BUILDING BETTER PEACE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025
WHAT GUIDES US

Conciliation Resources is an independent international organisation committed to stopping violent conflict and creating more peaceful societies. For over 25 years we have been working with people impacted by war and violence, bringing diverse voices together to make change that lasts.

OUR VISION
Our vision is to transform the way the world resolves violent conflict so that people work together to build peaceful and inclusive societies.

OUR PURPOSE
The world urgently needs different ways to respond to violent conflict. We must do this by working with communities living with conflict.

Our purpose is to bring people together to find creative and sustainable paths to peace.

OUR VALUES

Collaboration: we work in partnership to tackle violence, exclusion, injustice and inequality.

Creativity: we are imaginative and resourceful in how we influence change.

Challenge: we are not afraid to face difficult conversations and defy convention.

Commitment: we are dedicated and resilient in the long journey to lasting peace.

“YOUR SUPPORT GIVES US COURAGE AND HOPE THAT WE CAN MAKE IT. WE FEEL THAT, WITH CONCILIATION RESOURCES BY OUR SIDE, WE CAN GET FURTHER WITH OUR WORK.”

Ngala Tiburse, Local Peace Committee, Central African Republic
WHAT DRIVES US

1. Increase in violent conflict

Violent conflicts are becoming more intense, complex and persistent. Conflict wrecks the lives of millions of people all over the world and destroys prospects for future generations to live in peace and prosperity. Globally the number of people forced to leave their homes because of violent conflict and persecution is at a record high – over 70 million in 2018.

2. New causes of conflict

Deep-rooted factors driving many conflicts such as exclusion, injustice and inequality, are intersecting with new factors making the task of peacebuilding increasingly complex.

The impact of the climate crisis on livelihood security and resources exacerbates ongoing conflict and increases the risk of future conflict. The erosion of humanitarian principles and human rights threatens progress made on these standards over the last 75 years.

Technology – our increasing connectedness, big data, digitalisation and artificial intelligence – poses new opportunities and challenges for security. The loss of faith in globalisation and breakdown in multilateralism make the task of finding collective solutions to conflict harder.

3. The need for peacebuilding

There are no quick fixes to addressing violent conflict. But the need to find different and better ways to resolve conflict peacefully and effectively is urgent, as is the need to resource it. Investment in peacebuilding remains miniscule compared to global military expenditure (around 0.5%) and in relation to the cost of lost economic growth due to armed conflict (around 1%).
Violent conflict is difficult, complex and political. But peacebuilding works. We will tackle three key problems undermining effective peacebuilding and focus on finding ways to do it better.

1. Simplistic peace strategies: initiatives designed to build peace struggle to steer paths through complex systems of conflict and often breakdown when they encounter obstacles. How can peace strategies be better designed to be more creative and flexible?

Strategies designed to create peace need to navigate complex conflict systems which include political, social and economic relationships of power and grievance. Peace processes do not progress steadily in straight lines from cause to effect, but ebb, flow and deviate. They get stuck when influential people and institutions, who benefit in some way from the status quo, resist the chance to move from conflict to peace. Patterns of violence become embedded. Peacebuilding efforts get stuck too in routine practice that replicates faults, suppresses creativity and increases aversion to experimentation.

Peace deals between leaders are often an essential element of bringing about change, but seldom fully address the factors driving conflict on their own. Peace strategies need to anticipate and adapt to shocks and new threats. Robust, nuanced analysis which considers factors relating to gender can support the design of peacebuilding which is better informed and more flexible. Conflicts need to be tackled by including diverse perspectives, and through approaches that connect the grassroots with the national and international. Different initiatives to build peace need to be better aligned. Only then can we build collective resilience to blockages – from fixed mindsets or narratives of the past, to vested interests in violence, or political or economic manipulation.
2. Shallow inclusion: conventional methods for ensuring people are able to participate in processes that shape peace often fail to translate into their ability to influence them. How can peace processes challenge established patterns of power and privilege more effectively?

Exclusion is a driver of conflict. Enabling a wide range of people impacted by conflict to participate in addressing exclusion, is key to preventing violence and finding sustainable peace. This requires the negative patterns of behaviour associated with power, resources and security that drive violence to be transformed. However, inclusive peace processes are currently not living up to their promises. People marginalised in conflict stay marginalised in peace. Power and violence dictate who participates in peace processes and what is being negotiated. Structures of privilege and exclusion persist. Even when marginalised voices are able to gain access to peace initiatives, they seldom influence how decisions are made or implemented. Frustrated expectations of change bring risks of renewed violence.

Enhancing the quality of inclusion is more important than increasing the quantity, if it is to translate people’s involvement in a process into influence over its outcomes. New ways need to be found to open up peace initiatives to people who are usually excluded – from diverse groups of women, young and older people, to minorities, displaced communities and people with disabilities – so that they can realise their peace potential to transform their environments for the common good.

3. Stop-gap peace policies: international conflict response policies increasingly offer temporary and securitised fixes to deep-rooted conflict problems, ignoring the potential of people within society to bring about change peacefully. How can policies focus more on peacebuilding approaches that put people first?

International policies which support efforts to build peace are too often short-term, securitised and reactive. The impact on people, and their potential to influence positive change often comes last. Few countries’ foreign policies see peacebuilding and negotiated solutions as the ‘go-to’ means to prevent or end violent conflict, or even as key elements in a broader strategy. Major global challenges of forced migration, drugs or violent extremism that take root in violent conflict are largely tackled in isolation from the conflict itself. Addressing the structural elements which drive conflict and fuel violence is often a less pressing political priority, while global challenges like climate change that incite conflict in seemingly remote regions are similarly downplayed.

International peace support policies often prioritise the formal peace negotiating table over other essential peace initiatives, led by people within society. Such informal activities can facilitate official talks or tackle violence in other ways. High profile conflicts absorb disproportionate attention, determined by national self-interest rather than humanitarian need. Legal and other sanctions or political limitations undermine efforts to support dialogue with controversial armed groups, which is essential to transform violent behaviour. Overly rigid, rushed or risk-averse funding streams stifle the creativity and adaptability needed to deal with complexity and manage volatile processes of change. Putting people at the heart of peace policies is key to effectiveness – to protect people from harm and unleash their peace potential.

“YOUTH HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTRE OF THE VIOLENCE. IT IS OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO WERE PART OF THE ARMED GROUP, HAVE BEEN KILLED, ABDUCTED, ARRESTED. BUT WHAT I SEE NOW IS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ALSO HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO END THE VIOLENCE AND BRING PEACE TO COMMUNITIES.”

Idris Abdullahi, Youth Peace Platform Chair in Yobe State, Nigeria
WHAT WE DO

At Conciliation Resources we are not afraid to ask challenging questions of people with influence, to help them find creative and inclusive solutions to violent conflict. We work quietly at the hard edges of conflict with people committed to peace, and we are persistent in finding ways to get people to talk to each other.

We work to improve how peace is built by:

- Using practical insights from peacebuilding work to inform policy and sharing our specific expertise and learning.
- Connecting, convening and facilitating – building relationships between people immersed in conflict, from different parts of society and with different perspectives and who wouldn’t otherwise get the chance to speak.
- Investing for the long-term in peace processes and in trusted relationships.
- Recognising the power of people impacted by conflict and enabling more people to have a voice on the conflicts which affect them.
LEARN from experience

Analysing conflicts and sharing learning.

Understanding conflict is the foundation of our work. Collaborating with others, we learn from diverse perspectives and real experiences, to analyse the many factors that cause and sustain conflicts. We share lessons from peace processes across the globe and use past experience to shape solutions for the future – it’s central to everything we do.

CONNECT everyone involved

Building relationships with communities and governments.

Developing trusted relationships and networks is vital. We connect groups in conflict who rarely speak or meet, across dangerous and often seemingly impassable divides. We work with all sections of society – from politicians to young people – reaching out to people who are overlooked by mainstream peace processes.

BUILD sustainable solutions

Working together to find different responses.

Working in partnership, we find creative ways to initiate dialogue, solve problems and kick-start change when conflicts seem stuck. We accompany our partners, involve the community and influence governments to do things differently. The result – we help build peaceful and inclusive societies.

EQUIP through local ownership

Helping people affected by conflict make a change.

We work side-by-side with the people affected by conflict – accompanying them to develop the skills and confidence to take part in peace processes. We help people in the midst of conflict to channel their insights and knowledge into positively influencing decisions that shape peace. This means that their voices are heard, they lead initiatives and their insight drives action.
The process of building peace doesn’t just happen at a political level. Peace processes that include multiple and diverse viewpoints are more sustainable and have a better chance of success. We believe that people affected by conflict are key to finding effective responses.

We acknowledge the value of different types of peace initiatives – formal and informal, community-led, national, regional and transnational. And we support locally led peacebuilding as a foundation to prevent and reduce violence, and to address its causes and legacies.

We partner with people and groups in societies impacted by conflict, who have the legitimacy and influence to make change happen. By supporting creative and long-term peace processes that challenge established institutions and conventional approaches to addressing conflict, we are more likely to see sustainable change. Bringing together people divided by conflict, nurturing courage and building trust, we create the conditions to move towards peace. We promote the inclusion of diverse groups in peace processes, such as marginalised women, young people and ethnic minorities, and support them to be able to influence decisions and outcomes.

We help address the political, economic, social and environmental factors that drive violent conflict, as well as supporting changes at an individual level. Through processes of social healing, we help individuals and groups transform relationships damaged by prolonged and intense violence. We support peace negotiations and help societies own and accept the outcome of talks – which is crucial to achieving lasting change.
Our vision is to transform the way the world resolves violent conflict so that people work together to build peaceful and inclusive societies.

CHALLENGES WE WILL TACKLE

1. Simplistic peace strategies
2. Shallow inclusion
3. Stop gap peace policies
OUR PRIORITIES TO 2025

We will focus on improving the quality of peace processes and support to peace initiatives. This means applying, testing and learning from approaches that are inclusive, sustainable and transformative, and advocating the adoption of effective international policy priorities.
GOAL 1. ADAPTIVE AND ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO PEACE

PEACEBUILDING OVERCOMES BARRIERS TO CREATING PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

We will engage with those whose attitudes, perceptions and policies are resistant to peaceful change and inclusion. We will embed the use of gender-sensitive conflict analysis to enable new and alternative perspectives to be continually uncovered. We will support dialogue and mediation so that those in conflict can reframe compromise and find ways to tackle the legacies of past violence. We will integrate complexity into our work and enable adaptation to respond flexibly to opportunities and challenges.

The changes we want to see:

- Breakthroughs in addressing political sticking points in ongoing dialogue and collaboration initiatives.
- Participants in peace processes reach mutually acceptable compromises.
- Shifts in discourse away from divisive language towards a more constructive approach that retains different perspectives and insights.
- Something that was previously thought impossible becomes normal, accepted or subject for discussion.

GOAL 2. CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PEACE EFFORTS

MORE COHERENT INITIATIVES HELP PREVENT AND REDUCE VIOLENT CONFLICT

We will build and strengthen connections, complementarity and learning between different peace initiatives – those taking place locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. And we will diversify and strengthen peace networks in conflict-affected societies. We will improve the relationships and learning between people in formal, high-level processes and informal community-level processes. We will transform relationships between divided communities.

The changes we want to see:

- Dialogue and collaboration processes at the local, provincial and national levels inform and complement one another.
- Peace processes at multiple levels are linked and there is increased coordination among peacebuilding interventions.
- An increase in mutual understanding of and empathy for others’ perceptions amongst participants in peace processes.
- The strengthening of international and regional peacebuilding networks.

“WE NEED TO OPEN UP SPACE FOR DEEP REFLECTION FROM BOTH MEN AND WOMEN ABOUT WHY PEACE PROCESSES HAVE TENDED TO EXCLUDE SO MANY VOICES, AND WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO MAKE THEM MORE INCLUSIVE.”

Ameya Kilara, Founder and Director of the South Asian Leadership Initiative
GOAL 3. INCLUSION, GENDER AND INFLUENCE

EXCLUDED GROUPS INFLUENCE APPROACHES TO BUILDING PEACE

We will see more innovative design of peace processes, which ensures broader and more diverse participation, in terms of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and other forms of identity and status. These new spaces in peace processes will create opportunities to challenge power and privilege. We will work through partnership and undertake joint gender-sensitive analysis, programming and evaluation to increase the effectiveness of excluded groups’ engagement in peace processes and focus on enhancing their ability to positively influence peace processes and peacebuilding.

The changes we want to see:

• All people that have a stake in the outcome, voluntarily participate in or are represented in formal and informal peace processes.

• Representatives of marginalised groups both advocate for their own needs and interests in a peace process and support the wider peace process.

• Community members and dialogue participants initiate peacebuilding activity in ‘no-go’ or hard-to-reach areas.

• Recommendations and initiatives suggested by marginalised groups, such as women and youth, that emerge from the peace process, are supported by decision-makers.

GOAL 4. PEOPLE CENTRED POLICY

INTERNATIONAL PEACEBUILDING SUPPORT PUTS PEOPLE FIRST

We will put forward compelling justifications for the adoption of policies which prioritise people centred peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This means encouraging political and resource investment in long-term, inclusive, gender-sensitive and accountable approaches. We will engage in tactical dissemination of practical knowledge and evidence, to enhance understanding within key policy audiences of how to promote representation, diversity and justice in peace practice. We will advocate ‘peace-sensitive’ legal, regulatory and funding environments and instruments, which enable adaptive and creative peacebuilding.

The changes we want to see:

• International institutions and governments prioritise the prevention of violent conflict through peaceful means.

• Collaborative peace learning networks and activities drawing on evidence and guidance for effective peace support for policy impact.

• Donors adopt long-term, sustainable and flexible approaches to peacebuilding and project management.

• Legal and regulatory obstacles for peacebuilding initiatives reduced.
“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT WE ARE EQUAL PARTNERS. WE ARE DISCUSSING ALL ISSUES. THERE IS NO DECISION FROM ONE SIDE - IT IS ALWAYS A DECISION FROM BOTH SIDES.”

Marina Elbakidze, Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development
OPERATIONAL GOALS TO 2025

In order to support our peacebuilding goals, we aim to develop our organisational infrastructure, approaches and capacities in a number of areas.

OPERATIONAL GOAL 1.
INVEST IN STAFF

We will prioritise staff learning and wellbeing to ensure we, as individuals and as an organisation, reach our peacebuilding potential. Our strategic plan will be delivered by our collective efforts. We must value, include and inspire those who work with us. We will coherently bring together leadership, culture, structure and processes.

Outcomes in 2025:

- Staff engage with a fair and transparent professional development system that supports the individual.
- There is a culture of professional and supportive critique and fearless feedback.
- Line managers have the skills and space to build, lead and support their teams.
OPERATIONAL GOAL 2.
**INVEST IN PARTNERSHIPS**

We will commit time and resources to nurture our accompaniment approach to partnerships based on trust and mutual learning. As part of building sustainable solutions, we will engage with the right partners in a respectful and thorough way, with a commitment to supporting partners to continue their work effectively and efficiently. We will increasingly open ourselves to input and critique from partner organisations, with a willingness to adapt to need and context.

**Outcomes in 2025:**

- Outcomes and expectations of partner engagements are clear.
- Reciprocal joint analysis with partners regarding capability and impact, drives improvement of the partnership and the organisations themselves.
- Interaction with partners and between partners encourages mutual learning within all areas of the organisation.

OPERATIONAL GOAL 3.
**LOCATE AND EQUIP STAFF TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE PEACEBUILDING SUPPORT**

We will locate and equip staff to enable effective peacebuilding practice and partnership, and achievement of our goals. Our duty of care to staff, our desire to work efficiently and effectively, and the complexity of regulatory and donor requirements drive us to increase attention to peacebuilding teams outside London.

**Outcomes in 2025:**

- Staff in all locations feel valued and have the support they need.
- Staff are located in the right place, and teams are structured appropriately, to deliver our strategic goals, whilst considering the impact on partners and the environment.
- Appropriate support infrastructure, systems and processes exist for teams outside the central office.
- Programme development criteria are clear and transparent.

OPERATIONAL GOAL 4.
**KEEP PEOPLE SAFE**

We will prioritise the safety our staff, and people who we come into contact with. We will establish a stronger understanding of organisational risk appetite, and improve the way we assess, mitigate and manage security risks. We will continue to pursue safeguarding best practice. We will ensure that we have appropriately skilled and competent people, or access to them, in the areas we work.

**Outcomes in 2025:**

- All staff understand and operate within the organisational risk appetite.
- Programme Security Plans are locally relevant, useful and used to manage risk.
- Safeguarding is prioritised and consideration for safeguarding is embedded across the organisation and our partners.
OPERATIONAL GOAL 5.
DEVELOP EVIDENCE, LEARNING AND CREATIVITY

We will develop learning processes and practices that allow us to do evidence-informed programming and planning, holding ourselves accountable to the people we work with and for. We will promote and resource adaptation and experimentation which responds to evaluation and research. We will invest in effective knowledge storage and sharing. Our monitoring, evaluation and learning practices integrate gender at all stages.

Outcomes in 2025:

- Learning is structured into programme strategy and design from the beginning and accompanies the process, informing adaptation.
- Systems and processes for monitoring, evaluation and learning are streamlined to inform planning and programme design.
- Our programming and research approaches are challenged by innovation, experimentation and risk-taking and analysis of failure.
- Our systems for accessing evidence of impact and lessons from practice are easy to use and facilitate cross-organisational knowledge and information sharing.

OPERATIONAL GOAL 6.
ENSURE IMPACTFUL EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

We will communicate externally in a way that supports our peacebuilding goals and our organisational financial sustainability. We will tell the story of peacebuilding in a passionate, clear voice, to encourage support for our work.

Outcomes in 2025:

- Our work, and the broader case for peacebuilding, is more accessible and compelling.
- All teams support and engage with communications efforts to promote peacebuilding and the organisation’s development.
- Our donor audiences are diverse, and we speak up and engage more, with bold and creative communications.

“THE SKILLS I HAVE GAINED FROM CONCILIATION RESOURCES HAVE BEEN VERY IMPORTANT TO ME. WHEN THE COMMUNITY CONSULT ME TO HELP RESOLVE CONFLICT OR TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE, I AM PLAYING AN IMPORTANT PART IN HELPING MY COMMUNITY TO LIVE IN PEACE.”

Albert Atama lives in Aru, Democratic Republic of Congo
OPERATIONAL GOAL 7. SECURE SUFFICIENT, FLEXIBLE INCOME

We will invest in our people, infrastructure, systems and processes to ensure continuity of critical peacebuilding work. With an increased focus on unrestricted funding and new audiences, we will build an income strategy that allows us to support work outside the spotlight, allows us to be creative, and ensures support structures that provide staff and partners with increased clarity and certainty.

Outcomes in 2025:
- Restricted income projects are appropriately scoped and resourced.
- Total unrestricted income reaches 30%, with direct unrestricted funding accounting for 18% of the total.
- Several new institutional donors and other new streams of funding contribute significantly to income diversification and sustainability.

OPERATIONAL GOAL 8. ENSURE EFFICIENT FINANCIAL SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

We will make systems and process improvements to meet the needs of the organisation. We will upgrade and adapt the way financial management works, to ensure smart and timely decision-making, whilst minimising the burden on peacebuilding staff. We will ensure systems and processes are robust and diligent to meet evolving and increasingly complex regulatory and donor requirements.

Outcomes in 2025:
- Financial administration for staff and partners is streamlined and efficient.
- Financial systems allow us to meet regulatory and donor requirements.
- Finance staff are engaged and supported.
MEASURING OUR AMBITION

OUR APPROACH

Our approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning is rooted in a culture of evaluative thinking and knowledge-building. Peacebuilding is difficult to measure; progress can be hard to evidence and quantify. Peacebuilding is a process and one that is complex and continually adapting.

To capture evidence that responds to the complexity of our work we:

- use participatory approaches as far as possible to capture diverse and gendered perspectives and experience
- use a spectrum of approaches and methods blended together in creative ways to fit the unique needs of teams and contexts
- create safe and reflective spaces for our teams, partners and project participants to learn from their practice
- constructively challenge each other’s assumptions to identify blind spots in our conflict analysis and programming
- encourage staff and partners to think logically and creatively, using conflict analysis and theory of change approach to test assumptions, as well as methods such as storytelling, appreciative enquiry and most significant change.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

We are committed to learning from our work and to use those lessons to adapt our programmes and practice, and to inform our engagement with policymakers. We will take significant steps to strengthen our capacity to use monitoring and evaluation approaches to learn and unlearn, and to adapt programming in response.

We will introduce a process of Outcome Harvesting across the organisation to facilitate systematic monitoring of our work and to ‘harvest’ and analyse results. By first collecting evidence on an ongoing basis of what has changed, we can then work backwards to determine whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes.

We will invest in a system to easily and remotely store, access and analyse results. In annual workshops each team and, where possible, their partners, will analyse outcomes from a gender and inclusivity perspective, reflect on progress against their theory of change, the organisation-wide results framework, and the peacebuilding goals in the Strategic Plan.

To assess our progress as an organisation against our peacebuilding goals, we will conduct a mid-term review in 2022 and a final evaluation in 2025 using a mix of evaluation design and methods. Findings from Outcome Harvesting will inform a focus at the mid-term review point on programme contributions to the peacebuilding goals; at the final evaluation stage we will focus more on systemic changes in inclusion and influence, as well as on policy change.
“CONCILIATION RESOURCES HAS DEVOTED ITSELF TO THE SLOW, PAINSTAKING AND OFTEN ARDUOUS WORK OF BUILDING PEACE. IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS WHICH ARE INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND MULTI-LAYERED, THEY ARE HELPING ALL THOSE INVOLVED TO UNDERSTAND MORE CLEARLY THE CONCERNS OF OTHERS AND TO RECOGNISE WHERE BRIDGES CAN BE BUILT TO EACH OTHER.”

David Donoghue, Chair of the Board