



Photo: Sumaya Agha for Mercy Corps

## AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION:

**Why increasing investment in conflict prevention is worth more than a “pound of cure” in addressing the displacement crisis**

SEPTEMBER 2016



## Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who contributed to this report, and in particular: Provash Budden, William Farrell, Garrett Hubbard, Rodolphe Moinaux, and Raed Nimri, for sharing their experience and expertise; Heba Assad, Sam Kelege-Mufandjala, and Mohammad Nasareddin, for their support in facilitating interviews, and Michael Bowers, Lynn Hector, Miranda Hurst, Andrea Koppel, Jon Kurtz, Leah Schlechter, Selena Victor, Rebecca Wolfe, and Michael Young, for their insight and editorial feedback.

Ann Vaughan, Director, Policy and Advocacy

Kari Diener, Deputy Director, Policy and Advocacy

Madeline Rose, Senior Policy Advisor

# Executive Summary:

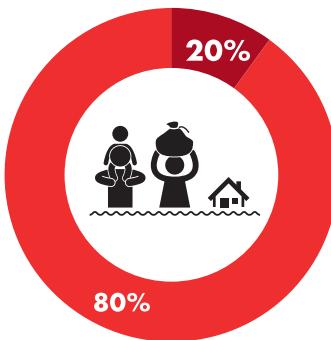
Today, we face the largest refugee and forced migrant crisis the world has ever seen: 65 million people are currently uprooted from their homes, a population roughly the same size as that of France — and the primary driver of all this displacement is conflict.

Just ten years ago, about 80 percent of humanitarian aid went to helping the victims of natural disasters. Yet today, 80 percent of aid is going to people whose lives have been turned upside down by conflict. The change has been so dramatic that **the World Bank now recognizes conflict as the primary cause of poverty and human suffering** — not just one among various causes. As conflicts rage unabated, they fuel bigger waves of displacement, which are now lasting longer than ever before. In 1993, a protracted displacement lasted nine years on average. Now, the average is more than 26 years.

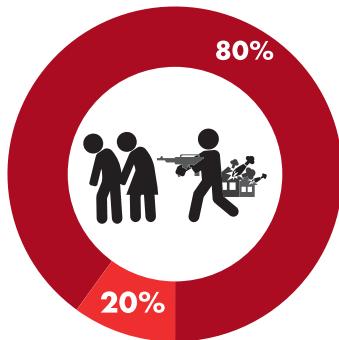
While conflict intensifies worldwide and forces people to flee their homes, it also exposes gaps in strategies intended to address humanitarian crises. In the face of today's challenges, preventing and ending conflict — and thus removing the primary driver of forced displacement — requires a comprehensive approach that integrates conflict mitigation, peacebuilding, and good governance as part of the response from the very outset. If our goal is to keep conflicts from dragging on (as in the Democratic Republic of Congo) or falling into repeat cycles (as in South Sudan) we must invest earlier and more robustly in programs that have been proven to prevent or mitigate conflict and build peace. These interventions are known as conflict management, conflict mitigation, or peacebuilding — and they can make a dramatic difference in people's lives, particularly in the absence of political will for high-level diplomatic resolutions.

## Humanitarian Funding and Displacement

**2006**  
**32.9 million**  
**people**  
**displaced**



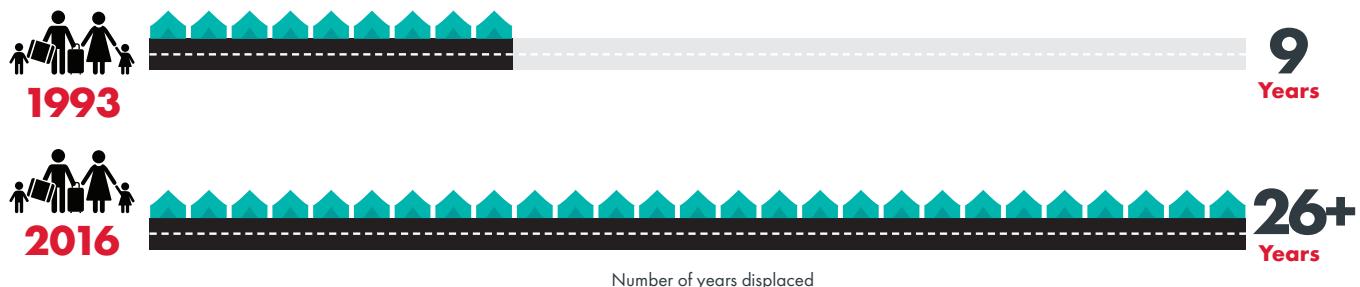
**2016**  
**65.3 million**  
**people**  
**displaced**

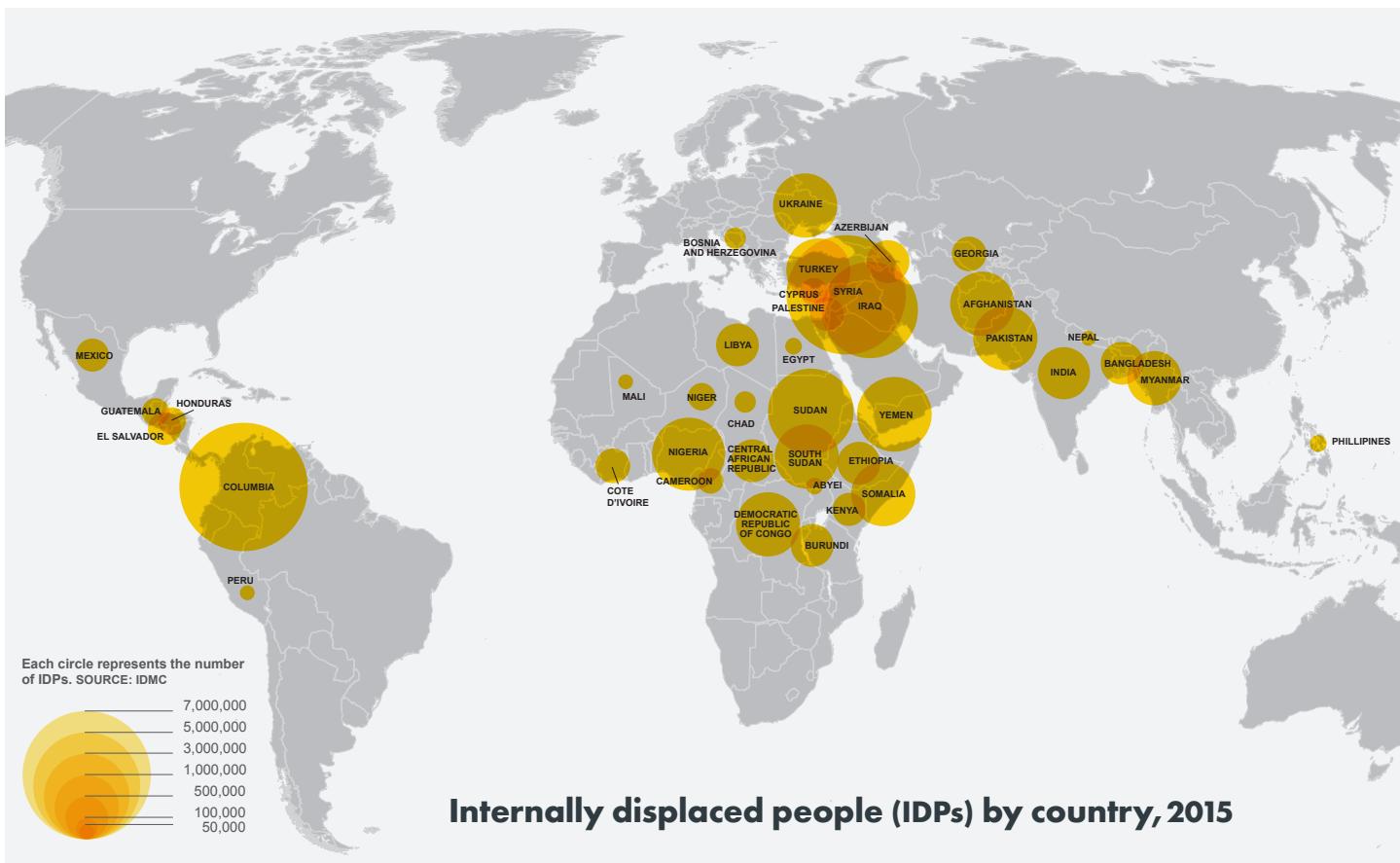


● Portion of humanitarian funding in response to natural disasters

● Portion of humanitarian funding in response to conflict

## Then & Now: average length of a protracted displacement (in years)





In recent decades Mercy Corps has implemented over 95 conflict management programs in more than 30 countries, documenting the measurable impact this programming has on building peace and stability. The following paper contains some highlights from our research and field experience that illustrate why this approach is vital to stemming displacement, including evidence from Central African Republic, Colombia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Iraq, Jordan, and Nigeria — all major sources or hosts of displaced populations.

*“Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity.”*

—UN Secretary Ban Ki Moon

Paradoxically, while these approaches are proven to be effective, the international aid community currently spends an infinitesimal amount of funds on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding relative

to other types of foreign aid. Approximately one percent of all foreign aid is devoted to conflict mitigation in general, increasing only to four percent in fragile states. This is a strategic oversight with grave consequences. Fortunately, there are solutions. **First, major donors, including the U.S. government, should double funding for programs that focus on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding. Second, development actors should engage early and in a sustained way to integrate conflict mitigation and peacebuilding into all interventions where conflict is a factor.**

If we are to seriously address the global displacement crisis, we must make bigger, smarter, and more sustained investments in high-level diplomatic efforts to broker peace agreements and grassroots peacebuilding. Only then will we begin to see the kind of meaningful impact on conflict, human suffering, and poverty that needs to be delivered.

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	3
<b>Introduction</b>	6
The Current Crisis: Conflict & Displacement	6
Rethinking Humanitarian Interventions	9
Mercy Corps' Focus on Peacebuilding	12
<b>Conflict Mitigation in Five Contexts</b>	14
Central African Republic	14
Jordan	15
Ethiopia	17
Guatemala & Colombia	18
Nigeria	19
<b>A Way Forward</b>	21
Recommendations	22

# Introduction

## The Current Crisis: Conflict & Displacement

We are facing the largest refugee and migrant crisis in modern history. At present, 65 million people are currently uprooted from their homes, a population roughly the same size as that of France — and the primary driver of this displacement is conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Just ten years ago, about 80 percent of humanitarian aid went to helping the victims of natural disasters. Yet today, 80 percent of aid is going to people whose lives have been turned upside down by conflict.<sup>2</sup> The change is so dramatic that the World Bank now recognizes conflict as the primary cause of poverty and human suffering — not just one among various causes.<sup>3</sup> As conflicts rage unabated, they fuel bigger waves of displacement, which are lasting longer than ever before. In 1993, protracted displacement lasted nine years on average.<sup>4</sup> Now, the average is more than 26 years.<sup>5</sup> In the Dadaab refugee camp in Eastern Kenya — which the government recently announced may soon close — nearly 330,000 Somalis live in protracted displacement, with entire generations having grown up in what is now the world's largest refugee complex, parts of which were established in 1992.<sup>6</sup>

At the moment, the crisis shows no sign of letting up. In 2015, 34,000 people across the globe were displaced every day,<sup>7</sup> or an average of 24 people per minute. This means that, for example, if this paper took an average of ten minutes to read, during that time about 240 people would be displaced.

**Each day 34,000+ people across the globe are displaced**



## 》 UN Definitions for Refugee, Migrant, IDP

*Refugee: In popular usage, a refugee is a person forced to flee across national borders due to conflict, persecution, natural disaster, or any other cause. The 1951 UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee under more specific terms, as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”<sup>8</sup> The Convention protects the right of refugees to seek asylum in other countries and be protected by international law.*

1 “Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase,” UNHCR, June 18, 2015, (accessed September 7, 2016).

2 Ban Ki Moon, “We must work in new ways to help people in crisis,” The Guardian, June 14, 2016, (accessed September 7, 2016).

3 *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*, World Bank, 2011.

4 “Population, Refugees, and the Millennium Development Goals: A UNHCR Perspective,” UNHCR, 2003.

5 *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015*, UNHCR, June 20, 2016.

6 UNHCR “Refugees in the Horn of Africa: The Somali Displacement Crisis,” (accessed September 7, 2016).

7 *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015*, UNHCR.

8 “Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,” United Nations, 1951, (accessed September 7, 2016).

**Internally Displaced Person (IDP):** While they may flee their homes for the same reasons as refugees, IDPs are currently displaced within their home countries. As the UN states, they “remain under the protection of their government, even if that government is the reason for their displacement. As a result, these people are among the most vulnerable in the world.”<sup>9</sup> At the time of writing, there were 40.8 million IDPs worldwide — or nearly twice as many IDPs as refugees.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, because IDPs remain in their home countries, their plight can be highly politicized due to the fact that governments may perceive international support for IDPs as interfering with domestic issues.

**Migrant:** Whereas refugees and IDPs are forced to flee their homes, migrants choose to move. They leave not because of a direct threat of persecution, disaster, or death, but, according to UNHCR, “mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. For individual governments, this distinction is important; countries deal with migrants under their own immigration laws and processes.”<sup>11</sup>

Today, when many people hear the words “displacement” or “refugee” they think first of Syria, which is currently the source of the world’s single largest displacement crisis. Some 4.8 million Syrians are refugees, having been displaced across international borders, with another 6.5 million displaced inside the country. All told, this is about half the country’s total population.<sup>12</sup>

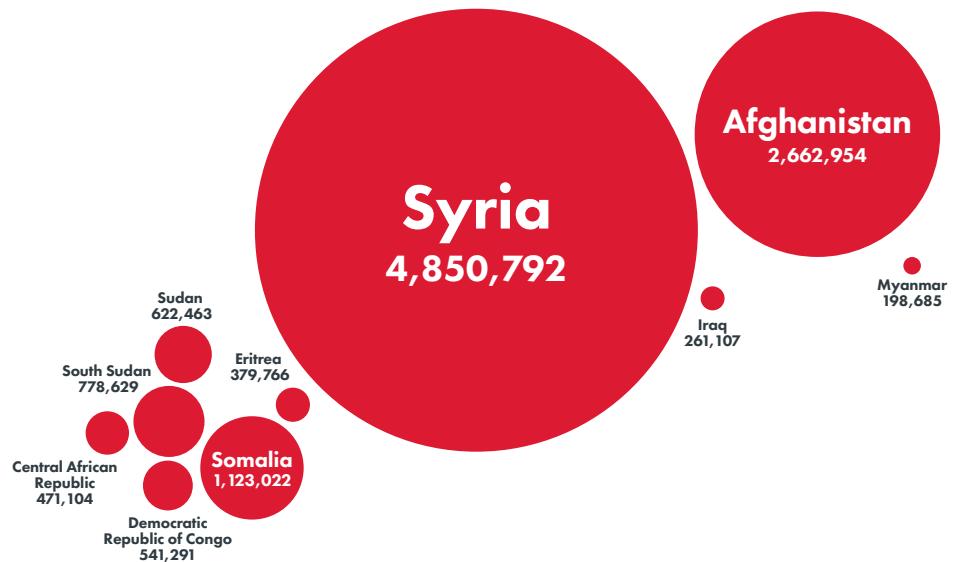
While some experts — including former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres — observe that Syria’s conflict has overburdened the humanitarian system,<sup>13</sup> the deeper truth is that Syria has exposed fundamental flaws in the way we collectively approach global governance, development, and aid in general.

Our current humanitarian system was built to respond to natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, and typhoons and to manage fewer, shorter-term displacements. It was not built to manage massive conflicts like those underway in places like

Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) or Somalia, which have dragged on for decades, or the one unfolding more recently in Syria. In other words, the current system doesn’t address the causes of conflict but the consequences, with an emphasis on saving lives and alleviating immediate human suffering.

During the past several decades, humanitarians have grappled with how to best assist societies as they work to move beyond conflict and chronic crisis, without compromising core principles of

### Top 10 source countries for refugees



<sup>9</sup> “Internally Displaced People,” UNHCR, 2014, (accessed September 7, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> “Global Forced Displacement Hits All Time Record High,” UNHCR, June 20, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> “UNHCR Viewpoint: Refugee or Migrant, Which is Right?” July 11, 2016, (accessed September 7, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> “Syrian Arab Republic Crisis Overview,” UNOCHA, (accessed September 7, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> “As global crises multiply, UN official urges rethink for overstretched humanitarian system,” UN News Center, September 30, 2014, (accessed September 7, 2016).

neutrality and impartiality or getting tangled in often contentious and dangerous political issues. Yet rather than take necessary risks and make changes, we've continued to make do. Syria didn't overburden the system so much as it exposed problems that have been part of the humanitarian system for a long time.

The human suffering caused by violent conflict and displacement must be addressed more effectively. Tens of millions of lives depend on it. Currently, 8.7 million people — more than half of all refugees under the UNHCR mandate — have fled Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia, three countries torn apart by civil war or the aftermath of war.<sup>14</sup> In South Sudan, the country is plagued by conflict that caused the displacement of more than 2.25 million people<sup>15</sup> and massive food shortages; at least 5 million South Sudanese are in urgent need of aid.<sup>16</sup> In the Americas, even with an impending peace accord, Colombia's 52-year-old conflict continues to affect millions — the number of those displaced recently passed 7 million<sup>17</sup> — and further north, each year tens of thousands of women and children flee violence in Mexico and Central America, traveling one of the world's most dangerous migration routes to seek asylum in the United States, often only to be turned back.<sup>18</sup>



Political will, or lack thereof, on the part of donor governments, governments party to conflict, and the UN system at large also plays a significant role in the displacement crisis. Violent conflict erupts for a host of reasons. Poor governance, particularly where certain populations (such as ethnic and/or religious groups, or youth) feel they are not represented or are treated unfairly, provides openings for leaders to use grievances to mobilize supporters. Erosion of informal and formal institutions creates power vacuums that groups vie to fill or degradation of natural resources increases competition between groups. These factors often intersect — and the resulting conflicts frequently mean mass displacement.<sup>19</sup>

There is no doubt that the burden of hosting refugees has fallen disproportionately on countries that are poor, fragile, and already stressed.<sup>20</sup> The DRC, in the midst of its own crisis and the second poorest country in the world,<sup>21</sup> nonetheless hosts hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees and tens of thousands from the Central African Republic (CAR). During 2014, relative to their total population, Lebanon and Jordan hosted the largest number of refugees of any countries in the world, with 232 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants and 87 refugees per 1,000 respectively, followed by Nauru with 39 refugees per 1,000 and Chad with 34 refugees per 1,000.<sup>22</sup>

14 "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015," UNHCR.

15 "More than 2.25 million now displaced in South Sudan and across its borders," UNHCR, July 7, 2015, (accessed September 7, 2016).

16 "Quick Facts: What You Need to Know About the South Sudan Crisis," Mercy Corps, July 11, 2016, (accessed September 7, 2016).

17 Miroff, Nick, "Colombia's war has displaced 7 million. With peace, will they go home?" Washington Post, September 5, 2016, (accessed September 9, 2016).

18 Hiskey, Jonathan T. et al, "Understanding the Central American Refugee Crisis," The American Immigration Council, February 1, 2016, (accessed September 6, 2016).

19 "Mercy Corps' Peace and Conflict Sector Approach," Mercy Corps, April 2016.

20 UNHCR Mid Year Trends 2014, UNHCR, January 7, 2015.

21 "World 2014," World Development Indicators database, <http://data.worldbank.org>, (accessed May 7, 2014).

22 "Hosting the World's Refugees," UNHCR 2014.

Relative to the ability of an economy to withstand an influx of refugees, the economic burden of hosting hit Pakistan and Ethiopia hardest.<sup>23</sup> Pakistan hosted 1.5 million formally registered Afghan refugees, with the government estimating that there may be an additional million unregistered refugees,<sup>24</sup> while Ethiopia hosted about 734,000 refugees from South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea.<sup>25</sup>

### All told, developing countries with scarce

**resources and their own development needs host 86 percent of the world's refugees.**<sup>26</sup> With the exception of Sweden, no developed nation has resettled a similar number of refugees in relation to its population nor its wealth. Additionally, humanitarian funding needs increasingly go unmet: in 2015 the World Food Program cut assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon by 50 percent.<sup>27</sup> As of August 2016, the humanitarian appeal for CAR was only 28 percent funded, the DRC's only 42 percent, and only 33 percent of the needs inside Syria have been funded.<sup>28</sup>

**Chad ranks 185 out of 188 countries in the Human Development Index – yet it hosts 34 refugees per 1000 inhabitants.**

**What if developed countries hosted at this rate?**

Number of refugees if hosting 34/1000	
Canada	1,195,440
United States	10,842,600
Australia	786,420
New Zealand	152,014
United Kingdom	2,189,940

### At what rate are developed countries hosting refugees?

	Total Refugees	Current rate of hosting (per 1000 inhabitants)
Canada	135,888	
United States	273,202	
Australia	36,717	
New Zealand	1,337	
United Kingdom	123,067	

As UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon said in his April 2016 remarks about the displacement crisis: "Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity."<sup>29</sup>

### Rethinking Humanitarian Interventions

How can donors and development actors work together to resolve this "crisis of solidarity" and effectively address displacement?

First, we must rethink how we address conflict in general. Too frequently, the international response to a conflict is extremely expensive and securitized — be it training and equipping troops, sales of military equipment, or counter terrorism interventions. When the conflict affects civilians, international aid organizations will rush to provide emergency medical care, food, and shelter. All these measures address critical needs. **Yet in the face of today's challenges, short term relief work is not only inadequate but highly unlikely to end suffering if it doesn't occur alongside conflict mitigation and peacebuilding.**

23 "UNHCR report shows world's poorest countries host most refugees," UNHCR, January 7, 2015.

24 "Pakistan, Renewed Threats to Afghan Refugees," Human Rights Watch, July 1, 2016, (accessed September 7, 2016).

25 "Do Not Risk Your Lives, Grandi Tells Eritrean Refugees," February 2, 2016, (accessed September 6, 2016).

26 "UNHCR Report Shows World's Poorest Countries Host Most Refugees," UNHCR, January 7, 2015.

27 "UN food agency cuts aid for Syrian refugees by half," Press TV, August 7, 2015.

28 Data pulled from the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) on August 24, 2016.

29 "Refugee Crisis about Solidarity, not Just Numbers, Secretary-General Says at Event on Global Displacement Challenge," UN Press Release, April 15, 2016 (accessed September 7, 2016).



Photo: Corinna Robbins / Mercy Corps

## » CONFLICT MITIGATION & PEACEBUILDING

According to the OECD, “conflict prevention and peacebuilding describe a fast-developing field that covers four broad areas of intervention: equitable socio-economic development, good governance, the reform of security and justice institutions, and truth and reconciliation processes. Conflict prevention activities share the goal of averting the outbreak of violence. Peacebuilding work focuses on reducing or ending violent conflict and/or promoting a culture of peace.”<sup>30</sup>

Mercy Corps’ approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding is based on the idea that if communities are more cohesive, key community leaders and government institutions manage conflict peacefully, and drivers of participation in violence are addressed, then those communities will be more secure and experience less violence.

We need strong political leadership to propel sustained diplomatic efforts and build real political will to end the horrific wars driving displacement and long-term international support to address the systemic root causes of conflict. Yet, there are immediate steps that can be taken to mitigate the effects of conflict, promote peace, and otherwise tackle these crises. This means more and better political and security solutions, more effective diplomacy, more on-the-ground peacebuilding, and sustained support for addressing the underlying drivers of conflict. The real issue isn’t about choosing one intervention over the other but about improving interventions in general.

One thing is clear: we can no longer afford to wait for an emergency to end or for a humanitarian response to be well underway before we address conflict. As a community, we must dramatically rethink how we intervene, integrating humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding programming to simultaneously save lives while addressing the root causes of conflict.

This position is not without risks. Coordinating interventions that aim to support the people and communities we serve by addressing the drivers of conflict has obvious implications for how we understand humanitarian action and how we deliver it. Moving forward, we need careful and purposeful work to ensure humanitarian principles are not undermined — and we also need to improve how humanitarian and development actors deal with politics. But while these concerns must be recognized and addressed, they should not prevent us from taking the steps that will do the most to break cycles of conflict and crisis.

At present, although conflict mitigation and peacebuilding cost far less than other interventions, these programs are seriously underfunded and otherwise limited by policies focused on short timelines, siloed programming, and fast, easily-reported results. In fact, according to Mercy Corps’ analysis of 2014 OECD-DAC statistics, approximately one

30 Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities, OECD-DAC, 2008.

percent of all Official Development Assistance<sup>31</sup> is dedicated to conflict prevention and resolution, peace and security. Even in fragile states, generally the hardest hit conflict zones, that percentage creeps up to just four percent.<sup>32</sup>

One need only to look at interventions in Iraq to see how most governments currently prioritize funding: in 2011, the U.S. government spent a staggering \$47 billion USD for military appropriations in Iraq<sup>33</sup> yet that same year, it spent just \$184 million USD — less than one-fifth of \$1 billion USD — for all democracy, human rights, conflict mitigation, and reconciliation programs in the country.<sup>34</sup> Again, while we are not suggesting that conflict mitigation or peacebuilding can or should replace other interventions, failing to devote more resources to these approaches is an error that translates into more loss of human life, more suffering, and more money eventually spent on recovery.

## 2011 U.S. Government spending on military vs peacebuilding in Iraq



The U.S. Government spent  
**\$47 billion**  
per year on  
**military funding in Iraq.**

The U.S. Government spent  
**\$184 million**  
per year for  
**democracy and human rights,  
conflict mitigation, and  
reconciliation programs in Iraq.**  
**(less than one-fifth of 1 billion total)**

each soldier or dove equals 184 million

- 31 Through analysis of OECD Query Wizard for International Development pulling data for 2014 from all donors (DAC and Non-DAC countries), all recipient countries, ODA, and the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) subcategories 15220, "Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution" and 15261 "Child Soldiers (Prevention & Demobilisation)" we found investments in conflict prevention to be approximately 1% of total ODA. While not a perfect indicator since donors do not uniformly input data and the subcategories do not include all peacebuilding ODA and includes some additional activities, it does serve as the best available proxy. Even expanding the definition of what can be considered peacebuilding and including donor funding for "Democratic participation and civil society (CRS subcategory 15150)" that includes programming in line with peacebuilding goals, only increases the total percentage of funds towards these activities to 1.5% of ODA. For an in-depth analysis of OECD DAC data see "Investments in Peace and Security" by Sarah Dalrymple, March 2016.
- 32 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "States of Fragility 2015 Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions," 2015, page 68, Figure 3.7 and page 72, Table 3.6.
- 33 Congressional Research Service, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," December 2014, (accessed September 8, 2016).
- 34 "Foreign Assistance in Iraq," Foreign Assistance.gov for 2011, (accessed September 8, 2016).

## Mercy Corps' Focus on Peacebuilding

As we urge global leaders to make resolving conflict a top priority, the humanitarian and development community must also get serious about changing the way we intervene in complex crises and fragile states to ensure we address conflict as a whole. This means meeting needs created by conflict via integrated, multi-year humanitarian and development aid programming — and at the same time massively scaling investments in conflict mitigation and prevention efforts.

### › "Good Governance & Investing in Iraq's Peace"

*Good governance is directly linked to conflict mitigation and peacebuilding, and is a key part of addressing forced displacement. When governance is working well, it supports mechanisms that effectively help resolve conflict, deliver justice, and otherwise maintain peace. Conversely, when governance is not working, people are marginalized and services are not provided, and instead of peace there is fragility and instability.*

*In 2014, when the Sunni extremist group the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) conquered much of Sunni-dominated Iraq, pundits described it as a natural outcome of the country's sectarian inheritance. Since 1920, Iraq's artificial borders have placed it on the fault line of the world's Sunni-Shia divide — and this fact is often held up as a driver of violent extremism.<sup>35</sup> Yet, our research shows that more often poor governance drives conflict — and that getting governance right can and does dramatically decrease popular support for the sectarian militancy that contributes to instability. This work demonstrates that sectarianism seems to have been overplayed as the primary or sole driver of instability.*

*"Iraq today faces a choice," says Kasim, the head of the Iraqi Center for Human Rights Activists, a Mercy Corps partner that works to increase citizen influence and improve government transparency. "Either we must empower the civil society of our country, particularly the youth, or we will abandon Iraq to the forces tearing our country apart."*

*Mercy Corps has carried out humanitarian and development programs in Iraq since 2003, and in December 2015 closed our largest program, a three-year, \$55 million dollar USAID-funded program that focused on broadening participation in civil society. Over the course of our time in Iraq, we've seen firsthand the importance of improving government legitimacy at the national and subnational level. This means coupling approaches with efforts to enable citizens to make government deliver through programs that promote citizen engagement, enhance government-citizen dialogues — particularly when it comes to municipal government and civil society — and mobilize civic-minded youth to be leaders. As a result, at a time of growing mistrust and sectarian strife, local civil society organizations are playing a vital role as front line responders to the humanitarian crisis. Today, their engagement, access, and knowledge helps build connections, provides context that pays off in various sectors, and contributes to a more informed and impactful humanitarian response.*



Photo: Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

<sup>35</sup> Proctor, K and Tesfaye, B, "How Good Governance Can Diminish Support for Violent Extremism," Mercy Corps, December 2015.

Wholeheartedly supporting communities in their efforts to mitigate and manage conflict is a critical opportunity for the international community and one we should seize. This is particularly true given current diplomatic failures and the way that lack of investment in peace is directly reflected in the growing displacement crisis. Fortunately, the coming weeks and months provide multiple opportunities for reversing this trend. In addition to a new U.S. Administration and a new UN Secretary General, President Obama's Leaders' Summit on Refugees is a chance to chart a new course.

**We urge that governments participating in the Refugee Summit commit to doubling funding for conflict mitigation and peacebuilding, and announce concrete steps to institutionalize and make these approaches a top priority.**

At Mercy Corps we know from experience that responding to complex crises requires specific, nuanced interventions — and that fostering real stability means purposefully making conflict mitigation and peacebuilding part of an overall response where conflict is a factor.<sup>36</sup> What follows is some of Mercy Corps' research on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding from the Central African Republic, Jordan, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Colombia, and Nigeria which provides insight into why addressing conflict is key to addressing displacement and how investments in peacebuilding and conflict mitigation lead to tangible impact. Embedded in this research are specific strategies to approach conflict mitigation more effectively.

---

<sup>36</sup> In a conflict situation, every intervention should include conflict mitigation and peacebuilding; this of course does not mean every program within an intervention. For example, in our recent work in CAR Mercy Corps carried out peacebuilding side-by-side with food security programs. "Mercy Corps' Peace and Conflict Sector Approach," April, 2016 and "Building Community Resilience During Violent Conflict," Mercy Corps, October 2015.

## II. Conflict Mitigation in Five Contexts

### Central African Republic

#### Creating Community Resilience Amid Violence

Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced instability and corruption since independence in 1960. In March 2013, a violent coup d'état overthrew President Bozizé and a Muslim-dominated Séléka coalition took power. In response, anti-Balaka armed militias formed, comprised largely of Christians, and carried out targeted attacks on Muslims. This was especially shocking given that the two groups had lived side-by-side for decades, mostly in peace. By December 2013, the UN warned that a genocide was possible — an early warning sign that allowed the international community to act quickly and prevent mass atrocities.

In January 2014, Mercy Corps launched a program to stabilize vulnerable communities in two socio-economic hubs of CAR — the capital of Bangui and the city of Bouar — to help stem retaliatory violence and rebuild social cohesion. It was extremely unusual to receive donor funding for this type of program during an ongoing armed conflict when humanitarian need was so urgent: at the time, 2.5 million civilians required humanitarian assistance and 1 million (out of a total population of 4.5 million) were displaced. These vital funds were only available because of policy and bureaucratic changes made by the Obama Administration to create new tools to stem violent conflicts before they metastasized into more intractable and costly crises.

**In December 2014, 220 anti-Balaka fighters voluntarily disarmed to join community leaders and Peace Committees in supporting nonviolent social change. By the program's end in August 2015, community members found ways to forgive and trust each other: 56.1 percent of respondents reported trusting "the other" group, compared to 30.1 percent in the baseline study, or an 86 percent increase.**

With just \$1.7 million USD in funding from the U.S. government's Complex Crises Fund,<sup>37</sup> the program brought together youth and community leaders representing the country's main religious groups to discuss how to stem retaliatory violence, address grievances, and promote peace. These talks resulted in a signed reconciliation pact, which not only allowed leaders

to maintain peace in communities and diminish violence, but also positively affected the economy. Trade between communities of different ethnicities and religions froze during violence, but the new pact helped traders of all faiths cooperate once more, facilitating, in particular, the integration of Muslim traders back into the local economy. Mercy Corps then provided Peace Committees with financial support for small-scale economic recovery projects to further solidify social cohesion and move toward economic recovery.

The program catalyzed other important actions among conflict actors and community members. By the end of that year, in December 2014, 220 anti-Balaka fighters voluntarily disarmed to join community leaders and Peace Committees in supporting nonviolent social change. By the program's end in August 2015, community members found ways to forgive and trust each other: 56.1 percent of respondents reported trusting "the other" group, compared to 30.1 in the baseline study, or an 86 percent increase. When violence triggered again in September 2015 — this time by the beheading of a young Muslim cab driver — clashes erupted, yet peer educators who had received training through the Mercy Corps program stepped up to advocate for nonviolence. In Bangui, they

<sup>37</sup> According to the State Department's Congressional Budget Justification for FY 2017, Appendix 2, page 166, "CCF is a flexible funding resource enabling the U.S. government to rapidly respond to unforeseen and evolving contexts that if left unaddressed threaten long-term development gains, foreign policy priorities, and national security interests. Projects aim to address and prevent root causes of conflict and instability through a whole-of-government approach and include host government participation, as well as other partner resources. It is a critical tool for prevention activities."

monitored the situation, dispelled rumors, and otherwise mitigated tensions. Meanwhile, in Bouar, community leaders and religious associations publicly condemned the violence and worked to swiftly restore order and to keep the main road open to traffic.<sup>38</sup>

Based on past events, the most recent presidential election in February 2016 had significant potential to set off more violence and another round of displacement. Yet, that did not happen and investments in peacebuilding appear to have contributed to preventing more violence. There is still significant work to be done, but these initial experiences suggest that there is enormous potential for conflict mitigation in CAR and in other contexts experiencing acute political crises.

## Complex Crises Fund (CCF)

*The Complex Crises Fund (CCF) is a funding mechanism “appropriated by the United States Congress that provides much-needed flexible money to USAID ‘to prevent and respond to emerging or unforeseen crises,’ filling a critical gap when stove-piped assistance funds cannot be reprogrammed.”<sup>39</sup> Started in 2010, the fund has received \$30-50 million USD in annual appropriations<sup>40</sup> and these funds can be critically important for rapidly mitigating on-going crises and helping recovery in post-conflict contexts. Yet \$30-50 million dollars often runs out in the face of so many crises, and many identified needs go unmet.*

**The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has absorbed a significant number of Syrian refugees — according to UNHCR it has the second largest number of refugees per capita of any country in the world, with 87 refugees per thousand inhabitants. This includes two million registered Palestinian refugees and refugee descendants and just over 600,000 registered Syrian refugees.**



Photo: Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

## Jordan

### Integrating Water Management and Conflict Mediation

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has absorbed a significant number of Syrian refugees — according to UNHCR it has the second largest number of refugees per capita of any country in the world, with 87 refugees per thousand inhabitants. This includes two million registered Palestinian refugees and refugee descendants as of December 2015<sup>41</sup> and just over 600,000 registered Syrian refugees. In late 2014, the government estimated that there were a total of 1.4 million Syrians living in the country,<sup>42</sup> between new refugees and people who arrived in Jordan before the crisis.

38 "Building Community Resilience During Violent Conflict: Lessons Learned from Mercy Corps' Stabilizing Vulnerable Communities Program in the Central African Republic (CAR)," Mercy Corps, October 2015.

39 "The Complex Crises Fund," Friends Committee on National Legislation.

40 Office of Program, Policy, and Management, USAID, (accessed August 10, 2016).

41 "Where We Work: Jordan," UNRWA, Figures from December 1, 2015. (accessed September 7, 2016).

42 Francis, Alexandra, "Jordan's Refugee Crisis," Carnegie Endowment for Peace, September 2015, (accessed September 7, 2016).

About 80 percent of Syrian refugees live in host communities rather than official camps. While both groups work hard to keep relations cordial, the sudden surge in population intensified demands on already severely limited resources such as water, housing, and employment.<sup>43</sup> This, in turn, created tensions between the two communities. Competition for resources — as well as delivery of aid that favors some refugees over others — stoked tensions within the Syrian refugee community itself.<sup>44</sup>

The stakes are particularly high when it comes to water, given that Jordan is one of the world's driest countries. Serious problems with aging infrastructure were compounded by the influx of a new population not accustomed to water conservation. In 2013, \$920 million USD in aid entered the country, with only one-tenth earmarked for water, sanitation, and hygiene — yet the government anticipated needing at least \$750 million over the course of three years for water projects alone.<sup>45</sup> Lack of alignment between country needs and international aid, coupled with the fact that, at the time, Jordan's debt was more than \$1.3 billion, rendered the country unable to pay for such projects on its own.<sup>46</sup>

In the summer of 2013, conflict broke out over water in Zaatari Village, which sits next to Jordan's largest camp for Syrian refugees. During Ramadan, water levels fell dangerously low, causing relations between refugees and villagers to sour. Even though the issue was a malfunctioning pump and old pipelines, many villagers believed their water was being diverted to the nearby refugee camp.<sup>47</sup> Fortunately, earlier in the year, the UK Conflict Pool and USAID's CCF funded a negotiation skills project that Mercy Corps carried out with both Jordanian and Syrian community leaders in areas hosting refugees. When conflict over water broke out during the summer, two community leaders from the largest tribes in the region who had been through the Mercy Corps training intervened.

**While many people feared that the influx of refugees would lead to spillover effects from the Syria conflict, thanks to negotiation skills gained in the Mercy Corps program, tensions were successfully managed by local leaders.**

"There was fighting in the streets," said Abu Moayed, a Jordanian tribal leader. "It was very tense. People were sent to the hospital. If someone were killed, it would have been very bad. Events were spiraling out of control."

These leaders rallied the heads of other tribes, brought the issue to the government, and raised money to fund extra water tanker deliveries during the hottest months.<sup>48</sup> They led public dialogues to reframe the issue, clarifying that the main reason behind the scarcity was poor infrastructure and not the fault of Syrians.<sup>49</sup> This, in turn, provided an opportunity for the communities to come together to design longer-term solutions for shared water issues. While many people feared that the influx of refugees would lead to spillover effects from the Syria conflict, tensions were successfully managed by local leaders, thanks to negotiation skills gained in the Mercy Corps program.

43 "Seeking Stability: Evidence on Strategies for Reducing the Risk of Conflict in Northern Jordanian Communities Hosting Syrian Refugees," Mercy Corps, October 2014.

44 "Seeking Stability," Mercy Corps, October, 2014.

45 "Tapped Out: Water Scarcity and Refugee Pressures in Jordan," Mercy Corps, March 2014.

46 "Tapped Out," Mercy Corps, March 2014.

47 "Negotiating for Water and Peace," Mercy Corps, December 2013.

48 Morris, Shannon. "The Power of Mediation," *Foreign Policy*, January 7, 2014, (accessed September 7, 2016).

49 "Negotiating for Water and Peace," Mercy Corps, December 2013.

## Ethiopia

### Moving From Conflict to Coping

During a conflict, people are often displaced simply because they can't fulfill their basic needs for survival — markets are closed, people are not able to safely access farmland, goods are not able to travel. In Ethiopia, our research shows that investments in conflict management make it more likely for people to meet basic needs compared to areas where similar investments don't exist, since the enhanced security allows people to access the resources they need to survive — and as a result, are less likely to be displaced.

In southern Ethiopia, for example, peace, drought resilience, and migration are intertwined. In addition to direct impact through the loss of human lives and livestock, violent conflict restricts pastoralist movement, as well as the ability to peacefully negotiate access to water, pasture and markets — all of which are key coping strategies for pastoral communities during a drought.<sup>50</sup> In 2008 and 2009, the South Oromia and Somali regions of Ethiopia saw increased conflict, including a major incident over water resources and grazing land that resulted in hundreds of deaths, the displacement of thousands of people, and massive loss of assets.

"The presence of conflict has highly restricted the ability of our community to move to other areas freely and share resources," said one member of a local community who preferred to remain anonymous. "Also the conflict has prevented our people from developing [livestock] enclosures because we suspect our conflicting communities will burn the enclosures."

In response to these conflicts, in May 2009, Mercy Corps initiated peacebuilding activities with these communities as part of its Strengthening Peace and Development project, funded by USAID's Ethiopia Mission's Democracy and Governance Office. Major conflict mitigation activities included strengthening conflict management mechanisms within government and traditional institutions, formation of peace committees, and development of peace accords and resource use plans.<sup>51</sup> The negotiation and development of the Negelle Peace Accord was among the most significant achievements of the project. This accord helped increase security of land from Moyale in the south to Arero in the north — an area approximately the size of the state of Connecticut — and also involved building negotiating skills and improving communication between adversarial groups. When we spoke with regional leaders, the accord was frequently cited by local officials and community groups as leading to more peaceful co-existence.

In the wake of the extreme drought in Ethiopia during 2011, our research demonstrated that this program, which focused on reducing violence, also built livelihood resilience along the way. Greater security and resulting freedom of movement brought about by the program was cited as the most important factor in enabling pastoralist households to manage the severe drought conditions. Participating communities reported fewer barriers to accessing important resource like pasture and water for animals, markets to buy and sell food and animals,

**In the wake of the extreme drought in Ethiopia during 2011, our research demonstrated that this program, which had focused on reducing violence, also built livelihood resilience along the way. Greater security and resulting freedom of movement brought about by the program was cited as the most important factor in enabling pastoralist households to manage the severe drought conditions.**

50 "From Conflict to Coping: Evidence from Southern Ethiopia on the contributions of peacebuilding to drought resilience among pastoralist groups," Mercy Corps, February 2012.

51 "From Conflict to Coping," Mercy Corps, February 2012.

and public services including health and education. As a result, they were less likely to rely on negative coping mechanisms — such as selling livestock at low prices — and more likely to use adaptive capacities such as herd splitting and livestock migration.

We conducted a follow-up study in 2015 in the Horn of Africa to better understand what type of conflict mitigation activities are most effective in strengthening resilience. The study reinforced earlier findings that investing in improved local conflict management systems — including negotiation and dispute resolution over shared natural resources — can mitigate the impact of economic and climate-related shocks, such as droughts, on communities' livelihoods and welfare.<sup>52</sup>

Now, the "El Niño" effect is disrupting the ability of millions of Ethiopians to meet their needs via pastoralism and agriculture. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that during 2016, 17 million Ethiopians will require food assistance and that displacement will increase dramatically, with 400,000 new displacements due to flooding and 286,000 due to drought. This not only means more migration, but more competition for scarce resources and more tension, which can lead to further displacement.<sup>53</sup> This is precisely the sort of situation in which the effects can be reduced by investment in conflict management.

**In both Colombia and Guatemala, it remains common for farmers to be expelled from their land because they lack formal land titles and there is little state presence to protect them. Instead these farmers find themselves facing guerrillas, paramilitaries, or other armed groups who use violence to assert control. Well aware of these issues, we've focused our programming on addressing land rights in both countries.**

1980s alone, 150,000 people were killed, over one million were displaced, and more than 200,000 fled over the border to Mexico<sup>54</sup> — and this in a country that, at the time, had a population of less than 8 million.<sup>55</sup> In both Colombia and Guatemala, it remains common for farmers to be expelled from their land because they lack formal titles and there is little state presence to protect them. Instead, these farmers find themselves facing guerrillas, paramilitaries, or other armed groups who use violence to assert control.<sup>56</sup> Well aware of these issues, we have focused our programming on addressing land rights in both countries.

## Guatemala & Colombia: Supporting Stability via Land Titles

Across Latin America poor governance and centuries of rampant inequality have caused land to become concentrated in the hands of a small group of wealthy elites and large businesses—and protracted conflicts like the civil wars in Colombia and Guatemala have only served to further concentrate land in the hands of a few.

In the countryside, grievances and conflict around land rights have historically spurred people to join rebel groups and ignited fighting. Protracted fighting led to massive displacement in Colombia where, until recently, guerrillas, paramilitaries, and military fought for control of rural areas, leading to the displacement of about 7 million. In Guatemala, during the early

52 Kurtz, J., and McMahon, K., "Pathways from Peace to Resilience: Evidence from the Greater Horn of Africa on the Links between Conflict Management and Resilience to Food Security Shocks," Mercy Corps, September 2015.

53 IOM Humanitarian Compendium for Ethiopia. IOM, (accessed August 31, 2016).

54 Jonas, Susanne, "Guatemalan Migration in Times of Civil War and Post-War Challenges," Migration Policy Institute, March 27, 2013.

55 The World Bank Open Data. The World Bank, (accessed August 20, 2016).

56 Niezen, Cecilia, "Farmers struggle for land in Guatemala," Oxfam America, August 22, 2013, (accessed September 7, 2016).

In Guatemala, we worked to resolve agrarian conflicts by leveraging the knowledge of local mediators and technical experts to streamline land titling in what has otherwise been an overburdened bureaucratic process.<sup>57</sup> Starting in 2003, with funding from USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM), Irish Aid, and the EU, Mercy Corps worked alongside local mediators to support regional entities — both NGOs and municipalities — as they resolved more than 700 land conflicts in Guatemala. This benefitted almost 34,000 families and increased not only the quality of land tenure, but the quality of relationships between parties involved in disputes and the sustainability of the program. During the final evaluation in 2015, 97 percent of mediation participants reported that there was less violence between their community and the other party due to mediation, and 92 percent reported that both sides complied with the agreement — conditions that support stability and make it much less likely that people will be displaced. At the same time, Mercy Corps also carried out parallel economic development work in Guatemala to support farmers becoming more productive on their land, further decreasing the chances that they could lose it again in the future.

## › Conflict Management and Mitigation

*USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation was founded in 2002 in an effort to better address violent conflict while also connecting USAID to the community of organizations devoted to peacebuilding and conflict mitigation. It provides both analytical and operational support, "supporting peacebuilding through a \$26 million yearly "people-to-people" reconciliation fund."<sup>58</sup>*

As one participant put it, without these interventions, "Hostility and poverty [would have resulted] because the families wouldn't have anywhere to work or plant." Others theorized that violence would have persisted; at least one speculated that people would have been killed, while another said that the mediation process had prevented the "disintegration" of communities.<sup>59</sup>

Programming in Guatemala also became a model for resolving land conflict in Colombia, including a south-south exchange where Guatemalan and Colombian partners have a platform for sharing their experiences and expertise. The work in Colombia has led to 200 territorial conflicts being resolved. Additionally, five mediation centers are now integrated into municipal management, with two more centers being established by government authorities.

These programs helped ensure that conflict didn't reignite on a large scale in Guatemala, and it helped people in Colombia maintain or gain land rights in the midst of conflict — both of which contribute to greater stability, and help decrease the displacement of rural people.

## Nigeria:

### Addressing the Cost of Conflict

Farmers and pastoralist communities in Nigeria's ethnically and religiously diverse Middle Belt have long suffered from violent conflict centered around competition for key natural resources such as land and water. A range of factors underlie the disputes, including increased competition for land (driven in part by desertification, climate change, and population growth), lack of clarity around demarcation of pasture and stock routes, and the breakdown of traditional relationships and formal agreements between pastoralists and farmers. Because livelihood strategies are closely tied to identity — and because access to services and opportunities can vary

57 Alexander, Matthew, "Colombia and Guatemala: A South-South Model in Latin America Tackles Land and Governance." Mercy Corps.

58 Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, USAID, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, USAID, (accessed September 7, 2016).

59 "Success and Setbacks: Mediating Land Conflicts in Rural Guatemala," Mercy Corps, March 2015.

across identity groups — many farmer-pastoralist conflicts are exacerbated by ethnic and religious divisions.<sup>60</sup> Violence in the region has displaced at least 400,000 people in the last five years,<sup>61</sup> and between January and August of 2016 alone, more than 600 people were killed.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to the obvious and devastating costs in terms of human life, these conflicts take an enormous toll on the economic health of the country at the national level, as well as at the level of local economies, communities, and households. Resource-based conflicts impede market development and economic growth, reduce production and trade, and diminish investment in the private sector — and these shocks are felt throughout society. In 2013, Mercy Corps carried out a study to learn more about the costs of farmer-pastoralist conflict in this region and to quantify those costs as part of a more comprehensive understanding of what economic resources are lost during and after violent conflict. The work also addresses the economic benefits that hypothetical peace would bring on the national and local levels.

**In addition to the obvious and devastating costs in terms of human life, these conflicts take an enormous toll on the economic health of the country at the national level, as well as at the level of local economies, communities, and households. Resource-based conflicts impede market development and economic growth, reduce production and trade, and diminish investment in the private sector — and these shocks are felt throughout society.**



Photo: Corinna Robbins/Mercy Corps

At the national level, we found that states affected by conflicts lost an average of 47 percent of taxes due to conflict through 2012. In total, the four states of the study — Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau — are estimated to have lost between USD \$719,000 and \$2.3 million in taxes alone during 2010. Meanwhile, Nigeria stood to gain up to \$13.7 billion annually in total macroeconomic progress in a scenario of peace between farmers and pastoralists in just those four regions.<sup>63</sup>

At the household level, the relationship between income and exposure to violence was universally negative, and almost always significant. In fact, some households would stand to increase their income by up to 210 percent in a hypothetical scenario of peace.<sup>64</sup>

Based on these findings, we recommended the implementation of programs and policies that help farmers and pastoralists manage conflict more productively and address the root causes of conflict by improving their economic situation. In 2012, we began a multi-year program funded by the UK Department for International

60 "The Economic Costs of Conflict and the Benefits of Peace: Effects of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt on Households," Mercy Corps, July 2015.

61 Egbejule, Eromo, "Nigeria land disputes fuel violence in herdsman disputes," Reuters, June 2, 2016, (accessed September 9, 2016).

62 This number reflects Mercy Corps' tracking of violence in the Middle Belt, and is based on media as well as partner and community reports.

63 "The Economic Costs of Conflict and the Benefits of Peace: Effects of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt on State, Sector, and National Economies," Mercy Corps, July 2015.

64 "The Economic Costs of Conflict and the Benefits of Peace: Effects of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt on Households," Mercy Corps, July 2015.

Development to build skills in mediation and negotiation and to support communities in conflict as they work to create joint economic initiatives.

Thus far, we have trained more than 700 leaders in mediation and they have negotiated agreements to nearly 500 land and other disputes that could have otherwise escalated into violence. In one community in Kaduna state, leaders negotiated an agreement to allow for a cattle route in their area to avoid the problems that occur when livestock destroys the crops of farmers while seeking good grazing land. Neighboring communities heard about the agreement and asked these trained leaders to help negotiate a broader agreement to allow for a cattle route covering several communities. This has helped prevent disputes and violence from arising throughout this area. And in Plateau State, youth leaders formed a network across farmer-pastoralist, religious, and ethnic lines that has already de-escalated conflicts over cattle. At the time of writing, they are negotiating a long-term agreement.

Communities are also working on economic projects to strengthen relationships strained by a long history of conflict. In one community, farmers and pastoralists once in conflict are now working together on a joint beekeeping project — they have a legal cooperative and sell to a local buyer. In another area, 120 people have come together from three ethnic groups previously in conflict to create and sell biomass fuel briquettes for cooking. Elsewhere, a community of farmers and pastoralists — who previously had no interaction after a conflict several years ago left dozens dead and caused many others to flee — came together to plan and work on a joint rice processing project.

While lessening conflict in these areas, access to resources and economic opportunity is also becoming more secure. These investments make it less likely people will be displaced by future violence, lack of access to natural resources, or lack of economic opportunity.

### III. A Way Forward

None of the interventions described here are showy or expensive. Dedicated and targeted funding for peacebuilding activities are fractions of a penny on the dollar compared to costly military interventions or UN Peacekeeping operations.

Beyond doubling funding for targeted peacebuilding programming, development organizations from the World Bank to bilateral donors must address the underlying causes of conflict earlier. To be effective, international development actors must step in long before peace deals are signed — while also changing the way they engage with fragile or failing states in conflict. This means increasing risk tolerance for engaging in those contexts, particularly with regard to their willingness to program remotely at scale by supporting local partner networks.<sup>65</sup> And this also means finding diplomatic solutions to current conflicts while making the prevention and reduction of conflict an explicit goal for policy and aid spending in all other contexts.

Future aid responses must be infused with conflict mitigation or peacebuilding — and there must be adequate funding to sustain this programming. Along with our urgent recommendation that participation by donor governments in the upcoming Leaders' Summit on Refugees be contingent on doubling funding commitments to conflict mitigation and peacebuilding, the following are specific recommendations about how to better integrate conflict mitigation into interventions.

---

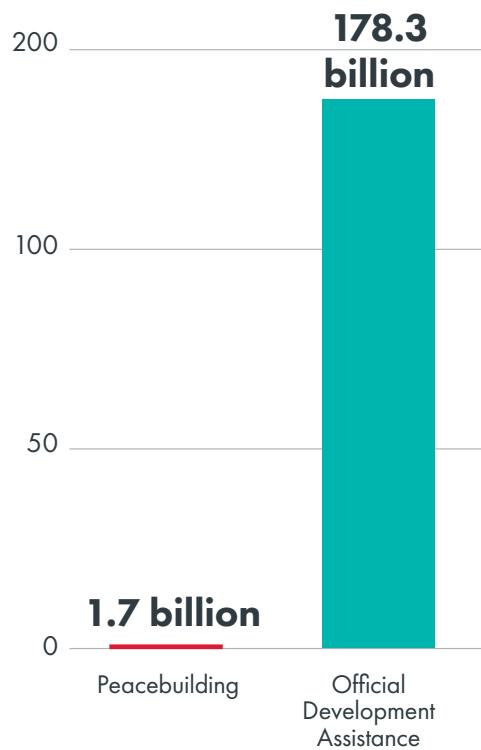
<sup>65</sup> "Cracking the Code: Enhancing Emergency Response & Resilience in Complex Crises," Mercy Corps, 2015.

# Recommendations

## To government donors

- › Increase investments, as a percentage of overall aid spending, in targeted conflict mitigation and peacebuilding programming by at least two fold within the next two years.
- › Make conflict prevention and peacebuilding central pillars of foreign policy — including foreign aid — and align resources, mandates, and investments as needed to make good on this commitment.
- › Drive high level political commitment to work toward reaching Sustainable Development Goal 16 of promoting just, peaceful, and inclusive societies, and meet the goal to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity.”<sup>66</sup>
- › While meeting growing humanitarian needs — including closing the gap in humanitarian financing — donor countries should pledge to reform their development and humanitarian interventions to ensure they include conflict sensitive analysis and programming.
- › Donors must improve tracking of prevention funds — including improving how OECD tracks spending on conflict prevention — and realign how funding is categorized to better measure if we are meeting the SDG 16 goals.

**Spending for peacebuilding vs Total official development assistance in 2014<sup>67</sup>**



## To all development agencies and institutions

- › Engage early and in a sustained way in conflict-affected crises, and partner earlier and more frequently with humanitarian actors to bridge the relief to development divide, so that these crises end sooner and don't repeat themselves.
- › In addition to the commitment of bilateral donors to double conflict mitigation and peacebuilding funding, the World Bank must be supported to allow it to increase concessional loans and grants to fragile and conflict affected states, with donors — including the US Congress, UK and others — fully funding the IDA-18 replenishments that target fragile states.

## To implementing organizations

- › Make conflict sensitivity analysis — rooted in local knowledge — a prerequisite for engagement in conflict-affected countries.
- › Ensure that fragility assessments include conflict sensitivity analysis.

<sup>66</sup> UNDP, “Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions,” Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030, (accessed September 9, 2016).

<sup>67</sup> Data was pulled from OECD database using the Query Wizard for International Development Statistics and includes data from all donors, (including DAC and non-DAC donor countries) all recipient countries, Disbursements, subsectors Civilian Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention & Resolution, and Child Soldiers (Prevention), measured in current USD prices. If funding for ‘democratic participation and civil society,’ a broader subcategory that includes programming in-line with peacebuilding goals, is included the overall percentage of peacebuilding funding increases to 1.5% of ODA.

- › Commit to iterative conflict analysis and adaptive management within operations to ensure aid programming does not cause harm or exacerbate conflict; ensure there are clear baselines and impact analysis within programs to further build an evidence base of effective conflict mitigation.
- › Build capacity of staff and partner organizations in conflict mitigation and peacebuilding skills, including conflict analysis, intervention methods, and effective advocacy and movement building skills.

### **Mercy Corps' Commitments**

- › Mercy Corps commits to continue its research illuminating how to most effectively prevent and/or counter violent extremism in complex crises, including conducting and sharing learning from at least three major studies over the next two years.
- › In five years, 75 percent of all Mercy Corps humanitarian responses will mainstream peacebuilding, conflict mitigation, and/or governance work to break cycles of conflict and build resilience.
- › In five years, Mercy Corps field teams will possess the analytical capacity to layer conflict, climate, market, and displacement data to better predict crisis onset, design crisis prevention programming, and position humanitarian assistance to contribute to greater resilience in the face of repeated shocks.

Preventing and reducing conflict comes down to widespread awareness that conflict reduction is possible, along with a commitment to dig in for long periods of time and engage deeply with the people we work with. It means growing the body of research about how humanitarian aid and development assistance can be programmed in ways that meet immediate needs while preventing and resolving conflict and helping communities rebuild and become more resilient. And it means targeting all interventions to address the drivers of violence.

Conflict mitigation and peacebuilding have already been proven to be effective. What's more, we no longer have the option of investing a "pound of cure" in protracted complex crises, because it's far more expensive to respond to emergencies than it is to invest in an "ounce of prevention."

As a result of being reactive rather than proactive, the international community is currently running out of money, to the detriment of some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Ongoing displacement is becoming the new normal. **If we fail to prioritize finding diplomatic solutions to current violence, responding to communities' needs for support for conflict mitigation and peacebuilding, and better incorporating these approaches into humanitarian relief and development, it will signal nothing less than our collective failure to create meaningful change by tackling displacement head-on.**

As the Chair's Summary by the United Nations Secretary-General for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit clearly states, we must all recognize the "centrality of political will to effectively prevent and end conflicts, to address root causes, reduce fragility and strengthen good governance. Preventing and resolving conflicts would be the biggest difference leaders could make to reduce overwhelming humanitarian needs."<sup>68</sup>

Now is the time to be more strategic with funding and programming, using tried and proven practices and programs to end the conflicts that are driving forced displacement all around the world. Only by stemming conflict and addressing the root causes of violence can we build a world in which people have both the right to move freely and the right to live in peaceful societies where they won't be forced to flee.

---

68 Chair's Summary by the United Nations Secretary-General, World Humanitarian Summit, May 2016.

## **CONTACT**

ANN VAUGHAN  
Director | Policy and Advocacy  
[avaughan@mercycorps.org](mailto:avaughan@mercycorps.org)

REBECCA WOLFE  
Director | Peace and Conflict  
[rwlfe@mercycorps.org](mailto:rwlfe@mercycorps.org)

### Suggested Citation

Avilés, Annie, "An Ounce of Prevention: Why increasing investment in conflict prevention is worth more than a 'pound of cure' in addressing the displacement crisis," Mercy Corps, September 2016, [https://d2zyf8ayvg1369.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps\\_An%20Ounce%20of%20Prevention.pdf](https://d2zyf8ayvg1369.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps_An%20Ounce%20of%20Prevention.pdf).

### **About Mercy Corps**

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



45 SW Ankeny Street  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
888.842.0842

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