Tearfund Peacebuilding

RECONCILING DIVIDED COMMUNITIES

The most fragile places in the world are drastically impacted by conflict, increasing the vulnerability of the most marginalised communities. Robert Zoellick, head of the World Bank from 2007 to 2012, has said that conflict costs the average developing country roughly 30 years of GDP growth. He further points out that countries caught up in protracted crises can fall more than 20 percentage points behind in overcoming poverty.[1] The British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) network states that in 2016 one person was displaced as a result of war and persecution every three seconds.[2] In many of these conflicts, social divisions mirror religious divides and so the ability to speak coherently into issues of faith is critical to effective peacebuilding. As a faith-based relief and development agency, Tearfund is well placed to contribute to peacebuilding in these situations.

TEARFUND'S GRASSROOTS APPROACH

People in positions of influence and power can often be disconnected from the desires, hopes and aspirations of people at the grassroots. However, even in the toughest locations and

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency, committed to eradicating poverty and bringing about whole-life transformation for individuals, families and communities.

Tearfund is working in over 50 countries and many of these nations have borne the brunt of war and continue to do so. There is a real danger that growing insecurity and conflict threaten to further increase vulnerability of communities, setting back any developmental progress achieved with a disproportionate impact on people who are marginalised and suffering economic poverty. Recent years have also seen an increasingly complex interplay between religion and conflict.

Tearfund has made it a strategic priority of working in fragile states. Tearfund currently works in half of the countries listed in the Fragile States Index[3] as being on 'very high alert' and in 11 of the 12 listed as 'high alert'; a total of 38 countries where Tearfund works currently appear in the 'alert', 'high alert' or 'very high alert' categories.

Tearfund's Thematic Support Team has a mandate to develop, invest in and pilot new work and to explore Tearfund's added value around emerging issues globally. In 2011, the team launched a global campaign to prevent and end sexual violence in 15 countries, building a strong reputation for its work. In 2016, Tearfund began to explore an innovative peacebuilding response to conflict, which is outlined in this document.

With Tearfund's Christian ethos and established networks of local partners, faith and interfaith communities around the world, peacebuilding can be linked with other Tearfund relief and development initiatives. Our ability to facilitate our work through these widespread networks ensures a deep and sustained reach into communities.

'I do think that this gathering was a huge step towards cementing relationships and future partnerships within the community of peacebuilders in the Middle East. I hope that it won't stop here.'

FAITH LEADER AND PARTICIPANT, MIDDLE EAST GATHERING

in every place of conflict, the landscape is dotted with people at the grassroots who are breaking down barriers, building togetherness, bridging the divides and restoring relationships so that peace can grow. Nevertheless, these people, often working as individuals, can feel isolated and overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge and so face burnout.

Our vision is to support and sustain these individuals – nurturing, equipping and connecting them so that they are transformed into a resilient movement of peacebuilders. We believe that peacebuilding is not just about technical skills, important though these are, but is also about the peacebuilders themselves. To be effective they need to **be** peacebuilders and not just **do** peacebuilding.

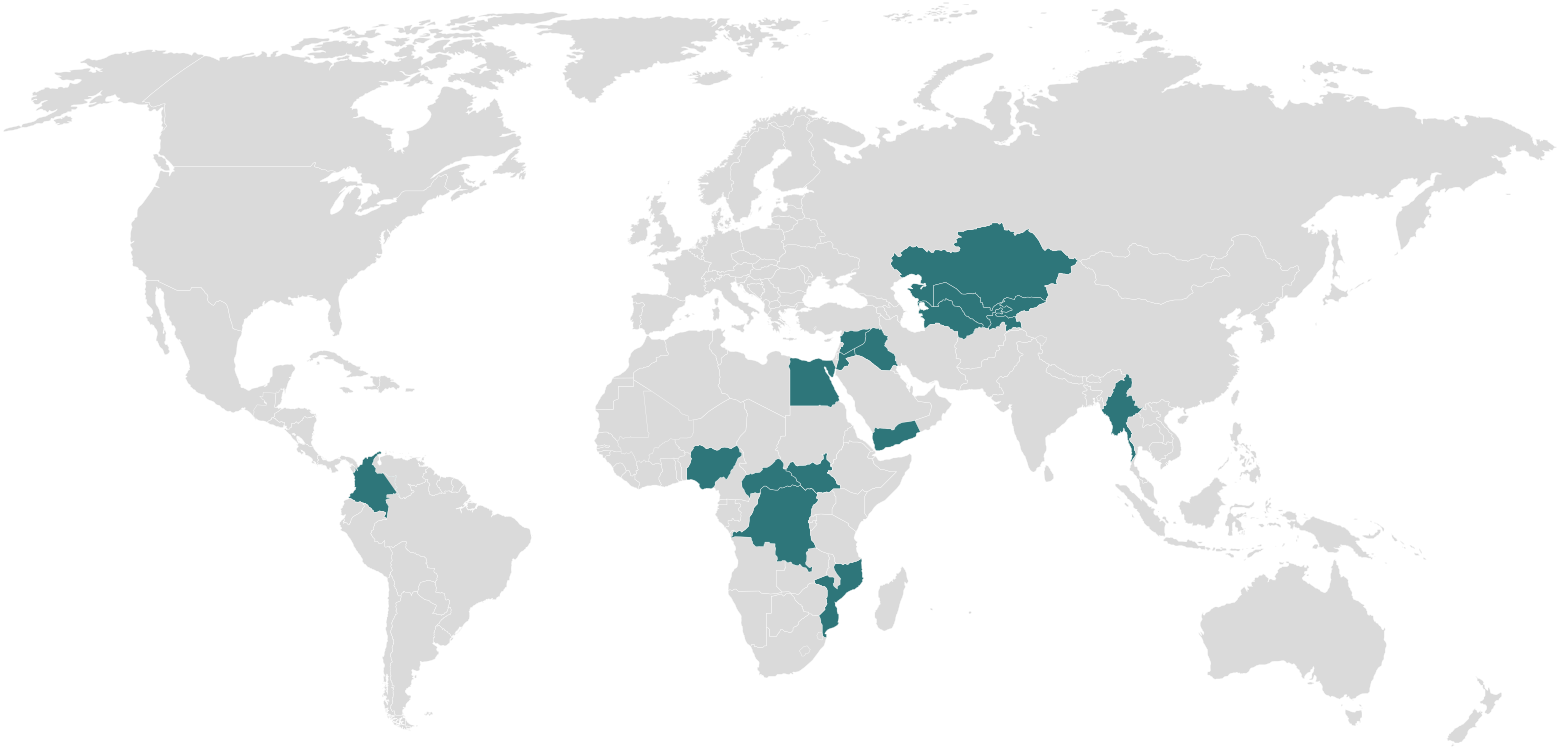
A key element of our approach, therefore, is to create space where these peacebuilders can pause, reflect and renew their strength, deepening their own personal journeys of forgiveness and reconciliation. Nurtured, they can then be equipped with the skills and techniques that they require to be effective in their communities and contexts. Through this nurturing and equipping they are connected into a wider group of peacebuilders – a group in which they are able to support and encourage each other, to sustain them in their work. They also have a shared learning experience, act collectively and collaboratively, in order to extend their reach and impact.

THE MIDDLE EAST GATHERING

Tearfund began this approach in the Middle East in April 2016, holding a gathering of peacebuilders from across the region. The gathering has created a launchpad for the strategic objectives around peacebuilding in the wider Tearfund Middle East Response Strategy, which has since been developed. It has also provided a framework for replicating this form of initiative in other regions where Tearfund works. Other gatherings have since followed. The individuals from the first gathering have now formed a series of national peacebuilding networks and implemented programmes at the local level.

Participants at the gathering identified Tearfund's added value as being a bridge and enabler for those working in peacebuilding to connect, learn, network and be in community with one another. The outcomes of the peacebuilder's gathering align naturally with Tearfund's experience in journeying with Inspired Individuals[4] and other initiatives, such as building sexual violence survivor movements.[5] The learning gained from these initiatives is helping to establish the building and enabling of movements of peacebuilders as a core part of Tearfund's peacebuilding strategy. Working in this way, by developing and supporting local networks of peacebuilders, also contributes towards the general desire for localisation in the development sector.

Above: Participants in the Middle East gathering share insights from their work.
Photo: Andrew Phillips/Tearfund



COUNTRIES IN WHICH TEARFUND CURRENTLY WORKS WITH PEACEBUILDERS

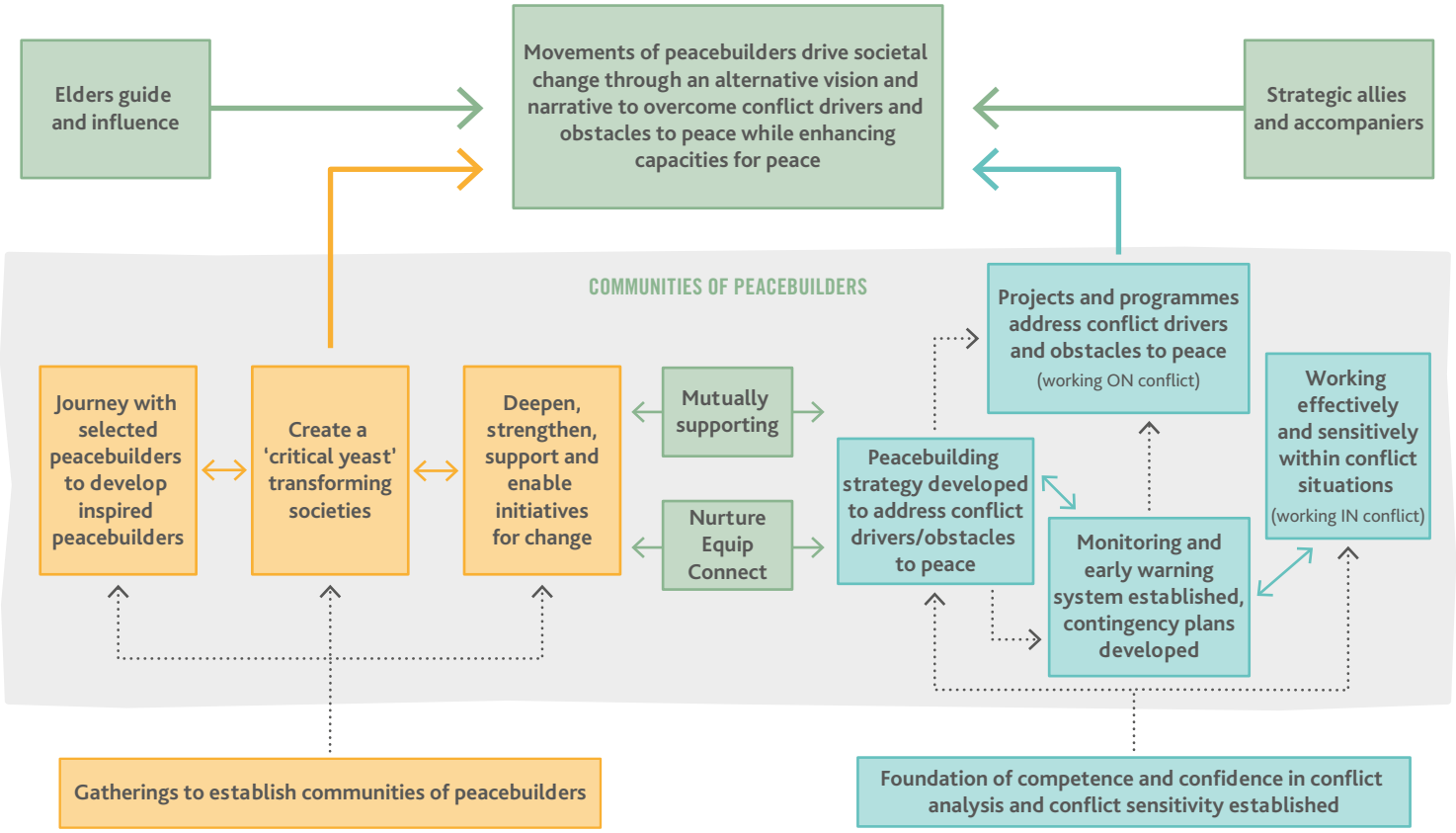
TEARFUND'S VISION FOR BUILDING PEACE IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES

Working with individual peacebuilders to nurture, equip and connect them is one arm of our peacebuilding strategy. Also core to Tearfund's approach is working through the church as part of an approach we call 'church and community transformation' (CCT). With partners, and in some situations directly ourselves, we have always sought to address the root causes of poverty and to counter the issues that drive conflict; in so doing, building resilience and restoring broken relationships.

Our peacebuilding strategy brings these two components together to form our overarching approach: identifying, equipping and connecting peacebuilders (including partners and church leaders) with one another to join movements, while also addressing current needs and priorities so that an alternative vision and narrative is birthed. Through this, conflict drivers can be reduced, obstacles to peace overcome and capacities for peace strengthened.

'Participants identified Tearfund's added value as being a bridge and enabler for those working in peacebuilding to connect, learn, network and be in community with one another.'

Below: Hwol Buji, in the Plateau State of Nigeria, is a remote community of 5,000 inhabitants comprised of Christians and Muslims who live together peacefully.
Photo: Andrew Philip/Tearfund



TEARFUND'S INNOVATIVE RESPONSE TO PEACEBUILDING

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding is a crowded space with many agencies involved in initiatives in many countries. Tearfund is keen to avoid duplication but is committed to learning from the experiences of others. Tearfund's strategy has three areas of innovation:

- **Our focus on nurturing** individual peacebuilders. We invest in them as individuals and in their personal growth and development as peacebuilders, and, as a secondary goal, we equip them with the tools they need.

- **Our focus on connecting** these individual peacebuilders to form movements of peacebuilders locally, nationally and regionally. While 'movement building' is in itself not new, our accompaniment model, our focus on the grassroots, our special focus on women and youth, and our investment in leadership development within these movements are innovative. In this work we draw on our experience in building movements of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and also on our Inspired Individuals programme.[6]

- **Our ability to unite** peacebuilding with responding to immediate needs, and addressing underlying drivers of conflict through our emergency response capability, and our longer-term development work.

1 The World Bank (2011), World Development Report 2011, 'Foreword', page xii

2 BOND (September 2017), State of the world's emergencies: a briefing for UK parliamentarians, page 6

3 http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/2017/05/14/fsi-2017-factionalization-and-group-grievance-fuel-rise-in-instability/

4 Our Inspired Individuals programme identifies, develops and connects Christian leaders from around the world who are incredible changemakers in their communities. For more information, please see: https://www.tearfund.org/en/inspired_individuals/

5 Tearfund is currently working in 15 countries with around 150 communities in attempts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. For more information, please see: https://learn.tearfund.org/en/themes/gender/

6 For more information on both initiatives please see footnotes 4 and 5

tearfund *Following Jesus where the need is greatest*

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Photo cover:Tearfund is supporting, linking and building the capacity of peacebuilders such as these in the Middle East. Andrew Phillips/Tearfund