

H2N Conflict Sensitivity and the Psychosocial Approach (PSA)

When we think of building sustainable development, long-lasting peace, and transforming the conditions that generate destructive conflict in communities, we cannot ignore the mental, psychological and emotional state and health of community members. This H2N describes how to include these human factors in the context analysis and the program development, including at institutional level, in order to enhance positive impact of programs and reduce risks.

1. Psychosocial approach

Three areas of a “psychosocial approach” can be distinguished:

- 1) The **psychosocial dimension** as an analytical method: the use of psychosocial elements (fear, hope, frustration, personal, social and cultural aspects) in the context analysis leads to a better understanding of the mental state of the individuals and their environment (social reality). This analysis explains the willingness or reluctance of a target group to engage in the transformation process of the project. The findings of the context analysis are to be integrated at the program and institutional levels.
- 2) **Psychosocial support projects** are created to address specific needs and/or problems of individuals or groups caused by humanitarian crisis, war, violence or people living in extreme poverty. These projects are typically in the areas of education, health or social work and have specific psychosocial components focusing on the well-being of individuals in relation to their environment and mitigation of destruction (sector approach).
- 3) **Psychosocial organizational principles** focus on the staff of projects and/or organizations to ensure their physical and psychological health by strengthening self-protection and self-reflection of staff. It considers the institutional work structure of the programmes and focuses on generating a culture of care expressed in knowledge, attitudes and psychosocial practices at the institutional level.

2. Psychosocial dimension as part of the conflict sensitive program management (CSPM)

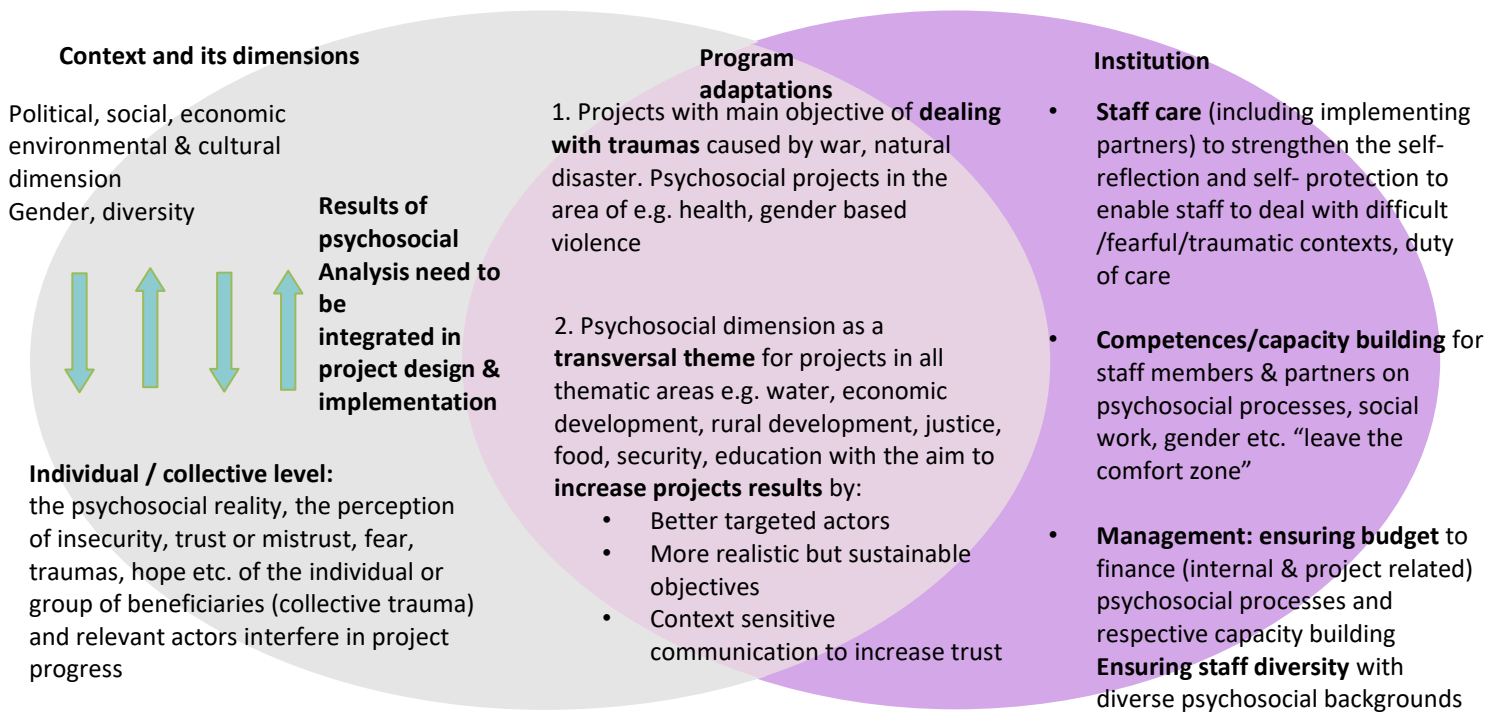
The psychosocial approach addresses all relevant actors of a project, including staff. It focuses on the links between people and the different dimensions of the context and how specific circumstances in a context, e.g. an economic crisis, violence, the experience of a natural disaster has shaped the actors -, their social reality, their beliefs, values, sensitivities, needs, interests, fears etc. - and how this influences their behavior like e.g. their decision making processes. Understanding the people and their actions allows addressing underlying and unconscious barriers and obstacles thus increasing success factors of a project, as the participation of the actors can be better aligned to support project's results.

The psychosocial dimension is relevant for all projects of international cooperation across all sectors, as projects are being implemented by individuals for individuals. The implementers as well as beneficiaries and partners might share the same or have different levels of education, ideas, values, emotions, sensitivities, culture, history, be members of different social classes, or different gender, have distinct/unequal possibility of political participation and share an imbalance of power distribution and can be affected differently by economic and/or social processes. The insufficient understanding of the different backgrounds of the actors can cause misunderstandings, (insurmountable) development challenges or even conflicts during the implementation of a project and a shortfall in result achievement and the sustainability of a project.

These elements are reflected in a summarized way in the following graphic.

CSPM & the psychosocial dimension

Be aware that the psychosocial state of the individuals often interferes in the progress of the programs. Therefore include the **individual** (or collective) in your analysis of the context, analyse their psychosocial state, their traumas, fears and hopes and draw the results of the analysis into the design of the programs.

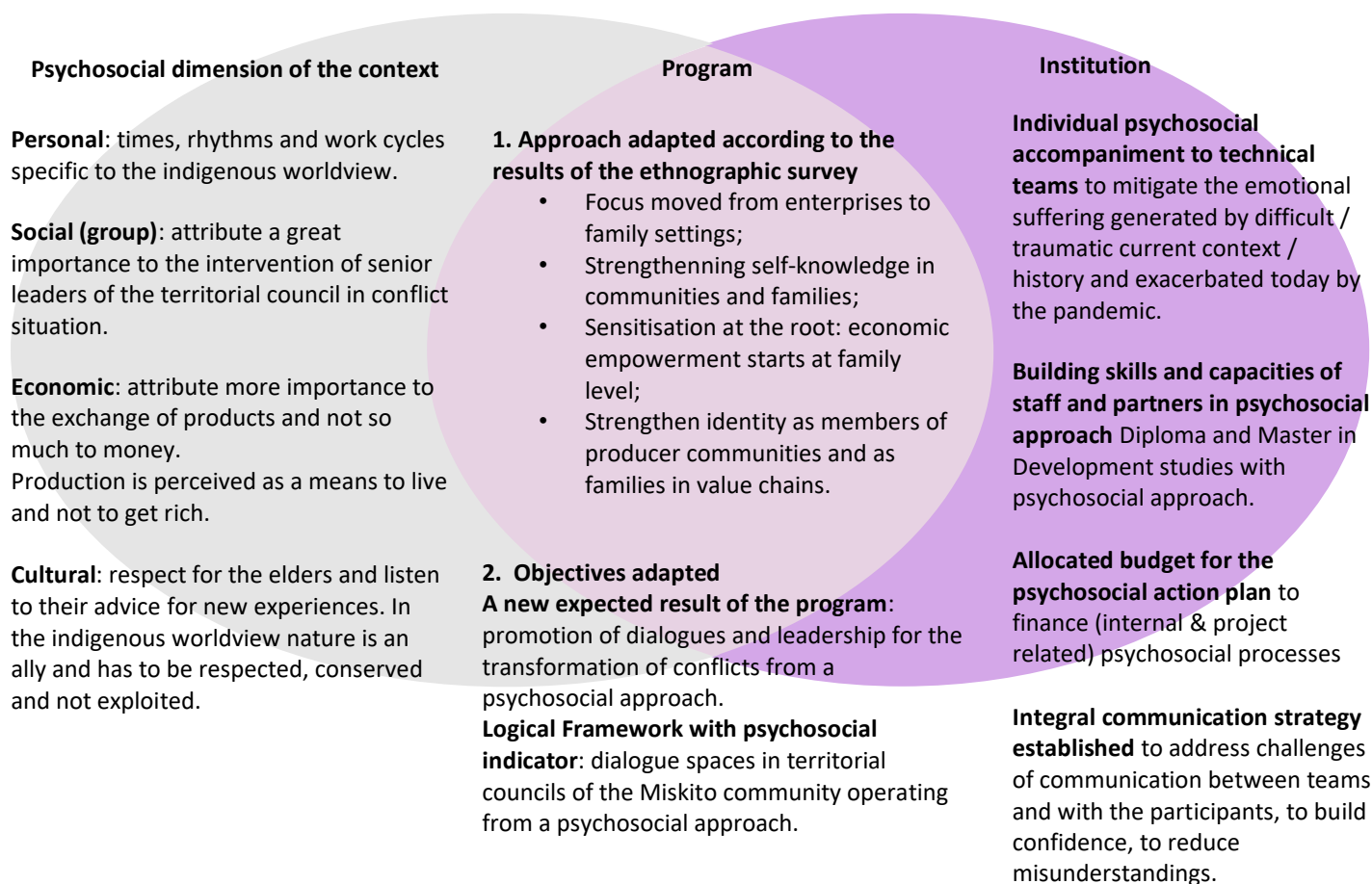


Annex: the example of Honduras

In **Honduras**, the SDC supported EmPoderat project transversally (across sectors) incorporates a psychosocial analysis with an ethnographic approach, in an attempt to give projects a new dynamic and better adapt them to psychosocial realities (expectations, fears, frustrations, concerns). Expected goals have been redimensioned or reformulated due to the new insights, and new indicators and lines of action elaborated (see graphic on the next page).



Psychosocial dimensions in reference to Prawanka Program



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