

Transforming lives and conflict

CORD Strategy 2007 - 2011



Our world and work

Violent conflict is a reality which affects people and communities in many countries throughout the world today.

Since the end of the Cold War, the context of conflicts has been changing. Civil wars have become commonplace, and are increasingly internationalised; most involving intervention by external states. Media attention has in recent years focused on the 'war on terror' and has highlighted the devastating impact conflict has on people and development.

Violent conflict disrupts and destroys lives, livelihoods, societies and economies and breaks up social structures of families and communities. It can leave a long legacy of mistrust, bitterness and hatred. Conflict causes displacement, resulting in people fleeing their homes - within their own country as internally displaced people (IDP), or crossing into other countries as refugees. At a micro level, devastating factors such as the break up of families and communities, loss of livelihoods, interruption or loss of education, and the deterioration of health status are common. At the macro level the impact can be catastrophic, resulting in a decimated economy, loss of trade, and crippling of the health and education systems. It can also fuel issues such as trafficking, the drugs trade, commercial sex, and gender based violence.

The relationship between development and conflict is complex. Poverty does not create conflict, but poverty coupled with other factors increases the likelihood of violent conflict. There are few situations where a lack of development, including a lack of access to rights, has not been acknowledged as a contributing factor to conflict. In addition, peacebuilding initiatives that do not address development needs are generally very fragile, or fail.

Violent conflict is one of the most significant threats to development, poverty alleviation and global security. Conflicts must be transformed in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

2007 marks CORD's 40th anniversary of working in conflict situations beginning with its response to the Vietnam War in 1967. CORD recognises that scarce resources, power relations, and a lack of access to rights are frequently contributing factors to the build up to violent conflict.

We believe that conflict transformation is essential to ensure that communities co-exist with one another and it requires a co-operative approach. CORD understands conflict transformation to be an ongoing process of changing relationships, behaviours, attitudes and structures from the negative to the positive.

Conflict Transformation

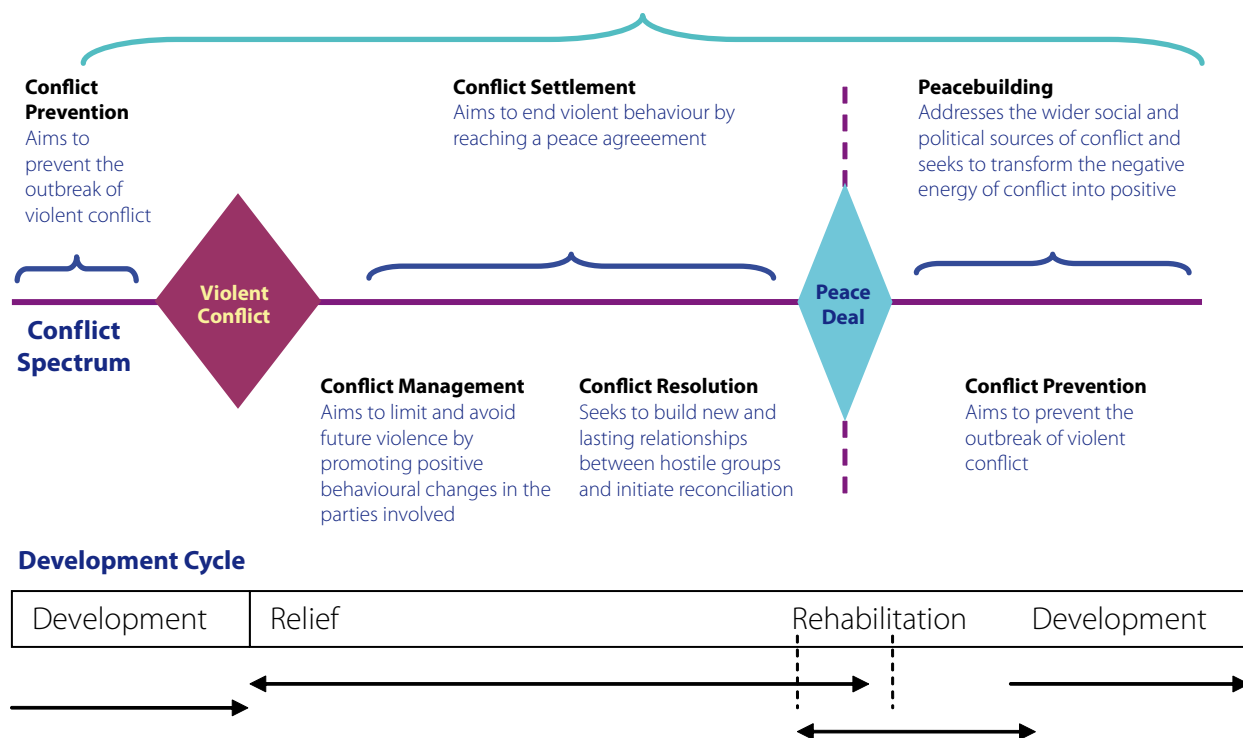


Figure 1: CORD's understanding of the conflict transformation process within the development cycle across the conflict spectrum

CORD's experience makes it well placed to contribute significantly to grassroots social and economic development whilst working strategically with practitioners whose expertise lies in other areas such as reconciliation and forgiveness, good governance and security. All these areas are essential components of conflict transformation. CORD will establish linkages between the grassroots, national, regional and global agencies to tackle factors influencing specific conflicts to support conflict transformation.

Vision

CORD's vision is a world where all people live in harmony with one another, creation and God, and have access to resources needed for development and the opportunity to live in freedom with security and justice.

Purpose

CORD works to transform lives and conflict by working with people and communities in the developing world. CORD works across the conflict spectrum, to build trust and social cohesion through the sectors of livelihoods and education, assisting people to rebuild their livelihoods and to further their economic and social development.

Core Values

CORD is motivated and inspired by the Christian faith. Based on this, our core values are equality, responsibility and partnership. CORD is not a proselytising organisation; and respects people of all faiths and none.

Equality

We believe that all people are created equal, in the image of God, with inherent dignity and worth. CORD works with all people and communities regardless of faith, gender, politics or race. We seek to be inclusive and celebrate God's diversity.

Responsibility

We are stewards of God's creation, and we act responsibly for the resources we have, both financial and environmental. To achieve this we will continue to be open, honest and transparent, behaving with integrity. We will continue to improve our systems by, for example, endeavouring to manage our financial resources in an effective and accountable manner recognising that corruption is often a significant element of the context we work in. We also strive to care for the world we live in, assessing the impact of our work on the environment, seeking to minimise negative consequences and ensure positive changes.

Partnership

We believe that working collectively and co-operatively in partnership is central to effective conflict transformation and development. We believe partnership to be a two-way consultative process, working respectfully and accountably, to most effectively address the needs of the beneficiaries. We will therefore develop strategic long-term partnerships with other organisations where clear increased effectiveness will result.

Our Approach

The following will guide CORD's work and are the means to achieve our values.

Our approach will be:

In Partnership

Relationships are key to CORD, we work in partnership with local communities, civil society organisations, supporters and donors. Working with local partners is CORD's preferred approach in both its operational relief and non-operational development programmes. Collaboration with donors, supporters, networks and alliances enables mutual sharing and learning and is crucial for effective development.

Participatory and Empowering

CORD works with local communities and organisations, as it believes that meaningful involvement of civil society and people affected by the conflict is central to any dialogue to reach positive sustainable outcomes. CORD believes participation leads to empowerment, as it facilitates communities to lead their own development. CORD understands development to be a process that empowers people, increases access to rights and brings about change and transformation.

Professional

CORD strives to be professional in all its work: providing ongoing development of qualified and capable staff, developing clear and defined policies and strategies to guide and underpin our work, and ensuring effective systems and procedures to implement, manage, monitor and measure its impact.

Innovative

CORD believes in trying new things, as innovative methods often lead to successful development. Therefore, CORD will pilot new initiatives, document lessons and learn from our experiences.

Sustainable

CORD strives to consider the whole conflict situation and seeks to ensure all aspects are addressed; directly through our programmes with partners and indirectly through advocacy, and encouraging and engaging with other stakeholders. We will assess the long-term impact and long-term viability of all our work.

Our Commitment

CORD is committed to working across the conflict spectrum, encompassing conflict prevention, working in crises and in post-conflict recovery and development. In the next five years we will expand our portfolio of work reflecting the spectrum of conflict.

The expansion of CORD's work will take place in two ways: Firstly, through relationships, building on the contacts we have globally and with diaspora groups in the UK. We seek to be invited to new countries by peace practitioners in the country, or their diaspora. Secondly, CORD will respond to conflict situations as they arise, following assessment, and will include regional conflict analysis. We will assess the potential for CORD to support programmes against open and transparent criteria, based on the security levels, in-depth analysis of the conflict and the needs of communities.

Our Focus

CORD has been working in conflict situations since 1967, by addressing the effects of conflict through meeting the needs of communities and people displaced by conflict. Increasingly CORD, together with others in the sector, have realised the importance of not only addressing the needs of those affected by conflict but the need to engage with the underlying causes of conflict, thus addressing conflict and development needs together.

Over the next five years we will actively engage in conflict transformation processes, building the capacity of partner organisations to effectively integrate development interventions to support the conflict transformation process. CORD will continue to expand its learning and improve our engagement with partners, and advocate with partners for changes at national, regional and global levels to improve the effectiveness of approaches within conflict transformation processes to reduce poverty, and prevent and mitigate the effects of violent conflict.

CORD has identified five strategic interventions within the conflict transformation process. Of these, CORD focuses specifically on conflict prevention, conflict management, and peacebuilding, and seeks to grow and develop its strategic alliances with organisations working on conflict settlement and resolution.

Over the next 5 years, we will focus on the above elements of conflict transformation, working across the conflict spectrum through the sectors of education and livelihoods. These sectors have been identified by our stakeholders as areas of significant need. Combined with CORD's experience, we are well placed to contribute significantly to grassroots social and economic development, which is one of the key areas of transforming conflicts. Education and livelihood development will improve the social and economic status of those affected by conflict, and it is anticipated that the indirect effect of bringing people and communities together in education and livelihood activities will aid reconciliation, ultimately creating strong cohesive communities.

During violent conflict, people often lose access to their means of livelihood, or their assets are destroyed. Providing livelihood opportunities enables people to have a means to immediate survival and long-term self-sufficiency. It can also contribute to the prevention of violent conflict, by reducing livelihood failure, which itself can be a contributing factor to conflict. Addressing livelihoods also provides a means to engage with the process of restorative justice, the replacing of what was lost, and begin to remove barriers to reconciliation.

Education provides choices and opportunities to tackle poverty and contribute to a peaceful society. It offers a means to a better life and a way to prevent a recurrence of violent conflict. For example, educational opportunities for young people offer alternatives to being recruited into armed groups, and provide an understanding of potential peaceful futures, secured through non-violent means.

Working on conflict, CORD addresses the education and livelihood needs with communities following needs assessment analysis. The cross-cutting issues of HIV, gender and environment are also part of the needs analysis and are mainstreamed accordingly. This means that without changing our core focus of transforming lives and conflict, we will analyse how HIV, gender and environment impact all aspects of our work, and how our work impacts these issues. The findings will be incorporated into our work accordingly. Country programmes incorporate protection components to protect those affected by violent conflict, supporting them to develop ways to protect themselves as well as realise and access their rights.

Through our work, CORD will bring communities together to discuss conflict issues and differences; to educate and inform; to problem-solve; to build trust and social cohesion amongst the communities; and to discuss coping mechanisms and methods to deal with potential conflicts in a non-violent manner. The ultimate aim is to transform the conflict, affording people the opportunity to enjoy their rights to economic, social, cultural and political development.

CORD's 3 Strategic Aims

1. Transform lives and conflict

(describes programmes and programme impact)

Reducing impact of conflict - We will continue to address the livelihood and educational needs of people and communities affected by conflict, taking account of HIV, gender and environmental issues. We will support people and communities to access their rights and have their voice heard.

We will increase our capacity and that of civil society organisations to undertake effective lobbying and advocacy work to expose the underlying causes of conflict.

Work across the conflict spectrum - Our work will include programmes in relief, rehabilitation, and post-conflict development settings. We will support immediate needs in the aftermath of the outbreak of the violent conflict, and as the crisis continues we will seek to develop people's skills and capacities in their new environment, in preparation for their return home.

In the post-conflict recovery, our programmes will support the resettlement of displaced people and their reintegration into local society. We will build the capacity of local institutions to manage the development process and monitor the conflict situation. Programmes will focus on supporting the development of livelihoods and the local economy, ensuring the accessibility of education and opportunities to rebuild social cohesion and trust.

Poverty reduction - Reducing poverty is a key indicator for CORD. Poverty is often a contributing factor increasing the risk of violent conflict, and conflict increases poverty levels. We will monitor the contribution of our education and livelihoods interventions in reducing poverty and improving the social and economic rights of individuals and communities, to realise the MDGs.

Working through partners - Our work will be undertaken predominantly on a partnership basis, with a strong participatory and empowering focus, so that local communities lead their own development process.

We will continue to increase the number of partners we work with, and will build their strategic, operational and resource capacity, enabling them to prevent, manage and monitor conflict.

Building sustainable peace - CORD and its partners will facilitate people to come together to discuss issues and find solutions without resorting to violence. We will collaborate with all stakeholders across the conflict transformation process to build sustainable peace.

Conflict prevention - We will work with communities and stakeholders to identify potential conflict issues and develop indicators to highlight growing tensions and escalation of catalysts predicting future violent outbreaks. Appropriate interventions will be designed and implemented when triggered to prevent violent conflict.

We will also work with partners in countries where there is regional instability, which may overflow into violent conflict, and further exacerbate the situation.

2. Be an agent of peace

(building coalitions and advocating peace)

Networking and alliance building - Our collaboration in networks and coalitions will be strategic and targeted. Involvement in these will result in increased impact, expanded learning and improved practices. We will have contributed to the conflict and development knowledge base of the sector.

Role in conflict and development sector - We will be known as a key agent in the conflict and development sector, and will have challenged, contributed actively, and influenced discussions and debates, leading to improved sector performance and increased support to address conflict as part of development and humanitarian interventions.

Christian basis - We will continue to develop a strong Christian understanding of the world to underpin all our conflict and development work. We will engage with the churches and other relevant bodies in discussions on conflict and development. Papers on various aspects related to conflict and development will guide our work and be used externally.

Lobbying and advocacy - We will speak out and challenge systems and structures to bring about changes in the lives of those affected by conflict and will support partners in the north and south to undertake advocacy and lobbying work.

Development education - Development education will continue to be a key focus of the work undertaken with new and existing supporters. This will include increasing their understanding of conflict in relief and development settings leading to increased awareness of the issues.

3. Be a recognised conflict and development NGO

(strengthening our effectiveness)

Performance and learning - We are committed to monitoring the impact of our work and learning from our experience and the experience of others. We will continue to be open and transparent about our work, sharing the successes, failures and challenges we meet.

Innovation - CORD will continue to develop effective, flexible, responsive and long-term approaches and programmes addressing conflict, livelihood and education development.

Risk management - Conflict by its nature poses risks and threats. CORD will continue to analyse the risks and threats in each of the conflict contexts we operate in. We will continue to strengthen our approach to security in an environment where humanitarian neutrality no longer exists. We will ensure staff and partners understand, and have adequate procedures and resources in place, to mitigate and address levels of risk.

Technology - Global communications offer new ways for information exchange, increasing access to information and building linkages. CORD will continue to strengthen its internal and external communications through the use of innovative modes, the promotion of shared learning and the documentation of lessons learned. We will also seek ways of using technology to provide more effective training materials and on-line support to partners.

Reputation - CORD will develop a strong brand, which will be well known by individuals, churches, donors and other relevant bodies. Supporter Relations will use this brand to extend CORD's institutional support. Our supporter development work will be recognised as one of our key strengths. We will be a catalyst for change, facilitating relational development and co-operation.

Human resources - CORD will be recognised as a highly professional organisation known for its honesty and integrity, operating appropriately in diverse cultural settings, with policies, procedures, and documents in place to guide and underpin all that we do, and ensure our work is delivered to agree

Finances - We will broaden our financial base and strengthen our collaboration with existing donors. We will seek innovative partnerships with donors, seeking to strengthen the relationships beyond one of finance, to a mutually accountable partnership and co-operation for development, where we are influenced and informed through each others work. We will also continue to improve our financial management and internal audit systems across the organisation, to ensure effective use of our financial resources.





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Reg. Charity No. 1070684
V1.2 - 24-08-07