

# Civil Society, Conflict Transformation and Peace Building

## **A Christian Aid Ireland Learning Paper**

Fran Witt and Karol Balfe (February 2016)

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Christian Aid is a Christian organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice.

We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.

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# 1. Executive summary

“Tackling Violence and Building Peace” became a strategic priority for Christian Aid globally in 2012. Violence is a prime agent of poverty, capable of wiping out years of development and destroying thriving societies. This learning paper draws on the experience and expertise of Christian Aid’s partners in Angola, Colombia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Central America, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (IOPT), Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, and Pakistan. These countries are all affected by unequal power dynamics and failures of governance which stem from conflict (current or past), state fragility, corruption, and serious deficits in the rule of law that are the root causes of conflict.

In this paper, we identify some of the lessons learned and basic principles for Christian Aid country programmes to contribute to conflict transformation. The main methodology for this learning was a conference organised by Christian Aid Ireland, in partnership with the Transitional Justice Institute in Ulster University in November 2014. Key approaches and areas of change that Christian Aid partners work on are identified in the paper.

Key lessons emerged on the role of civil society, gender, experiences of conflict transformation and transitional justice. Included amongst the key lessons are: empowering civil society is a central intervention to Christian Aid’s theory of change, and this is an area where we have seen significant gains in a number of countries; stereotyped notions of gender often ignore the many different roles of men and women in conflict; the existence of dialogue alone is not enough, groups need to be empowered to engage in a meaningful way, and external actors in peace processes need to be sensitised to community needs; it is vital to understand the incentives of different actors and what makes them engage;

transitional justice can have an important role to play in bringing the perpetrators of gross violations of human rights to account, as seen in countries such as Colombia, Guatemala, Sierra Leone and South Africa however it is essential to have a context specific approach and not to impose a ‘one size fits all’ model to transitional justice or conflict transformation more generally; and any change or approach needs to be embedded in local political understanding the particular nature of conflict for each area or country.

The papers sets some guiding principles for country programmes including: the importance of power and conflict analysis; the need for on-going reflection and adaptation in order to ensure civil society programmes are conflict sensitive; the importance of developing protection strategies; the need to assess constantly how civil society is representing the most marginalised; where possible transforming conflict through their interventions; a focus on creating resilient livelihoods can address some of the unequal power dynamics in a conflict setting; having an understanding of the role and impact of violence and conflict on men and women and their role in building solutions to this, in particular it is critical not to assume stereotypical understanding of gender relations of the different roles of women and men; programmes should consider the critical role of youth in conflict transformation, particularly where young people are most affected by conflict and violence, and where they may also be the perpetrators.

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## 2. Christian Aid's work on tackling violence building peace

In 1945 Christian Aid was born out of the need to respond to the effects of violence and conflict of this time. The Irish and British church leaders in the aftermath of World War II established Christian Aid as a humanitarian organisation to support reconstruction, attend to refugees, and help mend lives and communities. In the following 70 years it has worked in many conflict-affected countries and settings, often working directly on issues of violence and peace. While not a specialist peace building organisation, Christian Aid understood that its development and humanitarian work constitutes the basic building blocks for peace.

**"Tackling Violence and Building Peace"** became a strategic priority for Christian Aid globally in 2012. Through this work Christian Aid acknowledges that violence is a prime agent of poverty, capable of wiping out years of development and destroying thriving societies.

*"What has Christian Aid got to do with peace building? Our work is based on our belief that everyone, regardless of faith or race, is entitled to live a full life, free from poverty. We believe in tackling violence as it is a major driver of poverty and a barrier to development. We believe the world can and must be changed so that there is equality, dignity and freedom for all."*

Rosamond Bennett, Chief Executive, Christian Aid Ireland, speaking at a peer learning international conference on "Civil Society, Conflict Transformation and Peace Building" in Belfast, Northern Ireland, November 2014.



Therefore as an organisation Christian Aid is seeking:

- increased **protection** for those most vulnerable to violence – and **equipping them to address the causes of violence**, to tackle impunity and resolve conflict peacefully;
- the **development of peaceful and effective alternatives** to violence and armed conflict;
- to **support broad social movements for change** with women at the centre, that successfully address root causes of violence and act to transform them with justice.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The focus of this paper

This paper identifies the learnings of a number of countries working on violence and peace building. The main methodology for this was a conference organised by Christian Aid Ireland, with the Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University. The peer learning and international conference, held in Belfast on “**Civil Society, Conflict Transformation and Peace Building**” took place in November 2014.

120 participants took part in a series of interactive sessions involving Christian Aid partners from all over the world including Angola, Colombia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Central America, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (IOPT), Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, and Pakistan. They were joined by local academics and NGO representatives from Northern Ireland in an effort to share learning on issues around peace building, conflict transformation and transition.

This learning event was part of Christian Aid Ireland's four year governance and human rights programme supported by a €3 million annual grant from Irish Aid, which started in 2012. The goal of this programme is to bring about pro-poor responses and increased stability and security for poor and marginalised people in seven countries affected by high inequality, human rights violations and conflict in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Angola and IOPT. Partners outside this programme also participated in the learning event.

**Civil society means ‘everything between the citizen and the state’**, from community self-help groups to trade unions and business groups, from women's movements to development and humanitarian organisations, faith-based groups, human rights activists, peace campaigners etc. It is a vital part of an accountable society in which the values of trust and cooperation are central, and in which poor and marginalised people are empowered to exercise their right to political participation, freedom of expression, information and assembly, access to justice, and to economic, social and cultural rights.

(Oxfam GB (2011) ‘Within and Without the State: Strengthening Civil Society in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Countries: a summary of current thinking and implications for practice’, p. 12: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/within-and-without-the-state-strengthening-civil-society-in-conflict-affected-a-209789>)



Over 120 participants, from Ireland and overseas, took part in the international peer learning conference, “Civil Society, Conflict Transformation and Peace Building” in Belfast (November 2014). The conference was organised by Christian Aid Ireland, with the Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University



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## 4. Some concepts defined

This section defines some concepts used when looking at the role of civil society in responding to violence and conflict. Civil society is understood as playing an important role in reducing violence, and in facilitating the conditions necessary for building a sustainable peace. However, limited empirical research has been undertaken to test assumptions about civil society's role in building peace. Broadly speaking seven roles have been identified for civil society, (depending on the context and the particular phase of violence or conflict): **protection** of citizens against violence from all parties; **monitoring** of human rights violations, the implementation of peace agreements, etc.; **advocacy** for peace and human rights; socialisation to values of peace and democracy as well as to develop the in-group identity of marginalized groups; **inter-group social cohesion** by bringing people together from adversarial groups; **facilitation of dialogue** on the local and national level between all sorts of actors; **service delivery** to create entry points for peacebuilding, i.e. for the six above functions.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these roles key approaches inform the work of civil society: conflict transformation; conflict sensitivity; do no harm and engagement in transitional justice processes.

### Conflict transformation

Conflict transformation is an approach that seeks to transform the very systems, structures and relationships which give rise to violence and injustice.<sup>3</sup> It is a long-term, gradual process which must involve wide-ranging and comprehensive actions and actors across different sectors of society as they work together to develop strategic goals for change.

Conflict transformation involves:

- **engaging in processes** that lead to long-term change
- working on **changing relationships** (particularly looking at power dynamics)
- **interpreting society holistically** – attitudes (how individuals feel or understand a situation), behaviours (visible and can be articulated as violence) and structures (religious institutions for example).<sup>4</sup>
- **conflict actor mapping**, historical analysis and local-national multi-level analysis.

The **ABC triangle analysis** used in the conflict transformation approach is based on the premise that conflicts have three major components: the **context** or situation, the **behaviour** of those involved and their **attitudes**. These three factors influence each other. For example, a context that ignores the demands of one group is likely to lead to an attitude of frustration, perhaps even anger, which could erupt into violence. Work that is done to change the context (by making sure that demands are acknowledged), to reduce the level of frustration (by helping people to focus on the long-term nature of their struggle) or to provide outlets for behaviours that are not violent will contribute to reducing the levels of tension.<sup>5</sup>

The strategic options are then considered, and adapted where necessary to ensure they are conflict sensitive (see below): capacity and skills are developed, and identification of who is willing and able to intervene takes place, and what the local actors and processes are, and how they can be strengthened are analysed.

### Conflict sensitivity

Conflict sensitivity calls for a development organisation to:

- Understand the context in which they operate.
- Understand the interaction between themselves, their activities and this context.
- Act upon their understanding of this interaction so as to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive ones.<sup>6</sup>

Participation needs to be realistic as engaging with all actors at certain points can be dangerous and changing mindsets can take a long time.

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### **The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium definition is as follows:**

*“A conflict sensitive approach involves gaining a sound understanding of the two-way interaction between activities and context, and acting to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts of interventions on conflict, within an organisation’s given priorities/objectives (mandate).”<sup>7</sup>*

The conflict sensitive approach involves using specific tools to:

- conduct a conflict-aware context analysis
- monitor and evaluate development programmes in the context of endemic violence and conflict
- take into consideration the conflict dynamics that a particular context presents during the whole project/programme cycle.

Conflict sensitivity can be used in all stages of the project cycle starting from the planning stage, where baseline surveys are undertaken, up to the evaluation phase. The approach emphasises the importance of carrying out thorough conflict analysis of the area where programmes or projects are implemented. This provides information on how conflict evolves and how it affects the implementation of the programme.<sup>8</sup>

Many organisations are active in conflict-affected areas, bringing with them a diverse range of mandates and methods. Prominent amongst these actors are governments (including donors), civil society (including local and international NGOs) and multi-lateral organisations. Each actor has specific priorities and objectives that relate to their mandate, such as a primary focus on poverty reduction, saving lives, protecting human rights, improving education etc. Actors in conflict-affected areas are increasingly realising that their interventions will have unintended impacts on the context within which they are working and hence have grown aware of the need for conflict sensitivity.<sup>9</sup>

### **Do No Harm**

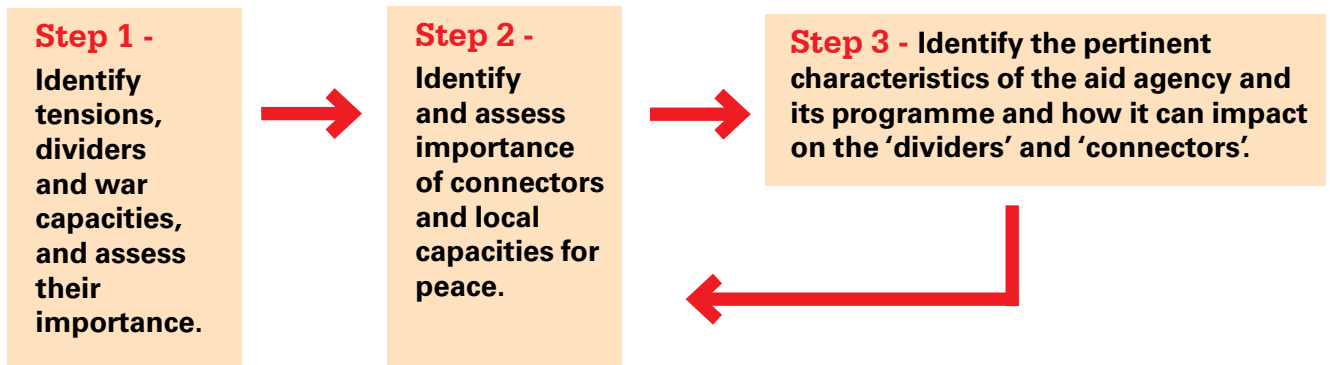
One way of approaching conflict sensitivity is through the principle of “Do No Harm”. Mary Anderson,<sup>10</sup> conflict resolution specialist and former Executive Director of NGO Collaborative for Development Action, describes the term:

“When international assistance is given in the context of a violent conflict, it becomes a part of that context and thus also of the conflict. Although aid agencies often seek to be neutral or nonpartisan towards the winners and losers of war, the impact of their aid is not neutral. When given in conflict settings, aid can reinforce, exacerbate, and prolong the conflict; it can also help to reduce tensions and strengthen people’s capacities to disengage from fighting and find peaceful options. Often, an aid program does some of both: in some ways it worsens the conflict, and in others it supports disengagement. But in all cases, aid given during conflict cannot remain separate from that conflict.”<sup>11</sup>



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Anderson provided a simple analytical framework for considering the impact of aid on conflict adapted below:



### Transitional justice:

Transitional justice is an approach that can help create the conditions for peace, security and development. It refers to the set of judicial and non-judicial measures implemented in different jurisdictions to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses committed in times of violent conflict.

By trying to achieve accountability and giving redress to the victims, transitional justice aims to demonstrate the rights of victims, promote trust within civil society and to strengthen the rule of law. Systemic human rights violations affect the whole of society, not only the victims. Transitional justice provides a means for states to fulfil their duty to provide security for the populations, to guarantee that violations will not recur, and to reform institutions that were either complicit in or unable to prevent abuses. Broader definitions of transitional justice also include commemorative practices and memory work, educational reform and providing connections with longer term peace building processes.

**The Transitional Justice Institute's Belfast Guidelines on Amnesty and Accountability** point people towards the use of amnesties, arguing that they can encourage ceasefires and disarmament and help inform truth mechanisms. Many victims value the knowledge of what happened over prosecutions, and truth may not emerge in legal prosecutions. This is controversial amongst the human rights community who believe that in the fight against impunity prosecution is obligatory.

The Belfast Guidelines make it clear what type of amnesty is permissible in national and international law and demonstrate that amnesties should be linked to the victims' rights, and if they can live with truth, recovery and reparations. The guidelines show the process for consultation and creation of good amnesties.<sup>12</sup>

There is no consensus amongst transitional justice practitioners about how much transitional processes can tackle the root causes of a conflict and about whether or not they should address economic, social and cultural rights alongside civil and political rights. Frustration with transitional justice from some has resulted in proposals of a new agenda of transformative justice. While transformative justice does not seek to completely dismiss or replace transitional justice, it does seek radical reform of its politics, locus and priorities. Transformative justice is not the result of a top-down imposition of external legal frameworks or institutional templates, but of a more bottom-up understanding and analysis of the lives and needs of populations. The tools of transformation will not be restricted to the courts and truth commissions of transitional justice, but will comprise a range of policies and approaches that can impact on the social, political and economic status of a large range of stakeholders.<sup>13</sup>

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### The Four Pillars of Transitional Justice:

Transitional justice measures rest on legal and moral foundations, but how these obligations are satisfied varies widely between contexts. The core inter-linked elements of transitional justice are:

- **Criminal prosecutions**, bringing perpetrators considered most responsible to justice.
- **Reparations** through which governments acknowledge and redress the harms suffered. This may be through cash payments or provision of services, and through symbolism through public apologies, memorials, renaming of public spaces for example.
- **Institutional reform** of state institutions that have been responsible for the abuses such as armed forces, police and courts, and to deconstruct the structures responsible for abuses to prevent recurrence of human rights violations and impunity.
- **Truth commissions** to investigate and report on human rights violations and to recommend appropriate changes.



Gabriel Sheunopa Manyagadze, Zimbabwe Council of Churches, and Professor Monica McWilliams from the Transitional Justice Institute of Ulster University at the “Civil Society, Conflict Transformation and Peace Building” conference in Belfast (November 2014).

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## 5. Some drivers of conflict and violence

Before looking at the lessons from each country, this section sets out some of the drivers of violence. We recognise that conflict is a healthy and inevitable part of any society, but the problem arises when conflict becomes violent. Here we use conflict and violence for the commonly held understanding of violent conflict.

Manifestations of conflict and violence are very context specific, and include: war and armed conflict; armed groups or gangs; criminal gangs; gender-based or ethnic violence and violence against human rights activists. A key concern is that the nature of war and conflict has radically changed, and that the end of militarised violence often leads to the beginning of seemingly random, criminal violence. Recent figures estimate that 9 out of 10 violent deaths happen outside of conflict, the vast majority as victims of murder or intentional homicide. There is also an understanding that there are protagonists in conflict with vested interests, who benefit from conflict and instability.<sup>14</sup>

Violence is rarely explicable in terms of any single cause. Drivers of violence can be political, economic, social and environmental. They can include socio-economic inequalities, injustice, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, land, dispossession and crime. In many cases, it is impossible to define all the potential drivers or triggers of violent conflict, but this section seeks to identify those factors seen as most relevant to Christian Aid.<sup>15</sup>

### Structural violence

Johan Galtung, principal co-founder of the discipline of peace and conflict studies who co-founded the Peace Research Institute in Oslo in 1959,<sup>16</sup> first introduced the concept of structural violence in 1969, describing it as an “avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs”. Structural violence is a way of describing aspects of society that put individuals and populations in harm’s way. It is considered structural because it refers to experiences embedded in the political and economic organisation of our social world; it is violent because they cause injury to people. It is evidenced when historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces conspire to constrain individual agency.

Structural violence is experienced by people whose social status denies them access to the benefits of political, economic, scientific and social progress.<sup>17</sup>

As opposed to personal or direct violence, it is indirect in that there may not be any person who directly harms another person in the structure. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and unequal life chances. However it can be seen as a result of choices and decisions by governments and others to not address issues such as inequality and exclusion.

A number of Christian Aid programmes specifically identified structural violence as a key issue in their country as part of this peer learning, emphasising the need to address the interplay between economic, social, and cultural rights and their relationship with violence and conflict. For example, countries that are characterised by extreme poverty, social inequality and injustice, and/or weak governance structures are prone to structural violence. Exclusion and inequality do not only catalyse violence, but they directly lead to harm, including high levels of infant mortality, malnutrition and starvation for example.

Structural violence not only exploits and causes direct harm, but also incites the use of physical violence by the poor and suffering to be employed as a tool for basic survival.<sup>18</sup> However, people do not turn violent just because they are poor, but because they are deprived of basic resources. In other words, Galtung’s theory of structural violence guides us a step forward into the realm of social and resource inequality. Having an understanding of structural violence builds a bridge between Christian Aid’s development programme and the undeniable need to tackle the structural causes of death and harm, and the work on tackling violence and building peace.

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## Violations of international law and access to justice

Violence is typically a violation of human rights law and failure to address violations can lead to conflict. Therefore the protection of human rights is central to conflict resolution.<sup>19</sup> Violations of economic, social and cultural rights are part of the structural violence examined above. When rights to adequate food, housing, employment, and cultural life are systematically denied, and large groups of people are excluded from the society's decision-making processes, this can lead to conflict and social violence in which parties demand that their basic needs be met.

However it is important to note the distinction between the need to address discrete violations of human rights during conflict versus the need to address more structural issues which may be the drivers of conflict. A misconception exists that addressing economic, social and cultural rights means that you are automatically looking at structural issues of a conflict. However specific violations of economic, social and cultural rights occur during violent conflict- such as people being displaced because of conflict or food being denied to particular groups. Likewise civil and political violations can also relate to entrenched systemic problems.<sup>20</sup> Understanding this distinction is important for clarifying the obligations of states and how civil society should advocate in relation to human rights violations.

Violent conflicts may be sparked or spread by violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. International humanitarian law is applicable in times of armed conflict, whether international or non-international. Conflicts are considered international when they involve two or more states, and include wars of liberation, regardless of whether a declaration of war has been made or whether the parties involved recognise that there is a state of war. Non-international armed conflicts are those in which government forces are fighting against armed insurgents, or rebel groups are fighting among themselves. Because international humanitarian law deals with an exceptional situation – armed conflict – no exemptions whatsoever from its provisions are permitted.<sup>21</sup>

In principle, international human rights law applies at all times, i.e. both in peace time and in situations of armed conflict. However, some human rights treaties permit governments to limit certain rights in situations of public emergency threatening the life of the nation. Such limitations must, however, be proportional to the crisis at hand, must not be introduced on a discriminatory basis and must not contravene other rules of international law – including the rules of international humanitarian law.<sup>22</sup>

Where massacres or torture are carried out, this can inflame hatred and strengthen an adversary's determination to continue fighting. Armed conflict often leads to the breakdown of infrastructure and state institutions, including hospitals and schools meaning that the rights to adequate health and education are denied. In addition, the collapse of economic infrastructure can result in hunger and poverty.<sup>23</sup>

The collapse of government institutions may result in the denials of civil and political rights, including the rights to privacy, fair trial, and freedom of movement and association. On the other hand governments may become increasingly militarised or authoritarian, violate human rights and police and judicial systems corrupted or behave unaccountably. Abductions, arbitrary arrests, detentions without trial, political executions, assassinations, and torture often follow. Unresolved human rights issues can serve as obstacles to peace negotiations.<sup>24</sup>

## Gender based violence

The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”<sup>25</sup>

A recent multi-country UN study<sup>26</sup> indicates that the most common cause of violence against women was ideals of manhood that justify and celebrate toughness, male sexual performance and dominance over women.



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Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic and one of the most harrowing results of gender inequality rooted in patriarchal systems and structures that enable men to assert power and control over women. These attitudes start early in life and, without early intervention are passed on from generation to generation.

Both men and women are victims of violence within a conflict. However, there is a need to understand harm against women in conflict against the patriarchal norms which dominate societies pre and post-conflict. If women have a lower status and are excluded from legal and political protection systems in peace time, they may become more vulnerable to harm during conflict and when living within fragile states where security is not guaranteed.

Professor Fionnuala Ni Aolain, Associate Director of the Transitional Justice Institute, stresses it is important to understand that stereotyped notions of women and men in conflict tend to focus on women as victims and ignore the fact that they may be passive or active participants, as combatants or in subtle ways through mothering that produces combatants or in enabling social acceptability of violence.

In Myanmar for example women may push their husbands to join ethnic armed groups and thus have a role in supporting conflict. Women may also gain power or autonomy in times of conflict by becoming the head of the household. Alternatively it can be considered shameful if the man doesn't join the armed groups. Similarly men of a certain age are automatically assumed to be aggressive, combatants, perpetrators of harm, ignoring their experience as victims and peace makers.

Professor Ni Aolain noted that notwithstanding the devastating impact and consequences of sexual violence on women, the very high publicity around this single issue risks overshadowing other potentially equally harmful effects of conflict on women. It also overlooks the continuity of violence against women, presenting sexual violence as a consequence of conflict rather than something that is present in both pre and post-conflict societies. As a discourse, by focusing exclusively on harm against women's bodies as a rationale for intervention, she argues that we risk reinforcing stereotypes and essentialisms about women that present them as passive and vulnerable, in need of protection, and thus recreating the values that led to sexual violence in the first place.

The roles of men and women may also change considerably during armed conflict as women take up new roles to maintain livelihoods, protect their families, and take part in conflict as combatants. The role of women in peace making,<sup>27</sup> conflict prevention and peace activism can often go unnoticed and take place on the margins of formal peace and reconstruction processes. In recent years, it has been recognised that this not only contravenes the right of women to participate in decisions that affect their lives but that, for a sustainable peace to take hold, women must take an equal role in shaping it. Their perspectives and experiences are critical for stability, inclusive governance and sustainable development.

### **Moving beyond stereotypes**

Armed conflict and peace processes impact differently upon women and men. Whilst men and boys are extremely vulnerable to forced conscription, abduction as child soldiers and the loss of traditional roles due to displacement, women are, at times, among those who perpetrate conflict, but they also suffer the impact of violence and conflict differently as they can be used as collateral. Women in conflict situations are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, especially rape, forced prostitution, forced marriage and sexual slavery – practices that in turn greatly increase their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. Often, women are targeted in this way as an indirect attack against their male partners, to 'dishonour' the reputation of the family.

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Post-conflict reform of political institutions provides an important opportunity to increase the political participation and representation of women in decision-making. This space often shuts down when formal peace processes are initiated. Indeed, peace processes can be accompanied by a yearning for 'normality' that can lead to a reassertion of conservative norms that are often embodied in restrictive laws against women. As such we also need to be wary of talking of 'reparations' for women, which suggest a return to the status quo ante (or the way things were before). Financial reparations may not benefit a woman who does not have control over her own financial assets.

The end of conflict is a transformative moment during which we should take the opportunity to assert the rights and needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised to ensure that they are not left out of the process and subsequent agreements. Women should be encouraged and supported to be part of this process.

### **Land, dispossession and natural resources**

A further element driving violence is the issue of land. Millions of people each year are threatened by evictions or forcibly evicted from their land, often leaving them homeless, landless, and living in extreme poverty and destitution.<sup>28</sup> In some countries, housing settlements have been cleared off the land, frequently with no consultation, prior warning or entitlement to compensation. Forced evictions have taken place to facilitate urban development and state-led policies for land reallocation, removing people from their homes, often violently.<sup>29</sup>

Large-scale land deals, often accompanied by human rights violations, have had a major focus on agricultural projects and the exploitation of oil and mining activities. Across the programmes where Christian Aid works, there has been a dramatic increase in levels of violence faced by those who work on the land and against human rights defenders working on land who advocate for reforms, oppose large scale development projects and defend the rights of victims. They are often subject to physical threats and attacks and stigmatisation and criminalisation of them or their families.<sup>30</sup>

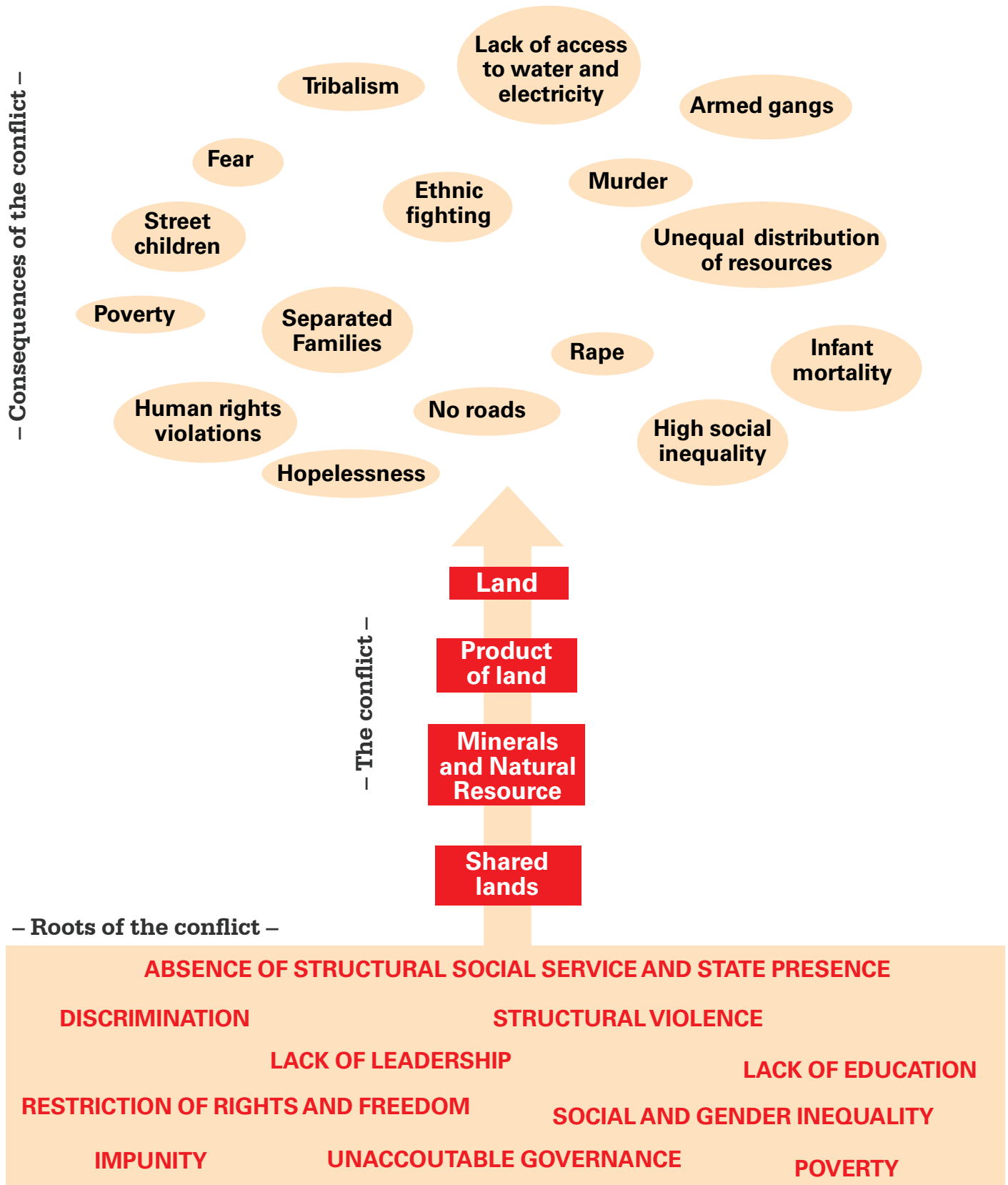
Illustrative of this is how the DRC programme characterised the conflict as at tree, where the trunk of the tree, or the mainstay of the conflict, is constructed around land and resources, and the roots are defined as the structural causes of the conflict, and the branches are the consequences.

### **Conclusion**

A contextual analysis of the drivers of conflict in any jurisdiction is an essential part of defining the necessary theory of change.<sup>31</sup> The issues contemplated here cover only a few of the many issues that engender violence and conflict, but are the areas considered by the conference to have the greatest resonance. Others might include the impact of crime and the illicit economy; identities; religion and security systems for example.



## Democratic Republic of Congo Roots of Conflict



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## 6. Lessons learned

**An overview of some of the key lessons that emerged from the ten countries participating in the peer learning:**

### **The role of civil society in conflict transformation:**

- **Empowering civil society** is a central intervention to Christian Aid's theory of change, and this is an area where we have seen significant gains in a number of countries. This empowerment of civil society entails:

- creating spaces for dialogue within civil society;
- focusing on the voices of the poor and marginalised;
- mobilising support from other actors such as lawyers, the church, media; dialogue with traditional and non-traditional institutions and structures;
- training programmes on what human rights are and how to claim them;
- advocacy or negotiation with powerful groups and actors.

In turn civil society plays a role in strengthening citizens' capacity and creates opportunities for them to transform public policy and practice. Both the engagement of civil society and citizens in this way contributes to efforts to tackle violence and build peace.

- **Building the capacity and knowledge of civil society** can provide people with the tools and resources they need to tackle violence and build peace. Such tools and resources include conflict analysis and mapping; community cohesion programmes; monitoring and protection activities; participatory tools to focus on the meaningful inclusion of women; tools to analyse how to change attitudes and behaviours, and how to engage through cultural activities. Information and dialogue are key to strengthen the capacity of people affected by conflict to engage in tackling violence.

- A key role for Christian Aid is **re-building local level trust between people within communities, with different ethnicities and religions, and between communities and their local government**. In some contexts partners can in turn ensure peace building is a part of national dialogue and focus on rebuilding trust between the national government and citizens.

In other contexts where the government is the primary instigator of violence, partners focus more on addressing state accountability mechanisms.

- **Advocacy is considered to be a critical element for building the conditions for peace, and is conducted in many instances by civil society** to influence political, economic and social institutions responses. Civil society uses advocacy to ensure certain issues are included in peace negotiations and that marginalised voices are included in decision-making.

- It is important to be **conscious of the limitations** of what civil society can do in the context of tackling violence and building peace. Outcomes in work on tackling violence and building peace are difficult to predict and subject to unintended consequences. Well intended civil society interventions can exacerbate conflict and reinforce the status quo. In most violent contexts the kind of political transformation sought is beyond our capacity, so it is necessary to seek alliances.

- It is a **challenge is to ensure that civil society is genuinely representative of the views of the poor, those most marginalised or victims of violence**; gender dynamics need to be at the heart of developing an understanding of how civil society can be truly representative. Civil society therefore constantly needs to assess and critique how it is standing alongside the communities it works for rather than speaking for them.

- It is important to be aware that **civil society does not automatically indicate like-minded organisations** – recognising this is important in order to be conflict sensitive and to “do no harm”. Likewise the experience from Christian Aid programmes tells us that **we should not assume that civil society always has an incentive to speak out in situations that, while violent, might be better than the alternative**. In **Colombia and Central America**, for example, people living with the violence of a particular drug cartel or militia, might benefit from the status quo by having more security and lower levels of violence under criminal gangs than if left to the government authorities.

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- **The role of civil society in peace building will also depend on the nature of the context and the conflict.**

For example if the conflict is a state to state conflict, the role of civil society may be less influential. In an internal armed conflict or complex emergency,<sup>32</sup> civil society can play a greater role in holding governments to account, through for example, documenting victims' experiences.

Such documentation can provide the foundation for transitional justice and accountability, by providing factual information about the realities of violence. However in order to be effective, the documentation also needs to be robust, well-researched and reliable – therefore it is not enough for civil society organisations only to document- they need to be ambitious and produce quality documentation.

- Despite the limitations mentioned above, **civil society space plays a critical part in conflict transformation**, in particular the creation of dialogue that is more inclusive of the voices of the poor and marginalised. Conflict transformation in any context is inherently political and the widening of civil society space or involvement allows citizens to engage in this political process more effectively.
- **Protection needs to be carefully considered when working to empower civil society as a central theory of change.** Those engaging in work on tackling violence and building peace often place themselves at great risk and are vulnerable to attacks and threats. **Development organisations such as Christian Aid need to better assess how they can support partners in providing protection** to those subject to such risks and address the security systems and other causes of violence that need to be tackled simultaneously. This includes pushing for implementation of international standards to protect human rights defenders.
- **There is an identified need to build and protect the space in which civil society operates**, particularly where civil society space is threatened by repressive legislation or other restrictions. This requires institutional support for freedom of association, assembly and expression, and positive legislation to enable the engagement of civil society. During peace processes, civil society organisations need to be genuinely and actively engaged to ensure the widest possible ownership of a peace accord.

- While **investment in civil society to support them to engage in non-violent approaches and peace-building is important**, more support is needed from governments and international institutions through technical assistance, political and diplomatic influence.

### Gender:

- **Stereotyped notions of gender** often ignore the many different roles of men and women in conflict. It is important to consider that **notions of women and men in conflict** tend to focus on women as victims and ignore the fact that they are often passive or active participants. Stereotyped notions of masculinity can also result in more men joining armed combat, or being forcibly recruited and vulnerable to death and casualty.
- Levels of **gender based violence** such as rape, are exacerbated by armed conflict and are used as a deliberate weapon of war. Such violence is rooted in gender inequality which is a feature of societies in times of war and peace.
- High levels of gender based violence are clearly a huge concern and are inextricably linked to gender inequality outside of conflict. However when the main focus on women's rights in conflict is **harm against women's bodies**, we risk reinforcing stereotypes about women that present them as passive and vulnerable, in need of protection, and thus recreating the values that led to sexual violence in the first place and ignoring other violations that men and women face.
- **Working with youth** to build their role in conflict transformation is critical, particularly where young people are most affected by conflict and violence, and where they may also be the perpetrators. The challenge is to enable them to become agents of transformation in divided communities.

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## Experiences of conflict transformation:

- **The pursuit of justice in conflict transformation does not automatically lead to democratisation.** The end of armed conflict is potentially a transformative moment, and as such it is important to grasp the opportunity to embed changes for society, such as strengthening gender justice. It is crucial however that such change is not lost once negotiations are complete.
- **The existence of dialogue alone is not enough.** Groups need to be empowered to engage in a meaningful way, and external actors in peace processes need to be sensitised to community needs. It is vital to understand the incentives of different actors and what makes them engage or not. In order to transform conflicts in a way that is sensitive to all the factors behind the conflict and has a chance of achieving impact, it is vital to carry out a thorough **power analysis**, and to understand the history and dynamics of the violent context or conflict.
- In many of the countries where Christian Aid works the **failure to address the root causes of conflict** has worsened conflicts or has provided the conditions for violence, or a return to conflict.
- For many of Christian Aid's country programmes, **inequality, poverty and marginalisation are critical drivers of violence** (described as structural violence). Issues of local level justice and accountability are of paramount concern in relation to this, for example if a farmer's livestock is taken as a result of conflict. Yet in our experience these issues do not receive as much attention as formal or informal armed conflict.
- The **concentration of wealth** and power and the related lack of accountable governance are often at the core of the structural problems leading to violence. A key approach for Christian Aid programmes is **addressing violence by strengthening governance and political institutions** to help avoid marginalisation and conflict.

Governance is about how power is expressed and ensuring institutions are responsive. The consolidation of inclusive institutions supports peace. Advocacy is an important way to make the results of conflict transformation more sustainable.

## Transitional justice:

- Transitional justice can have an important role to play in **bringing the perpetrators of gross violations of human rights to account, as seen in countries such as Colombia, Guatemala, Sierra Leone and South Africa**. It is essential to have a **context specific approach** and not to impose a 'one size fits all' model to transitional justice or conflict transformation more generally. Any change or approach needs to be embedded in local political understanding and the particular nature of conflict for each area or country. Every approach needs to embrace the reality that change is complex and unpredictable. Further to this, some practitioners point to **the need for transitional justice to embrace complex political realities to a greater degree**.
- Some recent academic debates highlight significant challenges for transitional justice. **At the level of implementation, the scale of human rights violations can overwhelm criminal justice systems** and the normal mechanism of redress; institutional structures may be too fragile to manage transitional justice and there may be a lack of political will to engage.
- **Transitional justice as a discipline is beginning to recognise that it cannot assume that the pursuit of justice, accountability and redress leads automatically to democratisation.** This is because, in most cases, instruments for delivering change towards democracy are the long term fruits of political struggle and cannot be delivered through legislative change alone.

Truth commissions, and others measures, can look at the cause of human rights atrocities and expose them, but some argue that transitional justice itself is not necessarily the vehicle for delivering that change. Neither should it be seen as a trojan horse for regime change. Notwithstanding, there may still be a moral imperative to pursue mechanisms for dealing with massive atrocities, whether or not these contribute to democratisation.



- Christian Aid’s programmes use the tools of transitional justice in certain contexts. However, a concern for Christian Aid is that **transitional justice mechanisms lack the judicial and non-judicial tools that the poor can use to get recourse for the everyday abuses they suffer**. Criminal justice is not always accessible to the poor and there has been a massive failure of protection for them and ability to respond to their most immediate needs.<sup>33</sup> In some contexts with protracted conflicts civil society have begun efforts to work on transitional justice when there is no end to armed conflict or formal peace process negotiated.



Paul Seils from the International Centre for Transitional Justice delivering the keynote address at the “Civil Society, Conflict Transformation and Peace Building”, conference in Belfast (November 2014).

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## 7. Christian Aid programme practice on tackling violence and building peace

The different strategies and activities that are employed by Christian Aid's programmes to tackle violence and build peace:

### Summary of approaches

Central America	
<p><i>Approaches: conflict transformation, violence prevention, gender based violence, advocacy on human rights and resilience and capacity building.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: Caja Ludica (youth engagement with peace and violence prevention), Fespad (human rights advocacy), Ceprev, Orumusa, CDH, IEEEEPP, MCM, Codefem.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protecting vulnerable people from violence and identifying and challenging its causes to transform conflicts peacefully.</li><li>• Women and youth are enabled to demand their rights against violence through training in human rights, peacebuilding, transformation of conflicts and gender.</li><li>• Supporting violence prevention and human rights initiatives, including promoting dialogue between citizens, governments and the private sector to ensure legal frameworks and policies are suitable and effective in terms of violence against women and young people, and public institutions work with accountability and effectiveness in prevention of violence.</li><li>• Inclusion of vulnerable groups in policy making, including youth at risk and in conflict with law and of women victims of violence.</li></ul>



<b>Colombia</b>	
<p><i>Approaches: conflict transformation, violence prevention, transitional justice, advocacy, exposing the misuse of violence and power, resilience and capacity building.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: the Inter-ecclesial Commission of Justice and peace, Peace Brigades International, Corporacion Colectivo de Abogados Jose Alvear Restrepo, Corporacion Colectivo de Abogados Luis Carlos Perez, ABColombia, DIAL, ODHACO, Pastoral Social de las Diocesis de Quibdo, Cedetrabajo.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposing structural and physical violence and challenging the systems that prevent the fulfilment of human rights for all.</li> <li>• Exposing the scandals of misuse of power and use of violence for political and economic means, which implies exposing the hidden power, which consists in secret links between companies, paramilitaries, public servants and/or the military.</li> <li>• Using advocacy to create pressure on the Colombian government from the outside world, especially foreign Governments and the UN, to complement national efforts to bring about change.</li> <li>• Building an enabling environment and strengthening citizen's capacity to address the imbalance of power and to transform conflicts.</li> <li>• Supporting marginalised communities to build resilient livelihoods and facilitate their access to resources and their active participation in determining their future.</li> </ul>

<b>Angola</b>	
<p><i>Approaches: conflict transformation, violence prevention, focus on the 'unjust use of power, advocacy, peace building and reconciliation, resilience and capacity building, focus on land related rights and civic engagement.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: ACC, UFC, Omunga.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening and building civil society to build agency within civil society and accountability and responsiveness within governmental institutions and legal systems.</li> <li>• Building the conditions for peace, by working at the following levels:  Informal-systemic = transforming cultural and social norms  Formal-systemic = advocacy on laws and policies  Formal-individual = individuals advocacy for access to resources.  Individual-informal = evolution of consciousness and individual agency.</li> <li>• Supporting organisations that promote the rights of poor communities to their land and to opportunities to develop.</li> <li>• Giving voice to young and marginalised people to lay the conditions for a society in which the benefits of natural resources are felt by all.</li> </ul>

<b>DRC</b>	
<p><i>Approaches: conflict transformation, advocacy, resilience and capacity building, building trust and dialogue.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: CEJP, ECC MERU, SARCAF, Congo Peace Network.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting changes to structures that keep Congolese people in poverty, helping communities become more resilient and improve their access to essential services.</li> <li>• Promoting and nurturing a culture of peace building and conflict transformation by working to ensure peace-building processes become an integral part of national politics; striving for long-lasting peace by hearing voices from local communities in the DRC and other countries, particularly Rwanda and Burundi.</li> <li>• Working for sustainable peace in two provinces of Kivu, drawing on traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms, supporting gender based violence GBV survivors and improve living conditions and livelihood options for internally displaced and returnees.</li> <li>• Seeking to reduce cross-boundary conflicts, tension and violence through regional advocacy and championing sustained dialogue between civil society structures in the countries of the Great Lakes to demand an end to violence in the region.</li> </ul>

<b>Sierra Leone</b>	
<p><i>Approaches: conflict transformation, Approaches: conflict transformation, advocacy, resilience and capacity building, building trust and dialogue.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: The PICOT programme, NMJD.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that citizens are aware of their economic, social and political rights</li> <li>• Enabling the participation of poor citizens in governance and development processes and supporting demands for improved service delivery from local authorities.</li> <li>• Community level engagement i.e Governance and Accountability Sessions, peace and human rights dialogue sessions, establishment and strengthening of peace and development committees: awareness raising campaigns through the mass media.</li> <li>• Engagement with District and Chiefdom Authorities, Traditional Leaders and Companies on accountability and governance issues.</li> <li>• National level engagement: Partnership and coalition building with like-minded CSOs, joint advocacy campaigns to influence policies and laws.</li> </ul>

Zimbabwe	
<p><i>Approaches: conflict transformation, advocacy, peace building, documentation and monitoring of human rights violations, resilience and capacity building, building trust and dialogue.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: The Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Zimbabwe Peace Project.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote and nurture a culture of peace building and conflict transformation.</li> <li>• Together with the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ), ZCC formed the Zimbabwe Peace Project, which keeps a database of most of the violence perpetrated in different communities. Observers write monthly reports of violence in different areas.</li> <li>• ZCC is making efforts to help engage both political parties to enhance their willingness to represent the greater interest of the Zimbabwean people rather than promoting political party interests. ZCC is forming alliances with civil society organisations, contributing to issues of transitional justice, focusing on the formation of and enabling the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission. ZCC campaigns for strong accountable structures within society; this would lead to sustainability in terms of transitional justice.</li> <li>• Engaging traditional leaders to develop and revive mechanisms to resolve conflict at community levels tapping into the knowledge they have and where possible to share knowledge. Traditional leaders are able to adopt and sustain positive attitudes to resolving conflict and maintaining peace.</li> <li>• Engaging communities to actively participate in conflict resolution, through peace committees and awareness raising.</li> <li>• Engaging church leaders to support conflict resolution and peace building at all levels, including addressing GBV.</li> </ul>

IOPT	
<p><i>Approaches: conflict transformation, advocacy, transitional justice, resilience and capacity building.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: Zochrot (conference participant); Adalah, Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Arab Human Rights Association, Addameer Prisoners' Rights and Human Rights Association, Badil, Culture and Free Thought Association, Al Haq, Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy, B'Tselem, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting rights in conflict and expanding civic empowerment and responsibility by strengthening people's capacity to demand their rights, with a focus on tackling inequality and reforming the institutions and bodies that deny those rights.</li> <li>• Demanding accountability through litigation and advocacy and advocating for unified representation of the Palestinian people. Ending discriminatory practices and legislation against Palestinian citizens of Israel; Increasing civic space and facilitating dialogue that ensures accountability and representation of Israelis and Palestinians.</li> <li>• Implementing civil society led transitional justice approaches. Using transitional justice as a way to discuss sensitive issues that are key to building peace, such as refugee return.</li> <li>• Supporting an ecumenical accompaniment programme, which places international accompaniers in Palestinian communities and inside the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly around high risk areas such as near Israeli settlements.. This demonstrates solidarity, enabling local civil society to carry out their work and also monitors how Israel administers the occupation, and whether it intervenes when settlers abuse Palestinians.</li> <li>• Inclusion of marginalised voices in decision making as a form of building lasting peace.</li> <li>• Supporting young people to become more aware of their rights and facilitating activities that help them realise their rights.</li> <li>• Documenting violations of international law to end a culture of impunity, and advocating within international mechanisms for protection.</li> </ul>

<b>Myanmar</b>	
<p><i>Approaches: conflict transformation, advocacy, focus on governance and access to basic services as a component of peace building work.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: Gender Development Institute, KDN and Myanmar Council of Churches.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening civil society's capacity to influence and hold the powerful to account, demand good governance and uphold respect for human rights.</li> <li>• Promoting resilient livelihoods and building community organisation, access to information, and the participation of IDPs and refugees in planning and decision-making around resettlement.</li> <li>• Addressing basic services, especially health, to different ethnic groups.</li> <li>• Implementing a project using civilian protection monitors to document human rights violations. An important aspect of this work is providing physical protection for the monitors, as there have been incidences of women carrying out this role being raped by the army, and of arbitrary arrests.</li> </ul>

<b>Pakistan</b>	
<p><i>Approaches: peace building, advocacy, community focus on tolerance and peace.</i></p> <p><i>Programme partners: NCA, Paiman Trust.</i></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging in a humanitarian response but also aiming to expand developing conflict-sensitive programmes to address the often violent reality of life in Pakistan.</li> <li>• Minimising and preventing the misuse of religion, with a focus on halting the widespread growth and expansion of intolerance and disrespect for diversity, which is now evident even among common people, not just militants and extremists.</li> <li>• Linking with lawyers who challenge the misuse of blasphemy laws in court, and establishing local structures – composed of mullahs, civil society leaders, media people and local authorities – that can step in quickly and pre-empt or prevent mobs.</li> <li>• Organising events where different religious leaders come together to send the symbolic message that everyone can co-exist.</li> <li>• Providing vocational education and training programme targeted at some 300,000 armed fighters.</li> </ul>

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## 8. Thematic issues of relevance to Christian Aid country programmes

Some thematic issues were discussed throughout the peer learning.

### Youth and peace building

In **Guatemala and El Salvador**, our programmes identify low investment in and criminalisation of youth, and repressive policies as manifestations of structural violence –with 20 murders per day in El Salvador in May 2015 alone, and the victims are mainly young people. Christian Aid's partners identified the vital importance of building the capacity of young people to think of themselves as part of the solution, to assume the role of multipliers for positive change, and to take part in transforming conflict and violence. Their aim is to prevent young men and women from being automatically recruited into gangs, and offer an alternative path.

In **Sierra Leone**, youth based organisations are a strong force, especially at times of elections, when politicians become keen to win their support. A particular group targeted by politicians are called Okadas (their members are between the ages of 16 and 35 and are predominantly male) who offer motorbike taxi services. This group are seen as a force for change and have challenged authority, often violently. It is believed that politicians will give them money, drugs, alcohol and parties to win their support. One significant gain from working with the Okada youth leaders has been a demand put forward by them to the government for the establishment of a youth commission from the government. This has now been established. Civil society needs to explore opportunities to work with them to influence their followers for positive change.

### Youth in Pakistan

Similarly, in **Pakistan** civil society groups are working with youth as agents of change, bringing peace into their own areas. 15,000 volunteer boys and girls for example have been trained to bring peace in their communities, working in informal spaces such as wedding parties and coffee parties in the case where women and girls are not allowed unaccompanied out of the house. The programme is about defining the spaces that young people can occupy to bring a narrative of peace and reconciliation.



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## **The link with governance and tackling violence, building peace**

Governance is about processes – how things are done rather than what is done. Making governments more accountable is an important strand of tackling violence and building peace for Christian Aid because it is ultimately about how governments and their agencies exercise, or fail to exercise, their power. It is also about the means by which poor people influence decisions that affect their lives.

Christian Aid programmes recognise that it is not always right to assume that civil society sees the state as motivated by uncomplicated desires to account for their performance as providers of public goods.<sup>34</sup> Having an understanding of the motivations of governments in relation to governance structures is an important part of the power analysis and this has an impact on the approach to change taken. There is often a lack of trust in the accountability of state institutions and government which can lead to violence and frustration.

Christian Aid recognises that supporting people in societies affected by conflict and endemic violence to claim their rights and hold their governments and power holders to account is important to ensure their needs are addressed. At the same time, weak institutions and poor governance are often both the root cause of conflict and an obstacle to building the conditions for peace. By enhancing state capacity and governance, and the relationship between the state and its citizens, the processes to tackle violence and build peace are put in place.

### **Case Study: Angola**

Christian Aid's programme builds accountability between power holders and civil society in Angola. Although Angola has been one of Africa's fastest-growing economies mainly due to major export earnings from oil, only a tiny portion of these earnings has trickled down to the population. An estimated two-thirds of Angola's 16.5 million people live on less than \$2 a day, according to the United Nations.

The lack of services and increasing inequality is leading to severe structural violence and contributing to the conditions for violence and conflict. Power is concentrated at the provincial level with the governor and access to the budget is very difficult even for those in the public sector. The government controls 84% of the budget at central level and local government is appointed by central government.

In this context, the Council of Christian Churches in Angola (CICA) manages a programme on good governance to help build the conditions for peace by engaging in participative dialogue, mapping priority needs in communities with men, women and youth. They report on their consultations and speak to authorities including the local authorities and provincial governors and to make them more accountable. CICA is building strong networks to contribute to change, including joint work with the Catholic Church, members of government, CSOs, donors, and embassies.

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## Gender inequality

As identified in the previous section, the structural conditions of lack of security, lack of access to human rights and to the most basic resources of life and patriarchy can exacerbate gender inequality and lead to violence. Christian Aid programme approaches to generating change range from building understanding and fostering community relations at a local level; promoting and sensitising institutions and citizens on gender sensitive legislation; building gender awareness and buy in amongst traditional elites; and using areas traditionally occupied by women (provision of health services for example) to build the capacity of women. The rise in violence against women can be seen as a barometer for a general trend in violence in society, and can act as an early warning system.

### Case Study: Zimbabwe

Christian Aid's partners work through traditional Chiefs as custodians of power within rural communities. The aim is to break the cycles of violence and against women that existed in pre-conflict society which continue to have an impact.

The project aims to change these power relationships through sensitisation and education on existing laws, such as the Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Offences Act, Child Protection Act; sensitising communities on how they can report abuse and how communities can be better placed to live when the vulnerable are protected; encouraging chiefs to actively resolve conflicts at the initial stages to avoid political violence being used as an excuse to settle old scores; rebuilding relationships and reconciling relationships after the trauma caused by the violence associated with elections; advocating for changed mindsets around the precedence of male children.

Men are incentivised to support these changes by focusing on the manner in which conflict affects development – women are recognised as the primary drivers of development, therefore if they are overburdened by responsibilities related to conflict and violence they are not able to fulfil their other roles, which has negative effects for the whole community, not only women themselves.

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## Land and displacement

As we have seen, land is increasingly recognised by Christian Aid's programmes as being a vital element in tackling the root causes of conflict. People uprooted by conflict and natural disaster risk losing the land they leave behind, where it may be opportunistically occupied by others, or where land acquisition was a direct motivation for uprooting people in the first place.

In conflict and post-conflict countries, land acquisition and repeated patterns of dispossession frequently exacerbate tension and are the underlying cause of further violence – often linked to wider processes of political exclusion, social, ethnic and racial discrimination, economic marginalisation, and a perception that peaceful action is no longer a viable strategy for change.<sup>35</sup> This underscores the importance of land in peace building efforts.<sup>36</sup>

Strategies to respond to land issues include strengthening leadership, organisation, and democratic processes at a community and inter-community level, and promoting linkages and joint action between affected groups, based on principles of citizenship and peaceful contestation.

Extensive awareness-raising and training of activists and community leaders on mediation, administrative processes, and land laws is another element. Participatory land demarcation of rural land can also help communities to be prepared, decrease the risks of local leaders privately agreeing land concessions, and is a step towards obtaining collective legal titles, which in some contexts are provided for under the law, but only ever granted in a couple of cases.

At a local level, awareness raising and advocacy may take place through the media, letter writing, petitions, and local meetings and debates. The power to halt evictions and grant compensation ultimately lies with governments (and in cases of large scale evictions, usually with those at the highest level); private bodies and local authorities have limited scope for action. In individual cases there is some engagement with private landowners and companies to reduce damages, lobby for compensation or increase acceptance of the tenure rights of communities. In some rural areas, landowners may have an interest in local development.

## Conclusion:

This section has considered some of the salient themes that arise from a consideration of Christian Aid's theories of change. The area most strongly identified with in the analysis was building the capacity of civil society to tackle violence and build peace, and this is seen as mainly related to building accountable governance.

Other key elements include the role of youth and the role of gender that need to be considered as part of a theory of change, and finally land has been considered as a vital element that needs specific strategies to address.

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# 9. Principles to guide programme practice

## Some guiding principles for country programmes based on the peer learning:

- **Power analysis and conflict analysis** are critical to understanding the drivers of conflict and violence in a particular context. These require on-going reflection and adaptation in order to ensure they are sensitive to the conflict. This includes ensuring an understanding of the history and dynamics of the violence. Activities undertaken to do these analysis should be participatory and include communities.
- **A theory of change can help programmes understand how their intervention will contribute to peace building in the context of a specific conflict.** A theory of change should outline how any intervention hopes to achieve change or impact. It should articulate different changes at different levels, how they link, and set out how specific changes eventually contribute to more significant and broader change and impact. It should be very explicit but be refined and revised as external and internal changes happen. Its most crucial function is to set out the steps of how a project or programme can see change happening.
- **Protection strategies are critical for country programmes when engaging in work on tackling violence and building peace- for both partners and communities.** This includes an assessment of how Christian Aid can support programmes to enable civil society space.
- **Civil society should constantly assess how it is representing the most marginalised.**
- **Where possible programmes working on tackling violence and building peace should consider how they are transforming conflict through their interventions.** This includes tackling the root causes of the conflict explicitly and linking interventions with governance work to make decision-making more inclusive and pro-poor. Tackling relative and extreme inequalities – economic, political, cultural, gender and those related to security, justice and social services – can help to address the grievances that lead to conflict and violence. A focus on creating resilient livelihoods is important in tandem with work that seeks to address conflict. Securing livelihoods can address some of the unequal power dynamics in a conflict setting.
- **Having an understanding of the role and impact of violence and conflict on men and women and their role in building solutions to this, is critical for developing pro-poor, sustainable responses to violence.** In particular it is critical not to assume stereotypical understanding of gender relations of the different roles of women and men.
- **Programmes should consider the critical role of youth in conflict transformation,** particularly where young people are most affected by conflict and violence, and where they may also be the perpetrators.

## Conclusion

This learning paper has drawn on the experience and expertise of Christian Aid's partners in Angola, Colombia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Central America, IOPT, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, and Pakistan.

As we have seen, these countries suffer from issues of high levels of violence, threats to safety, constrained civil society space and unequal distribution of resources. All these aspects hamper citizens' ability to demand their rights, or to create the conditions that would end or alleviate poverty. The countries are all affected by unequal power dynamics and failures of governance which stem from conflict (current or past), state fragility, corruption, and serious deficits in the rule of law that may well have been the root causes of conflict in the first place. In some cases the conflict is ongoing, in others it has officially ended for many years but the impact still affects the lives of poor and marginalised people.

This paper has identified some of the lessons learned and basic principles for Christian Aid country programmes to contribute to building an environment of security and stability for poor and marginalised people, through conflict transformation and by holding the state to account for human rights abuses. Ultimately this is a contribution to sharing learning of our approach to enable more citizens to claim their rights successfully and without fear.

# 10. Annexes

## Six stages of mapping your initiative for social change

1. Identifying long-term goals
2. Backwards mapping and connecting the preconditions or requirements necessary to achieve that goal and explaining why these preconditions are necessary and sufficient.
3. Identifying basic assumptions about the context.
4. Identifying the interventions that the initiative will perform to create your desired change.
5. Developing indicators to measure your outcomes to assess the performance of your initiative.
6. Writing a narrative to explain the logic of your initiative.

<http://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/how-does-theory-of-change-work/>

## Annex 1: Developing a theory of change

A theory of change requires planners to think in backwards steps from the long-term goal to the intermediate and then early-term changes that would be required to cause the desired change. This creates a set of connected outcomes known as a “pathway of change”.

This approach to planning is designed to encourage very clearly defined outcomes at every step of the change process, including specifics about the target population, the amount of change required to signal success, and the timeframe over which such change is expected to occur. This approach to achieving social change enables programmes and partners to develop specific and achievable long-term outcome targets that are acceptable to all parties.

### Example of how theory of change methodology has been used in Sierra Leone:

In **Sierra Leone** there is still considerable disillusionment at the lack of progress in tackling the issues that caused the civil war, such as corruption and the exclusion of many from access to resources and public services. Christian Aid's power analysis identifies the need to work with traditional power structures because more than four-fifths of the land mass of Sierra Leone is under the control of paramount chiefs, most of whom are selected and or elected from a small undemocratic pool of chieftaincy families.

It was identified that the way chiefs operate can be a problem for communities, fostering imbalances in power relations which ultimately lead to violence, especially during election periods.

Many people feel that they cannot influence these traditional power structures as it is taboo to do so. It is here that Christian Aid is adding value by forming and strengthening CSOs and networks, such as the Partners Initiative for Conflict Transformation (PICOT) to participate in the Chiefdom Governance Reform Campaign Team.

Through the theory of change process, partners in Sierra Leone identified working with the Chiefdom Governance Reform Campaign Team to enact a new Chiefdom and Tribal Administration Policy which will promote participation at local levels to ensure communal peace, stability, harmony and security, as a basic rudiment of national development and progress. They are also supporting the proposal of the Government to put the issue of Paramount Chieftaincy elections to a public debate.

### Sierra Leone: Accountability for peace consolidation – transforming unjust power relations between citizens and the state

What change do I want to see? (In people's lives/ policy or law in institutional behaviour).

- **Vision**

A developed and peaceful society where human security is ensured

- **Goal:**

- Citizens aware of their economic, social and political rights
- Citizens participate in governance and development processes
- Citizens demand for improved service delivery and local authorities respond to these demands.

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**\* What needs to happen to create this change?**

(Steps required to achieve your end result.)



Communities (esp. women and youth) willing to participate in governance sessions

Communities understand their rights and responsibilities and take advocacy issues forward

District and local authorities' capacity (knowledge) enhanced

District and local authorities willing to interact with communities

CSO collaborate along thematic areas to for national level advocacy

Government gains confidence in and sees CSOs as partners in development

**\* What can the project do to influence change?**

(Braod activities of the project.)



**Micro level**

**Community level engagement:** Governance and Accountability Sessions, peace and human rights dialogue sessions, establishment and strengthening of peace and development committees: awareness raising campaigns through the mass media

**Messo level**

Engagement with **District and Chiefdom Authorities**, Traditional Leaders and Companies on downward accountability and governance issues

Knowledge and skills capacity building of community actors

District-Chiefdom-Community interactive dialogue sessions to discuss common problems and find joint solutions

**Macro level**

**National level engagement:** Partnership and coalition building with like-minded CSOs

Joint advocacy campaigns with other CSOs

Influencing policies and laws through advocacy and lobbying



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## Annex 2: Northern Ireland and the Bridge of Hope toolkit

Christian Aid Ireland is in a unique position to link its global work on tackling violence and building because of the history of conflict in Northern Ireland. Christian Aid Ireland has developed partnerships with domestic groups working on issues of peace in Northern Ireland. Our formal relationship with seven Protestant Church bodies and the Irish Council of Churches provides a real opportunity to engage with many influential church actors who were instrumental in the building of peace and the ending of armed conflict which informs our work overseas.

One of these partners is the Bridge of Hope, a programme of Ashton Community Trust that works to support victims and survivors of the conflict. It provides a wide range of therapies and personal development courses geared towards improving health and wellbeing. It seeks to better understand people who have lived through the conflict by carrying out community focused research.

**A Bridge of Hope report outlines how the scale and longevity of the Northern Ireland conflict make it an instructive site to examine how transitional justice works in practice.**<sup>37</sup> It shows that the magnitude of the loss of life during the conflict approximates to 2,500 dead per million of population. The figure has to be scaled up to be appreciated. In a country such as the UK (population 62 million) this would be equivalent to 155,000 deaths.

The scale of family disruption and social instability due to imprisonment is also enormous. In Northern Ireland up to 30,000 people spent time in prison due to the conflict. In the UK the equivalent number of people imprisoned would be 1,240,000. The vast majority of these people were from urban working class districts. Many former politically motivated prisoners have been internationally recognised as having played a positive and critical role in conflict transformation.

Over 90 per cent of those killed were men, and over 80 per cent of the violence occurred in the most disadvantaged urban areas of North and West Belfast and Derry. In other words, citizens living in those areas that saw the outbreak of civil disturbance in the 1960s experienced the worst impacts of the conflict for over 30 years. In Northern Ireland, statistics of conflict-related harm intersect with patterns of socio-economic inequalities that preceded the conflict.

While the 1998 Good Friday Agreement heralded the end of conflict and set out commitments to equality and human rights- much work remains to be done.

In partnership with Ulster University's Transitional Justice Institute, the [Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit: User's Guide](#) was developed by Bridge of Hope for communities navigating the post-conflict era. Drawing on the lived experiences of those affected by the legacy of the conflict in Belfast, Bridge of Hope's User's Guide equips those least able to influence the important transition from conflict to stability. It is complementary to the Transitional Justice Grassroots Toolkit, a practical guide for people whose lives are profoundly changed by conflict and transition.

Professor Rory O'Connell, Director of the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University said:

***"Ultimately this toolkit user guide provides a way to share insights and experiences in a form and language accessible to others facing transition from a grassroots perspective. It has been used effectively in refugee camps by the Women's Democracy Network in Syria and TJI is also exploring ways to use the Toolkit in places across the globe."***

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