



Integrating a Conflict Prevention Approach in Humanitarian Resilience Programmes

Research in the 'Humanitarian Programme Plan'

How can we build the resilience of communities living in an environment of protracted violent conflict? How can we understand our impact on the conflict as well as the conflict's impact on our work? How is building the resilience of communities facing violence different from supporting communities facing natural hazards?

These are some of the questions motivating Christian Aid Ireland's new programme of learning research in its humanitarian resilience programmes. Christian Aid Ireland's Irish Aid Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP)¹ is being implemented **in Burundi, DRC, Myanmar, and South Sudan**, where humanitarian needs are driven mostly by protracted violent conflict. So, we are testing a new approach that **integrates conflict prevention into the resilience activities of the HPP**. Researchers from **Queens University Belfast are supporting this with ways to capture learning**.

The research will address the question: *What can we learn about strengthening community resilience to violence from the design and integration of a conflict sensitive/conflict prevention approach to resilience work in protracted crises?* The findings will be important in understanding field-level implications of the '[New Ways of Working](#)'. This is a global push to have development, humanitarian, and peace building actors collaborate in support of collective outcomes that reduce risk and vulnerability. These outcomes will serve as instalments towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Christian Aid defines [resilience](#) as the ability of individuals and communities to anticipate, organise, and adapt to change. Programmes on resilience are characterised by a participatory assessment process (using the [Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment](#) tool), community creation of a Community Action Plan, and the implementation of activities from the plan by the communities with support in specific activities provided by Christian Aid partners. Advocacy by communities and leveraging of other resources for the plan are emphasised. The resilience approach contrasts with approaches designed to deliver humanitarian relief without longer-term engagement with communities.

The research on this resilience approach follows earlier lessons from the '[Linking Preparedness, Response, and Resilience](#)' consortium, led by Christian Aid. The consortium produced sector-leading insights on community resilience in conflict settings.

A few key insights were:

- That violent conflict is a risk, but it's also the whole context in which some communities live
- Resilience is not accidental – it is an outcome of intentional interventions, though the interveners may be communities themselves, local civil society, state authorities etc.

The new research builds on these by focusing on how applying an [Integrated Conflict Prevention and Resilience \(ICPR\) approach](#) might impact the type of resilience activities that are implemented and their effectiveness. Each of the four countries have recruited a local consultant with strong knowledge of each context to support Christian Aid country teams and partners in implementing the ICPR approach. This includes accompanying conflict analysis efforts, providing conflict sensitivity advice, and mentoring for any potential conflict prevention activities included in Community Action Plans. Queens University Belfast researchers have designed a Learning Framework for studying how this integration approach is working, and what impacts it may have. The researchers work closely with the consultants in each country, as well as the country teams, to understand the benefits and challenges of the approach. They will also travel to each of the four countries to visit teams, partners, and beneficiaries for primary field research.

The research will also address the specific questions:

1. How have communities managed risks and improved well-being in contexts of conflict and crises? What power and gender dynamics affect this?
2. What are the factors of empowerment, cohesion, and other possible factors of resilience common across all contexts? How are the factors different for men and for women and marginalised groups within individual communities?
3. To what extent can communities living in protracted conflict contribute to a more transformative agenda of change?
4. Has the integration of conflict sensitivity approaches and resilience supported conflict prevention and transformative change, and how? Are there gaps that need to be considered in order to improve conflict sensitivity and to link humanitarian programming to longer lasting peace?

The first findings of the research are expected in late summer 2018. Christian Aid will use the findings directly to improve humanitarian resilience programming, pro-actively share them with others using a resilience approach, and bring insights from the research to policy debates on the New Way of Working collaboratively across humanitarian, development, and peace actors.