Acknowledgements

This Strategic Plan is the outcome of a collaborative and reflective process involving staff from across Conciliation Resources both in its development and production.

The Plan sets out our direction and ambitions for the period 2016-2020 allowing us to pursue and measure changes through our work over a medium term period. It frames our programmatic and policy work and provides the framework for our organisational results.
A foreword from our Chair

‘We all have a right to peace’ is a bold and courageous motto for our times. With at least a third of the world facing conflict, to work on such a ‘right to peace’ is both a challenge and a privilege.

That is why Conciliation Resources has developed this five-year Strategic Plan – to ensure that in a world dominated by risk and where resources are tight, we are able to offer and resource an approach to peacebuilding that works: partnering for peace.

Conciliation Resources is committed to making significant and documented contributions to preventing, transforming and ending violent conflicts and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. We will work to secure political commitment towards the prevention of violence, influencing decision-makers worldwide to pursue strategies for peace.

Driven by this overarching aspiration, we have set ourselves three 2020 goals to work towards:

1. Causes and drivers of conflict are peacefully transformed.
   As a result of our support, relationships, governance practices and structures, and legacies of violence, which are obstacles to sustainable peace, are addressed.

2. Approaches to building peace support inclusion.
   As a result of our engagement, expertise and resources, peacebuilding and conflict prevention practice is more inclusive; and

3. Policy is prioritising conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
   As a result of our efforts, relevant policymakers at international, national and regional levels make investments in long-term, non-violent approaches to preventing armed conflict and building peace, and in those working for peace in conflict contexts.

Whatever happens in the next five years, these goals remain essential requirements for peace.

They are ambitious goals. To achieve them, Conciliation Resources’ teams will develop plans each year, linking programmatic and operational decisions with the Strategic Plan and shaping our work to maximise its impact. We acknowledge how difficult it is to make predictions in the world of peacebuilding, and so are intentionally flexible in our planning so as to enable us to adapt to changing environments and demands in changing times.

More than two decades of hard-won experience, documented and marked by Conciliation Resources’ influence in the world, offer the promise that we can both prove and deliver that ‘right to peace’. I commend the vision that this Strategic Plan outlines, and the ongoing work of Conciliation Resources. In the words of the late Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General of the United Nations 1953-1961, “For all that has been: thanks. For all that is to come, yes.”

Rt. Rev Peter B. Price
Chair, Conciliation Resources
Conciliation Resources is an independent international organisation working with people in conflict to prevent violence, resolve conflicts and promote peaceful societies.

Our vision is of a world where people work together to resolve conflicts and promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

Our mission is to provide practical support to help people affected by violent conflict achieve lasting peace. We draw on our shared experiences to improve peacebuilding policies and practice worldwide.

Our values

Collaboration
We believe that everybody affected by conflict has a stake in peace. We work to create peaceful and inclusive change within societies in partnership with local people, to respond to violence, inequality, injustice and exclusion.

Challenge
We believe that peace can only come about if people have a chance to better understand their conflict and if difficult conversations are held between allies and adversaries. We stand alongside those who, with courage and integrity, reach out across conflict divides.

Creativity
We believe that peacebuilding needs to be flexible and adaptive to the specific and evolving realities of each conflict context. We support innovative ways to influence change, and we share insights from people’s lived experience globally to build collective knowledge and expertise.

Commitment
We believe that building sustainable peace takes time. That’s why we make long-term commitments to support just and resilient transitions from protracted conflict to lasting peace.
PEACEBUILDING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

1. Peacebuilding is essential.
Armed conflict affects a third of all states worldwide and is the main factor driving the record numbers of people currently displaced from their homes. In 2014, 180,000 people died in armed conflict, over three times more than in 2010. Promising post-Cold War trends in preventing, ending and transforming violent conflict have experienced major setbacks. In many parts of the world, conflict continues to impede sustainable development, exacerbate extreme poverty and inequality, violate human rights and undermine justice. Conflict systems are complex, changing and multi-layered, and are not confined by political or territorial boundaries. Conflicts that fester exacerbate militancy and lawlessness.

2. Exclusion and inequality underlie many of today’s conflicts.
Grievances felt by excluded communities and social groups – often ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, border communities, youths, internally displaced persons, but also oppressed majorities – can fuel social discontent, unrest and, ultimately, violence. Exclusive governance often reflects the interests of a small number of people with power, disregarding the needs of those outside elites. International commitments to inclusive peace processes and to gender, peace and security, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325, do not receive enough support to be implemented properly.

3. Peacebuilding works.
Negotiated peace agreements have resolved 75 per cent of the nearly 60 armed conflicts that have ended over the last 30 years. Many more groups that use terrorism have abandoned violence through a political process than through military force. The 2015 reviews of UN peace architecture stressed the “primacy of politics”: “Lasting peace is achieved not through military and technical engagements, but through political solutions”; and a transformative approach: “Sustaining peace should span an essential combination of actions across the diplomatic, political, human rights, economic, social and security areas, with particular attention to root causes.”

4. But it needs more and better support.
Peace processes and initiatives are neither quick fixes nor panaceas. A third of peace agreements still break down and relapse into violence. Peace interventions are often too late, ignoring the potential for prevention. Many are not designed or resourced sufficiently to promote sustainable transformation of the root causes of conflict. Not enough policy is based on evidence of what works and what does not, nor sufficiently adaptive to changing local conditions. Contradictory strategies undermine lasting political solutions, to prioritise countering terrorism, insurgency and extremism, rather than building peace and promoting inclusion.
Three key peacebuilding challenges are undermining the promotion of ‘peaceful and inclusive societies’:

**CHALLENGE 1**
**The capacity of people affected by conflict is neglected.**
Many formal efforts to transform armed conflicts exclude people affected by them: from determining the peace agenda, to designing and implementing effective responses.

Pioneers of peace often come from communities experiencing violence. Local initiatives can occur long before formal talks or external interventions. Local insights can help navigate political systems and power structures, connecting elites and non-elites to enable real change. Locally-led initiatives can help identify conflict drivers, address root causes, and tackle the legacies of violence to transform conflicts sustainably and fundamentally. Too often, however, the knowledge and capability of people affected by conflict is not supported: at best disregarded; at worst displaced.

**CHALLENGE 2**
**Peace interventions are too narrow.**
Official negotiations are essential to end fighting. But a peace process is not over when an agreement is signed. Elite talks can produce exclusive outcomes, as only a small proportion of interests are represented at the negotiating table.

More collective and cooperative approaches can multiply and broaden the impact of peace interventions. Complementary tracks and paths can facilitate more inclusive political transition out of violence. However, policy commitments to promote inclusion are not translated into practice: not enough is known about how inclusive peace processes work; and not enough support is given to turn aspirations into reality. Promoting gender, peace and security requires urgent and sustained action to understand gendered power relations in conflict-affected societies, increase women’s participation in peace processes and the support to women peacebuilders. Armed groups need advice and assistance to transition grievances from the bullet to the ballot box. Elites and non-elites; state and society; and internal and external actors: all have an interest in peace and a role in a peace process.

**CHALLENGE 3**
**Conflict response strategies are reactive and securitised.**
Approaches to tackling armed conflict prioritise military or technical responses over transforming the social contract – often as part of prevailing strategies to counter terrorism or extremism, or prioritise stability.

Over-reliance on security can contradict conflict prevention and inhibit space for negotiated political solutions: backing particular sides in a dispute rather than promoting inclusion; substituting the extension of state institutions, in particular the security sector, for political negotiations and accommodation; and preferring interveners’ interests over local capability. Over-reliance on existing strategies and capacity discourages willingness to learn from practice and evidence, and to explore innovation.
OUR 2020 GOALS

Drawing on Conciliation Resources’ organisational strengths and peacebuilding experience, we have set ourselves the following overarching ambition over the next five years:

Conciliation Resources will make significant and documented contributions to preventing and transforming violent conflicts and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

To achieve this organisational ambition we will pursue three mutually-reinforcing goals. They are core to our approach, which links people, practice and policy to make peacebuilding work. Each goal is underpinned by a set of intended outcomes. Each year we will review and assess our progress. We recognise that Conciliation Resources will contribute along with others to realise these changes in the contexts in which we work and at the global policy level.

GOAL 1: Causes and drivers of conflict are peacefully transformed

Outcomes:
1. Relationships among and between communities and other parties to conflict are collaborative and constructive.
2. Formal and informal governance structures and processes in conflict-affected areas are more responsive to local priorities.
3. The legacies of violence are addressed in conflict-affected societies.

GOAL 2: Approaches to building peace support inclusion

Outcomes:
1. People affected by conflict are leading the design and implementation of peace initiatives.
2. Greater access and representation for marginalised groups in peace processes and peacebuilding initiatives.
3. Programming undertaken by Conciliation Resources and other practitioners is gender-sensitive.
4. Armed conflict parties are better prepared to engage in non-violent conflict resolution.

GOAL 3: Policy is prioritising conflict prevention and peacebuilding

Outcomes:
1. Greater recognition at policy level of the need for and value of locally-owned non-violent and long-term conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives.
2. Greater political and financial investment in inclusive practice, and in people engaged in peacebuilding in conflict contexts, which builds both their capacity and influence.
3. A stronger evidence base for why and how peacebuilding works is available to policymakers.
HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR GOALS

Our approach

The effectiveness of our work is based upon a combination of factors which characterise Conciliation Resources’ approach to peacebuilding. These factors are built on first-hand experience of peacebuilding work over 20 years. They will continue to be the foundation for how we will achieve our goals.

People and partners

Partnership
We invest in long-term relationships of trust with individuals and local, national and regional organisations, formal and informal. These relationships are fundamental to what we are able to achieve together. We challenge and develop each others’ understanding and analysis. We work alongside our partners, supporting their agency, visibility and authority, sometimes using our leverage to highlight issues and perspectives at the international level. Partnership can be a means to provide expert practical support or financial assistance, and to offer solidarity, and together we develop mutual knowledge and skills over a sustained period of time.

Agency and voice
We recognise the agency of people affected by conflict to prevent violence and build peaceful futures. Part of what we can add is our experience of reaching out to those people who are marginalised or isolated by conflict: be they, for example, communities in neglected border areas; members or representatives of armed groups, with a view to encouraging their return to civilian life and exploring alternatives to violence; or those with little or no access to power.

Dialogue
We support and facilitate dialogue processes across conflict divides and across multiple levels. We do not set parameters on those we talk to and work with. Combatants and non-combatants, victims and perpetrators, governments and unrecognised authorities – all have a role to play in moving away from conflict.

Sustainability

Long-term engagement
International attention can swing from crisis to crisis, as can donor priorities. We see long-term engagement as essential to change conflict root causes and to forge relationships of trust. In most cases we work long-term on protracted conflicts where conflict drivers have become caught up in regional politics and interests, and overlap with other local or regional conflicts.

Enhancing policy and practice
We use our experience and insights, and those of partners, to advocate changes in peacebuilding policy and practice, in order to enhance prospects for peace. We believe that effective change happens through alliances and collective action, which requires us to be adaptive to changing contexts. We take active part in, and in some instances lead, the work of networks, coalitions and consortia, including in the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, Bond and the Political Settlements Research Programme.

Focus and expertise

Selective engagement
Our decision to engage in a specific context is led by an assessment of our added value and requests for support by people affected by conflict. In some cases this leads to light-touch involvement to bring influence, expertise or solidarity; in other cases it develops into a long-term partnership and programme with resources deployed to the conflict context.
Focus on peace processes and mediation support
Our engagement in peace processes encompasses the ‘multiple paths to peace’: peace initiatives before, during and beyond any peace agreement and at multiple levels. With our partners we seek to ensure that peace agreements are more rooted in the needs of societies. We use our expertise in dialogue, facilitation and mediation support, analysis, advocacy and communications to provide assistance where it is needed and where we can amplify local capability.

Enquiry and exchange
We learn from practice. Our work is led by enquiry rather than preconceived answers - we value local expertise and others’ experiences and insights. All peace processes learn from and inform other peace processes. We facilitate comparative learning as a way to improve peacebuilding policy and practice and to give those working for peace the opportunities to explore, learn and draw inspiration from others. Our flagship publication Accord, has documented the lessons of peace initiatives and processes for over 20 years.
Organisational capacity fit for purpose

In order to achieve the goals in our strategic plan, we will need to prioritise the following areas in our operations and organisational development:

Where we work
In order to see local leadership of peacebuilding flourish, become resilient and sustainable, we will focus on, and strengthen where needed, our accompaniment and support in the conflict-affected contexts in which we work and where we continue to add value. As part of our regular planning processes, we will assess our relative contribution in each context with a view to scaling our engagement over a given timeframe to reflect the value we provide and the needs of our partners, and that of the context itself. Our programme development into new geographic or thematic areas will be based on assessment of our added value, alignment with our strategic goals and expressed need, and our ability to provide the organisational capacity to support new work over the medium to long-term.

Evidence and learning
The need for evidence and learning about inclusion and the effectiveness of inclusive peacebuilding practices, as well as the ongoing need to enhance the effectiveness and impact of our work, will require further development of our results and impact measurement skills and systems. We will roll out our new Monitoring and Reporting System to improve the organised collection of data, and enhance our own skills and approach to documenting and analysing change and articulating impact. We will support partners to do the same. We will develop more coherent and effective organisational learning processes and practices, including how we learn with and from partners, in order to strengthen programme design and the evidence we communicate through policy advocacy and communications.

Communications
Linked to our ambitions around impact and learning, our external communications will focus more on supporting our strategic goals, amplifying and illustrating the case and evidence for the peacebuilding approach we advocate. We will review the coherence of our external communications, with a view to aligning them more closely and consistently with our goals and outcomes. We will make our internal communications and knowledge management more structured, streamlined and efficient.

Sustainable funding
A funding base which allows us to forward plan, realise our goals and weather fluctuations in funding flows, will require us to strengthen security of existing sources and to diversify, securing more donors and longer-term support. To this end we will deepen our relationships with foundations and with strategic government and multilateral donors, including through policy dialogue; access new donor streams including through thematic and regional programme-practice initiatives; and engage in more research-practice consortia and interdisciplinary collaboration. We will use flexible funding to support the organisational systems and staff needed to achieve the goals and to strengthen our policy influence with donor governments and institutions. We will use such funding as seed money to scope new opportunities and leverage additional resources for new initiatives, and to facilitate small-scale essential, but sensitive work for which restricted funding is not forthcoming or practicable.

Inclusiveness
We work to ensure that our organisational practice is inclusive. We aim for internal policies, recruitment processes and decision-making structures that enable greater diversity and inclusion.

Organisational support systems
We will continue our work to ensure our financial management and human resource management
systems and policies keep up with developments in compliance and due diligence requirements. We will review and adjust where necessary procedures for finance, IT, human resource management, staff safety and administration to ensure they support and adapt to the challenges facing staff and partners in fast-changing and often remote contexts.

**Staff**

The work we do centres on processes and relationships, which requires the investment of high levels of staff time and expertise. To support and retain our high-calibre staff, we will strengthen our staff management and support processes, from recruitment through to development and progression. We will review existing staff competences against the requirements of the plan and invest in relevant training or professional development as necessary (for example, in mediation support, advocacy, management, communications and analysis). We will match our leadership and decision-making structures to the size and scale of an evolving organisation, and appropriately apply our organisational practice in these key areas. We will continue to review our operating model developing the concept of a strong core supporting deployment of resources to the contexts where we work.
Conciliation Resources is an independent organisation working with people in conflict to prevent violence, resolve conflicts and promote peaceful societies. We’re there for as long as we’re needed to provide advice, support and practical resources. In addition, we take what we learn to government decision-makers and others working to end conflict, to improve peacebuilding policies and practice worldwide.

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