Breaking the Cycle

BREAKING THE CYCLE
of Conflict, Hunger and
Human Suffering

CONCERN
worldwide

Octavie is only 13 but is responsible for her nephew after their mothers moved away to a city in Central African Republic. Some days the children have nothing to eat and as a result the young boy is malnourished. He has been receiving a special therapeutic food from a health post where Concern is working with volunteers from the community. Photographer: Chris de Bode, Panos Pictures for Concern Worldwide.

Executive Summary

"War is never inevitable. It is always a matter of choice: the choice to exclude, to discriminate, to marginalize, to resort to violence... But peace, too, is never inevitable. It is the result of difficult decisions, hard work and compromise... Prevention is not merely a priority, but the priority. If we live up to our responsibilities, we will save lives, reduce suffering and give hope to millions."

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Conflict is the single greatest driver of humanitarian crisis today, and the biggest threat to progress towards a more prosperous, stable and sustainable future.[1] In a world of mounting need, aid saves lives, and is increasingly effective at doing so.[2] However, development progress has been uneven both across – and within – countries. Just as war-torn countries have struggled to meet other development goals,[3] today, conflict-affected contexts are falling further and further behind, precisely when action is most needed.

This report shares the voices and lived experiences of those most affected by conflict around the world. The accounts shared highlight the destructive and complex consequences of conflict in its many forms. These include direct experiences of violence and its devastating impact on displacement and food security, alongside more indirect, detrimental effects on community resilience, cohesion and gendered social relations.

These accounts lead to three conclusions, common to both hunger and displacement, and reflecting the harsh realities and enormous challenges faced by communities in conflict-affected contexts around the world:

1. Conflict's reach goes far beyond the scope of physical violence alone, transforming (and often destroying) economies, social networks and household support systems far from the frontlines.
2. Conflict is gendered: it affects women, men, youth and people from vulnerable groups in starkly different ways that often reinforce existing inequities.
3. Conflict's legacy lasts much longer than violence alone, affecting the likelihood of return and the success of reintegration and reconciliation long after stability is re-established.

Displacement is a defining characteristic of modern conflict. Today, an estimated 68.5 million people are forcibly displaced, the worst displacement crisis in 70 years.[4] The experiences shared in this report shine a spotlight on the millions of people around the world who have fled their homes in search of safety, those who host them, and the challenges the displaced face in rebuilding their lives on return.

Hunger and conflict are also inextricably linked: in 2017, 124 million people faced crisis-level food insecurity, with conflict the key driver in 60 per cent of cases of acute food insecurity.[5] The stories in this report highlight conflict's devastating impacts on food security in areas both acutely and less directly affected by violent conflict. Direct impacts include exposure to physical violence, restricted movement and preventing access to humanitarian aid. Indirectly, conflict profoundly affects communities through localised violence, economic crisis, and as a compounding factor in contexts of natural disasters and climate change.

While conflict can be catastrophic, the accounts shared in this report also attest to the strength, resilience and hopes of those who have survived extreme violence, continue to navigate uncertainty, and are committed to building a brighter future. Often, the task of tackling conflict can seem monumental. Nevertheless, when rooted in evidence and best practices, locally-owned peacebuilding initiatives can have a profound impact on prospects for peace. Concern is supporting the work of local communities to build a more peaceful and prosperous future in diverse contexts around the world. Integrated approaches to reduce conflict, gender-based violence and environmental vulnerability in Central African Republic will help the whole community enjoy the dividends of sustainable peace. In the Middle East, engaging men in the work of reconstructing gender roles that harm both men and women strengthens families uprooted by war. Upskilling urban youth leaders with non-violent dispute resolution training in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, equips tomorrow's leaders with the skills and the confidence to transform their communities. Facilitating partnerships for conflict prevention between different livelihood groups in rural Chad reinforces the resilience of groups who can together better tackle the impacts of climate change and build peace.

The issues local peace champions are addressing are not simple or straightforward, but neither can they be ignored. Conflict rolls back development and undermines progress towards a more stable and prosperous future. For these reasons, Concern works to:

» Integrate peace programming into multi-sectoral responses to jointly address conflict's complex drivers and consequences;
» Support relationship-building and the transformation of social norms in conflict-affected communities; and
» Reinforce systems for more effective, sustainable and inclusive conflict management to help build lasting peace.

One year old Goanar Sebit with her mother, Nyakera Kong, at the Concern nutrition centre in POC 3 near the UN base in Juba, South Sudan. Photographer: Kieran McConville, Concern Worldwide

More importantly, these processes are being driven by community members who are committed to building peace every day in the most challenging of circumstances.

Ultimately, it is important to recall that even those who have been victimised in conflict remain active agents in rebuilding their lives and a better future. Context-specific, locally-led and locally-owned initiatives are the only way to build lasting peace. Giving a platform to the voices of those most affected by violence helps us understand people's experiences of conflict, how they seek to rebuild their lives in the midst of insecurity, and their hopes for the future. This understanding is central to developing effective, accountable, empowering and sustainable responses to crises and ultimately achieving the Agenda 2030 ambition of building peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development (SDG 16).

However, these voices should also be a catalyst for political and policy change at the highest level. Humanitarian and development aid cannot be used as a substitute for effective diplomacy or the political will to find lasting solutions to protracted crisis. In its 50th year of tackling crisis in the world's most conflict-affected contexts, Concern is committed to doing more than ever to alleviate suffering; work with communities to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability; and empower women, men, youth, and peace champions from vulnerable groups to build a better future for their communities. However, it is not within our power to end global conflict.

The task of addressing conflict can appear insurmountable. But inaction is not an option. Maintaining the *status quo* costs countless lives and untold billions in economic collapse, humanitarian crisis and under-development. The **UN system** is at a crossroads and only leadership and coordinated effort at the global level can bring about the systemic change needed to achieve and sustain peace. **National governments** must show the leadership to protect civilians and achieve the political solutions necessary to end conflict: ultimately, the only durable peace will be one that is nationally owned and led. **International donors** face mounting needs in increasingly complex contexts, which must be matched by fresh thinking, renewed commitment and a reassertion of the value of humanitarian aid and our responsibility to alleviate suffering and save lives. Meanwhile, the **Irish Government** is in a unique position to become a global champion of SDG16 and expand its footprint in conflict-affected contexts, drawing on its own experience of conflict; its record in peacekeeping; and its contribution to peace processes globally.

Drawing on the accounts in this report, and building on a series of recommendations aimed primarily at humanitarian and development actors in two accompanying publications,[6] **Concern calls on all parties to take the following steps to break the cycle of conflict, hunger and human suffering:**

UN member states

» Support Secretary-General Guterres' agenda for a surge of diplomacy and meet his call to increase funding to $500m for a reformed UN peacebuilding architecture.[7]
» Push for the implementation of an ambitious Global Refugee Compact with robust targets and indicators for monitoring progress and ensuring accountability.
» Introduce a specific monitoring, reporting and accountability mechanism for violations of Resolution 2417 (2018) on conflict and hunger.
» Introduce binding language that guarantees the meaningful representation, participation and leadership of women at every level of peacebuilding.

National governments

» Create meaningful forums for the inclusion, participation and leadership of local civil society, women and youth peacebuilders in national-level peace processes.
» Incorporate and monitor the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in national laws, policies, and development plans.[8]
» Lead on establishing nationally-owned resilience-building strategies that tackle the combined impacts of conflict, climate change and natural disasters on hunger and food insecurity.
» Adopt, fund and implement ambitious National Action Plans for the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

International donors

» Increase investment in conflict sensitivity in all interventions in conflict-affected contexts to maximise the benefits of peace.
» Put an end to single-year, annual pledging conferences and deliver on existing commitments to increase flexible, multi-year humanitarian funding to address and prevent protracted displacement.
» Increase the level of rapidly dispersible and flexible funding available to tackle food crises and turn early warning into early action.
» Eliminate gendered funding gaps that disproportionately harm women, girls and victims of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict.

The Irish Government

» Strengthen its focus on peace, conflict prevention and fragility, by tripling the funds[9] provided to integrated programmes that include locally-led civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution initiatives.
» Increase support to initiatives that (re-)establish livelihoods earlier, and support return, reintegration, recovery and resilience-building for a longer period for displaced, host and returning populations.
» Maintain its global leadership in the fight against hunger, and build stronger links between its priorities in food and hunger, and peace and conflict prevention, as defining principles of its UN engagement.
» Increase the number of, and level of funding to, peacebuilding initiatives that have gender equality and women's empowerment as a principal or significant objective.[10]

Humanitarian and development organisations

» Design and implement programmes based on deep contextual analysis that are highly attuned to the ways gender and social relations shape conflict's impacts.
» Implement integrated programmes to support social cohesion, integration and where relevant, voluntary return in safety and dignity, for displaced and host populations.
» Support more local-level peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution initiatives as part of integrated responses in conflict-affected contexts.

Contents

Acronyms

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
CAR	Central African Republic
CHD	County Health Department
COFEM	Coalition of Feminists for Social Change
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Department
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSIN	Food Security Information Network
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICGBV	The Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
JOAC	Jersey Overseas Aid
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
PoC	Protection of Civilians
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHACDO	Shabelle Community Development Organisation
SSHF	South Sudan Humanitarian Fund
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UPC	Union for Peace in Central Africa (*l'Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique*)
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
YAC	Youth Actors for Change

Foreword

*"you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land...
...i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore".*

Warsan Shire (home)

The world is on fire. Conflict and climate change are tearing apart the development gains of the late 20th Century.

Conflict is now the single greatest driver of humanitarian crises. With over 68 million people forcibly displaced and 134 million in need of humanitarian assistance, response systems are overstretched and the diplomatic structures in place for conflict prevention and resolution have proved wholly ineffective.

Working in conflict zones has always presented great challenges for humanitarian aid workers, particularly with regard to security and access to populations in need, and this challenge is only increasing. Conflict can also create a fiercely chaotic space, one where societal structures are upended, where populations are at their most vulnerable, and where the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are most essential and most challenging to maintain.

Responding to conflict is not easy, but it is essential. Our own organisation, Concern Worldwide, was formed in 1968 as a response to the famine caused by the Biafran War. Much of our work since then has been in response to the urgent humanitarian needs created by conflict.

Concern's dual mandate as a humanitarian and development NGO affords us a deep understanding of conflict and its relationship in particular to hunger and extreme poverty. In many of the countries in which we work, we have developed ways of working to address the needs of those most affected by conflict that go beyond the basics of humanitarian assistance. These approaches are effective, but the scale and impact of global conflict mean that more is demanded of us.

Meeting the needs of conflict-affected populations requires a more ambitious approach that addresses both the drivers and the consequences of conflict. This report argues that supporting communities to establish or revive their own systems of peace building must be at the heart of a grassroots approach to preventing and resolving conflict and building lasting peace. Concern is a global NGO, but it is rooted firmly in Ireland. The experience of Northern Ireland has shown that while political leadership is essential to bringing an end to violence, peace can only be truly consolidated when it is embraced, owned and enjoyed at the community level. We also know that peace is only truly achieved when *all* members of the community – including women and young people – are engaged meaningfully and can enjoy it equally.

We know from our own work that even in the hardest to reach areas of Central African Republic, or the most violent slums of Haiti, investment in peace at the community level can be immediately impactful and effective.

As an NGO, we have a duty to not only work with those caught up in protracted conflict, and to give a platform to their voices. That is why we have placed the accounts of affected people, those who are closest to the crisis, at the centre of this report. Even though they have experienced the most devastating trauma, their harrowing testimony reflects their strength, resilience and a determination to forge a better future for themselves and their families. For our part, we must do all that we can to help this future be realised.

Resilience however is not inexhaustible. Conflict crushes, erodes and kills the spirit of many and for every person that finds the strength to go on, many more do not.

We must remind ourselves that violence is not inevitable. Perpetrators and even whole sections of society choose to commit violence - and can choose to stop it. But ending conflict is not straightforward. It requires context-specific, sustained approaches on the ground but most of all it requires political will, leadership and diplomacy. Solutions are not easy, but we simply cannot consign millions of men, women and children to the brutality of war or to lives half lived as refugees or in displaced camps for decades, surviving on insufficiently funded humanitarian life-lines.

George Bernard Shaw once said 'the essence of inhumanity is not hatred; it is indifference'. In truth, when we fail to act on or prevent the suffering of others, then we are not only denying their humanity, we are slowly eroding our own.

Let us respond to inhumanity with humanity, channelling our most basic human impulse to alleviate the suffering of others. In doing so, we must return with renewed vigour to the promises and obligations made when 193 nations came together to sign up to the Sustainable Development Goals. This was the first time the global community collectively signed up to a visionary commitment to reducing all forms of violence and building more peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16).

Let us talk of these goals as rights, including the right to live free from fear, persecution and violence. Language is important – if we see the goals as rights, we move from aspiration to obligation - from ambition to action. This is what is needed if we are to achieve a more peaceful world - one without conflict, hunger or poverty.

Dominic MacSorley
Chief Executive Officer, Concern Worldwide

1. Introduction

Concern's commitment to not only leaving no one behind, but to also reach the furthest behind first, has increasingly taken the organisation into fragile contexts.[11] There, the devastating consequences of conflict and resulting levels of human suffering have soared in recent years. This report is the final publication in a series of papers exploring the humanitarian consequences of conflict and proposing new ways to break the cycle of conflict, hunger and human suffering.[12]

Conflict is the single greatest driver of humanitarian crisis today, and the biggest threat to progress towards a more prosperous, stable and sustainable future.[13] The world is an increasingly dangerous place. After a period of relative gains in global peace, conflict has significantly increased in the past decade.[14] In 2017, 164 state, non-state and anti-civilian conflicts were recorded around the world, up from 80 in 2010.[15]

Conflict halts development gains and may roll back progress on these for years, if not decades.

Conflict halts development gains and may roll back progress on these for years, if not decades. A typical civil war decreases Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *per capita* by 15 per cent and increases the level of undernourished people by 3.3 per cent.[16] The breakdown of law and order and the emergence of war economies weaken governance systems and provide opportunities for corruption that further impoverish communities and do long-term damage to accountability systems. Even in large-scale, indiscriminate violence, it is the poor and vulnerable who suffer most. Instances of sexual and gender-based violence against women, numbers of children out of school, and levels of infant mortality all increase as a result of conflict. Conflict's impacts go far beyond the reach of violence alone. On average, for every child killed in conflict, another who would otherwise survive will also die from war's indirect effects.[17] Conflict is much more than 'development in reverse': it represents the unfulfilled potential of future generations.

Displacement is a defining characteristic of modern conflict. Today, the world is facing the worst displacement crisis in 70 years. An estimated 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced. International attention tends to focus on the relatively small numbers of people making perilous journeys to reach safety in Europe. However, around the world, almost twice as many people are displaced within the borders of their own countries as are displaced as refugees.[18] Sadly, displacement is also rarely an isolated event: many people in protracted conflicts have been displaced several times in a near constant search for safety as frontlines shift (see Concern case study, Page 14).[19] While displacement fuelled by a small number of high-profile conflicts draws considerable attention, displacement in the world's neglected crises is relatively overlooked, and demands unique attention. Moreover, displaced populations are often excluded from decision-making processes that fail to take their views, needs and objectives into account.[20] This report seeks to give a platform to those perspectives to inform a more effective, accountable, empowering and sustainable response.

Market trader, Maduok Yai at his market stall in Aweil West, South Sudan. Photographer: Kieran McConville, Concern Worldwide.

The Constant Search for Safety in Syria

Now in its eighth year of war, unprecedented levels of violence in Syria have resulted in the largest refugee crisis since World War Two. As of April 2018, approximately 6.6 million people are internally displaced in Syria; and 5.6 million have fled the country.[21] International attention has often focused on refugees arriving in Europe. However, the vast majority of Syria's displaced remain in the region, and the largest number are inside the war-ravaged country itself. Many have experienced multiple displacements in a near-constant search for safety, as shifting frontlines create new threats.

Laila* is a 31-year old mother who lives in Northern Syria with her five children. Laila's tragic journey from her home in Aleppo began in 2012. In the early stages of the war, she and her husband fled south of the city with their children, to a house her father's family owned. There, the extended family of 14 lived in a small three-room house for seven months. When they first arrived, there was little food, but as the frontline got closer people began to leave, abandoning crops. Laila says, **"At the beginning we only cooked one meal a day, but as the town became empty, people left their crops and then there was lots of food to eat."** However, as shelling came closer, the family was also forced to flee.

In the countryside north of Aleppo, they found a small farmhouse where they stayed with 25 people. Women and children slept in the house, while men slept outside in cars. The cramped conditions soon became untenable, and in mid-2013, the family moved again to another city, that was considered safe at the time, and was under the control of opposition forces. On arrival, the family were brought to a school where IDPs were accommodated. While conditions were crowded, they were an improvement. The family received assistance from NGOs, and both Laila and her husband were able to find work. Nevertheless, the constant threat of war was never far away. Military personnel established headquarters in other schools, leaving all schools vulnerable to attack.

In January 2014, the city was attacked, ousting the forces previously in control. Under a new armed group, Laila was forbidden from working in the small sewing workshop where she had been employed. **"Life was like a prison. It was forbidden to go out or move to other areas […] there was no work, no freedom to leave; there was fear."** After a year in the school, the armed group forced IDPs out and the family moved again, this time to a house still under construction, where they lived for two years. Although they had access to some services, Laila's daughter was forbidden from attending school.

As the war intensified in 2016, the armed group fled the city using the family and thousands of others as human shields. Laila's family were forced to accompany the retreating forces, settling only briefly in towns along the way. During this time, the family ate food from abandoned houses. After more than three months of constant movement and fear, the family managed to escape. Their final journey was perilous: on their route, they came across dead bodies, and had to avoid areas littered with landmines.

Checkpoints and registration points are very common in Northern Syria, especially in areas that have recently changed hands or are close to conflict lines. At one such point, Laila and her family were stopped. After years of displacement, Laila had lost her identification papers. She was detained for questioning for six days along with her youngest son. After being released, Laila discovered that her husband had left to travel to his mother's funeral: in the course of his journey, he was shot and killed.

Laila has now returned to the city in which she previously lived for three years. There, Concern has supported her and her family with a food basket, food vouchers and a hygiene kit. In all the devastation of war, Laila misses the normalcy of life before the conflict: **"I miss my neighbours, friends and walking inside the traditional markets of the old city; and eating ice cream from Salloura with my husband in the public park."** When asked whether her children have missed time in school during their period of displacement, Laila remembers the family's time squatting in a crowded school building: **"My children entered school, but not for teaching, only to live."** Laila's hope for the future is to find work in a sewing shop so that she can find a better home for her family, and send her children to school.

Concern is one of the few organisations providing assistance to IDPs in Northern Syria, where IDPs are often displaced multiple times, each time moving further from their homes in search of assistance. As Laila's story shows, in addition to the very real physical threat of violence, IDPs are at risk of harassment at checkpoints and face severe restrictions on movement. Beyond the fundamental need for security, access to basic services is severely limited, with long-term consequences for the population's well-being. Concern's response to the Syria crisis began in April 2013, and includes multi sectoral life-saving actions through emergency assistance and rehabilitating water supply systems. Concern's emergency response activities in Syria are funded by ECHO, OFDA, DFID, Irish Aid, Food for Peace and the Centre for Disaster Philanthropy. Activities are designed to provide from one to three months of multi-sector response for IDPs arriving from conflict-affected areas, as well as targeted support for the most vulnerable host community and returnees.

All names have been changed for security purposes

An IDP shelter in Northern Syria.
Photographer: Concern Worldwide.

Conflict and hunger are also inextricably linked: in 2017, 124 million people faced crisis-level food insecurity, with conflict the key driver in 60 per cent of cases of acute food insecurity.[22] As the global community strives to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2) of ending hunger, conflict is fundamentally undermining progress. Last year, over 20 million people were declared at risk of famine in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and North-East Nigeria, all of which are in the midst of acute conflict.[23]

In some cases, food insecurity and famines are actively used as weapons of war,[24] such as through the targeting of food production, transport systems and markets; or limiting humanitarian access (see Concern case study, Page 18).[25] In other cases, conflict's impacts on hunger are less direct, through disrupted markets, inflation, limited food diversity, and/or distress coping mechanisms that undermine long-term resilience. These impacts do not occur in a vacuum. Conflict often compounds other factors – including natural disasters and climate change – that make people food-insecure, expose communities to multiple shocks and undermine resilience.[26] Ultimately, conflict, and its interaction with local food systems, livelihoods and coping strategies, is extremely context-specific. For this reason, first-hand accounts of local conditions, such as those included in this report, are vital to understanding the drivers and consequences of food insecurity, and the responses required.

In a world of mounting need, aid saves lives, and is increasingly effective at doing so.

In a world of mounting need, aid saves lives, and is increasingly effective at doing so. In part, as a result of the increasing professionalization and sophistication of contemporary humanitarian response, the twenty-first century appears to have heralded the end of 'calamitous' famines.[27] Similarly, global campaigns against tuberculosis, malaria and polio have made extraordinary progress, and achieved near-eradication in some contexts.[28]

However, progress has been uneven both across – and within – countries. While 14 countries' Global Hunger Index scores have dropped by more than half since the turn of the century, almost twice as many saw a fall of no more than 25 per cent, and one (Central African Republic), made no progress at all in two decades of crisis.[29] Just as war-torn countries have struggled to meet other development goals,[30] conflict-affected countries have systematically made the least progress in addressing malnutrition.[31] In other words, conflict-affected countries are falling further and further behind, precisely when action is most needed.

While conflict can be catastrophic for individuals, households and communities, the accounts shared in this report also attest to the strength, resilience and hopes of those who have survived extreme violence, continue to navigate uncertainty, and are committed to building a brighter future. Often, the task of tackling violence can seem monumental. Nevertheless, when rooted in evidence and best practices, supporting locally-owned peacebuilding initiatives can have a profound impact on prospects for peace.

New arrivals rest on open ground just outside Mogadishu in Somalia.
Photographer: Kieran McConville, Concern Worldwide.

Supporting Hard-to-Reach Communities Affected by Conflict and Crisis in Somalia

In 2017, Somalia witnessed one of the largest scale-ups of humanitarian assistance in the world in a coordinated response to deteriorating food security and drought conditions. While these efforts were successful in averting famine, after decades of civil war, an estimated 6.2 million people – or half the population – remain in need of humanitarian aid in 2018.[32] These enormous needs are driven by a combination of ongoing conflict and environmental disaster, compounded by limited humanitarian access in areas under armed opposition group control.

The town of Qoryoley is in Lower Shabelle Region, 95km south-west of Mogadishu. The community's main livelihoods are farming and pastoralism, but these have been severely disrupted by conflict and drought. In 2014, internationally-backed government forces regained control of the town after several years under armed opposition group control. Since that time, however, the town has been under siege by armed groups, restricting trade, population movements, and humanitarian response. The situation has triggered large-scale food insecurity. **"In the past three to four years, the town was besieged by the opposition armed group, our community was enormously affected by food insecurity"**, Yusuf Omar*, a 43-year-old farmer and casual labourer with a family of 10, tells Concern. Last year, over a million Somalis were displaced, with many moving to Mogadishu and the nearby Afgoi Corridor in search of safety.[33] In Qoryoley, many people also fled, but as is often the case, some of the most vulnerable households have been unable to travel.

Faduma Ali* is a 36-year-old single mother of four who stayed in Qoryoley. **"I experience difficult times whenever there is an [armed group] blockade in this village or the entire region because I am the sole bread winner for my family since my husband died,"** Faduma tells Concern. **"When I cannot make a living then my family suffers greatly and struggles to survive"**. Describing the kind of work she took on to support her family, **"I collect firewood and sell it in Qoryoley",** Faduma continues. However, insecurity and armed group control in the area surrounding Qoryoley meant trade was heavily restricted. **"The [armed group] imposes excessive tax on our products which caused me not to earn enough income to feed my children"**.

Concern, which had been supporting the community before humanitarian access was restricted, adopted an innovative approach to cash transfer programming to reach households most in need despite the challenge of restricted access. Concern and its local partner, Shabelle Community Development Organisation (SHACDO), worked with a local community committee, which brought together community elders, respected leaders and prominent business people. Through this committee, beneficiaries were identified using criteria to ensure that the most vulnerable households were targeted, including the elderly, pregnant and lactating women, single mothers, those living with disabilities, and those who were chronically ill. Money was transferred by mobile phone, and Concern and partner

staff followed-up by phone call to ensure the targeted beneficiaries were reached. In total, 400 vulnerable households were reached with unconditional cash transfers, an agreed best approach in this context as cash transfers aid livelihood resilience and support beneficiaries to determine and meet their most immediate needs (often food). Mobile money transfer is also very discreet, which can significantly reduce aid diversion, and security and protection-related risks.

Faduma has now been able to use the money she received to meet her family's needs: **"When we started to receive this mobile cash, it enabled me to buy food that can last for at least one month and even to buy two goats to provide milk for my family"**. Khadija Mohamed*, a 34-year-old mother of five, also received the cash transfer: **"We were not expecting an organisation would come and take risks for our sake"**, Khadija tells Concern. Khadija and her husband separated two years ago, and she is currently the only guardian of her five children. Khadija's was among the families that could not leave their home and faced tremendous hardship in Qoryoley. **"I am very happy now; this timely cash support has positively changed our life and saved us from the brink of hunger"**. When asked about what she thinks the future holds, Khadija reflects: **"We hope in the future the security will prevail, the river will flow again, and we will get support that will help us cope"**.

Concern has been working in Somalia since 1986, responding to emergencies and implementing long-term resilience-building programmes focused on nutrition, health, education, WASH and livelihoods. Concern's work throughout Somalia is supported by Irish Aid, ECHO, DFID, OFDA, UNICEF, the Somalia Humanitarian Fund, the European Union Trust Fund, and others including foundations and trusts.

All names have been changed for security purposes

A family who had been displaced from their home in Lower Shabelle, Somalia, as a result of the severe drought conditions. Photographer: Abdulkadir Moallim

The issues these local peace champions are addressing are not simple or straightforward, but neither can they be ignored. Ultimately, it is important to keep in mind that even those who have been victimised in conflict remain active agents in rebuilding their lives and a better future. Context-specific, locally-led and locally-owned initiatives are the only way to build peace. Giving a platform to the voices of those most affected by violence helps us understand people's experiences of conflict, how they themselves seek to rebuild their lives in the midst of insecurity, and their hopes for the future. This understanding is central to developing effective, accountable, empowering and sustainable responses to crises and ultimately achieving the Agenda 2030 ambition of building peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development (SDG 16).

However, these voices should also be a catalyst for political and policy change at the highest level. Humanitarian and development aid cannot be used as a substitute for effective diplomacy or the political will to find lasting solutions to protracted crises. In its 50th year of tackling crises in the world's most conflict-affected contexts, Concern is committed to doing more than ever to alleviate suffering; working with communities to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability; and empowering women, men, youth, and peace champions from vulnerable groups to build a better future for their communities. However, it is not within our power to end global conflict.

The task of addressing conflict can appear insurmountable. But inaction is not an option. Maintaining the *status quo* costs countless lives. As the successful end to conflicts that once seemed intractable shows, wars do end. But this only happens through a combination of the tireless work of champions of peace; brave and unfaltering political leadership; and the creation and facilitation of the space for communities to pursue their greatest goal – a better, safer life for their families and communities.

> **The task of addressing conflict can appear insurmountable. But inaction is not an option. Maintaining the status quo costs countless lives. As the successful end to conflicts that once seemed intractable shows, wars do end.**

*Halima, a Syrian refugee, with water taps during a distribution at an informal settlement in North Lebanon. Photographer: Jana Nashar, Concern Worldwide. * name changed to protect the identity of the individual.

2.

The Lived Experience of Conflict, Displacement and Hunger

This report seeks to share the voices and lived experiences of those most affected by conflict around the world. Synthesising research presented in two previous studies, *Conflict and Displacement* and *Conflict and Hunger*,[34] the accounts shared in this report highlight the destructive and complex consequences of conflict in its many forms in Central African Republic and South Sudan. These include direct experiences of violence and its devastating impact on displacement and food security, alongside more indirect, detrimental effects on community resilience, gendered social relations and long-term recovery.

Concern team members work with a mobile drilling kit, which is used to provide new water sources for conflict-affected communities in Kouango, Central African Republic. Photographer: Kieran McConville, Concern Worldwide.

These accounts lead to three conclusions, common to both studies on hunger and displacement, and reflecting the harsh realities and enormous challenges faced by communities in conflict-affected contexts around the world:

1. Conflict's reach goes far beyond the scope of physical violence alone, transforming (and often destroying) economies, social networks and household support systems far from the frontlines.
2. Conflict is gendered: it affects women, men, youth and people from vulnerable groups in starkly different ways that often reinforce existing inequities.
3. Conflict's legacy lasts much longer than violence alone, affecting the likelihood of return and the success of reintegration and reconciliation long after stability is re-established.

2.1. The wide reach of violence

No two conflicts are the same: the length, type and intensity of violence are all unique to a given context. Some conflicts involve very high-intensity violence, while others are characterised by lower-intensity or more targeted insecurity. In many cases, countries experience multiple types of conflict in different areas at the same time.[35]

Conflict has devastating impacts on households and communities in areas both acutely and less directly affected by violence.

Conflict has devastating impacts on households and communities in areas both acutely and less directly affected by violence. In the former, acute insecurity puts people at risk of serious injury or death, severely restricts movement, and in some cases, leads to near-total dependence on humanitarian aid. In these contexts, restrictions on humanitarian access either because of generalised insecurity, or deliberate efforts to prevent access, are deadly weapons of war.[36] Even in areas that appear more stable, conflict also profoundly affects communities through localised violence, economic crisis, and as a compounding factor in contexts of natural disasters and climate change.

The accounts of people affected by conflict in contexts of both acute violence, and less indirect effects, clearly show that conflict's impacts go far beyond the threat of physical violence alone. Conflict can transform, undermine and disrupt wider social relations within society. Violence can undermine trust and cohesion in a community. As a result, in extreme cases, support systems between family members, neighbours and wider social networks which might normally serve to support one another in times of crisis, can break down.[37] This damage to social relations has severe implications for community resilience in the face of crisis, as well as recovery and long-term development (see Concern case study, Page 24).

Social Solidarity in Crisis in South Sudan

South Sudan is one of the world's most conflict-affected countries. Now entering its fifth year of civil war, it is ranked the most fragile country in the world in 2018's *Fragile States Index*; and 181 out of a total 186 countries in the world in 2016's *Human Development Index*.[38] Famine was declared in parts of South Sudan in 2017, and an estimated 6.1 million people are now in need of urgent food assistance.[39] At current levels, humanitarian assistance reaches less than half of all households in need,[40] mainly due to severely restricted humanitarian access because of insecurity.

A monthly food distribution in Juba, South Sudan. Each family receives a monthly food ration, with the distribution spread over two days to help reduce waiting times for beneficiaries. Photographer: Steve De Neef

In this context, community-based support is a vital, life-saving coping strategy. Community practices of mutual aid have served for generations to provide some form of social safety net through reciprocity, support and exchange in previous periods of stress. However, the impact of the current crisis, and the unprecedented levels of suffering in some parts of the country, are affecting this. Conflict is transforming systems that previously reinforced community resilience, deeply disrupting and eroding, if not completely destroying, practices in place prior to the crisis. This is true in both areas acutely affected by conflict, and those that appear to be more stable.

In Bentiu, in former Unity State, high-intensity conflict has led to an acute food security and protection crisis, with just under 115,000 displaced and now residing in the Protection of Civilians (PoC) camp in the environs of the UN base.[41] There, high-intensity violence, mass displacement, and economic crisis all combine to create an environment in which longstanding community traditions are being disrupted. A man in Bentiu contrasts life before and after the onset of civil war in 2013: **"Before the crisis, the relationship was very good. If you see one of your relatives has nothing, you help him. But here in the PoC, there is no exchange – help me, help you, is not there now, because no one has enough anymore"**. Even among residents who had previously been prominent members of their community and accustomed to supporting members of their family, life in the PoC makes this extremely difficult: **"Someone who is vulnerable cannot contribute to another. I want to help others, but I have nothing to contribute"** a male advocate involved in Concern's nutrition programme reports.

In contrast to Bentiu, Aweil North, in former Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, is relatively stable, and yet, is profoundly indirectly affected by national-level conflict and local violence that undermines security and wellbeing in different ways. Although the context in Aweil is very different to Bentiu, residents shared similar stories of the breakdown of social networks there. **"The life was much better before the crisis […] people could freely cultivate, and had good yields. They had cows, and could help people in their family"**, a mother in Akuangkgap tells Concern. By contrast, now, **"Everyone is struggling for his or her life and may not be able to help others. We all have a lot of dependents to support**

[…] Some churches now are even collapsing because there is no money being contributed". A male farmer group in Hong Voi agrees, noting that before the crisis: **"If you didn't have something, your relatives could help you. Now, you only struggle for yourself. […] Back then, the community used to sit together and see – *who is very poor?* – and help that person. Now, for this life, our current life, it is much harder than before"**.

This damage to social solidarity mechanisms has several implications. First, it disrupts local systems for support and through this, undermines resilience. Second, it risks further marginalizing already vulnerable community members, such as those with disabilities, the elderly, widows and orphans. Vulnerable members of the community may be poorly integrated into social networks as it is, and have even less support in a context of crisis. Third, it can be a source of further tension. Some respondents attribute deteriorating relationships within extended families to eroded solidarity mechanisms, and report that this can lead to violence within families. As women in a mother-to-mother support group in Bentiu remark, **"If one of your relatives asks for something from you and you don't have it, or don't give it, they can become angry and send people to loot you at night"**.

Although the settings are very different, the accounts from both Bentiu and Aweil North alike illustrate conflict's complex impacts on social systems. In response, identifying ways that those affected can strengthen resilience and rebuild systems of mutual support is an important step in empowering communities. Concern's work in South Sudan involves emergency WASH, shelter, non-food items and nutrition interventions, as well as livelihood and food security and longer-term health and nutrition programming. In light of the challenging context, and the importance of reinforcing community-level support systems, Concern supports mother-to-mother support groups and the creation of 'Baby Tents' – spaces for mothers to use for breastfeeding, come together and share positive health practices, and provide a safe space for mothers to share experiences and support one another. Concern's work in South Sudan is supported by Irish Aid, OFDA, the Canadian Government (GAC), UNICEF, WFP, FAO and the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF).

'here in the PoC, there is no exchange – help me, help you, is not there now, because no one has enough anymore'

Women in Mogadishu, Somalia, holding up their 'Kaarka Qeybinta' distribution cards entitling them to receive a non-food item kit during a Concern-led distribution. Photographer: Mohamed Abdiwahab, Concern Worldwide.

Concern Worldwide

2.2. The gendered impacts of war

While conflict can be devastating for entire households, communities and even countries, it also has different impacts on different groups. These include starkly gendered effects on women and men, and intersecting impacts on the most vulnerable. Inequality is a key dimension of Concern's understanding of extreme poverty, and can shape people's vulnerability to violence, and their capacity to adapt, cope and transform in that context.[42] Even in the same location, different people are differentially vulnerable to conflict and its impacts.

Generally speaking, conflict exacerbates existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. Those who were vulnerable before, or as a result of previous cycles of conflict, are typically more vulnerable to later waves of conflict, and generally have fewer remaining coping strategies.[43]

For women and girls, the war does not end when fighting stops.

The experiences of women shared over the course of this research highlight the fact that women and girls face particular challenges in conflict. In contexts of wider conflict, levels of sexual and gender-based violence can increase.[44] This includes violence perpetrated by armed actors in a conflict, as well as less visible forms of violence and discrimination, such as intimate partner violence.[45] For women and girls, the war does not end when fighting stops. Women's vulnerability to violence has implications beyond individual women alone. Research demonstrates that women's economic status and decision-making power is directly related to family health indicators such as child survival and weight-for-age.[46] There are also long-term, and potential inter-generational implications. Conflict often disrupts schooling for young women and girls, and through this, has long-term effects on food security, nutrition and household wellbeing.[47]

The stories of both women and men also highlight that gender roles are highly relational, with women's responsibilities conditioned in part by those of men, and vice versa.[48] In active conflict, men and boys often face heightened threats of physical violence and forced recruitment. In light of this, many men experience feelings of shame and helplessness in the face of widespread violence and their perceived failure to fulfil their role as provider. The different roles of women and men, and intersecting vulnerabilities, all contribute to different experiences of conflict, and different needs in response (see Concern case study, Page 28).

Case Study

Gender Relations and Intersecting Inequalities in Central African Republic

Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the world's most conflict-affected countries. It ranked third most fragile in the world in 2017; and lowest in the world in 2016's *Human Development Index*.[49] An estimated 2.5 million people – more than half the country's population – are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2018, and yet the international humanitarian response to this neglected crisis has been severely underfunded in recent years. Since a violent takeover of power in 2013, stability in the country has deteriorated. As a result of five years of conflict, over 1.1 million people, or more than one in every five Central Africans, are displaced.[50] The country remains plagued by ongoing insecurity, limited state capacity and acute access barriers for humanitarian actors.[51] As such, many communities navigate ongoing insecurity every day,

Although many people share similar challenges in conflict and when displaced, gendered dynamics, and the intersecting vulnerabilities of groups such as people with disabilities, demand unique attention. Women and girls are at risk at every stage of the displacement cycle. At the onset of conflict and initial flight, women and girls are often targets of sexual and gender-based violence, a vulnerability that can be compounded by other inequalities. In Kouango, a town of approximately 8,000 people on the Ubangi River in southern CAR, heavy fighting over control of the town means that the region has experienced extreme violence as different forces passed through. In one example, when Seleka forces attacked a nearby village, many of the most vulnerable people in the community were left behind because they could not flee. Bernadette*, a mother of two who has a pre-existing disability affecting her ability to walk, recalls, **"only a few disabled people stayed […] They committed abuses and raped girls. I had to hide my daughter under the bed. I lost everything"**.

During displacement, many communities report that women were exposed to sexual exploitation and abuse at the hands of host populations, who forced them into transactional relationships in exchange for food or temporary employment. As women tell Concern in Kpangba, a village near Kouango: **"Food was sometimes exchanged for sex […] Women did temporary work to find food. The people who hired them sought to sleep with them. Host populations want to have sex with women before they are hired"**. Men in nearby Yangouasso recount similar experiences: **"The host community often takes the girls forcibly to have sex with them. Our children are raped … Women take on temporary work to survive, as their husbands do not have money. The owners of the fields make them work for crumbs and seek to have sex with them"**. Even on return, women face challenges that are conditioned by social roles, and their status as mothers, widows, property owners or survivors of violence.

It is important to recall that the experiences of men and boys in relation to conflict and displacement are also profoundly gendered. The crisis severely restricts their movement and, therefore, their ability to work and take care of their families. While women often risked exposure to sexual violence when moving outside of their villages, men were at risk of being killed. As a result, many men report deep-seated feelings of shame and helplessness in the face of their own perceived failure to provide for and protect their families.

Examples of how these different gendered impacts relate to one another are clear within individual families. Faced with a lack of food for their children, two of Albert's* wives periodically make the 80km round trip journey by foot back to their fields across dangerous territory, to cultivate cassava. The responsibility for agricultural work, sourcing and preparing food typically falls on the family's women and girls, putting them at great risk as they travel to source this. At the same time, this risk is compounded by the fact that Albert is unable to find work in Kouango, in large part due to his recent disability,

which makes his family even more dependent on their crops. As a father and husband, he perceives this as a profound weakness and is deeply affected by this sense of failing: **"Before I had both hands, now I am disabled. I am totally dependent. What hope can I have for the future?"**

Concern's activities in Kouango include seed fairs and Cash-for-Work activities for those who have lost their livelihoods because of conflict and displacement, as well as support to fisheries through distributions of fishing kits and training on processing and storage. Concern also works to combat malnutrition through activities to enhance dietary diversity, such as seed distribution and training in household vegetable gardens; and increasing access to improved water sources for communities, schools and health centres through hygiene promotion, rehabilitating existing water points, and constructing new wells, boreholes and protected spring catchments. Concern's work is supported by Irish Aid and OFDA.

All names have been changed for security purposes

A woman drinks water from one of four new water sources that Concern Worldwide rehabilitated around Dawili, which sits between the towns of Bokoum and Bossembélé in Ombella-M'Poko prefecture in southern Central African Republic. Photographer: Crystal Wells, Concern Worldwide.

2.3 The long legacy of conflict

The preceding sections reflect the grave challenges faced by individuals, households and communities in the midst of crisis. But conflict's legacy lasts much longer than violence alone, affecting subsequent development, the likelihood of return and the success of reintegration and reconciliation long after stability is re-established.

Beyond the immediate and tragic costs to human life that accompany conflict, wars roll back development gains and often lead to long-term – if not permanent – damage to social, political and economic institutions.[52] Early life exposure to conflict can have long-term and irreversible consequences for health and wellbeing, including nutritional status, height and educational attainment,[53] while the experience of conflict can be profoundly traumatising and necessitate long-term support for rebuilding lives.

Displacement is a defining feature of contemporary conflict, and often persists long after conflicts officially come to an end, condemning populations to years, if not decades, of uncertainty and risk. More than four-in-five refugee crises persist for a decade or more, and two-in-five last for 20 years or more. While data is more limited and measurement more challenging, reporting suggests that conflict-related internal displacement crises may last for an average of 23 years.[54] The stories and experiences of those affected by conflict and displacement reveal that even for those populations that do return to their locations of origin, the task of rebuilding lives and livelihoods, and reintegrating into communities can seem at times impossible (see Concern case study, Page 32).

Crucially, in the midst of the uncertainty and rapid changes that often accompany the end of conflict, there is often a unique window of opportunity to consolidate peace and development gains. Failing to capitalise on this opportunity to reinforce peace dividends and support communities in rebuilding their lives increases the risk that conflict-affected communities, struggling to recover, will become trapped in a cycle of conflict and suffering.
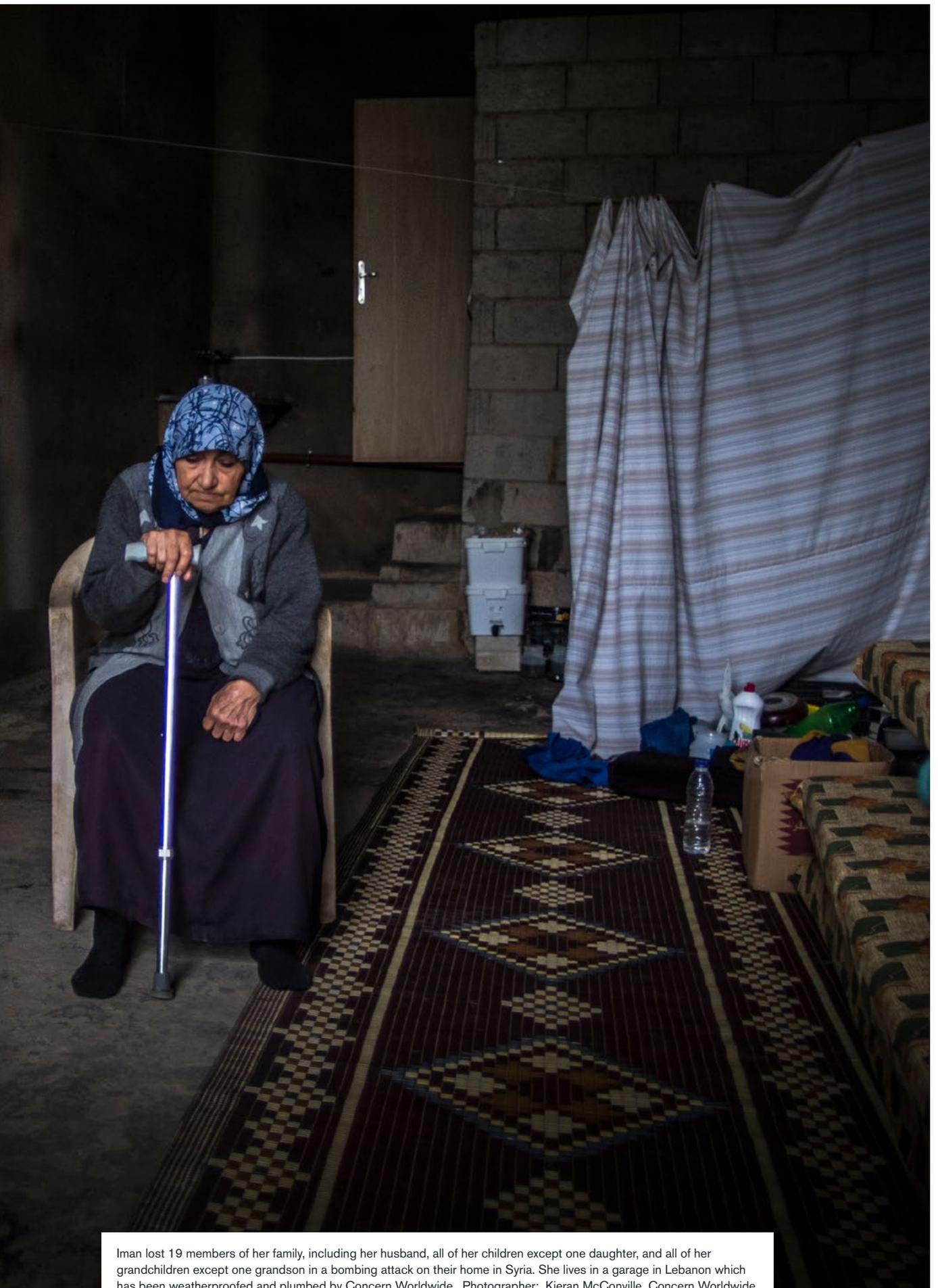
Iman lost 19 members of her family, including her husband, all of her children except one daughter, and all of her grandchildren except one grandson in a bombing attack on their home in Syria. She lives in a garage in Lebanon which has been weatherproofed and plumbed by Concern Worldwide. Photographer: Kieran McConville, Concern Worldwide.

The Challenge of Post-Conflict Recovery and Reconciliation

Concern research in both South Sudan and Central African Republic confirmed that countless individuals, households and communities continue to feel the effects of violence long after formal hostilities end.

While the current crisis is the focus of international attention on South Sudan, sadly, the country has a long and tragic history of conflict and crisis. Interviewees emphasised the impact of the past war with the Republic of Sudan on livelihoods, including the devastation to families and the loss of cattle. In many communities in South Sudan, cattle are a key livelihood asset, as well as an important indicator of social status and basis of exchange and reciprocity in local culture. The conflict also had profound impacts on human security. As one member of a local health committee in Nyamlell recalls, **"The conflict [with the North] caused us a lot of pain: our children died, our cattle were taken away. I always dream I will see my family again but they will never come back. All that pain is in this place […] What will make me smile again, [since] my children were taken away [in that conflict]?"** The stories of communities whose lives were destroyed by the last civil war are a stark reminder of the cyclical nature of many conflicts, and the importance of understanding the historical, as well as political and social context, of a crisis.

In Central African Republic, for many, the legacy of recent conflict remains even after communities return after displacement. Bossembélé is a town of approximately 21,000 people, which sits 150 miles north-west of Bangui, on a major transit route to Cameroon. Owing in part to its strategic position, the area was the site of heavy clashes during the peak of CAR's crisis. Although security and calm have largely been restored in the area now under government control, the effects of the crisis are still pronounced. While predominantly Christian households began to slowly return to their homes in 2014, many in the town maintain that friends and neighbours remain away out of fear. As one woman tells Concern, **"only the brave came back"**. Many people report returning to burned out and pillaged homes, with all their belongings destroyed. Antoine* is a 47-year-old farmer, who was displaced with his family of 15 for several months in the wilderness. He reflected on his circumstances, three years after his return: **"We are like refugees: we had to reconstruct everything from zero"**.

Communities whose assets were destroyed began to undertake the enormous task of rebuilding their lives, but in doing so, often faced precarious economic futures, forcing them into different – and potentially unsustainable – lines of work. A chief in Yamien described how the community had never engaged in charcoal-making before the crisis, but were forced to take up the practice after returning due to the lack of alternative livelihood options. The devastation of so many livelihoods also disrupted systems of mutual aid in the community. Local associations, self-help organisations and community initiatives all suffered as a result of members' displacement, their inability to contribute on return, and the more profound erosion of collective action and solidarity systems in traumatised communities: **"It was difficult to help one another [on return], because we were all victims. We had all fled"**.

The experience of conflict and displacement has also made some community members more risk-averse, and shortened their planning horizon. Women in Bossembélé report being reluctant to reinvest in their homes and belongings out of fear that they would lose all of their possessions in future violence. Some reported being afraid that owning items such as furniture made them a target to armed groups in the first instance, and therefore increased their vulnerability to violence. Concern also hears reports of households in the area planting smaller plots of land than before the crisis because of fear and uncertainty. Households weigh the risk of planting larger plots and losing their investment, against planting smaller plots, allowing them to eat some remaining seeds, but leaving them without enough food for the year. These practices may be strategic efforts to manage risk, but carry serious implications for food security, as well. On a personal level, one young woman described how on return, the women had **"lost the peace in our hearts"** – an expression of the unease and anxiety in which they live after their traumatic experience.

The accounts shared speak to the many ways households and communities struggle to rebuild their lives after displacement. For those facing uncertain futures on their return, re-establishing stability and creating reliable conditions for investment in households' futures is necessary for peace and development. Responses must also go beyond supporting economic conditions for return and re-integration alone to support the rebuilding of community relationships, strengthen inclusive institutions for managing conflict, and address the legacy of past violence. Concern is responding to needs in Bossembélé through a multi-sectoral programme that integrates components of food security, livelihoods, water and sanitation, health and nutrition. Concern also implements an integrated programme supporting community-level institutions to reduce the impact of natural disasters, address gender-based violence, and improve community management of conflict.

* All names have been changed for security purposes

Members of the Water Management Committee of the Concern-constructed water point at Boyali in Yaloke-Bossembélé, Central African Republic, which is now managed by the local community. The existing water source was protected from flooding and the access point raised for better access. Photographer: Kieran McConville, Concern Worldwide.

3. Breaking the Cycle: Empowering Communities to Build Peace

The accounts shared by individuals throughout this report demonstrate the urgent need to respond to conflict, address its impacts and work with communities to resolve and prevent it. Often, this task can seem monumental. However, when rooted in evidence and best practices, supporting locally-owned peacebuilding initiatives can have a profound impact on communities' chances for a more peaceful future. Peacebuilding is essential to reduce the violence that undermines development progress and prevent recurring conflict in the future. It is also cost-effective. Although reliable data is challenging, by some estimates, investment in peacebuilding delivers a sixteen-fold return. In other words, for every dollar invested in peacebuilding, the cost of conflict is reduced by $16 in the long run.[55]

Although the drivers and consequences of conflict are enormously complex and multi-faceted, with the support of governments and international donors, concerted locally-led action in three key areas can help communities build lasting peace. These are:

» Integrating peace programming to address peacebuilding, alongside conflict's complex drivers and consequences;
» Supporting relationship-building and the transformation of social norms in conflict-affected communities; and
» Reinforcing systems for more effective, sustainable, and inclusive conflict management.

3.1. Integrating peace programming to address multi-faceted crises

It is important to recall that conflict does not occur in a vacuum. There are many forces that shape people's decision to participate in conflict, and through which conflict's impacts are transmitted beyond physical violence alone. For these reasons, it is important that peacebuilding activities are undertaken alongside other activities that tackle the underlying drivers of conflict, and support people living with its consequences in different ways. Supporting livelihoods, strengthening resilience to natural disasters and other environmental shocks, and empowering community members to transform social norms that expose people to the gendered impacts of conflict, are all vital.

Increasingly, evidence suggests that integrated approaches to peacebuilding are not only more effective at addressing the multidimensional nature of conflict's drivers, but they are also often more closely aligned with communities' ideas of what constitutes 'peace' in the first place. While top-down peacebuilding processes tend to emphasise bringing an end to formal hostilities, local communities tend to associate peace with much more than just the absence of violence. Instead, they associate peace with a much wider range of needs being met, including basic services, employment, political participation and cultural freedom.[56] Definitions of 'peace' also depend on gender, reflecting the fact that men and women experience war and peace differently, [57] and necessitating an integrated response to these different needs. For these reasons, adopting integrated approaches to peacebuilding is often the most effective, locally legitimate and inclusive approach to supporting communities' transition from conflict to peace. It is also one of the only ways to help ensure that the benefits of peace – including being free from violence and the fear of violence – are enjoyed equally by women and men, girls and boys alike.

In CAR, Concern is pioneering an approach to an integrated, multi-sectoral programme addressing the multidimensional impacts of conflict. The programme provides material assistance in the form of support to food security and livelihoods; community resilience; and health, nutrition and WASH services. Alongside this, programme activities are designed to support conflict management capacity at the local level, build resilience to natural disasters, and reduce gender-based violence. The issues these committees will address are not simple or straightforward, nor can they be ignored. The devastating impact of conflict, the gendered dimensions of violence, and the added risk of natural disasters, hold back development and undermine progress towards a more stable and prosperous future in CAR.

Young people can play a vital role in championing peace, rebuilding relationships across lines of division and leading non-violent transformation in their communities.

3.2. Building relationships and transforming social norms in war and in peace

Relationship-building is a critical component of effective peacebuilding. As the accounts throughout this report have shown, conflict can fundamentally transform, and often destroy, trust and community cohesion in diverse societies. In extreme cases, conflict also undermines social capital, community support systems and mutual reciprocity within communities, as the pressure of crises push households to the breaking point.

In such contexts, working to rebuild trust and positive exchanges in divided communities is vital. Young people can often be champions of this change. Approximately half of all young people live in fragile and conflict-affected states.[58] In many fragile contexts, young people make up a large share of the population,[59] and yet, young people often find themselves economically marginalised, with limited opportunities, and excluded from decision-making in their communities.

Conflict can have particularly devastating effects on young people. Globally, young people are disproportionately represented among the direct and indirect victims of violence; and although exact figures are elusive, estimates suggest young men are particularly likely to be direct victims of armed violence.[60] At the same time, young people are often dismissed or vilified as perpetrators of violence. Young men are disproportionately likely to be recruited into armed groups,[61] and research on the 'youth bulge' suggests that high levels of young people in a population creates an increased risk of insecurity.[62] As a result, many policies place greater emphasis on the risks young people pose to stability, than their contributions to it.[63]

However, as with gender and other social categories, it is important to keep in mind that 'youth' as a category is extremely diverse. Ultimately, young people are not just victims or perpetrators of violence: they are active agents who can contribute positively to rebuilding their lives, communities and countries in the face of conflict. Young people can play a vital role in championing peace, rebuilding relationships across lines of division and leading non-violent transformation in their communities. Concern is working in Haiti to empower young people and support them in developing the skills to organise non-violently, peacefully resolve disputes, and become leaders and champions of change in their communities (see Concern case study, Page 36).

Young Leaders Championing Peace and Change in Haiti

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, ranking 163 out of 188 countries in the 2016 Human Development Index, and 12th most fragile country in the world in 2018.[64] Although it is not host to large-scale conflict, organised violence and criminality in Haiti's urban centres takes a devastating toll on communities. At 10.2 killings per 100,000 people, Haiti's homicide rate is more than double the global average.[65] The impact of this violence is coupled with extreme environmental vulnerability and exposure to successive natural disaster shocks, such as Hurricane Matthew which hit in 2016. Together, these challenges have prevented the people of Haiti from building the prosperous and stable future to which they aspire. Although international actors can play an important role in supporting Haiti's transformation, it must ultimately be led by local communities themselves.

Martissant and Cité Soleil, a sub-commune and commune of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, share a long history of violence between armed groups. Wars between rival groups prevent freedom of movement, economic development and the delivery of basic services in these already vulnerable communities. Laika* is a 21-year-old young woman from Martissant. Her father was a gang leader who was killed in 2017. She tells Concern of the impact insecurity has had on her community: **"There are no jobs created and there is no social activity in the area. Young people are left to fend for themselves, hence their tendency to turn to armed groups to meet their needs"**. While these conditions drive many young people to leave in search of work, some young people choose to stay and try to make a difference.

In 2017, Laika worked with Concern delivering training for Youth Actors for Change (YAC). Training sessions with young people were organised over six months covering a range of topics and trained future young leaders in strategies for peaceful dialogue and non-violent dispute resolution. They also provided young people with an opportunity to openly discuss subjects like sex and gender attitudes, things that had previously been taboo. Laika says that she had always wanted to work for change in her community, and the training sessions finally gave her this chance. They also supported her own personal transformation: **"Working with these young people was my contribution to this much desired change. This has also helped me socially, since I am perceived differently by the young people of the neighbourhood, and no longer just as the daughter of a gang leader"**.

Darrel*, 24, is one of 190 young people from Cité Soleil who have benefited from the YAC programme. Before taking part in the training, Darrel tells Concern that he took on small jobs, but struggled to survive with the meagre opportunities available. **"Unable to support myself on my own, I turned to those in charge of the area, to whom I rendered different kinds of services for a fee"**. Darrel was one of thousands of young people living in Cité Soleil who led a life of illegality and precariousness, in total contrast to his dreams and aspirations. Now, Darrel sees the skills he learned through the training as a new opportunity **"to change my life, and even change the perception of others towards me. I must admit that**

before, I was a very aggressive person who took part in conflicts in my neighbourhood without even being invited. Now I am looking at myself in a new light: I'm not just a fighter. I can do better and help others do better too".

The way young people are perceived – by their communities, their peers from other neighbourhoods, and the population of Port-au-Prince at large – is extremely important to young people. Many young people are haunted by feelings of shame and stigma, and feel that coming from a marginalised community makes others see them as trouble-makers and fighters. Following the trainings, the YACs participated in a two-day awareness campaign in their neighbourhoods on themes including gender equality. For Darrel, the most remarkable moment was not only when people understood the messages he was sharing, but when they were astonished by his own personal change and encouraged him to stay on this path.

"This inter-district division has been going on for far too long" says Pricien*, chairman of another YAC committee, in the neighbourhood of Cité Gerard. "After the training, we were all of the opinion that it was up to us young people from Cité Soleil to do something and not lose everything we had learned. We are the future of [Cité Soleil] and it is up to us to make peace there". In communities as divided as Cité Soleil, even the simplest forms of dialogue between rival groups can seem impossible, until the right opportunities and supports are in place. "These trainings have helped to develop links that were previously unimaginable between young people" Pricien tells Concern. Young people from the different participating neighbourhoods have now established YAC committees to jointly propose peaceful solutions to disputes that arise, and explore activities that attract investment and opportunities for young people in their communities.

The task ahead is a daunting one, but the YACs are only at the beginning of their journey, and are not daunted. In spite of all the challenges, Pierre* – a representative of the joint YAC committees – tells Concern: "We do not lose hope. We youth actors are well aware of our role; we are all aware that the change will come only from us, and we have decided to work to initiate and maintain a climate of peace in our community. We will not leave the country […] Our goal is to make a change".

Concern has been working in Haiti since 1994. Its peacebuilding programming is part of an integrated, five-year urban community resilience and conflict mitigation programme in Port-au-Prince. Its work is supported by Irish Aid, and builds on former peacebuilding programmes in urban areas.

All names have been changed for security purposes
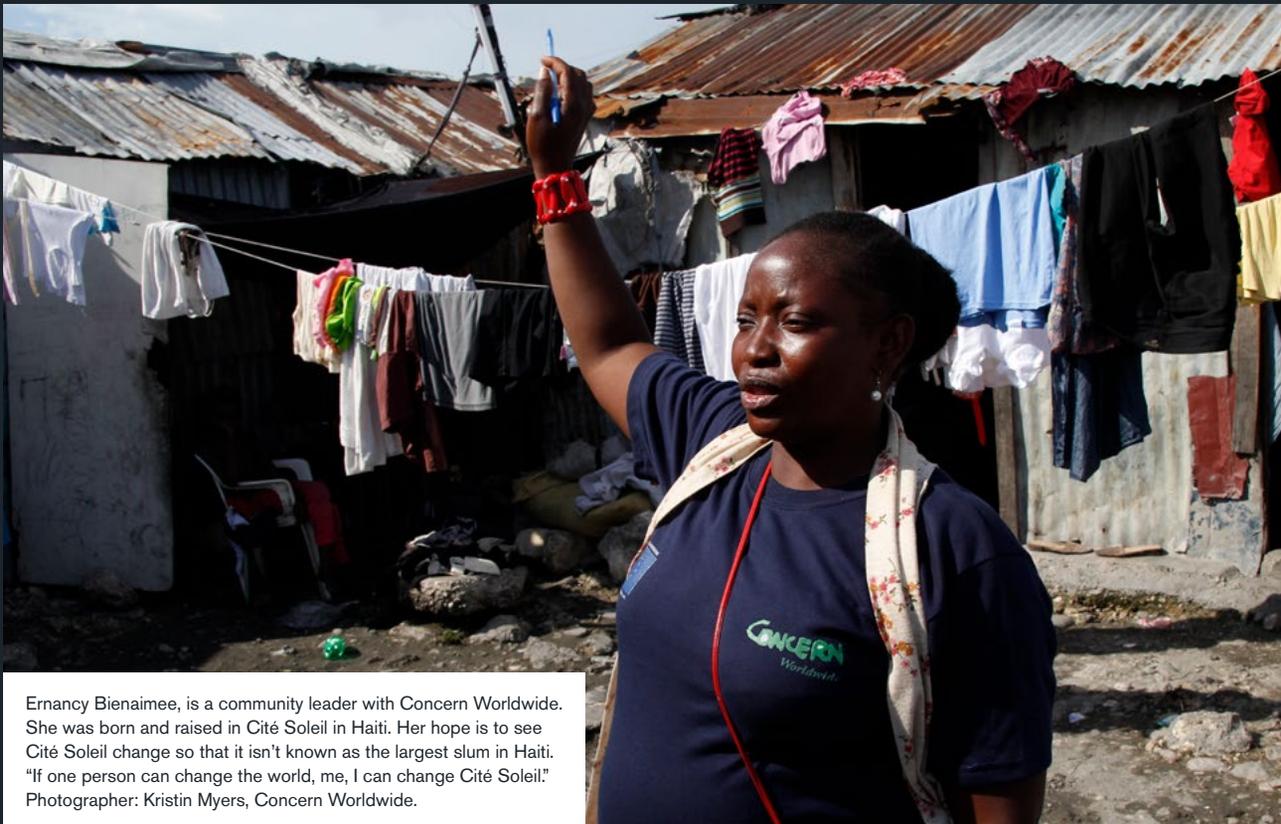
Ernancy Bienaimee, is a community leader with Concern Worldwide. She was born and raised in Cité Soleil in Haiti. Her hope is to see Cité Soleil change so that it isn't known as the largest slum in Haiti. "If one person can change the world, me, I can change Cité Soleil." Photographer: Kristin Myers, Concern Worldwide.

Conflict also has a devastating impact on social relations within communities. The stories women and men have shared throughout this report clearly demonstrate the profoundly gendered impacts of conflict. These include the terrible prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in active conflict contexts, as well as the damaging reinforcement of gender roles within communities and households. In these contexts, rigid gender roles can promote less visible violence and discrimination against women and girls. The accounts, however, also highlight women's work for peace in their communities, and their hopes and ambitions for a more prosperous and stable future.

Empowering women is an urgent and important step to address these inequalities and begin to change damaging patterns. But women cannot, and must not be asked to, bear the burden of social change alone. Men must be engaged as allies in the fight against gender-based violence and harmful gender roles and in the work of truly transforming gender relations. It is also important to recognise the gendered vulnerabilities men and boys themselves face in conflict, and how wider assumptions about men's responsibilities, masculinity and status in society can be damaging.[66]

This report has highlighted how men are at risk of targeted killing, forced recruitment and sexual violence by armed groups, and how they struggle with the burdens they carry in terms of their perceived roles and responsibilities in households and communities. Gender-sensitive approaches must pay greater attention to the roles men play, the beliefs they hold, and the behaviours they carry out or condone. Tackling this requires an approach that engages men and empowers women simultaneously. In Lebanon, Concern's team is working with whole families to address gender norms, reduce violence, and support transformative change from the household to the community level (see Concern case study Page 40).

Empowering women is an urgent and important step to address these inequalities and begin to change damaging patterns.

Ahmad Alalewi (Outreach Co-ordinator Officer) organising the distribution of new tent kits (including wood, plastic sheeting) to families whose homes were recently burnt down. The tents are going to be built on this field, in Lebanon. Photographer: Mary Turner, Panos Pictures for Concern Worldwide.

Case Study

Engaging Men: Recovering from Trauma, Changing Attitudes and Transforming Lives in Lebanon

The Syrian conflict has resulted in a truly regional crisis: as of April 2018, there were almost 5.6 million registered refugees in the region.[67] Lebanon has the highest *per capita* population of refugees in the world, 58 per cent of whom are living in extreme poverty.[68] For people who have fled devastating violence in search of safety, rebuilding lives is about more than just the economic and physical conditions of survival. Even for refugees who have been displaced for many years, recovering from trauma, adapting to a new life, and rebuilding social bonds is a long journey.

Exposure to conflict, coupled with adjusting to a new life in often precarious conditions, can transform social norms, and reinforce gender roles and rigid masculinities. For many men, their identity is closely linked to their role as provider and breadwinner. When that is taken away from them by war and displacement, they can cling to more entrenched versions of masculinity to help them retain a sense of purpose. These kinds of changes in gendered relations are one of the indirect, and often hidden, ways in which conflict's destructive impacts on communities and families are transmitted. In these conditions, support for psychological wellbeing, personal resilience, and positive social relations within the family and community (together, referred to as 'psychosocial support') is a vital step in supporting individual as well as family and community recovery.

Rashid*, a father of six, lives in north Lebanon, in a rural town near the Syrian border that is home to many Syrian refugees alongside the local Lebanese community. **"I was a teacher in Syria, I had a respectable job and could provide for my family,"** Rashid tells Concern. **"Coming to Lebanon felt like losing my identity and my self-worth. I didn't know how to be a father without being a provider and how to steer my children in the right direction in a place that is so different."** Rashid participated in Concern's psychosocial support programme targeted at engaging men and boys. The programme is structured around weekly group sessions run separately for men, women and children. Participants usually come from among the same family to reinforce education and empowerment in the whole family unit. Adult sessions cover topics including non violent communication, stress management, gender roles and gender-based violence, and others. Reflecting on what he gained from the sessions, Rashid says: **"I have learned how to manage my stress, that I am no less of a man if I cannot provide financially for [my family], I am still able to provide them with love, trust and confidence."**

Ali* is a 42 year old father of six who also participated in the programme. **"For me, I realised that stress was the root cause of all my problems. It was like someone turned on a light for me and I could see that my constant distress over our situation and the lack of money impacted myself and my family very negatively. I was seeing everything black; I thought the only way to be a good father was outside the home, to work, earn money and feed my family."** The sessions helped Ali realise that he had a very rigid idea of what it meant to be a father and husband. He has since re-evaluated his role in the home and in his children's lives: **"I have six children […] More than providing for them, it is my responsibility to teach them between right and wrong, good values and to be kind to other people. We lost our country and our homes, but this is not an excuse to lose our children."**

14-year-old Hamze* left Syria when he was just 10 years old, but has vivid memories of his life before the war: **"Before I came to Lebanon, I can remember my house, my relatives, how we used to play freely with my friends and neighbours. We used to feel safe before the war started and then everything changed when we moved."** He tells Concern that he can see his parents struggling in their new surroundings without a stable income, separated from their extended family. Hamze is attending school, but due to his lack of French language skills, he has been placed in sixth grade. Many Syrian refugee children struggle with this, as they are not taught French in school in Syria, and so struggle to keep up academically. These obstacles contribute additional stress and worry for young people far from home.

Hamze participated in Concern's sessions for youth, aimed at increasing children's confidence in themselves, improving their socialisation with other children, building a more positive relationship with family members, and contributing to their healthy development and learning. Looking back on how the sessions changed his perspective on gender and family, Hamze says, that as a young man with sisters, he was always taught by his community to protect them from harm, and that they are delicate and should stay at home. He said he still feels a responsibility to protect them but that women are **"just as strong as men and they have the same rights as me"**.

Concern has implemented its Engaging Men and psychosocial support programme since 2014. Concern augments this programme with Education, Livelihood, Shelter and WASH support, providing practical as well as emotional support to displaced men, women and children. The programme has thus far reached Syrian and Palestinian refugees as well as vulnerable Lebanese adults and children. Concern's protection activities in Lebanon are funded by Irish Aid, ECHO, the Big Heart Foundation and the Dutch and German Governments.

* All names have been changed for security purposes

A little girl sleeps in a centre for refugees run by Concern in Lebanon. Photographer: Kieran McConville, Concern Worldwide.

Concern team in Koutoufou Health Centre,
Goz Beida, Chad. Photographer: Oli Cohen

3.3. Revitalising systems for sustainable conflict management

While supporting relationship-building and the transformation of social norms at the individual and household level is vital work, this alone cannot ensure lasting, sustainable peace on a wider scale. To achieve this, concerted action is also required at the level of community systems, structures and institutions for conflict prevention, management and resolution. Systematic drivers of conflict cannot be addressed through improved social relations alone: support for systems that equitably, inclusively and sustainably address underlying causes of disputes within communities are necessary for lasting change.

When a family's livelihood and source of food is already vulnerable to shocks, even slight changes in the environment can have a devastating impact. Coupled with the effects of conflict, the outcome can be disastrous.

Access to and control over natural resources is one area in which the need for systematic solutions is particularly apparent. The accounts shared throughout this report highlight just how heavily dependent many poor communities are on the natural environment. When a family's livelihood and source of food is already vulnerable to shocks, even slight changes in the environment can have a devastating impact. Coupled with the effects of conflict, the outcome can be disastrous.

Although climate change can exacerbate conflict, evidence suggests this is unlikely to be through a direct causal relationship.[69] Instead, climate change's effects are typically mediated through local-level capacities to adapt to and anticipate climate change's effects and reduce its impacts.[70] This is significant for two reasons: first, it means that vulnerable communities whose capacities to cope have already been eroded by poverty, conflict and other shocks, are at an extra disadvantage when it comes to absorbing the impacts of climate change and environmental disasters.[71] Second, it means that there is something that can be done about it: where climate change's impacts depend on local communities' capacities, they can be supported in their efforts to adapt to, anticipate and reduce the impacts of climate change and natural disasters in their communities.

Climate change and conflict can also be linked in a vicious cycle. In conflict-affected contexts, the consequences of extreme weather events such as drought, and in particular, their impact on population movements, can contribute to conflict among divided communities.[72] However, climate change does not automatically lead to conflict. Where communities have institutions and processes in place to mediate between different groups, negotiate access to and control over resources, and agree on mutually beneficial and equitable terms, natural resources can be managed peacefully through cooperation. Where these systems either are dormant, or have been undermined by external shocks, cooperation can break down and fuel violence. In Chad, Concern is working to support collaboration within communities to develop their own solutions to issues over land use, resources and livestock, and ultimately establish a more lasting and durable peace (see Concern case study, Page 44).

Supporting Resilience to Climate Change and Leadership for Peace in Chad

Chad is one of the world's most fragile countries: it ranked 8th in the 2018 *Fragile States Index* and 186 out of 188 countries in the 2016 Human Development Index.[73] The country faces a range of complex challenges. Insecurity in neighbouring countries, Libya, Nigeria, Central African Republic and Sudan, drives cross-border displacement and threatens to destabilise the region. A deepening economic crisis caused by low oil prices affects the poorest and most vulnerable households the most. Lastly, extreme vulnerability to environmental shocks and natural disasters depletes assets, undermines livelihoods and erodes resilience. As a result, an estimated 4.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2018.[74]

In Eastern Chad, Concern works to strengthen community resilience to climate change through an integrated programme combining climate smart agriculture, market gardening and agroforestry with livestock and animal health practices, to improve livelihood security while preserving the local ecosystem. Addressing the environmental aspects of climate change is vital, but its effects do not take place in isolation. One of the major sources of vulnerability in this context is conflict between agro-pastoral, pastoral and farming communities. These conflicts centre around agricultural land, migration routes for cattle, and access to resources including water points. Disputes undermine livelihood security and communities' cohesion, and can quickly escalate to violence, with devastating consequences.

Many communities in Eastern Chad have traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in place, through which members negotiate resolutions to disputes and conflicts after they arise. However, these systems do not prevent conflicts before they occur. This requires an approach that maps existing resources, takes account of different groups' needs and uses, and works to ensure equitable access, use and control to reduce future conflict.

The first step in this process is analysing the drivers of conflict, so communities can identify flashpoints of violence and agree on preventive actions that can facilitate more peaceful coexistence. To support this, Concern convened a participatory conflict analysis workshop in September 2017. This was timed to precede the seasonal pastoralist migration towards pasture and water, in an effort to reduce tensions during this critical time. The workshop targeted community leaders and influential stakeholders, bringing together customary and local authorities, NGOs and UN agencies, and was facilitated by the Sultan of Dar Sila. Through an adapted participatory rural appraisal approach, the participants mapped the area's geographic profile and conflict hotspots; key actors and their roles in conflict; and the drivers and effects of conflict in the local community. The process enabled the

participants to agree on potential conflict reduction measures, such as agreement over livestock corridors and grazing areas; identify key actors to lead on those measures; and determine feasible action plans based on available resources.[75]

The workshop was a crucial first step in reducing conflict between groups with different livelihood strategies in the region. The President of the Livestock Breeders Federation of Dar Sila remarked that he had never before had the opportunity to come together with farmers and herders to discuss the challenges they face. However, building peace is a long-term process and cannot be addressed in a once-off workshop alone. The President reflected that the workshop, **"opened my mind to the possibility of having a joint conflict resolution committee"** to take the actions arising from the workshop forward.

A representative of the National Council of Rural Producers of Chad, and president of a local women's farming group, echoed these sentiments. She tells Concern **"My first wish is that this workshop should not be the first or the last".** Concern is planning a follow-up workshop in 2018 to advance action plans arising from the 2017 workshop and consolidate peace.

Empowering communities to build peace and address the root causes of conflict requires sustained, long-term engagement. It is only possible when organisations develop meaningful partnerships and earn the trust of communities affected by conflict. Concern has been working in Chad for over a decade. Concern's work in Eastern Chad is funded by Irish Aid, UNICEF and Jersey Overseas Aid Commission (JOAC).

Local community group members doing a seasonal calendar for rain, agricultural activities and hazards in Goz Beida, Chad. Photographer: Dom Hunt, Concern Worldwide.

Elianna holds her severely malnourished daughter Laureine at Bossembele hospital, Central African Republic. Concern organised transportation from her village to the hospital – the cost of which would be too high for most people. Photographer: Chris de Bode, Panos Pictures for Concern Worldwide.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conflict is the single greatest driver of humanitarian crisis today, and the biggest threat to progress towards a more prosperous, stable and sustainable future.[76] The accounts in this report demonstrate the profound needs and complex challenges facing communities affected by conflict in its many forms. From direct experiences of violence and its devastating impact on displacement and food security, to more indirect, detrimental effects on community resilience, cohesion and gendered social relations, this report seeks to record and share the voices and lived experiences of those most affected by conflict around the world.

These accounts lead to three conclusions, common to both hunger and displacement, and reflecting the harsh realities and enormous challenges faced by communities in conflict-affected contexts around the world:

1. Conflict's reach goes far beyond the scope of physical violence alone, transforming (and often destroying) economies, social networks and household support systems far from the frontlines.
2. Conflict is gendered: it affects women, men, youth and people from vulnerable groups in starkly different ways that often reinforce existing inequities.
3. Conflict's legacy lasts much longer than violence alone, affecting the likelihood of return and the success of reintegration and reconciliation long after stability is re-established.

> **Giving a platform to the voices of those most affected by violence helps us understand people's experiences of conflict, how they themselves seek to rebuild their lives in the midst of insecurity, and their hopes for the future.**

The accounts shared also attest to the strength, resilience and hopes of communities that have survived extreme violence, continue to navigate uncertainty, and are committed to building a brighter future. Ultimately, it is important to keep in mind that even those who have been victimised in conflict remain active agents in rebuilding their lives and a more stable, prosperous future. Giving a platform to the voices of those most affected by violence helps us understand people's experiences of conflict, how they themselves seek to rebuild their lives in the midst of insecurity, and their hopes for the future. This understanding is central to developing effective, accountable, empowering and sustainable responses from the local to the global levels.

Our ultimate aim is to bring about a resurgence of humanity to break the cycle of conflict, hunger and human suffering. To this end, the 2030 Agenda sets out an ambitious plan for achieving global prosperity and peace through the SDGs.[77] While committed to its global agenda, within its seventeen areas for action, individual member states can bring their unique experience and expertise to bear on different goals. Each area of the Agenda needs champions and role models committed to demonstrating leadership and unfaltering political will. Nowhere is this more necessary than the goal to build peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16).

Golden Marlenue, outside her home in Central African Republic. Her two youngest children are both malnourished. Concern helped to re-open the nearby Ndanga health post so that the children can now get the treatment and support they need. Photographer: Chris de Bode, Panos Pictures for Concern Worldwide.

To achieve peace and prosperity, all governments must play their part, and show the political will and solidarity to address conflict, move past deadlocks, and engage the public in this pressing issue. The moral outrage at the targeting of civilians in conflict, forced displacement and the use of food as a weapon of war already exists. Concrete actions, and the political will to take them, less so. The international community must show leadership in confronting these abuses, holding perpetrators to account, and investing in addressing conflict's root causes and devastating consequences.

The UN system is at a crossroads. International commitment to multilateralism is under attack; protracted crises and political deadlocks have undermined public confidence; and political will and leadership to find political solutions is sorely lacking. This is occurring at precisely the moment the Secretary-General is spearheading an ambitious agenda for reform with peacebuilding and conflict prevention at its core. The global community faces a stark choice, and must be clearly reminded that maintaining the *status quo* costs countless lives. The current system, in which there is uneven or no accountability for violations of the fundamental elements of International Humanitarian Law, sends a message that human rights violations in conflict are acceptable, and that strategic interests come before civilian lives. Only leadership and coordinated effort at the global level can bring about the systemic change needed to achieve and sustain peace.

National governments bear primary responsibility for addressing and resolving many of conflict's impacts on their own populations, including extreme poverty, displacement and hunger. It also falls to them to show the leadership to protect civilians and ultimately lead on the political solutions necessary to break the cycle of conflict and human suffering. With the support of regional and international bodies, national governments must pursue political solutions that are inclusive and attentive to the differential impacts of conflict on women, men, youth and vulnerable groups; and that put the protection of civilians at the top of the agenda. Ultimately, the only durable peace will be one that is nationally owned and led.

International donors face mounting needs in increasingly complex contexts, which must be matched by fresh thinking and renewed commitment. In spite of greater concentration of needs in conflict-affected and fragile states, and extensive rhetoric about donor funding being focused there, needs far outstrip concrete action. Absolute levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to fragile contexts have stagnated in recent years, and as a percentage share of total ODA, have fallen by nearly seven per cent since 2010.[78] At the same time, humanitarian needs are becoming less predictable, with a growing divergence between anticipated and real-world needs.[79] They are also becoming more protracted, with the average duration of a humanitarian appeal now seven years, and 90 per cent of appeals lasting longer than three years.[80] In spite of this, the majority of humanitarian donors continue to operate in short 12-18 month funding cycles.[81] This mismatch between needs and systems must be fixed: donors need to meet existing commitments to reshape the humanitarian and development architecture to make it more flexible and responsive in the early stages of crises, and close funding gaps in chronically underfunded, protracted crises. This can only be done if governments demonstrate political leadership with domestic publics – through development education, public statements and clear action – that reasserts the value of humanitarian aid and our responsibility to alleviate suffering and save lives.

The Irish Government is in a unique position to become a champion of SDG16. Ireland has its own experience of transition from conflict to peace; its record in peacekeeping; and its contribution to peace processes globally in Colombia and elsewhere. Through these, Ireland already has a credible and distinctive voice on the global stage. This clearly reflects its commitment to multilateralism, human rights, support to civil society, the fight against hunger, and an actively principled humanitarian response. These commitments must be maintained and strengthened. Ireland can further leverage its convening power for catalytic change in conflict-

affected contexts and lead by example in its approach to conflict prevention and resolution. In the context of a renewed commitment to delivering 0.7 per cent of gross national income to development assistance, evidenced by a clear timetable towards its achievement, the Irish Government has an opportunity to expand Irish Aid's Key Partner Countries to include more conflict-affected contexts. There, it should invest heavily in a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to diplomacy, conflict prevention, humanitarian action and development.

Humanitarian and development organisations and their interventions cannot be used as a substitute for effective diplomacy or the political will to find lasting solutions to protracted crises. In its 50th year of tackling crises in the world's most conflict-affected contexts, Concern is committed to doing more than ever to alleviate suffering; working with communities to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability; and empowering women, men, youth, and peace champions from vulnerable groups to build a better future for their communities. However, while Concern integrates conflict-sensitivity and supports local peacebuilding, ultimately, it is not within our power to end global conflict. The accounts shared in this report point to programmatic, operational and organisational changes that we are committed to making to develop more informed, effective, accountable and empowering responses in the midst of conflict. But they should also inform much-needed change at the political and policy level.

Drawing on the accounts in this report, and building on a series of recommendations aimed primarily at humanitarian and development actors in two accompanying publications,[82] **Concern calls on all parties to take the following steps to break the cycle of conflict, hunger and human suffering:**

4.1. Breaking the cycle of conflict

» **UN member states should support Secretary-General Guterres' agenda for a surge of diplomacy and meet his call to increase funding to $500m for a reformed UN peacebuilding architecture.[83]**
Only sustained political will and leadership will make conflict prevention a reality. Beyond the moral imperative to prevent conflict, this investment is cost-effective and delivers major returns: estimates indicate that for every dollar invested in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, the global community can expect to save as much as $16 in the costs incurred as the result of future conflicts.[84]

Civil society representatives of women, men, youth, and vulnerable groups must be empowered to not only participate in, but also drive, peace processes.

» **National governments should create meaningful forums for the inclusion, participation and leadership of local civil society, women and youth peacebuilders in national-level peace processes.**
This research highlights the interconnections between local and national conflicts, and the vital work of local champions of peacebuilding and making peace every day. National governments should build on this momentum through firm commitments on the inclusion of diverse civil society representatives in peacebuilding processes. Evidence shows that inclusive participation is fundamental to building lasting peace.[85] Governments cannot achieve this through superficial, hurried or exclusionary consultation. Civil society representatives of women, men, youth, and vulnerable groups must be empowered to not only participate in, but also drive, peace processes.

» **International donors should increase investment in conflict sensitivity in all interventions in conflict-affected contexts to maximise the benefits of peace.**
Conflict is the single greatest driver of humanitarian needs globally and humanitarian responses can no longer afford to be conflict-blind. Concrete actions to operationalise conflict sensitivity include lengthening timelines and increasing flexibility to embed meaningful conflict analysis and adaptation at every stage of the programme cycle; increasing funding flexibility to support adaptive management in rapidly evolving contexts; and supporting initiatives to develop strong partnerships and continually build donor, NGO and partner capacity.

» **The Irish Government should strengthen its focus on peace, conflict prevention and fragility, by tripling the funds provided to integrated programmes that include locally-led civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution initiatives.**
Tackling conflict means not only addressing the root causes, but targeting support to peacebuilding as part of a holistic response. In the past decade, annual funds allocated to conflict prevention activities have averaged less than two per cent of Irish ODA.[86] This compares to approximately six per cent of UK aid in the same category.[87] Ireland should aim to triple this level of funding by 2030, with a targeted increase to activities under civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution initiatives. It is vital that this increase is targeted as locally as possible, to empower grassroots peacemakers and catalyse transformative change.

» **Humanitarian and development organisations should support more local-level peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution initiatives as part of integrated responses in conflict-affected contexts.**
This research illustrates the complex linkages between national and local-level conflicts. It also demonstrates the value of strengthening communities' capacity for conflict management and the strong demand among local champions of peace for greater support. Humanitarian and development responses must do more to integrate peacebuilding activities that enhance resilience; build lasting, sustainable peace; and ultimately, contribute to breaking the cycle of conflict.

4.2. Finding durable solutions for displacement

» **UN member states should push for the implementation of an ambitious Global Refugee Compact with robust targets and indicators for monitoring progress and ensuring accountability.**
Displacement is a global crisis that demands global leadership. As the process for finalising the Global Refugee Compact is underway, its success will ultimately depend on making its broad vision a concrete reality for affected populations. In advance of the first Global Refugee Forum, scheduled for 2019, it is imperative that an actionable plan for follow-up monitoring is developed with expertise and contributions from affected populations and civil society. This plan must include an ambitious, credible and robust series of targets and indicators against which progress on objectives will be reported and accountability ensured.

International donors should put an end to single-year, annual pledging conferences and deliver on existing commitments to increase flexible, multi-year humanitarian funding to address and prevent protracted displacement

» **National governments should incorporate and monitor the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in national laws, policies, and development plans.**
National governments have primary responsibility for preventing, alleviating and resolving internal displacement. To date, only 12 countries have legislation specifically regulating responses to internal displacement.[88] Adopting, ratifying, incorporating and monitoring the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in national laws, policies and development plans helps states meet their international obligations, facilitates tailored responses that are nationally owned and led,[89] and ultimately supports displaced and host populations alike to live secure, self-reliant lives in dignity.

» **International donors should put an end to single-year, annual pledging conferences and deliver on existing commitments to increase flexible, multi-year humanitarian funding to address and prevent protracted displacement.**
This research highlights the devastating cost of protracted, cyclical and onward displacement, and the enormous challenges faced on return. In spite of this, short-term and inflexible funding promotes a focus on immediate needs only, limits organisational adaptability, undermines synergies between humanitarian and development responses, and hinders recovery. Donors must deliver on commitments made through the Grand Bargain[90] and increase multi-year, flexible funding.

» **The Irish Government should increase support to initiatives that (re-) establish livelihoods earlier, and support return, reintegration, recovery and resilience-building for a longer period for displaced, host and returning populations.**
Addressing protracted displacement, and helping ensure new displacement does not become protracted, requires a shift in thinking. A greater investment must be made at the onset of a crisis to help affected populations restart livelihoods and move towards self-sufficiency much sooner. Development funding streams must be engaged much earlier to more effectively link short-term relief to long-term options. Where safe and voluntary return is possible, the Irish Government must continue sustained support to recovery as communities enter a critical stage for the consolidation of peace and development.

» **Humanitarian and development organisations should implement integrated programmes to support social cohesion, integration and where relevant, voluntary return in safety and dignity, for displaced and host populations.**
This research shows that for people who have returned, rebuilding lives and reintegrating into communities are enormous challenges. For many others, enabling safe and voluntary return is an immediate priority, but can be hampered by fears or divisions within communities. This research highlights that responses must go beyond supporting economic conditions for integration alone, to supporting communities to rebuild relationships, strengthening institutions for conflict management, and addressing the trauma of past violence.

4.3. Getting to zero hunger

» **UN member states should introduce a specific monitoring, reporting and accountability mechanism for violations of Resolution 2417 (2018) on conflict and hunger.**
Resolution 2417 (2018) is a critical step in the global community's recognition of the links between conflict and hunger. But it is only a first step. The global consensus around this issue provides a window of opportunity and much-needed momentum to turn words into actions.

Monitoring should take the form of a single, UN-led cross-sectoral and coordinated annual report on *Food as a Weapon of War* focused on robust monitoring and tied to meaningful accountability mechanisms for violations.

» **National governments should lead on establishing nationally-owned resilience-building strategies that tackle the combined impacts of conflict, climate change and natural disasters on hunger and food insecurity.**
Tackling climate change's impacts requires national leadership and a commitment to addressing environmental vulnerability among the most marginalised groups. Addressing the root causes of hunger, preventing food insecurity and building resilience to shocks through increased investment in climate-smart agriculture and resilience initiatives can provide a buffer for external shocks, such as conflict. Any community-level approaches need to be highly contextualised, and adapted to circumstances in which social capital and collective support mechanisms may have been undermined or destroyed.

» **International donors should increase the level of rapidly dispersible and flexible funding available to tackle food crises and turn early warning into early action.**
Humanitarian needs are becoming less predictable, with a growing divergence between anticipated and real-world needs.[91] At the same time, early warning systems are becoming more robust. The gap is not in our information, but in turning warning into action. The slow dispersal and inflexible nature of many funding mechanisms costs lives. International donors must show the political will and solidarity to support early, preventive action, rather than respond only when a crisis is already well underway. This not only saves lives, it also makes sense: although assessment is challenging, by some estimates, early action in a context of cyclical drought can save over $1,000 per beneficiary.[92]

» **The Irish Government should maintain its global leadership in the fight against hunger, and build stronger links between its priorities in food and hunger, and peace and conflict prevention, as defining principles of its UN engagement.**
Conflict is now the key driver of acute food insecurity. To make real progress on eradicating hunger, Ireland should leverage its long-standing reputation as a champion in the fight against hunger and strengthen synergies with its peace and conflict prevention work. To support this, Ireland should become a champion of Resolution 2417 (2018) and actively coordinate with other UN member states dedicated to eradicating hunger to drive forward the incremental changes necessary to make progress. Ireland can use its convening power and international credibility in both peacebuilding and tackling hunger to bring stakeholders together and push for change.

Ireland should become a champion of Resolution 2417 (2018) and actively coordinate with other UN member states dedicated to eradicating hunger to drive forward the incremental changes

» **Humanitarian and development organisations should design and implement programmes based on deep contextual analysis and that are highly attuned to the ways gender and social relations shape conflict's impacts.**
This research highlights how conflict affects food security directly, through acute violence. It also shows how conflict undermines food security indirectly through social systems and gender relations. To make real progress on reducing global hunger, we must address both. Responses must therefore be grounded in detailed and regularly updated conflict- and gender-sensitive analyses, that drive conflict-sensitive adaptation in programming as dynamic situations evolve.

4.4. Championing gender equality

» **Introduce binding language that guarantees the meaningful representation, participation and leadership of women at every level of peacebuilding.**
Women's meaningful participation in peace processes increases the probability that a peace agreement will be sustained.[93] Women are therefore vital to the UN's conflict prevention agenda. Progress on increasing inclusion in the last two decades should be celebrated. However, without binding commitments that turn aspiration into obligation, progress can be quickly undone. Women continue to be underrepresented in peace delegations, and in recent years, their representation even declined.[94] Binding language on the percentage of women participating in and leading peace processes is necessary to lead a step-change in inclusivity.

» **National governments should adopt, fund and implement ambitious National Action Plans for the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.**
As of June 2018, only 74 countries (or 38 per cent of UN Member States) have developed National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security.[95] Adopting, funding and implementing National Action Plans are vital to localising global commitments; transforming them into concrete, locally-owned action; and ensuring accountability for women's representation, participation and leadership in championing peace at the local, national and international levels.

» **International donors should eliminate gendered funding gaps that disproportionately harm women, girls and victims of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict.**
Protection responses generally, and gender-based violence interventions in particular, remain poorly funded relative to other sectors in emergency response. In UN coordinated appeals, protection funding has one of the lowest percentage of requirements met, with under one-third of appeals funded, and GBV interventions in turn receive at most 30 per cent of protection funding.[96] The funding gap is a gender gap. It inadvertently perpetuates the suffering and unmet needs shared by women and girls throughout this report.

*Hani, mother of seven, at her shelter in Somaliland. Her camels died of hunger and lack of water. Severe drought forced thousands of families to leave their homes in the countryside and seek help near urban centres. *names changed for security reasons. Photographer: Kieran McConville, Concern Worldwide.

Children playing on the streets of Juba's PoC, South Sudan. Photographer: Steve De Neef.

» **The Irish Government should increase the number of, and level of funding to, peacebuilding initiatives that have gender equality and women's empowerment as a principal or significant objective.**
Across many sectors, the Irish Government is a flagbearer in gender-equality focused aid.[97] However, aid with gender equality and women's empowerment as a principal or significant objective has constituted just over one-third of conflict prevention ODA by the Irish Government since 2008.[98] Increasing this proportion will strengthen women's voices and the sustainability of peace overall. Other countries, including Canada, have committed that 95 per cent of peacebuilding funding will either specifically target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2022.[99] Ireland should follow this example, channelling funding as locally as possible to empower women at the grassroots to not only participate in, but also drive, peace processes. Indicators for tracking the number of initiatives and levels of funding should be included in Ireland's forthcoming Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2019.

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» **Humanitarian and development organisations should design and implement programmes that are highly attuned to the ways gender and social relations shape conflict's humanitarian consequences.**
This research highlights how conflict affects communities directly through violence, and indirectly through gendered roles and social networks. Responses must therefore be grounded in detailed and up-to-date analyses of the indirect consequences of conflict and address gendered inequalities and enhance community cohesion wherever possible. Women alone cannot and must not be asked to bear the burden of social change alone: deepening engagement with men and boys is a crucial step for gender equality and a more peaceful future.

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