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# viewpoint

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Growing peace through development

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Not a day goes by that conflict does not rage in some part of the world. Equally, not a day goes by that some person, some family or some community does not take a step on the road to a better, more secure future, one free from conflict, hunger and poverty. And both can happen in one and the same place.

Both conflict and development are driven by a profound dissatisfaction with the way things are. But the one is a destructive response, while the other is positive and constructive.

Waiting for peace to take root before we begin to nurture development is a luxury we cannot afford. IFAD has a history of working with the most marginalized and disadvantaged rural populations, in the most difficult to reach areas, the most fragile situations and the most degraded environments. And we must continue to do so. If we want to help 80 million rural women and men to raise themselves out of poverty over the next three years, we have to go to where they are. They may be in least developed countries, fragile states, or pockets of intractable poverty in middle-income countries. Poverty finds the vulnerable wherever they are, and so must we.

The same conditions that provide fertile ground for unrest and conflict also create an urgent moral imperative for development: gross injustice, severe disparities in opportunity, lack of infrastructure and the tools to make life better, poor governance and corruption, intense competition for resources, greed, and lack of access to education or credit. Remove the obstacles and provide the tools, and people will begin to build a better world around themselves.

Our goal is to promote hope instead of hate, to see communities brought together to overcome adversity, not split apart by it. When we approach rural communities, we must look not only at what they are, but what they could be – and what they want to be. As IFAD's experience has shown time and again, we need to forge partnerships with rural people and let them take charge of their own futures.

### **A better future for tribal families in Jharkand**

A good example of our bottom-up approach is the work being done under the Jharkhand Tribal Development Project in 4 districts, 180 villages and 74,000 poor tribal households in the Indian state of Jharkand. Many of the villages in the state can only be reached on foot. Basic services and infrastructure are almost non-existent. Rural people have often been exploited by extremist groups, including

money-lenders. Financed by IFAD and implemented by the Jharkhand Tribal Development Society and NGO partners, the project has made a difference with an integrated natural resource management approach that has been fully owned by the people themselves, and which has particularly targeted women. The project has taken a comprehensive approach, including empowerment through the formation of self-help groups and building community awareness. Creation of land and water development structures, including digging of ponds and wells, contour trenching and field leveling, has helped many families with paddy cultivation and encouraged them to opt for a second crop as a cash crop. Community discussion on agricultural and other local issues has increased in the *Gram Sabha*, the traditional forum of community self-government. And significantly, there have not been further disturbances in the programme areas since the project started work.

Development can nurture peace. The two go hand in hand. If we create programmes that help people overcome the barriers to their own development, we give them a way to fight poverty and hunger instead of each other. We reduce the appeal of violent and destructive responses to conditions that are, admittedly, intolerable. No one should go to sleep hungry. No one should see a child's potential wither under malnutrition, illiteracy and hopelessness. No woman should be denied access to resources just because she is not a man. No one should be denied a voice simply because it suits someone else to keep them silent.

### **Healing the wounds of civil war in Burundi**

Peace, like food, has to be grown. It requires patience as well as determination. IFAD has been involved in Burundi through thick and thin. During the bloody 12-year civil war, IFAD remained active, and after the armed conflict ended IFAD was the first donor to move into the areas that had been hardest hit. IFAD has provided support to reconstruct rural infrastructure and the damaged agricultural sector, while also helping to build stronger communities and lay the foundations for a more cohesive, democratic society.

All four current IFAD projects focus on rebuilding rural livelihoods across the country, but the Transitional Programme of Post-Conflict Reconstruction (TPPCR), first launched in March 2006, took on the task of peace-building more broadly. TPPCR undertook community development, legal issues, HIV/AIDS awareness, support to food production, animal solidarity chains, rural infrastructure development and literacy activities. The approach helped build lasting democratic

institutions by addressing health and education issues. In so doing, the project struck at the roots of civil conflict: poverty, lack of opportunity, lack of education, lack of a future. If left untreated, these problems can build to desperation.

Today, project activities continue to enable people not only to rebuild their lives, but to prosper. The introduction of the system of rice intensification (SRI) has allowed farmers to more than double their rice yields per hectare. Lives and communities have a future again.

Nicaise Arakaza, a young man from Burambi, put it this way: "In the past it was all about vengeance... The programme helped us to learn good governance. It taught us the codes of law. Now we know how to resolve conflicts. You can explain your problem and find a peaceful resolution."

Conflicts over land have been cited as a major cause of the civil war. In Burundi and elsewhere, IFAD is not only raising community awareness about legal processes but also promoting gender equality by helping women pursue justice through the courts. As is often the case, education plays a vital role. Literacy classes are enabling women to read legal documents before signing them, particularly those relating to ownership of land, and ensure that their rights are respected. The resolution of land disputes is a key factor in helping the people of Burundi rebuild a peaceful society.

### **Creating a climate of peace**

Conflict has many causes, from the local to the geopolitical, but it thrives on desperation. The populations that participate in IFAD-supported programmes are among the poorest people on earth. It is not surprising that agricultural development is the most powerful engine of poverty reduction in developing countries. Indeed, GDP growth generated by agriculture is more than twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth in other sectors. The beauty of IFAD's approach is that it understands poverty reduction is more than economics or adding to GDP; to transform communities, rural development must address a range of social dimensions, and even the environmental context that rural people must contend with. We often talk of creating a climate for investment; we are also trying to create a climate of peace.

Studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between changes in global climate and civil conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. This applies to Somalia, where livestock price shocks related to drought fuel conflicts by reducing the opportunity costs of fighting. Endemic poverty and lack of public safety nets, credit and insurance make it difficult for people to cope when crisis strikes. Although more research is needed, preliminary studies indicate that strategies to help people

diversify their income and adapt to climate change and drought are not only effective in decreasing vulnerability to the effects of conflict, but can also contribute to conflict prevention. Food security at the household level is a foundation of general security at the community and national level.

But it is a mistake to assume that development activities will necessarily lead to peace. There are even cases in which interventions can provoke tension and conflict within communities or households. For example, in some countries studies have shown that when a crop formerly produced for household consumption becomes a marketable product, control over its production and profits is shifted to men. Therefore, unless we are cognizant of gender aspects, market-oriented initiatives could disproportionately benefit men.

Programme design requires careful targeting and a clear appreciation of the risks of trying to grow peace and development in unpromising soil. Of course, there are places where security is so fragile that undertaking development activities would be foolhardy and even irresponsible. In recent years, IFAD has been examining and deepening its work in fragile states. We are adopting a flexible approach to programme design and implementation, and are focusing on building the capacity of communities and government institutions. We are also strengthening our partnerships with other multilateral and bilateral actors. To be successful, we will need to perform deeper analysis of the causes of fragility and ensure simplicity of objectives and activities of projects in fragile states.

Conflict is not always full-blown. It can exist at various degrees and intensities, and its negative effects can be persistent and stubborn. Poor people living in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to having their lives disrupted or being displaced by violence. As a result, IFAD-supported projects work to build the resilience of people living in areas plagued by conflict.

### **Promoting peace and development in Pakistan, Mali and Tunisia**

IFAD is known both for innovation and for the long time-frames of the projects we support. We know that success in rural development requires the combination of creativity with a long-term commitment so that progress is not only incremental, but transformational. Nowhere is this more true than in areas plagued by conflict. One of our most encouraging successes is the Northern Areas Development Project (NADP) in Pakistan, which started in 1998. The project has brought new roads, clean water, new crops and livestock, and literacy to an area previously unreachable by development efforts. In addition, 140 women's organizations have been formed and women are starting small businesses.

But it was not easy. At first there was strong resistance, even violent resistance, to the project. Aspects of the project were seen as a threat to the community's traditions and religion – for example microfinance, which was viewed by some as un-Islamic. There were also issues of conflict that extended beyond the community. According to imam Maulana Muzzamil Shah, "Before, people from this area would go and train in different areas of Pakistan in the name of waging jihad to protect Islam. After the project, a change came on the people, and they stopped going. Now nobody goes." It was a long process for the project to be accepted, but once it was, not only was development embraced—extremism was rejected.

Time and again, IFAD's experience has shown that sensitivity to context, and engagement and dialogue with local people and their organizations, are critical to success.

In the case of the NADP project, "The people realized that the project was not there to attack their religion or their culture. The project is not anti-Islamic. The project is for the development of our people," said Shah.

Unfortunately, sometimes conflict overwhelms IFAD's work. In Mali's rural areas, most young people leave their villages to try to find work in the cities. This exodus has a devastating effect on the social fabric of remote areas. The elderly and the children remain, struggling to produce enough food.

An IFAD-supported project in Mali in the Timbuktu and Gao regions was focused on agriculture and livestock production and social services, including a component to train and create employment opportunities for young people. It had some success in slowing down the rate of migration, providing young people with reasons to stay in their village and develop businesses there. Because of the success of its projects, IFAD was recognised as a leading agency in Northern Mali.

However, as the conflict in Northern Mali became more widespread and violent, IFAD staff for the two projects were forced to withdraw to Bamako. While IFAD is not a humanitarian agency, the Mali country portfolio management team has been exploring ways to continue to support existing IFAD-funded infrastructure, such as health centres and irrigation schemes. Maintaining this infrastructure not only benefits local people during this period of conflict, but will be essential to rebuilding lives and livelihoods when the conflict ends. Even in difficult situations, it is important to find solutions to maintain infrastructure and activities initiated by the local population with project support, because this kind of support promotes sustainability and helps prepare for the post-conflict phase.

The current situation in Mali underscores the absolutely crucial need to create steady, reliable and reasonably paid work for young people in rural areas. Young people with prospects will build the foundations for their future. Young people without prospects have nothing to lose, and are more easily swayed by extreme rhetoric.

The recognition of agricultural development's potential to contribute to social stability and development was also one of the factors behind IFAD's decision to fund two projects in Tunisia. Indeed, the social upheaval in Tunisia had its roots deep in rural areas, in reaction to the inequalities between the coastal areas and the relatively marginalized interior.

The consequent establishment of a democratic climate in the country has given rise to greater freedom of expression, leading to demand for employment and infrastructure to meet basic needs on the part of the country's poorest regions.

IFAD, as an international financial institution active in the rural areas and the country's priority governorates, was particularly sought out to strengthen the interventions in the projects it cofinances, by granting emergency supplementary financing and by funding new projects. By deploying more resources to cover the unmet needs of rural people living in priority areas with a high incidence of poverty, IFAD hopes to contribute, in partnership with the Government of Tunisia, to building a peaceful and more equitable society, with a fairer distribution of wealth among rural and urban areas.

#### **IFAD's role in conflict-affected areas**

Conflict, unfortunately, will be with us for a long time to come. Conflict over resources, conflict over land, conflict over beliefs. For humanity, it is perhaps our greatest challenge. Conflict is as deeply rooted as poverty, because it underlies so much of poverty. But it cannot deter us from our mission; nor can we shy away from the sometimes uncomfortable reality that development and peace are closely intertwined outcomes.

We cannot advocate for one and stay silent about the other, because the alternative to peace is conflict, human suffering, stagnation and failure. As one of the NADP beneficiaries said, "when the project brought schools and other activities, we started to believe in the project's goodness. And then the people who opposed it also came towards the project."

Step by step, project by project, IFAD will continue to make a difference in the lives of poor rural people and to set examples that others who want to improve their lives and communities can follow.

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