séléka, the ex-Séléka and the Anti-Balaka to control villages, towns, and certainly in the northern, north-eastern and central parts of the country. So that gives you a thumbnail overview sketch of the demographics, the social, physical, and the crisis that has died down recently, but still impacts to a very great extent, social cohesion in urban and rural environments.

I think what's key to note here about social cohesion is that the crisis has created a religious divide, or a conflict between Christians and Muslims in CAR, which previously did not exist. So the tendency amongst donors and practitioners, and even academics is to characterise and frame the conflict as a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. I think it's far more complex, and far deeper than that, and there are many other types of cleavages that exist in the country, but given the last three years and the intensity of the crisis, and the violence that was carried out by the Séléka, which are largely Muslim affiliated militias, and the Anti-Balaka, which are mostly Christian affiliated, the crisis and the result for social cohesion really, is that it's cast and framed the divide as one between Muslims and Christians, and that needs to be taken into consideration in the types of programming we do.

I'm just going to mention very quickly a few of the social cohesion initiatives in CAR, and there are many, but USAID funds a few very significant ones, Search For Common Ground implements a project called Zo Kw Zo, Mercy Corps implements ASPIRE, and then CRS implements two or three programmes.

We just completed a programme under the SECC, which is the Secured, Empowered, Connected Communities, which focussed on social cohesion training in Bangui, and social cohesion awareness raising, training, and connector projects upcountry. We're launching, we've been awarded a large Global Development Alliance award from USAID with funding from foundations and other donors as well, called the Central African Republic Interfaith Peace-building Partnership, CIPP, and I'm happy to say that World Vision is our partner with us on this project, as is Islamic Relief, Aegis Trust and others. The purpose of the CIPP is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Inter-Religious platform of CAR to improve livelihoods and to address trauma healing and peace education in the country, and you'll see the photo there of the three leaders of the Inter-Religious Platform, you have the Archbishop, the Imam and the head of the Protestant Association. Then CRS also does some integration of social cohesion with livelihoods. We're intending to do the same thing with emergency shelter, but this is an initiative that's important to our agency, because we've made the integration of justice, peace-building, social cohesion, governance and gender an agency core competency. So we feel that in order to achieve our greater objectives, we need to be able to integrate social cohesion, justice and peace-building, into our core sectors, which are health, agricultural livelihoods, and emergency response.

Well, is social cohesion a silver bullet or a scapegoat, or somewhere in between? Probably somewhere in between, but I thought I'd give you a catchy title anyway. I'd like to simply note that one of the studies we co-conducted with Harvard in Haiti lends credence to those who strongly believe that social cohesion contributes to peace, stability, productive relations within and among adversarial groups. Our Harvard study has really affirmed that, and this was done in two separate urban communities in Haiti, really affirmed that social cohesion strengthening activities increased resilience in both of the communities studied, but it also could be considered a predictor of resilience, so that communities exhibiting a greater capacity for social cohesion were also more resilient. Now to some of you this finding is just going to seem like, well, it just confirms what you already knew, which reminds me of what one of my research and statistics professors told the class once. He said, "Well, social science merely confirms 90% of what you already know," so there you go, but it is nice to have studies like these, and the ones that World Vision has conducted to confirm some of the things we think we know and believe about the impact of social cohesion on such things as resilience.

I'd also like to mention here the work of Thania Paffenholz and her colleagues, in an edited volume they produced in 2010, where Paffenholz basically concludes that based on the case studies, that social cohesion initiatives generally are not all that effective in the way that they're carried out through donor funding. The reasons

have to do with socialisation, where the children are from a young age indoctrinated in home schools, places of worship and so forth, about who they are, who their group is, and what the other is, and it's very difficult to change some of that thinking in a project of short term duration. Then there are peace agreements, which also have the tendency to divide rather than unite people. You have the externally driven nature of social cohesion work, which often attitudes and behaviours and beliefs that have taken many years to take root, it's very difficult to change all of that in a few months or a couple of years. Then there tends to be a focus on group relations rather than the underlining reasons for conflict, so we tend to take, in the example of CAR, the Muslims versus the Christians, and yet there may be very significant other causes of conflict that tend to get neglected because of our focus on these major group relations.

Then finally Paffenholz mentions that social cohesion is often an outlet for donors because it's extremely difficult to pressure host country governments into taking actions that they should take to prevent and mitigate violent conflict, or to address the injustices and the indignities that exist in society, which can be at the root of conflict. So, funding a social cohesion programme tends to replace other work that should be done. Anyway, I wanted to juxtapose two different studies, just to give people a sense of some of the considerations that we all need to be aware of, as theoreticians or practitioners of social cohesion. You'll see here a group of women who are members of the women's wing of the Inter-Religious Platform of CAR and in Bangui, and they have been extremely influential in bringing women of the different faiths together to raise awareness of the need for conflict mitigation, of harmonious relations, of cooperation between and among different groups, and they've gone to the radio and used that as a means to communicate their messages, which have seemingly had quite a bit of impact. They're part of the training we've conducted in Bangui. We've also trained many people, I would say hundreds actually, of civil servants of a mid to senior level in the various ministries, departments and agencies of the government, and I'm very happy to say that the leaders at the very highest level in CAR came to CRS and requested that we offer this training and social cohesion to their professionals at the mid and senior level, so that they could also influence their families, colleagues and associates in Bangui. Then finally we've also been very consultative with leaders in the private sector who are directly concerned by the degree of social cohesion in CAR society, as it affects their business.

Over the course of our work we've developed various tools. The main tool, the first one is applying appreciative inquiry to the 3Bs. We call it the 3Bs/4Ds for short, I'll talk about that in a minute. The second one, Social Cohesion Integration Diagnostics Application Tool, that's a tool to assist a country programme to assess its readiness to implement social cohesion activities, or to integrate social cohesion into their existing portfolio. The third one is an adaptation CRS has made from an existing barometer, which gauges and measure people's attitudes and opinions about their own perceptions about social cohesion in their neighbourhood or workplace, as well as what they perceive others to think. So that's been a very fun, exciting and interesting tool we've used in workshops, and it's in draft, we're working on

producing a more formalised version of that tool. It's got about 18 indicators across three different categories. Then finally you have the training modules that we've used over the course of our training. The last one, the Basic Guide for Busy Practitioners is a tool we developed for conducting quick but thoughtful assessments of governance, gender and conflict.

So here you have the methodology of the 3Bs. I'm sure many of you have heard of the 3Bs, especially the bonding and the bridging, but let me just say a few words. The binding at the bottom there is the process that occurs inside an individual, within an individual, so it's reconstructing the way a person views him or herself, so it's introspective, but it's getting yourself set straight, so that you can take a more constructive and productive approach to your dealings with people in your own identity group, or from the outside. Trauma healing would fall into this category, and we've had a huge demand in CAR for that. The bonding is the relationship strengthening within a single identity group, and then the bridging is developing trust and bridging the divide between adversarial groups. Over the course of the training our lead trainer discovered that many of the participants were simply unable to envision a better future for the country. The crisis had affected them so deeply, and it's quite tragic really, when you sit in a workshop and you hear people talk about losing a son or a daughter, or a close relative or a friend to the conflict, that's when it really hits home about what social cohesion work can do to help people.

So our lead trainer took the principles of appreciative inquiry, which many of you I'm sure are familiar with, the discovery, dream, design and deliver, and applied them to the 3Bs, and found that that made the journey from the head to the heart so much easier and quicker for these participants. So what he did was, he put together this matrix, and on the left you'll see the 3Bs, the binding, bonding and bridging and across from left to right on the top you'll see the 4Ds of appreciative inquiry. They're not exactly called the 4Ds there, but the appreciative view is the discovery, and then the vision is the dream, and then appreciation of building together, that's the design, and then engagement for action is the delivery. What I've done here is I've just left a few questions in these boxes. What do I have inside me that's positive, for example. What's the dream of our group for our country? What should we do to improve inter-group relations? What intra-group traits can we build upon for social cohesion, and what can I do personally that would make my society, my neighbourhood, my workplace better? So that's the methodology, and all of this, it's final, but it's in a draft in the sense that we're translating the document, which was originally authored in French, and it's being translated now into English, and we hope that it will be released and put into the public realm in a couple of months.

So briefly the impacts we've seen in Bangui, I'm just going to give you a quick example from the 7th arrondissement, where you see pictured Imam Idriss and a former Anti-Balaka officer. That arrondissement, like many in Bangui was severely impacted by the fighting and the conflict, and there were clashes here. The young man to the right there led attacks on Muslims in that arrondissement, and they

destroyed a local mosque. He participated in the social cohesion training, the 3Bs and the 4Ds, he was so affected that he couldn't sleep, and he finally requested a meeting with the Imam, and asked him how he could reconcile? Could he beg forgiveness and change his life? So what we found was that he and the Imam came together and were able to restore, finding funding to restore that mosque. Upcountry we've seen various impacts, maybe not quite as powerful as that, but one I'd like to mention is where Muslims and Christians have come together in a remote area to form a committee that governs livelihoods for pastoralists who are basically Muslims, and the agriculturalists who are essentially Christian, and that has had an extremely good impact.

So, just to draw a couple of contrasts between urban and rural experience, we've seen a rapid pace of urbanisation in Africa, and yet cities in Africa tend to resemble very large villages. The difference is that people who have migrated to cities have lost their connections to their home regions, their culture, their language and so forth, and so they tend to group together in cities, which isolates people from each other, so it's very difficult to build up that social capital that you need, and then bridge it so you've got a high level of social cohesion. What we found through our training and our work is that we can leverage the influence of government, of civil society leaders like the Inter-Religious Platform. We've trained up a group of people as trainers, the TOT, and built up the institutional capacity of the IRP and others, to carry on this work. Then in a rural setting we've seen that by working through justice and peace commissions of the Catholic church for example, we can develop and reinforce social infrastructure, reach a lot of people, and people can engage and connect their projects for mutual beneficial cooperation.

So finally, let me just say thanks to USAID for making this work possible. They really had to scratch and claw to get the funding, because CAR was not necessarily high on everybody's priority list, but I would be remiss also if I didn't say thanks to our Chief of Party out there (? 57.13), and our lead trainer, Jean-Baptiste Talla. There are many other people I'd like to thank, but they know who they are, and thanks to all of them this work is making a difference. Thank you.

Leah Campbell: Thanks so much Bob, and again to Aline and Denis as well, all very interesting presentations, and I don't want to waste a single moment, so I'm going to jump straight into our Q&A portion. The first question we're going to ask, I'm going to jump to Aline, but we had a request for a repeat of the definition that World Vision is using for social cohesion, so before you answer this first question about the role that social cohesion can play in contributing to resilience in urban settings, I wonder if you can also just begin your answer by repeating the definition of social cohesion that you shared with us at the beginning, just so everyone's got that clear, and then go onto the part about resilience. Thank you so much.

Aline Rahbany: Let me start before stating the definition again, let me start by thanking Bob for the rich presentation. It's great to see that there are so many tools existing out there that CRS is already using, and this will be very beneficial for us in

our next steps of operationalizing what the recommendations of our literature review mean for programming in the field, so thank you Bob for that. Regarding the definition, what we found out in the literature review is that social cohesion can be defined as the nature and set of relationships between individuals and groups in a particular environment, which we are calling horizontal social cohesion, and between those individuals and groups, and the institutions that govern them, and that particular environment, which we refer to as vertical social cohesion. In the literature review you will find more details and elaboration on that, but this is the main definition that we're briefly using.

Now going to the question Leah, about the role that social cohesion plays in contributing to resilience in urban settings. To create resilience in urban settings, we must invest in the capacities and resources available at the community level, and in the institutions that are mostly affected by crises, so they can eventually be equipped not only to deal with the immediate needs, but also with the longer term ones. The resilience approach recognises people in need as active and creative agents, and empowers them towards greater ownership and betterment of their own lives through rapid employment, generation, life skills training, and inclusive governments. Social cohesion can be seen here as one of the drivers of this outcome. If we think back to the definition that I just repeated on the vertical social cohesion, we can see clearly how strengthening institutional capacity of local level authorities to be able to understand and address social tensions between refugees and host communities can lead towards building local resilience and ownership of response for more sustainable solutions, but at the heart of this endeavour, and I repeat it again and again, we need a thorough understanding of what factors are driving the tensions between the communities, because those are different from one context to another, even within the same country, and what solutions are more likely to bring the communities together rather than contribute to fuelling the tension?

So, to build resilience in the urban context affected by conflict and crises, from the societal perspective, it's to have a shared system of meaning between diverse communities living in the same space, to have solidarity, integration and trust among members of different communities, with broad and inclusive governance. So applying a social cohesion approach to programming in those settings can help in leading to improve urban resilience. Thanks.

Leah Campbell: Great, thanks Aline. I'm going to jump as well to Bob for this one, and see if he has any thoughts to add.

Robert Groelsema: Yeah, thank you. I think really Aline covered the ground very well. What I would add is that social cohesion really is needed in urban humanitarian response because if you have, like Aline and Denis pointed out in their presentations, if you have large refugee populations, you have displaced populations, that co-exist with host communities, that's a recipe for conflict, so it's extremely important to conduct social cohesion activities there, but not only for displaced peoples, but just generally, because of what I mentioned, most urban

populations have very short histories living in the places where they are in cities. They're only a few years away from having migrated there, maybe a generation, but their links still are very strong to their home regions, and therefore they feel isolated, they don't feel connected, they're fearful of the other. There's a lot of mistrust, there's a lack of cooperation, communication tends to get miscommunicated, and transmitted in ways that are not helpful, and that can enflame feelings of mistrust or hate of another group. This kind of work in a social urban setting is extremely, extremely valuable.

Leah Campbell: I want to jump straight to the next question, this is another one that came in advance, and I think it plays on the kind of recognition that social cohesion might be recognised as an important thing to do, but how important is it in a short term context, especially when you have a funding context where people are expecting certain things to get done in the short term, which is seen as the emergency response, and seeing other things as longer term interventions going into recovery or even development interventions? I'm going to go to Denis first to explore your thoughts, how important is addressing social cohesion in the short term emergency phase of a response?

Denis Brown: Thank you. What I'm getting from what's already been discussed is that each context is so different, so when you ask a question like this you really need to really look into each context. So for example in the situation of CAR, of course when you're dealing with emergencies and the donors, it's often, at least in the short term about lifesaving, right? That really depends if the context is actually in conflict, or was recently in conflict, such as CAR where social cohesion can be more defined as a lifesaving element, to prevent further conflict. It's certainly much more difficult in a situation where you're in a stable country, let's say in Jordan or Lebanon where it's a refugee population that's come in. So that's where most of the money goes in towards shelter and these lifesaving skills, and it's not until later on when it becomes a protracted crisis where tensions are starting to rise, when it's then viewed as more worth looking into. I think the way that we've approached it here at World Vision Jordan is putting it as secondary activities within larger programmes. It seems to be much more palatable for the donor, instead of 500,000 or a million dollar project on social cohesion, if you're doing something that costs 20,000 or 30,000 that deals with elements of social cohesion, it helps us. That's how we've done it, at least in the first few years of our operations, putting it into larger programmes.

Now it wasn't until recently, this particular conflict has finished its fifth year, that a new set of donors are coming in with a much longer term perspective, so this is where we've managed to actually secure funding for three years that deals specifically with social cohesion and peace-building at the community level. We have been submitting these types of proposals throughout, but have not had anybody bite on it up until now. That's how we've approached it here in terms of being able to deal with a much more emergency focussed response.

Leah Campbell: Great, thanks Denis. We wanted to give an opportunity for everyone to weigh in on this question, so we've launched another poll on this question, just to get a sense of what you all think. Please take a quick second to let us know what you think. The next question we're going to go to, I'll give a warning to Bob because I'll turn to him first, it has to do with what do we need to have a successful, community-led or community involved social cohesion programme in urban humanitarian response? I'll leave the poll going, and come back with the results of it after we hear Bob's thoughts on the question.

Robert Groelsema: Okay, thanks. First of all I would say it's important that this not be seen as an externally driven donor led type of activity. It's got to be owned by the community, and that applies to rural as well as urban, it really doesn't matter, and so it's important to find champions for this in the host community, leaders or citizens who want to bridge and form connections, and that can help mobilise others. We found in the town of Boda for example, that the women's association was an example where they were able to bring Christian and Muslim women and leaders together to approach NGOs and intergovernmental organisations like IOM, and the peacekeeping MINUSCA and ask for social cohesion programming. That was amazing, but activities also should be integrated to the extent that they can be, so that they're not simply standalone, but people will see them as vital, lifesaving type of interventions that impact their livelihoods and their lives in a very positive way.

So I would just say that to conclude, these social cohesion components need to figure as much as possible at the beginning of a response, so if you do a quick conflict assessment, and you're thinking about what social cohesion can do to address some of the issues that come up in this conflict assessment, then you can begin working on them. So for example, training using methodologies like the 3Bs and 4Ds right away, and then getting a connector project off the ground, because that takes a lot of discussion, consultation and planning, as well as time to implement, so getting that started is important. Identifying who the key stakeholders are, if there are other organisations that are working in your area, in your town or neighbourhood, who are they? What are they doing? How can you compliment each other? I know coordination takes time, it's not free, but you have to do it. Then just keep the emphasis on community led, and like Aline said, you're bridging horizontally and you're linking vertically, so don't forget that you want to bring in the government in a vertical way to link citizens to their mayors, or the municipal members of the council. You want to link them to markets, so bring in the business people, don't neglect them, the private sector has an important role to play too. Thank you.

Leah Campbell: Great, thanks. Aline, do you have anything else to build on this answer?

Aline Rahbany: Yes, so building on Bob's response, I would like to categorise the approaches for the main recommendations to keep in mind for successful community-led social cohesion programming, and this is based on the literature

review as well. So the first one being adopting cross sector area based approaches in urban and non-camp settings, so moving away as I shared previously, from the beneficiary centric and the sector centric approach, to support local municipalities and local organisations to provide public goods and services, like the education, health, water, so moving away from the traditional approach of NGOs and aid agencies as basically aid providers. Including vulnerable members of the society, not developing standalone programmes addressing refugees only, or Lebanese poor only for example, in the case of Lebanon. Such an approach can empower local actors, and increase the likelihood of sustainability, because they reduce the creation of artificial and parallel market systems.

The second recommendation would be to empower local actors, specifically by working with both refugees and host communities to create equitable solutions to alleviate tensions over distribution. So for example, in designing livelihoods projects, there should be equal participation from both communities, to take leadership positions and activities should be cooperative rather than exclusionary in nature. Such approaches might improve perception and relations between both communities, contribute to more inclusive social networks across the communities, and strengthen the local government mechanisms. The third recommendation would be to be very sensitive to the tensions over resources, but also tensions over identity, territory and security. So this calls for a greater communication transparency and accountability by the humanitarian community. The fourth recommendation would be also as Bob said, to liaise with community leadership, and security officials at the local level where tensions exist, in order to resolve disputes and settle tensions rising from different things, such as service provision and access and economic competition.

The international NGOs can facilitate establishment of more community based organisations and community councils with representatives from both host and refugee communities. Such networks can diffuse the tension through local capacity building and conflict resolution workshops.

Leah Campbell: Great, thanks Aline. Before we go to the next question I'll just take a second to share with you all the results of the last poll. Most of you felt like social cohesion is one of many important aspects, with quite a few of you as well thinking it's a priority, and equally those thinking it's somewhat important, so I think the third answer in the middle seems to be the overall consensus on this one. I think what our speakers have said, in terms of it being an answer that perhaps is context specific is quite an important point as well. I think that some of the tools that Bob has shared about how you can understand the degree and perhaps importance of social cohesion in the context you're working in, could be quite useful, in terms of considering how important you should prioritise social cohesion, and addressing it during the response. So we'll move to the next question, and this is one that's come in during the webinar itself. The question is about the security context, so including the presence, the degree to which armed actors are present as well as policies to do with crime, and how the overall sense of security in one place can affect the amount

of social cohesion. I'll turn first to Denis, and see if you have any thoughts about to what degree the security context might affect social cohesion, and whether there's anything us as humanitarians looking to address social cohesion might do, or be aware of in this regard.

Denis Brown: Thanks for that. For sure, I mean, in terms of working with refugees here in Jordan, and maybe also in Lebanon, we try as much as possible not to have more violence from security forces, from the context that the refugees are coming from. They would have an aversion to people in uniform, possibly are armed, so in general we try and maintain through all of our activities a very low profile, in terms of if there's any security requirements in terms of distributions and so on. That being said, in Jordan the government and the security forces here do have a very strong handle of the situation in country. They have good control over the borders, they have good control over the communities in terms of policing and so on, and it's a very professional security force. So that certainly helps to alleviate the fears that Jordanians have of moving into an insecure relationship with so many refugees coming into the country. Here in Jordan I would say that the government has good control, and it does allow us to implement, and for the most part it does help in keeping stability within the local communities.

Leah Campbell: Thanks so much. As we only have a couple more minutes, I'm going to go to our last question, turn to Bob for the final word. Considering this is something that you've been working on in CAR and other contexts for quite some time, how do you monitor progress in social cohesion? How do you check that any interventions you've made are having an impact, or whether the situation has changed over time? Do any of the tools that you shared earlier with us address looking at social cohesion over time, and as well, because you're our final voice today, if you have any concluding thoughts on the topic overall, please feel free to share those as well.

Robert Groelsema: Thank you, that's a great question, and I think we have a lot of work to do in terms of developing good monitoring and evaluation tools. For the social cohesion component of the second project we have utilised proxy indicators to give us a sense of the evolving context for social cohesion. We did a baseline study at the beginning of the project a couple of years ago, and the team is conducting, maybe already has conducted the endline study, and then we'll be comparing the results from when we started to where we are now. That particularly will be important for the urban centres upcountry, like Bossangoa and Bouar. Then we probably have a pretty good notion based on the assessment, the internal review we recently conducted, and this is our methodology. What we did was we brought in staff and volunteers from the project areas into workshops where they could debate and answer a number of questions having to do with the changes that they've seen observed and part of, or lack of change for that matter over the time that they've been involved with the project, so that helps us triangulate the results of the baseline and the endline.

We are in the process of conducting, very near the end now, a major in depth conflict analysis for the country, and the design of the analysis takes into consideration the kinds of work that we've done in Bangui and in these urban centres upcountry, so that will give us a sense of where do things stand now in terms of the social cohesiveness of a country, given the context of latent or active conflict in some areas, others that have stabilised, and life is returning somewhat to normal, as it was before. So, I think it's a combination of these methodologies and tools, which gives us as accurate a picture as we can get of the qualitative, mostly qualitative results.

You also have the social cohesion barometer, which we've utilised in a very unscientific way. We haven't conducted scientific random samples of the population with this tool, but it could be utilised for that, and I think that's the direction we want to move in with this tool, because up until now we've gotten a picture from the participants in the programme about their perceptions and opinions about social cohesion, and how things are evolving in their neighbourhoods, workplaces, places of worship and so forth. I think it's a tool that has applicability on a national scale, if it's applied in the right way to get a much more accurate and more scientific snapshot of where things stand in terms of social cohesion for any given country for that matter. Thank you.

Leah Campbell: Great, thanks so much. I have three quick points before you all leave us today. The first is to say thank you so much to the speakers and to you all for listening. The second quick point is that we added an article that CRS and Harvard did that Bob mentioned in his presentation to the hand-outs, so that's there as well as the World Vision social cohesion paper, and we'll make sure that there's a link to it, as well as the other paper that Bob mentioned, and any other resources that were shared by participants during the webinar as well, in the transcript and recording that we share in about a week's time. The final thing to say is that there are so many more questions we didn't get to, we've got questions here about social cohesion in different contexts, social cohesion in different groups, as well as the role of faith, and faith organisations in social cohesion, and the good news is that we do have a way to continue the discussion. We have our Urban Community of Practice, where you can contribute to the discussion on these and other topics to do with urban response going forward, so if you haven't already joined the CoP, you will get an invitation after the webinar, and we look forward to hearing all of your thoughts and experiences on these and other issues there, as well as at our next webinar. Thank you all again, and I hope you have a wonderful rest of your day.