



## Cultivating peace

For 12 years, El Salvador was wracked by fighting between government forces and rebel armies. Civilians, even women and children, were often forced to join the conflict.

Elba, a poor farmer from the mountainous region of Chalatenango, was one such combatant. After rebels moved into her village, Elba says they used propaganda to turn villagers into fighters. "They would coach us and warn that the time would come when we would have to leave our homes and lose our families," she remembers. That day soon came, and Elba's family was divided into different troops. Her husband and eldest son were placed into one troop, while she was ordered into another with her elderly father and two other children.

Elba's father and her husband both died on the same day. But Elba and her children managed to survive the war, and after the peace agreement in 1992, returned to their small plot of land. Agriculture in the region had been severely disrupted during the war, and much of the land, including Elba's, was burnt by soldiers.

With financial help from IFAD, an organization called Prochamate began helping farmers in Chalatenango cultivate the land again. Prochamate also taught farmers about more sustainable agricultural techniques, as well as product diversification, processing and marketing.

Today, Elba has reclaimed her land and learned how to improve its soil, using homemade herbicides and fertilizers. She has also started growing fruits and vegetables that fetch higher prices at the market. Thousands of farmers in the region have been able to improve their incomes through the Prochamate project, creating economic security and a place where peace can flourish.

## Rebuilding the farming sector

Four years of war devastated the farming sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina and shattered the country's agriculture-based economy. Most of the fighting took place in rural areas, ruining the land and destroying farm equipment. Many farm animals were also stolen or killed. By the end of the conflict, only a quarter of the country's 600 000 cattle had survived and dairy production was all but wiped out.

Nusreta Sejto lost the first of her two cows to shelling during a fight that raged near her hillside home outside Sarajevo. The fighting was so intense that Sejto had to wait until nightfall to milk her remaining cow and tend to her small plot of fruit trees and vegetables. Eventually, she was forced to sell her last cow in order to buy food. But without livestock, Sejto and her family no longer had a source of income, and their situation steadily declined.

Today, thanks to a joint initiative between IFAD and the World Bank, Sejto has a new cow on a highly favourable loan basis. The project distributed nearly 4 000 cows to farmers in the region, with the choice of repaying USD 1 500 for each animal or replacing it. Since the new imported breeds are genetically superior to livestock killed or lost during the fighting, milk yields have improved significantly. For instance, each imported cow produces about 90 litres of milk – more than twice the output of local cows before the war. So farmers like Sejto are not only rebuilding their businesses but also improving their economic prospects.

# Conflict

## The fight for long-term peace

Over the past 25 years, there have been at least 80 wars around the world. While the places may vary, today's violent conflicts have some striking similarities: almost all are civil wars and the majority of victims are civilians, not combatants.

Most of these internal conflicts have taken place in poor countries, impeding their development. In fact, more than half the countries where international development agencies currently operate are affected by war. Unfortunately, the majority of these conflicts are ongoing events, not temporary emergencies. Today's average conflict lasts about eight years – twice as long as conflicts before 1980. And many more people are killed in conflicts by hunger and disease than by actual fighting.

Today's civil wars are also far more likely to affect other countries. Not only does fighting frequently spill across borders and draw in foreign forces, but neighbouring countries often face the burden of contending with refugees, disease outbreaks and increased military presence. Civil wars disrupt trade, discourage investment and depress economic growth across entire regions – and heighten the risk that other countries will fall into civil war as well. Even distant, developed countries are affected by other countries' conflicts since insecurity breeds a number of growing global problems, such as terrorism, HIV/AIDS and illegal arms and drug trafficking.

The nature of today's conflicts underscores the urgent need to understand their causes and consequences – and develop new ways to handle them. Post-conflict reconstruction is not enough. Endemic instability demands more long-term solutions, and conflict prevention and management are essential parts of the equation.



## Women and war

Men are more likely to be involved in direct combat, but women are more affected by violence and economic instability during armed conflicts.

During violent conflicts, women are victims of rape, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexual humiliation and mutilation. Such violence can have severe health and psychological effects on women. For instance, women captured during conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa have allegedly been taken to soldiers known to be HIV-positive and raped with the intent of spreading the infection.

Wars often turn women into heads of households, and this role may signal discrimination and food and health crises for the entire family. Chronic poverty tends to

be more common in households headed by women.

Conflict has profound effects on the lives of women and yet women are rarely consulted or represented in peace and reconstruction processes. Women, however, often hold the key to reconciliation and regeneration. Some of the most effective peace agreements, for example, have included women in the negotiations and resulted in measures that empower women and protect their rights to land, property and inheritance. The international community must ensure that women are active and respected participants in the peace-brokering and building processes.



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### LINKS

The Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction  
Unit of the World Bank  
[www.worldbank.org/conflict](http://www.worldbank.org/conflict)

European Platform for Conflict  
Prevention and Transformation  
[www.euconflict.org](http://www.euconflict.org)

Forum on Early Warning  
and Early Response (FEWER)  
[www.fewer.org](http://www.fewer.org)

Oxfam's Conflict Campaign  
[www.oxfam.org.uk/what\\_you\\_can\\_do/campaign/conflict/index.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_you_can_do/campaign/conflict/index.html)

Stockholm International Peace  
Research Institute  
[www.sipri.se](http://www.sipri.se)

United Nations High Commission  
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## KEY FACTS

- More than 50 countries are currently experiencing, or have recently engaged in civil or cross-border conflicts.
- A century ago, most conflicts were between nations and 90 per cent of casualties were soldiers. Today, almost all wars are civil and 90 per cent of the victims are civilians.
- Over 4 million people have been killed in civil and regional conflicts since 1989.
- Approximately one third of the world's population is presently exposed to armed conflict.
- Fifteen of the world's 20 poorest countries have experienced armed conflicts in the past 15 years.
- About half of the countries in Africa are currently affected by armed conflicts.
- On average, economic growth in a country slows by 0.5 per cent per year when one of its neighbours is at war.
- The total number of refugees and internally displaced people in the world has risen from 22 million in 1985 to more than 40 million today.
- Conflicts over natural resources, such as land and water, are widespread. In 1995, for example, disputes over water triggered 14 international conflicts.

# Development despite disintegration

One of the most tumultuous civil wars in recent history took place in Somalia, leaving a legacy of famine and disease and the country in ruins. While the fighting has officially ended, ongoing power struggles often erupt in armed conflict and most of Somalia is still insecure.

Delivering aid has been further complicated by the fact that Somalia has no internationally recognized government. Without administration or support from international bodies, assistance to the country is usually limited to humanitarian relief and development programmes are scarce.

In partnership with the Belgian Survival Fund (BSF), IFAD has responded to the crisis by establishing Somalia's largest rural development programme. Since IFAD is unable to provide core lending to a country with only a transitional national government, the USD 5.3 million programme is funded by the BSF.

The programme operates in the northwestern part of the country, known as Somaliland, where inhabitants have formed their own independent, democratic governance. The rare stability in Somaliland has generated a steady flow of returnees, most of whom find their lands overgrown with bush, eroded or otherwise depleted. The IFAD/BSF Joint Programme works closely with rural communities to help rebuild their farms and livelihoods. Many of the programme's activities are aimed at improving water supply and soil conservation, but interventions also

target rural people's other needs, by providing microcredit, health services and better roads.

The most innovative aspect of the programme is its high level of community participation and ownership. Rural communities plan interventions and provide labour for the rehabilitation, construction and maintenance for infrastructure, such

as roads and water points and villages oversee and monitor all of the programme's activities. Not only are thousands of rural Somalians regaining their livelihoods but communities are encouraged to work together after years of mistrust and animosity. This highly participatory approach is now serving as a model for rural reconstruction programmes elsewhere.

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## Poverty may be the problem

It is no surprise that armed conflict can create poverty. Wars leave people without homes, food or sources of income and often create large numbers of refugees.

Farmers, in particular, are forced to leave their land or neglect their crops and livestock for fear of personal safety. Possessions can be looted or destroyed, and vital public services disrupted. Poor families become even more vulnerable when women are left alone to care for households and children cannot continue their education.

But poverty is also one of the driving forces behind conflict. While ethnic tensions and political feuds can lead to civil war, economic conditions can play an even bigger role. Low economic growth, low average incomes and high dependence on primary exports can be major causes of conflict. When a country's average income doubles, the likelihood of civil war is cut by half. And the risk for conflict falls in direct proportion to increases in a country's growth rate. On the other hand, a country is five times more likely to engage in conflict if more than 25 per cent of its income comes from the export of primary

commodities, like oil or diamonds, since leaders of countries with such lucrative natural resources tend to grow rich without fostering other kinds of economic activity.

Any number of other factors can ignite the violence, including ethnic and religious issues. Social inequality, political marginalization and environmental stress are also major causes of conflicts – all problems commonly faced by poor people. And as conflicts become more protracted, violence has a greater effect on the economy. Free markets may become "forced markets" with armed forces using coercion to maintain protection regimes and price differences, and more and more people withdraw from markets altogether.

As a result, poor countries become locked in a vicious cycle where poverty causes conflict and conflict creates more poverty. The average conflict tends to increase the number of people living in extreme poverty by 30 per cent.



## Peace and conflict

Sadly, even when countries manage to resolve conflicts, peace is not always lasting. Almost half of all newly peaceful countries revert to war within five years.

Historically, the international donor community has dealt with conflict by focusing on people's immediate needs, like shelter, food and water. But humanitarian relief is usually mobilized after fighting has already started, and the international community often faces growing health and nutrition emergencies without proper infrastructure or administrative support.

Today, there is a growing consensus that preventing conflict can be as important as responding to it – and may be an even better intervention strategy. Given that poor countries are at greatest risk of war, donors can have the greatest impact by addressing the root causes of poverty and by supporting policies and institutions that rebuild social cohesion and promote economic growth. Governments in poor countries can help by practicing good governance, keeping corruption low, and building better health, education and legal systems.

But security is the most important factor. People need to be both physically and financially secure. Reconstruction must therefore include income-generating activities for people who have lost their farms or businesses during conflicts. Seeds, tools, fertilizers and livestock need to be provided to help kick-start food production again. And poor people need access to long-term solutions like credit and training in order to rebuild their livelihoods and achieve enduring peace.