

## Session 7: Peer-to-Peer Exchange and Questions

**On the third day**, participants discussed specific issues or shared good practice in “problem clinics”.

The initial general discussion revolved around some of the bigger themes and difficulties of working in the region. It highlighted the extent to which corruption, personal networks, and use of contacts shaped the development of the state, and that there was never a ‘free lunch’, but rather always some sort of trade for information.



In this context it was important to constantly question the reliability of sources and to cross-check information to ensure that a project was not being distorted by the interests of one party or another.

The session also discussed the reality of working in post-conflict situations, whom to engage with and how, and the question of rehabilitation – at which point do we deem someone suitable to work with.

Finally, the tension between the desire for local flexibility and the reporting requirements to HQ surfaced again.

The **peer-to-peer exchange** dealt with following issues:

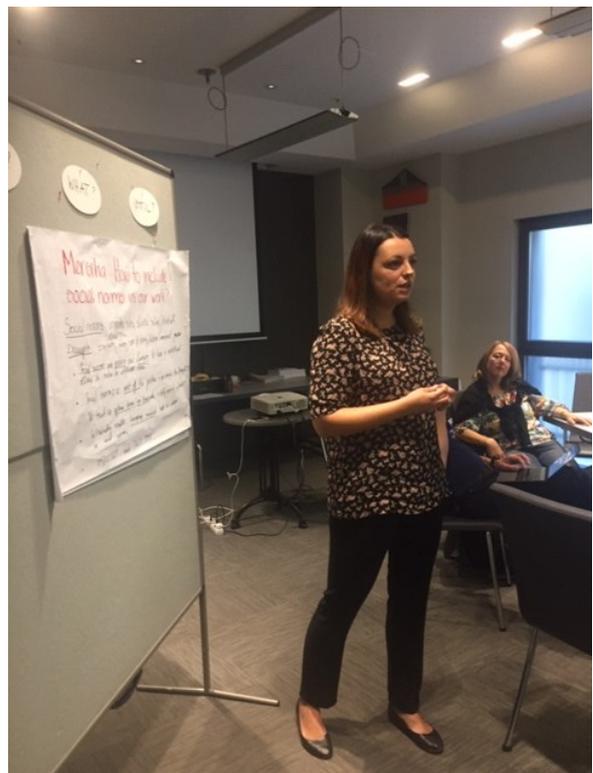
- **Social norms**

Defined as the unwritten rules which shape behaviour. The majority of social norms concern women’s traditional roles in society, but, equally norms change and projects need to understand and work with them. Do we analyse norms enough? Projects often focus on systemic changes. These systemic reforms can change norms – eg smoking - but projects should also be seeking to raise awareness and change attitudes. Ultimately, changing norms takes time.

\*One specific example that emerged was the practice of gift-giving as part of transaction, and its links to business deal-making. At what point does this become corruption? How much of this do we accept?

- **Economic development**

Should be a joint effort of embassies and project partners, who should be more involved at stakeholder analysis stage. The private



sector should play a leading position in pursuing analysis and understanding risks. The projects would benefit from strategic reviews – going back to original assumptions, and testing in the light of project development (such as understanding market distortions, links between politics and markets, political interests in subsidies, etc)

- CH in wider political landscape**

Often working in countries run by criminal organisations, and CH in establishing red lines or 'banging the table' is useful in concentrating minds.

CH has a particular advantage given its neutrality, and thus any risk is manageable, because host governments cannot afford to have CH against them, both as a country and a donor.

CH is able to be blunt with a host government but also maintain cordial diplomatic relations.

When regime is destroying civil society and media, we should be more robust. Discussions in Bern started few years ago, can we adapt our position, to use diplomatic weight. If country offices start to flex muscles they need the backing of HQ.

- How we work with incentives**

The discussion used the example of the DEMOS – local governance project which didn't look at weaknesses but focused on incentives. The DEMOS hypothesis, used existing incentives systems, that lead towards better local governance. With a good design we can 'shepherd' local government to good performance. However, key point is to not try to substitute for a failing municipal government, but rather help to test modalities and fill gaps.

