

# Footsteps

## Peace and reconciliation

- Conflict transformation
- Conflict tree
- Community dialogues
- Challenging gender inequality
- Building bridges across faiths
- Flourishing together



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## About Footsteps

Featuring practical solutions to development challenges, *Footsteps* magazine inspires and equips people to work with their local communities to bring positive change.

*Footsteps* is published by Tearfund, a Christian relief and development agency working with local partners and churches to meet basic needs and address injustice and poverty. *Footsteps* is free of charge.

📷 Cover photo: Elyse Ndayishimiye, a Peace Champion in Burundi, runs peacebuilding training sessions in his community. Photo: Paul Mbonankira/Tearfund

## A note from the editor

Conflict can be overwhelming, whether it is between friends, family members, communities or nations. It can cause us to experience many different emotions including anger, confusion, guilt, humiliation and fear.

Using examples from around the world, this edition of *Footsteps* considers some of the actions we can all take to help break cycles of misunderstanding, inequality and violence.

The stories and examples show that many small actions can lead to a large amount of change as we build peace and foster reconciliation in our homes and communities.

Jude Collins, Editor

■ 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.'

Matthew 5:9



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jude'.

Jude Collins,  
Editor

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# Conflict transformation

By Ildephonse Niyokindi and David Couzens



▣ Following years of family conflict, Teleshore and Primitive in Rwanda now live in peace. Photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

**Small disagreements are part of everyday life, and most of the time they can be resolved quickly and effectively by talking things through, apologising and moving on.**

However, if communication breaks down, a small disagreement – in a family, community, nation or region – can quickly grow into a much bigger problem.

For example, imagine two people are standing together and looking at a stream that has less water in it than usual. They are having a conversation about what to do. One person wants to divert the water onto crops, but the other thinks it should be used to power a watermill. At this point, if they work together it is likely that they will be able to find a solution that suits them both.

But they start to argue and things quickly become personal. No longer are they standing side by side, focusing on resolving the problem. Instead, they are

seeing each other as the problem. Their argument becomes louder, they say unkind things to each other, and they start to bring up disagreements from the past. It becomes increasingly difficult for them to find a way out of the situation.

Frustrated and angry, they stop talking to each other and instead talk *about* each other, surrounding themselves with people who agree with their point of view. The original problem then gets lost in a series of negative actions and responses: one group digs channels to divert the water onto crops; the other group breaks the channels so the water can flow to the mill; the first group damages the mill; the second group destroys the crops; and so the conflict grows. ▶

During this process of retaliation there is less and less direct communication and the facts become harder to recognise. Rumour and misinformation thrive, trust disappears and the level of violence increases.

## Constructive dialogue

To break cycles of conflict and violence – big or small – we need to avoid responding in anger, try to understand each other and recognise that there is usually right and wrong on both sides.

Ultimately, we need to go back to when it was just two people facing a common challenge. And instead of personalising the problem, we need to talk to each other and work together to find a solution that works for everyone.

Depending on the complexity of the situation, this can take a long time. Involving someone from outside the conflict may help. They can listen to both sides and encourage constructive dialogue until a solution is found.

## Forgiveness

Even once a solution is found, it can be difficult for people to move on from conflict, especially if they have experienced any kind of trauma. Feelings of fear and anxiety are often combined with shame, humiliation and a desire for both safety and justice.

If people try to ignore these feelings, they might emerge in the form of physical illness, flashbacks or nightmares. They may find themselves wanting to take revenge against those who have hurt them, or they might become frightened of people who are different.

It can be helpful if people affected by conflict are able to:

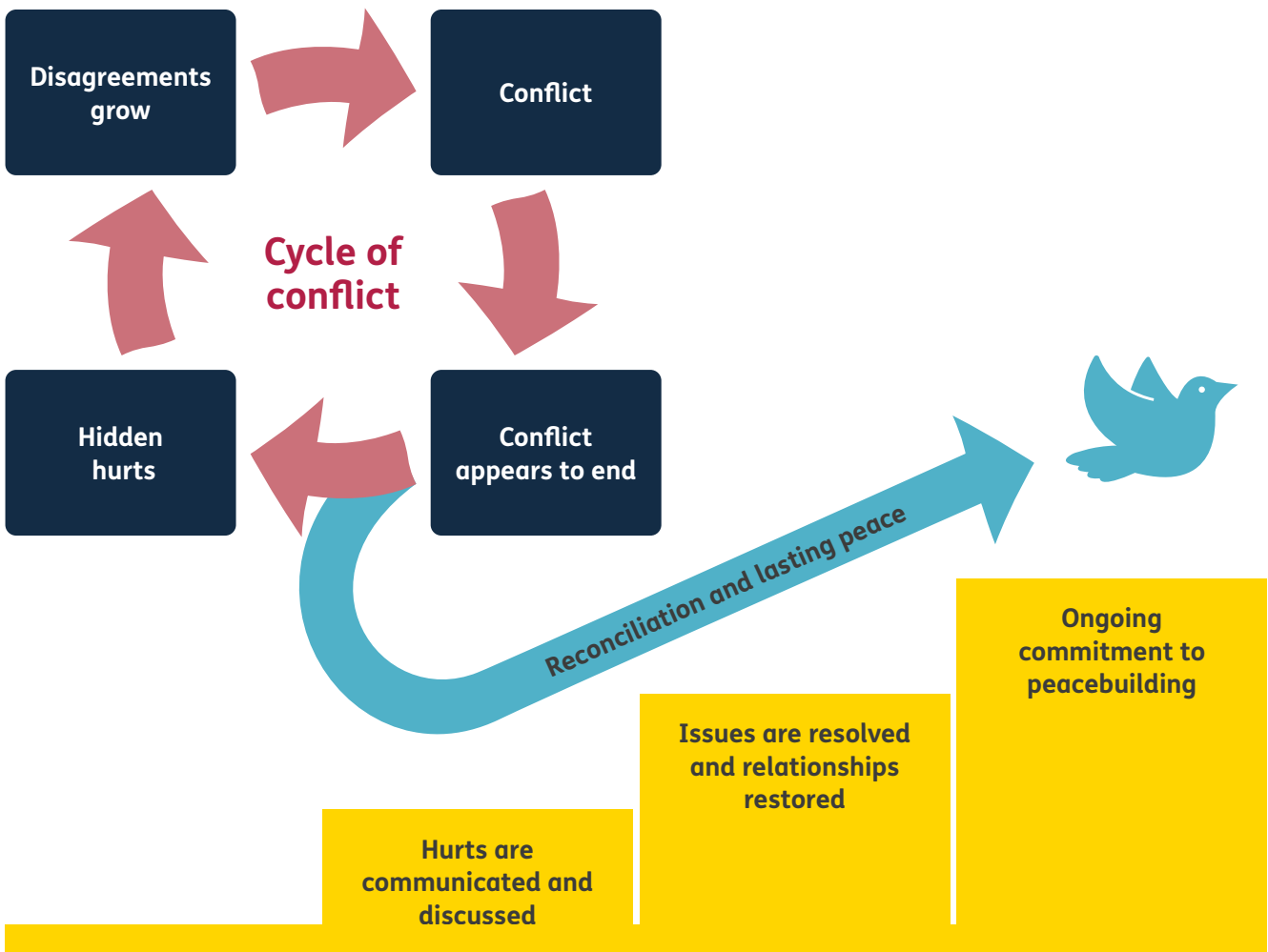
- Talk freely, in a safe space, about the trauma and mourn for what they have lost: perhaps a home, land, family member, health, dignity or self-confidence.
- Avoid getting trapped in the ‘Why me?’ question, asking instead, ‘Why them?’ What happened to cause the people on the other side of the conflict to believe that their actions were justified?
- Recognise that there is often wrongdoing on both sides during a conflict. Were there things that they themselves (or their group) should have done differently?
- Choose to forgive, recognising that this does not mean forgetting what happened, or that what happened does not matter.

Forgiveness can help people to move on from being victims, held back by the pain of what happened, to being survivors, acting in their own strength. However, they should never feel pressured into forgiving: it must be their decision.

📍 Planting a tree during peacebuilding training in Kigali, Rwanda. Photo: David Couzens/Tearfund



Without good communication and the restoration of relationships, even when a conflict appears to have ended, hidden hurts may cause it to start again.



It can take many years before the decision to forgive moves from being an idea in someone's head to a way of being. It has, however, been shown to be a vital step in healing from trauma, and it opens the door to reconciliation.

## Reconciliation

There is a complex relationship between the need to forgive and the desire for justice: for truth to be revealed and people to be held to account for their actions. If there is to be reconciliation and lasting peace, truth, justice, mercy and forgiveness all need to be present.

It can be helpful for people on both sides of the disagreement to be given the opportunity to talk to each other about how they have been hurt. If they are able to really listen to each other, this can aid healing and build understanding.

Over time, and with support, it is possible for survivors of conflict and trauma to tell a new story that does not see one side as aggressor and one as innocent victim. Instead, it recognises the complexity of the conflict and the pain that has been suffered by all. This creates opportunities for people and communities to work together to create a better, more peaceful future.

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*Ildephonse Niyokindi is a Global Peacebuilding Officer with Tearfund and David Couzens is Tearfund's Global Peacebuilding Lead*

# Community dialogues

By Leila Ngabirano

**‘I realised that getting angry or quarrelling is not the solution. But humility helps you to come to an agreement with the person you are in conflict with,’** says Reverien Rwaso, a Peace Champion in Burundi.

Reverien was trained by Tearfund’s partner, Help Channel Burundi, to encourage people to reach agreement on difficult issues by talking to each other – an approach known as ‘community conflict transformation dialogues’.

After the training, Reverien facilitated a series of workshops to help his community reflect on the conflicts that affect them, and equip them to transform these conflicts.

After many weeks of dialogue sessions, Reverien’s community identified various things they could do to help reduce the amount of conflict in their area. They formed a peacebuilding committee, started to run football matches to improve community cohesion, and provided the time and space for people to talk through their disagreements with a neutral mediator.



📍 **Reverien Rwaso is a Peace Champion in Burundi.**  
Photo: Paul Mbonankira/Tearfund

Over time, Reverien was delighted to see a reduction in the number of arguments being brought to the local government authorities.

He says, ‘People used to bring grievances to the local authorities two days each week, but these have reduced significantly. When people have opportunities to discuss issues that matter to them, conflicts can be prevented and resolved peacefully.’

📍 **Landscape in Kimate, Burundi.**  
Photo: Paul Mbonankira/Tearfund



## Learning through drama

During a Peace Day event organised by the Peace Champions in Burundi's Bururi province, community members, religious leaders and government and police representatives gathered to hear testimonies and learn more about the benefits of community dialogues.

The event included a drama telling the story of two sons. In the drama, each son gives their father alcohol to persuade him to give them a cow as part of their inheritance. After his death, the sons discover that they have inherited the same cow, and they almost kill each other. The neighbours intervene and the case is brought to the village elder.



Peace Champions take part in a drama at a Peace Day event in Burundi. Photo: Ildephonse Niyokindi

The elder studies the case and then declares one of the sons the winner. The one who loses declares revenge on his brother. The winning brother, fearing for his life, speaks to a Peace Champion about it. She listens to both of them and encourages them to try to understand the root cause of the conflict. In the end, both sons admit they were wrong to get their father drunk in order to inherit the cow, and they agree to share the cow as brothers.

## Preaching peace

At the end of the event the Governor of Bururi said, 'The drama has shown us that the key to resolving a conflict is to listen and understand the conflicting parties.'

'Where there is peace, there is unity, collaboration and development. I would like to invite the peacebuilders to continue preaching peace and showing a good example to others.'

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For more information visit [learn.tearfund.org](https://learn.tearfund.org) and search for 'Community conflict transformation dialogues'

*Leila Ngabirano is a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer with Tearfund in Burundi*



# Bible study

# Reconciliation

By Richard Serrano

The Bible tells us that God created a good and peaceful world. One in which human beings could live in fellowship and harmony with God, and with each other.

But human disobedience broke the peace, resulting in damaged relationships and conflict (Genesis 3).

Despite this, God did not give up on us. He loves us so much that he sent Jesus to 'reconcile to himself all things... by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross' (Colossians 1:20).

## Read 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

The word 'reconcile' means to bring together – or heal – that which was broken. This healing is much more than the absence of conflict. Reconciliation is about the transformation of damaged relationships into relationships of trust.

In a world where there is so much conflict and division, the church is called to be a community of peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – and the forgiveness this brings – we have been given a message and ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–19).



### Discussion questions

- When do you see people in conflict in your home, church or community?
- What causes these conflicts?
- What actions can you take to build peace in these situations and help people reach a place of reconciliation?
- Is there anyone in your own life who you need to reach out to for reconciliation? How will you do this?



📖 A Venezuelan family in Colombia read the Bible together.  
Photo: Luis Alvarez/Tearfund

When we work for peace and reconciliation, we:

- imitate the loving character of God, wanting the best for people
- resist the claims of people, ideas, systems and structures that go against God's purposes
- share the joyful message of reconciliation with God through Jesus
- offer people hope

Reconciliation is not easy. It requires humility, time and patience. But as the Holy Spirit helps us let go of the destructive power of past hurts and unforgiveness, we can help others to do the same.

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*Richard Serrano is a Theology, Network and Engagement Advisor with Tearfund in Latin America*





## Case study

# From conflict to trust

By Allayam Ndikinan

**In Chad, disagreements between herders and farmers are common, especially when animals damage crops. These disagreements can result in violence, and even in the death of the people involved.**

Younous Dout, a community leader in Batha province, says, 'The resolution of disputes is not always done in a transparent way. Often those who decide the cases receive bribes and the reparation is not fair.'

'For example, for a field of sorghum with an estimated yield of six bags worth a total of 120,000 Central African Francs (about US\$193), the farmer will be told that he can be compensated at only 20,000 Francs, which is the value of a single bag.'

Younous has recently been trained in conflict resolution by local organisation *Projet Évangélique de Développement Communautaire* (Evangelical Community Development Project). He now leads a conflict management committee that includes herders, farmers and representatives from government and community groups.

'Five oxen owned by Abakar, a herder, devastated the sorghum field of a farmer called Brahim,' continues Younous. 'Suddenly, the two men started to argue and they threatened to harm each other. Brahim called us and immediately we made a trip to the field, inviting Abakar as well. Together we assessed and estimated the value of the damage.'

'Both Abakar and Brahim agreed with the assessment and the following day Abakar took the money for the fine to the local chief in the presence of the conflict management committee, and they handed it over to Brahim.'

'The conflicts that led to the loss of human life are beginning to find peaceful solutions and this gives us joy in our hearts. Mistrust is beginning to disappear.'

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*Allayam Ndikinan is a Programme Manager with Tearfund in West Africa*

📍 **Cattle in rural Chad.** Photo: Steve Goddard/Tearfund



# The way of Jesus

As the violent conflict continues in one of the countries where Tearfund works, many people feel that there are only three possible responses: submit, run or fight with violence.

However, Jesus showed that there is a fourth, non-violent way to stand up against injustice and oppression. He explained to his disciples that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43–44). And even when he knew his own death was rapidly approaching, he refused to meet violence with violence (Luke 22:47–53).

In the country where Tearfund is working, this has formed the basis of a peacebuilding movement called Jesus' 4th Way. We are using four steps to build the movement (see page 11), recognising that when a large number of people take peaceful action together it can bring significant change.

These four steps form a virtuous circle. Each non-violent action sows seeds of interest in new people. And after learning more about the movement, eventually they participate in actions themselves, and so on.

**‘When a large number of people take peaceful action together it can bring significant change.’**

## Love and compassion

As the movement grows and demonstrates effectiveness, we hope that even people and groups already committed to ways of violence will recognise the positive and necessary contribution of non-violent campaigns.

One participant said, ‘Many people are facing difficulties and feeling stuck. In these times, how can we support each other? By showing love and compassion.’

Another added, ‘Each person’s fourth way will be different. First of all, we have to change our own life, and then we have to change the world around us.’

## Conflict transformation

The phrase ‘conflict transformation’ is used to describe the various processes through which people and nations seek to establish constructive, positive relationships and institutions in their communities, in place of the destruction of war.

Conflict transformation includes confronting wrongdoing in a non-violent way, establishing justice, negotiating agreements, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Jesus calls his followers to be involved in positively transforming conflict (Matthew 5:9).

Such people show themselves to be God’s children, demonstrating the same care and compassion for people suffering in conflict as God has demonstrated through Christ (Colossians 1:20).

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*From Bible study manual on conflict transformation by Daniel Buttry*

Visit [globalpeacewarriors.org](http://globalpeacewarriors.org) for this and other resources in multiple languages

# Building a movement for peace

## Step 1 Sow seeds

Many people in conflict situations dismiss the value of non-violent tactics and are initially unwilling to discuss them, particularly if they are experiencing trauma, grief and suffering. There is often an immediate, natural tendency to seek revenge or retribution for what has happened.

While helping people to work through their trauma, we talk about the importance of taking responsibility for harm, the power of forgiveness and how peace can come through dialogue, reconciliation and grace.



## Step 2 Gather people

We invite people who want to know more about peacebuilding and non-violent action to take part in regular discussion groups.



## Step 3 Develop strategy

As there are high risks associated with any form of activism in the country, it is essential for us to have a leadership team of wise advisors.

These advisors study previous examples of non-violent resistance and plan practical and safe activities to launch or support.



## Step 4 Take action

We invite everyone in the network to participate in non-violent activities to share messages of peace. These include singing competitions, drama and acts of kindness in the community.

The leadership team – which includes people from media organisations, Christian leaders and other public figures – publicises the activities, raises awareness and invites participation.



# Conflict tree

Adapt this tool for your context and use it to help people understand conflicts better and find lasting solutions.

## Example

Imagine a situation where floods and landslides have caused hundreds of people to move from the countryside to an already crowded informal settlement on the edge of a city.

As the pressure on available space and resources grows, arguments break out between the original residents and the newcomers, with threats of violence on both sides.

The local church invites representatives from both groups to meet to talk about the conflict. A facilitator encourages them to work together to answer the discussion questions (right).

During the process of answering these questions, the group draws a conflict tree to help them understand the situation better. As they do this, they realise that if the root causes of the conflict are not addressed, then it will be difficult for them to find a lasting solution.

They also realise that everyone wants the same thing – a safe and comfortable place to live – and that their disagreements are making the situation worse.

Based on this understanding, they agree to start working together to resolve the problem. As a starting point, they send a letter to the local government asking for practical support, and the host community offers to provide temporary accommodation for new arrivals.



## Discussion questions

- What is the issue of disagreement?
- Which people (individuals and groups) are involved and who is affected? How are they affected?
- What is the viewpoint of each group?
- What are the values, needs, hopes and concerns of each group? Which of these differ and which are the same?
- What are the past misunderstandings that might have contributed to the disagreement?
- What solutions to the conflict does each group suggest?
- Why might some of these solutions be unacceptable to the opposing group?
- What solutions will be acceptable to everyone?



## Key tips for facilitators

### Be sensitive and wise

Issues relating to conflict can be very sensitive and must be approached with an open and non-judgemental attitude. Before you start, make sure that the discussions will not put anyone at risk.

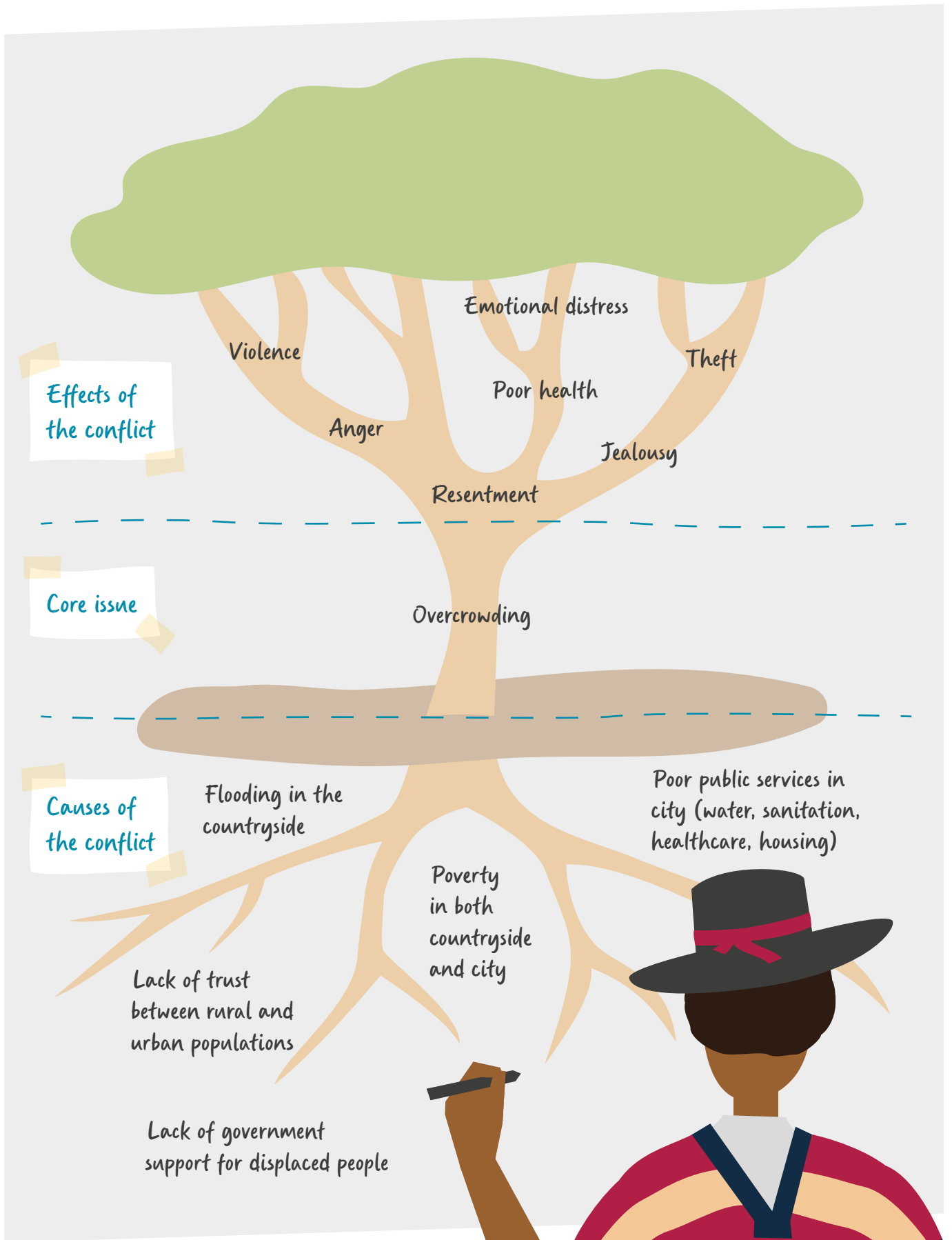
### Ensure participation

Include men and women of different ages, ethnicity, religion, disability status and socioeconomic background in the discussions. If the conflict is not too intense, it might be possible to

hold discussions with representatives from different sides at the same time. But if this is likely to make the situation worse, meet with the different groups separately.

### Go slowly

The process needs to be carried out at the pace of the people involved. Let them decide how much time they want to spend on each question and activity.



For more information and training resources, visit [learn.tearfund.org](https://learn.tearfund.org) and search for 'peacebuilding'

# Building bridges across faiths

By Mengistie Rebsso and Nadia Vermaak

**‘Today when we were coming from Nineveh, the checkpoint officer asked who we were, and we said one Kakai, one Yezidi, Christians and Shabaks. The officer was shocked to hear of so many ethnicities and religious groups travelling together.’** A participant in the JISRA consortium in Iraq

In many parts of the world, discrimination, misunderstandings, power struggles and intolerance lead to religious violence. This has a devastating impact on local communities, especially people living in poverty.

The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) – named after the word *jisr* in Arabic, which means ‘bridge’ – promotes peaceful and just societies by encouraging freedom of religion

and belief. It is a partnership of 50 civil society organisations across Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda.

JISRA partners use a community dialogue approach that encourages people from different faiths to have honest conversations, identify common problems and find common solutions. As a result, the participants develop closer relationships with each other, as well as gaining the skills they need to help address tensions in their communities.

Yordanos Asnake, a Christian in Ethiopia, says, ‘The workshops changed my understanding of the Islamic religion, and dramatically improved my relationships with Muslims. I now understand more about the contribution of all faith actors to peaceful coexistence in our community.’

📍 Representatives from different faiths in Nigeria join a peaceful demonstration on an International Day of Peace.  
Photo: Promise Salawu/Tearfund



**‘Long-lasting peace cannot be achieved without women.’**

## Engaging young people

Young people can be easily overlooked in peacebuilding processes, but they have a vital role to play. JISRA activities to increase the involvement of young people include sporting events and camps where youth from different faiths can make friends, discuss their beliefs, share their challenges and identify ways to live peacefully together.

Meseret Tadesse used to be involved in violent youth protests in Ethiopia, but now she sees things differently. She says, ‘In our culture, ethnic and religious conflicts often become violent. Thanks to JISRA training, many young people like me are realising that non-violent communication is the best way to develop a culture of peaceful coexistence.’

‘In my school, two religious groups got into a conflict, and I was able to help. First, I talked to those from the Muslim side, and even though I am a Christian they accepted my logic of reconciliation. I then talked to the Christian group. Finally, I brought them together and helped them to forgive each other and discuss their issues openly.’

## Gender equality

Long-lasting peace cannot be achieved without women. But gender inequality in families and communities often makes it difficult for women to become fully involved in peacebuilding activities. JISRA partners are working to change this through training events and conferences involving both men and women.

Haleemah Ahmed is a gender and peacebuilding advisor with the Development Initiative of West Africa. She says, ‘We have seen the notable role that women can play in peacebuilding processes around the world. It is important that they are at the forefront of activities and that their voices are heard.’

After attending a JISRA workshop on gender equality, Mr Modibo, a Muslim leader in Mali, now agrees with Ms Ahmed. He says, ‘Honestly, the workshop touched me and opened my mind. As the head of the family, with all my authority, I had no great regard for my wife. Now I am more respectful

towards her and, remarkably, she respects me. There is such a harmony in my family that did not exist before. I cannot believe it.’

## Faith leaders

Interfaith dialogue between influential faith leaders is helping to build trust and enhance religious tolerance and understanding.

Ali Thiam, a member of the High Islamic Council of Ségou in Mali, says, ‘All my life, I never imagined that there could be any collaboration between Christians and Muslims in this country. With all these activities, we have great hope that peace can and will reign in our country.’

Mr Mobido adds, ‘I dared not have too close relations with Christians. For me, a good Muslim should not build relationships with people of a different faith. But now I have so much respect for other people, including non-Muslims. From now on, even our grown children will be at peace with other religions.’

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*Mengistie Rebsso is Tearfund’s Project Coordinator for the JISRA programme in Ethiopia, and Nadia Vermaak is Tearfund’s Editorial and Digital Communications Assistant*

*The JISRA project is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and coordinated by four international peacebuilding organisations: Mensen met een Missie; Tearfund UK and Tearfund Netherlands; Faith to Action Network; and search for Common Ground, with support from technical partner Network for Traditional and Religious Peacemakers*

[jisra.org](http://jisra.org)



## Case study New friends

**Lebanon has a long history of tension between different religious and political groups. Sometimes this results in civil unrest and – at times – armed conflict.**

One of Tearfund's partners in Lebanon runs youth programmes designed to bring together young people from across religious and ethnic divides to learn more about one another, take part in activities alongside each other, and build relationships that start to bring understanding and healing.

Levon\* is 16. He is from an Armenian Lebanese family and studies at a Christian school. Before he joined the youth centre he did not have any Arab or Muslim friends at all.

Levon says, 'What changed most in me is how I see people who are different to me. Last year, I thought they were bad people. Today, however, I am much more open-minded than I used to be.'

**'What changed most in me is how I see people who are different to me.'**

'When I first joined the centre I used to hang out with Christian friends only, but now I have many Muslim friends. One of my good friends is Syrian. Moussa\* and I were in the classroom during an activity where students made speeches to represent their people. The conversation sparked and our friendship took off that day.'



**A child plays in Lebanon.**

Photo: Ruth Towell/Tearfund

Levon says he learnt a lot during the sessions about the importance of listening to each other without judgement, and learning about each other's beliefs. He says he also enjoyed a group activity that involved going out onto the streets and asking people questions to better understand attitudes and opinions within their own neighbourhood.

Young people such as Levon and Moussa have a natural and vital part to play in their communities. By making new friends and learning to hear and understand one another better, they can help to build peace.

*\*Names have been changed for protection*



# Make a friendship bracelet

Think about your friends. What do you like about them? Perhaps they are fun to be with, kind and easy to talk to. A good friend can cheer us up when we are sad and keep us company when we are lonely.

But sometimes we might have arguments with our friends, which can make us feel upset. If that happens, wait for a little while until you feel less upset, and then go and talk to your friend. If you can say sorry to each other and forgive each other, this will help you to carry on being friends.

Follow these steps to make friendship bracelets out of thick cotton or wool. You might want to give them as presents to friends or other children in your school and neighbourhood.

## Bible verse memory challenge!

Jesus loves us and is the best friend we could ever have.

Can you learn this Bible verse?

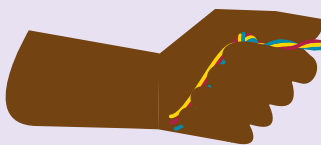
**'Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me."**

**Mark 10:14**

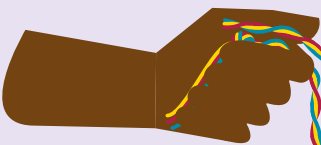
- 1 Take three strands of thick cotton or wool and tie the ends together – use different colours if you can



- 2 Wrap the strands around your wrist three times, which will tell you how long they need to be, and ask an adult to cut the strands to that length



- 3 Ask a friend to hold the knotted end for you while you twist the strands many times in the same direction until they are tight



- 4 Fold the bracelet in half and, holding both ends, let go of the rest of the bracelet, allowing it to twist around itself



- 5 Tie both ends together



- 6 At the opposite end to the knot, pull open a hole in the threads that is large enough for the knot to pass through

- 7 Push the knot through the hole to make a loop



# Challenging gender inequality

By Vanessa Barbosa

**After eight years working as a social worker in Brazil, I strongly believe in the potential of faith communities to help reduce inequalities that affect the lives of women.**

Many of these inequalities have been passed down to us through family and community culture, and we see them as normal. In churches, there is often little reflection on this, which is a mistake.

## Global problem

Gender inequality means that women and girls are valued less than men and boys, and this can lead to abuse and violence. Globally, one in every three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Many will then be stigmatised and blamed, making it difficult for them to live dignified and full lives in their families, workplaces and communities.

📍 **Young women enter a rural church in Fonseca, Brazil.**  
Photo: Tom Price-Ecce Opus/Tearfund

During disasters or armed conflict, women and girls become even more vulnerable. At these times it can be easier for people in positions of authority to abuse their power, and sexual violence may be used as a weapon of war.

## Places of refuge

In a crisis, churches and other places of worship often become places of refuge. It is therefore essential that faith leaders and members of congregations take the time to discuss and understand why women suffer from various forms of discrimination and violence, and the impact of these in their communities.

Alongside this, leaders and congregations must identify, challenge and try to change any unhelpful patterns of behaviour or wrong attitudes in their own lives. They can then work out how best to provide people affected by sexual and gender-based violence with the welcome, care and support they need.



Key ideas for faith communities to consider:

- Train leaders in how to respond to gender inequality and incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, including how to welcome and support survivors.
- Speak openly about gender inequality, injustice and gender-based violence in sermons and meetings, using examples from scripture to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours.
- Develop a series of regular activities that people in vulnerable situations can easily join in with, for example arts and crafts, sports, cooking, singing or drama. This will help people to feel welcomed, accepted and respected.
- Create peer discussion groups where people can speak openly about their experiences in a safe place.
- Equip men to be champions for the rights of women and girls.
- Develop a referral system with health professionals and public service providers who can offer specialist physical and emotional care when needed.



❏ Pastor Armando Hernández Puac, seen here with his wife Concepción Mendoza Choché outside their home in Guatemala, is a Gender Champion in Tearfund's Transforming Masculinities programme. Photo: Caroline Trutmann/Tearfund

*Vanessa Barbosa is a social worker and a member of the executive board of the Rede de Mulheres Negras Evangélicas (Network of Evangelical Black Women), working in the field of gender justice and anti-racism*

## Transforming Masculinities

Tearfund's Transforming Masculinities approach aims to end sexual and gender-based violence by changing harmful beliefs and attitudes that uphold gender inequality.

Using examples from scripture, faith leaders are trained in the approach and are supported through their own journey of transformation. They then speak out in their communities, sharing positive messages in sermons and modelling ways of being a man or a woman which value both sexes equally.

These faith leaders select one man and one woman in their community to become Gender Champions, who are trained the same way. These champions facilitate discussion groups where men and women can reflect on their

own beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, as well as those of their families and communities.

Participants often talk about how the programme is helping their families to become stronger, how violence is stopping, and how women and men are thriving together. As they share their stories, this encourages more people to choose to adopt behaviours and attitudes that support equality.

*For more information and training resources, visit [learn.tearfund.org](https://learn.tearfund.org) and search for 'transforming masculinities'*

# Flourishing together

By Nayar Mushtaq and Tabita Shamshad

Peshawar, the capital city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, has a predominantly Muslim population, but Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and other minority faith groups have also been living in the city for generations. Mosques, churches and temples are located in close proximity to each other, but their coexistence is fragile.

The Flourishing Together project aims to increase peaceful coexistence and tolerance of different faiths. Together, we are seeking to break religious stereotypes, promote mutual respect and enhance mutual understanding.

## Faith friend groups

Naeem is a senior Muslim cleric serving as a *Khateeb* (preacher) in Peshawar. He says, 'We can see that there is a great gulf between the faith communities and misunderstandings on all sides. Christians are increasingly perceived as alien and non-compatible with our culture.'

‘Together, we are seeking to break religious stereotypes, promote mutual respect and enhance mutual understanding.’

In 2022, a social mobiliser from Tearfund’s local partner met with Naeem. He explained to Naeem the vision of the project and demonstrated how the partner organisation is working with multi-faith communities for the promotion of social cohesion and peace.

Being a prominent religious figure, Naeem was unsure how his community would react to his participation in such a project. However, in October 2022 he became a member of a faith friend group and attended the project’s peacebuilding and conflict-resolution training.

Faith friend groups are local networks made up of representatives from different faith communities

📍 At an event in Pakistan, people from different faiths use string to demonstrate that we are all connected, regardless of belief and social status. Photo: Diocese of Peshawar





During peacebuilding and conflict-resolution training in Pakistan, young people and leaders from different faith groups present their ideas on how they can collaborate to create harmony in society. Photo: Diocese of Peshawar

including religious leaders, community members and young people. They play a crucial role in bringing communities together for peacebuilding and they advocate messages of peace and social cohesion. They also help people to put their peace commitments into action.

Naeem says, 'Before attending the meeting, I was convinced that peacebuilding activities were about converting people to other faiths. But after attending the meeting I realised that this particular group was genuine in its agenda and efforts and I decided to become an active member.'

Naeem began promoting social cohesion in both official and unofficial ways, and bringing like-minded clerics and Islamic seminary students to peacebuilding events.

## Breaking barriers

However, transforming deep-rooted beliefs and stereotypes takes time. During one faith friend group meeting held in a church, Naeem did not initially show up. The hosting pastor spoke to him and realised that Naeem was unsure about entering a church building.

Naeem told the pastor about past experiences of being scolded by his father for expressing curiosity about Christianity, and being threatened by a Christian security guard when he attempted to enter a church. These incidents left a lasting impression on Naeem, making him believe that coexistence would be difficult.

Having listened carefully, the pastor smiled and asked Naeem to follow him. He took him inside the now empty church and showed him the inside of the building. Standing in the centre, the two men talked at length about faith, beliefs and practices, finding many areas of agreement.

Deeply touched by this positive attitude and unusual experience, Naeem asked as many questions as he could think of. Both men listened carefully to each other and avoided being offensive or judgemental. They felt that invisible barriers had been broken and were greatly encouraged by this honest exchange.

*Nayyar Mushtaq is a Project Coordinator and Tabita Shamshad is a Programme and Communication Assistant. Both work for Tearfund in the Eurasia and North Africa region*

# Hands that weave peace

By Isabel Orozco Álvarez

In Colombia there is a conflict between armed groups that is more than 70 years old. Because of this conflict, thousands of people have been violently displaced from their homes and lands. Generally, they leave the countryside and go to the city.

In most cases, the mother is the one who survives the violent attacks. She becomes a widow who must look after her children. These mothers, who used to cultivate the land and raise animals with their hands, now do not know what to do with them because these skills are useless in the city. Their hands are empty and they live in poverty.

Gladys, Amparito and Ana Belén are three of the women who came to live in Granizal, on the outskirts of Medellín. Many look at them and see people who have strange dress or speech, or who could be dangerous. However, they are women of faith: courageous and loving. They have embraced

❏ Amparito looks out of her window at the neighbourhood she now calls home. Photo: Carolina Niklison



❏ A bird nesting in a tree: one of the tapestries created by the ladies in the Mujeres de la Memoria group. Photo: Isabel Orozco Álvarez

hope, even as they struggle to erase from their hearts the scars left by exile, abuse and violent loss.

They belong to the group Mujeres de la Memoria (Women of Memory), and together they have found in art a simple way to express what hurts them. With needle and thread, they weave their memories of the countryside, their painful past and their dreams.

As they weave, they think and talk about their new roles in the community. They see themselves as women bearing the image of God, who can use their hands to knit peace and reconciliation with themselves and their neighbours.

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*Isabel Orozco Álvarez is a theologian and artist in Medellín, Colombia*



# Resources

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- **Community-led advocacy – 118**
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- [un.org/peacebuilding](https://un.org/peacebuilding)
- [unicef.org/emergencies/peacebuilding-social-cohesion](https://unicef.org/emergencies/peacebuilding-social-cohesion)
- [globalpeacewarriors.org](https://globalpeacewarriors.org)

## Community conflict transformation dialogues

Resources to help communities think about the conflicts that affect them, while equipping them to transform those same conflicts

## Peacebuilding within our communities – Roots guide

Practical peacebuilding tools for communities and organisations

## Rapid conflict analysis

Key questions to ask when analysing a conflict

## Transforming Masculinities

A programme that seeks to end sexual and gender-based violence and promote gender-equal societies

## Podcasts

- Faith in development – Season 1: peacebuilding
- How to build community

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# Interview

# Restoration



**Barnabé Anzuruni is Tearfund's Theology Network and Engagement Regional Coordinator for East, Central and Southern Africa. Here he shares his thoughts on how to support people affected by conflict.**

'Recently, when I walked into a refugee camp in Uganda, memories came flooding back of my time as a refugee in Tanzania in the 1990s. I remembered the challenges we experienced, the hopes we had, and the long journey back to physical and emotional restoration.'

'I find Isaiah 61:3-4 helpful as a model for how we can support people affected by conflict, particularly those who have been displaced.'

## 1 Comfort all who mourn

'Our immediate response should be to provide comfort to those who are grieving. This includes providing people with safe shelter and nutritious food so they can rest and build up their strength.'



📍 **Collecting water in Bidi Bidi refugee camp in northern Uganda, home to more than 250,000 refugees from South Sudan.** Photo: Stephen German/Tearfund

## 2 A crown of beauty instead of ashes; oil of joy instead of mourning

'Once people are ready to talk about their experiences, trauma counselling and activities such as art therapy can help people move from pain and grief to a greater sense of peace, hope and emotional wellbeing.'

## 3 Oaks of righteousness

'Oak trees are a symbol of strength. By making it clear that we recognise and appreciate the worth of every individual, we can help restore their sense of purpose and dignity. They can then begin to use their skills and abilities to start rebuilding their lives.'

## 4 Rebuild the ancient ruins; restore the places long devastated

'Some regions affected by conflict have experienced devastation for decades, and historical disagreements, trauma and deep emotional wounds have been passed down from generation to generation.'

'Restoration in this context goes beyond rebuilding what was lost; it means creating an environment where people can thrive, dreams can be nurtured and opportunities for a better future can be realised.'

'By understanding the root causes of conflicts, addressing underlying disagreements and fostering reconciliation, communities can work together to build the foundations of a more peaceful, equitable and stable future.'

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