



international
alert

Peace is within our power
30 years of building peace

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We believe peace is within our power.

Peace is when you can walk your children to school in safety. When you can feed your family and have a home. When you can find a job and make a living, no matter who you are. When your rights are protected. When you are able to speak out and shape political decisions that influence your life. We can all play a part in building this everyday peace.

Peace is just as much about communities living together, side by side, and resolving their differences without resorting to violence as it is about people signing a treaty, laying down their arms and changing government policy.

That is why International Alert collaborates with people from across divides to solve the root causes of conflict. Together with local communities, partners, businesses and policy-makers, we turn our in-depth research and analysis into practical solutions that make a difference on the ground. We bring people together – from the grassroots to the policy level – to inspire and amplify our voice for peace.

Peace is within our power, and we all have a role to play in building a more peaceful future.



“International Alert has a distinguished track record of working with courage and compassion to build peace and inspire hope in troubled communities. From holding hands with Rwandans in the aftermath of genocide, to supporting young Syrians today. Always building, always challenging, always inspiring. For 30 years. I am very proud to be associated with this history.

Congratulations, International Alert. You are part of a global network for good, extending from the villages of DRC to the corridors of the United Nations. Here’s to the next 30 years. God bless you.”

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

Patron, International Alert

30 years of building peace

In February 1986, two million Filipinos protested day after day until the 20-year rule of President Ferdinand Marcos collapsed. It was the ‘revolution that surprised the world’.

That year in Sri Lanka, 80 Tamil farmers were massacred, allegedly by the army, their bodies burned on piles of rice, and 21 people were killed in a bomb attack by the Tamil Tigers on a flight, leading to an escalation of the ethnic conflict.

1986 also saw a rise in ‘the Troubles’ in Northern Ireland, a state of emergency declared in apartheid South Africa and the beginnings of the Soviet Union’s break-up.

Meanwhile in London, a group of visionaries, including Amnesty International’s Martin Ennals, were wrestling with how to reduce violence against communities, prevent mass atrocities and stop conflicts that violate human rights.

So they founded International Alert, to work with people from all walks of life, from villages to the UN, to help prevent conflict by addressing its underlying causes, and to build lasting peace.

Immediately they reached out to Desmond Tutu, Archbishop of Cape Town, who became our first Vice-Chairman and is still Alert’s patron today.

Since then, Alert has worked in over 60 countries to realise our values: that everybody has a right to live in peace and dignity, and that a world where people resolve their differences without violence is within our power.

To mark our 30th anniversary, we are sharing a few examples of how we walk alongside people striving to build a more peaceful future for their families and communities.

Peace was the untold good news story of the last three decades. After a spike in armed violence at the end of the Cold War, peace was spreading globally. In 1990 there were 50 wars; by 2010 there were 30, with fewer people killed in violent conflict and key peace deals being hammered out in Colombia, Myanmar and the Philippines. ►

Tragically, violence is rising again. With 40 wars ongoing, terrorism at an all-time high, and the largest number of battle deaths in 25 years, we are now living through the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, with 60 million people displaced globally. And violence is changing, touching lives from London to Tunis.

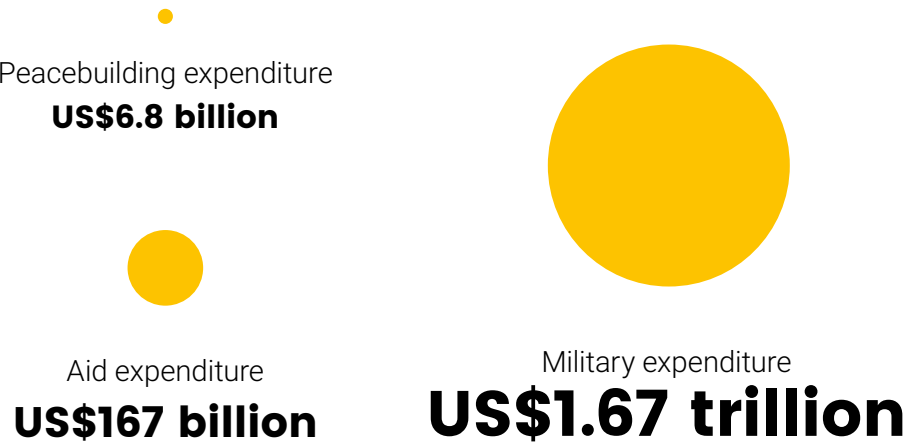
This is why now more than ever we all need to build everyday peace. The world spends so much time and money waging destructive wars. Imagine the difference we could make if we focused just that little bit more on waging peace.

How we build everyday peace

From rebuilding trust in Rwanda following the horrors of the genocide, to helping young people in Syria imagine a future free from violence, our passion for peace has taken us to some of the worst crises.

Conflict is a part of life – and of progress. The problem is that, too often, people turn too quickly to violence. Peacebuilding offers inspiring solutions, showing that violence is not inevitable. So that, when people disagree, feel wronged or face injustice, they do not reach for their machete or a gun, strap on an explosive

Global spending on war and peace in 2015



Sources: Institute for Economics and Peace (2016), Global Peace Index 2016; SIPRI (2015), Trends in world military expenditure.

vest or bomb from the skies. Rather, conflicts can be resolved peacefully, if only people get the chance – whether through tough political debates, having access to justice or their voices being heard.

Peace has to be won inch by inch, just as people making an area safe from unexploded landmines have to work carefully to clear the debris of war. So that people can walk their children to school in safety; feed their family and have a home; and make a living, no matter who they are. When their rights are protected, and they can speak out and shape decisions that influence their lives.

Peace is as much about communities living side by side and resolving their differences without resorting to violence, as it is about people signing a treaty, laying down their arms or changing government policy. Indeed, half of all peace deals unravel within five years. So to create this peace we have to work right across society – from the kitchen table to the negotiating table. Even in the midst of war.

As a Syrian partner, Mr Bastoni, who teaches teenagers about peace, explains: *“The alternative is to give up, to despair, to lose all hope. So we must keep going. We must believe in the next generation.”*

Over the next 30 years, standing alongside our partners, we will redouble our efforts to build a more peaceful world by working with people directly affected by conflict. We will shape the international policies and practices that support peace. And we will collaborate with all those striving for peace globally to strengthen our collective voice and impact.

Against all the odds, even when bombs are exploding around them, people keep reaching for peace. We believe peace is within our collective power. And we have seen over 30 years how we can all play a part in building this, every day, reaching out our hands for peace. ●

Harriet Lamb
CEO, International Alert



“Without peace there can be no development. Without development, there can be no peace. And you cannot have either peace or development without respect for human rights. We must listen to the warning drumbeats of human rights abuses and not wait for the mass atrocities to act. We must invest more in the peacebuilding that is needed to prevent violence – not just after an explosion of conflict.

Otherwise we pay a horrible price later on. For central to the concept of sustaining peace is the recognition that peacebuilding is not only a post-conflict activity, but also a step that needs to be taken before, during and after conflict.

In recent years, civil society organisations including International Alert have helped bring about the step-change in the recognition that we do need to invest in peacebuilding. Now we all need to do much more to translate that changed recognition into changed reality.”

Jan Eliasson

United Nations Deputy Secretary General

Healing fractured lives in Rwanda

“I rushed to my brother’s home and found they had all been hacked to death except their four-month-old daughter. I picked her up and ran toward the border of Burundi. Along my escape, I was attacked by local Hutus in a frenzy. They finally stopped because they thought I was dead...”

The years after the war were desperate. My house was stolen and the cattle butchered. I had nothing. I joined the local dialogue club to find solace. The trauma counselling helped me realise there is no future for peace unless I can live in peace with my neighbours, even if they participated in my attack during the war.”

Patricia (pictured), a Tutsi survivor

In 1994, some 800,000 people were killed in Rwanda’s genocide. Everyone was impacted, as neighbour turned upon neighbour, and family member turned upon family member. The country has come a long way since, but the devastation and trauma are still felt today.

For those who lost loved ones, were wounded or raped, or hid and fled in terror, the

memories and suffering persist. And for those imprisoned for their crimes – including those wrongly convicted – moving back home can prove a struggle. How do you begin to forgive or be forgiven?

We started by ensuring that more women were involved in the justice and reconciliation process, especially in the Gacaca courts –



Patricia, a Tutsi survivor, sitting next to Aloys, one of her attackers

a community-led method of conflict resolution, which traditionally excluded them.

“At first the women were sitting in Gacaca groups, but they didn’t say anything. So we built their capacity to analyse the situation and to express their views and even participate as judges,” recalls Alert’s Senior Adviser in the Great Lakes Gloriosa Bazigaga. “This contributed to fighting impunity.”

Working with the women’s network Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe between 2002 and 2006, we were able to increase the use of women judges in Gacaca trials to 34%. We also worked closely with public prosecutors to improve rates of conviction for rape, used extensively during the genocide as a weapon of war. ►

“The reason I joined other Hutus in the slaughter was pure greed, jealousy and stupidity. I was jailed for eight years. After returning to my village, I joined the dialogue club. They taught me how to approach survivors and ask forgiveness. This has given me the dignity I lost.”

Aloys (pictured), a perpetrator



“I lost 30 family members during the genocide. I had nightmares for years, haunted by screaming voices... A local official encouraged me to join the dialogue club. The trauma counselling helped me understand my fears and the project offered microfinance. Now, with three other members, we have a successful business. The greatest benefit I experienced was to learn to forgive and have no regrets. The only way to prevent another genocide is to talk about it and never let people forget the pain of the era.”

Joseph (pictured above), a Tutsi survivor

Yet, more needed to be done to address the deep-rooted feelings of anger among survivors and self-hatred among perpetrators. So together with our partner, the Rwandan Association of Trauma Counsellors, we offered trauma healing for individuals and families, and held public meetings to talk openly about the previously taboo subject of mental health.

With Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe, we also set up dialogue clubs where survivors, ex-combatants and ex-prisoners could come together to share their anger, guilt, fear and shame. Sitting side by side, people started to forgive one another and re-establish the community they had lost. This support was life-changing.

During the genocide, people lost not only loved ones but also their livelihoods. Our partner Duterimbere gave groups of people small loans and training to set up businesses.

These small businesses included a mix of survivors, ex-combatants and ex-prisoners, so while people rebuilt their lives together, they also reconciled with their former enemies.

We were the first to bring together survivors, ex-combatants and ex-prisoners in common initiatives. These were so successful that the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission recommended that other local authorities adopt this holistic approach.

There are now 260 dialogue clubs across Rwanda, positively impacting over 5,000 people every year.

With our partner the Rwandan Farmers' Federation (IMBARAGA), we are also helping to resolve conflicts over land through dialogue. Over 2,000 land disputes have been heard so far, 85% of which were mediated successfully, and almost 13,000 land titles have been collected. ●



Lambert, an ex-combatant who received counselling, with his wife

Creating safe spaces for young Syrians



Syrian refugee children in Lebanon

“Without your guidance and what you tell us, I would have joined ISIS.”

Abdul*, Syrian refugee, Lebanon

Young Syrians are experiencing unthinkable trauma and loss from the brutal five-year conflict that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and displaced millions more.

Our comprehensive peace education programme, which includes trauma healing and psychosocial support, has equipped around 7,000 young people in Syria, Lebanon and Turkey with the belief and skills they urgently need to build a future free from violence. Run by local partners, the scheme also increases young people’s resilience – in particular to recruitment by armed groups.

“They are surrounded only by violence,” explains Aida, a peace education teacher in Lebanon. “So no wonder that is how they respond. How they express it is different, but they all feel rage. We are showing them that there is another way to be, to behave.”

“At first the parents are not sure,” she continues. “Not now. They are asking for classes to happen twice a week, for adult classes, for longer classes...” All the peace education centres tell the same story.

“I have lost one son in the war and do not want to lose his brother,” says Hatem, whose

12-year-old son Aboud attends one of our peace education classes. Hatem’s elder son recently died in battle. Before he was killed, his brother would take Aboud to fight with him, exposing him to violence and violent role models. Aboud became aggressive, breaking his younger brother’s arm while simulating something he saw on the battlefield. “He wanted to become commander of a brigade,” recalls his father.

When he joined the local peace education programme, Aboud wore a military outfit and was aggressive towards his classmates, hitting and bullying them. It took a number of sessions to develop his ability to show empathy and to deal with trauma, as well as handle situations in a non-violent way. Facilitators noticed Aboud’s urge to be in command, so let him lead some of the games, to practise using power in a non-violent way.

Hatem says that these activities have helped his son deal with his trauma and anger. This has taken his parents by surprise. “His behaviour changed at home,” explains Hatem. ●

“Instead of breaking plates following a meal, he washed them. I did not expect this [peace education] would work.”

Hatem, father of peace education student

Promoting the business of peace

“The war always robs us of everything. During the war, the first things to be looted are the food depots. For us small-scale traders, each time you have to start from scratch. But there is real reciprocity between us. The Rwandan traders need us like we need them. Over there in Rwanda, they say ‘Turikumwe’ – we are one.”

Maman Bahati (pictured), Congolese trader

“**T**here is a lot of rudeness and harassment at the border,” says Maman Bahati, a Congolese trader. “The border agents only want money. You always have to discuss and negotiate. Refusing to pay may have them holding a grudge against you. The next time you cross, you run the risk of facing more problems. It is really not easy to cross the border every day. It is physically and morally exhausting.”

Maman Bahati is just one of thousands of women traders that we have supported who sell goods across the borders between eastern DRC and its neighbours Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. ▶



Thanks to our training of traders and customs officials on rights and responsibilities, cases of physical and verbal harassment have dropped by 60% at four key border crossings. In parallel, we are strengthening traders' associations, which has improved the profitability of their small businesses and developed relations across the border in what has long been a very tense region.

To take just one example of how this is helping to improve everyday peace: if the women don't sell everything in one day, they trust their neighbours enough now to leave the leftover goods over the border until the next day.

And to effect greater change, we brought together the governments from across the region with the women traders to explore ways of changing regulations and practices to better support their livelihoods.

Businesses can be a powerful voice for peace, so we help them to establish networks

to express their views and contribute to solutions. From Nepal and Uganda, these networks have successfully influenced government, communities and in some cases rebel groups to take practical steps to promote trust and sustainable peace. For example, in the Philippines the Mindanao Business Council called for parties negotiating the peace agreement to return to the table. And across the Caucasus, producers and traders have developed a brand of wine, tea, honey and cheese that reflects a vision of a united region.

Yet, while businesses can support peace, at times they can also fuel violent conflict. That is why for more than 15 years we have worked closely with dozens of major extractive companies, advising and training them on how to engage with communities and to operate in ways that reduce conflicts, rather than making them worse.

For example, we started working with Anglo American in 2010, in Brazil, Chile, Peru

“In the past, it could be difficult for a Rwandan trader to cross to Congo. If you had a problem, no one would help you. Some of us were even afraid to cross. But the other day, a Rwandan trader had an accident in Goma, and the Congolese women took her to the hospital. This never happened before.”

Maman Chantal, Rwandan trader



A border official at a border bridge between DRC and Rwanda

and South Africa, to help them manage their security risks in a way that respects human rights. Since then there haven't been any allegations or complaints against their security staff or private security providers.

Many more have used our innovative guide for extractive industries to help improve their practices, both locally and globally. Occidental Petroleum Colombia was an early adopter of the guide. *“We managed to insert conflict and human rights issues in the management system of the company ... [and] had very serious discussions about thorny issues in relation to the operation,”* says Juan Carlos Ucros, Vice

President of Corporate Affairs. *“No other oil company was doing that.”*

We were also a founding member of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights in 2000, which provides guidance to extractive companies. This initiative is now supported by nine national governments, 27 companies – including most of the world's largest extractives – and 10 NGOs, including Alert. We have supported 13 of these companies, from Latin America to Australia, and the governments of Colombia, Peru and South Africa in implementing these principles. ●

Breaking down prejudices in Lebanon

“After the civil war there was no real reconciliation process at the community level. So people just stopped fighting each other and stopped being in conflict, but there was no real process of reintegration. International Alert enabled us to look more closely at reality. It is like they gave us a magnifying glass to detect real problems, developing skills in exploring and managing differences, listening to ‘the other’.

Now when there are struggles in universities [where violent clashes break out between supporters of the different political parties], we know that we can call these people [from the other political parties] to defuse tensions.”

Ayman (pictured), party youth leader

A generation on from civil war, Lebanon remains deeply divided along partisan and sectarian lines. Frequent armed clashes, political assassinations and governmental paralysis are part of everyday life, and whole communities have become segregated from one another.

Dialogue can break down these barriers and we help youth leaders from all major political parties to connect. In 2009, when this project began, most members had never interacted with people from other sects, let alone worked together. Since then the group has been able to



discuss practical issues that affect their daily lives, from garbage collection to how Lebanon deals with Palestinian refugees.

These future leaders have been able to overcome their fears and break down their own prejudices, and those present in their communities.

As Nadeem, one of the youth leaders, said: “We don’t even have the same course of history in our schools. I know the history of the war by my parents’ and political party’s point of view. If I wasn’t curious enough to do the research, I could think that we were the only heroes and all the others were the bad guys or monsters. In the dialogue process that we have been part of at International Alert, year after year we are getting more and more comfortable talking to each other. So sitting with the other and getting to know them is a big step towards a peaceful city, country and region.”

Social barriers and negative perceptions were further shattered by learning from other divided countries, such as Northern Ireland, where the group visited and saw first-hand how other societies touched by conflict have addressed their differences and moved beyond violence.

The group has become increasingly self-sufficient and they now reach out to one another in challenging times. Something that would have been unthinkable before this dialogue started. ●



Rebuilding lives after Boko Haram in Nigeria

“When I first arrived in the camp, I was labelled a ‘Boko Haram wife’ with a dark soul. They thought I was evil. They viewed me as impure. I was isolated and the stigma was hurtful. The workshop conducted by International Alert was immensely helpful. I developed the confidence to speak to people. Before I was afraid and very shy.”

Jummai* (pictured), at an internally displaced person (IDP) camp in Maiduguri

In Nigeria, communities have long battled for political, social and economic power, with stark inequalities between the poorer north and richer south, which run along religious and ethnic lines.

As the new, democratically elected government struggles to tackle these historical divisions, the existing lack of trust between citizens and the state is disintegrating further. Feelings of inequality and exclusion have created space

*All names and locations changed to protect people's safety

for extremist groups to emerge, most notably Jama'atul ahl al-sunnah li da'awati wal jihad – known globally as Boko Haram.

Our recent research revealed that women and girls have been the hardest hit by the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, with over 2,000 abducted since 2009 – including the 276 schoolgirls kidnapped in Chibok in 2014. Many remain in captivity, but some are beginning to return. Tragically, their horrors don't end there.

Upon returning home, these women and girls are often rejected and persecuted by their own communities, who fear they could have been radicalised and that their children born out of sexual violence are 'tainted' by the 'bad blood' of Boko Haram fighters. This places them at risk of discrimination and violence.

To help them become accepted by their communities again, we run dialogue sessions



and community workshops in four internally displaced persons camps in the northeast with our partners, the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria, Herwa Community Development Initiative and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"I didn't want to re-take my wife. I completely rejected the idea and I had made a proposal to marry another woman. A few months later, I was attending the dialogue session with International Alert and Herwa. Many of the men said they had accepted their wives back and why shouldn't I? The discussions helped change my mind. I knew I was still in love with her. The workshops reinforced my values of being open and to embrace tolerance."

Sani and Fatima (pictured left), at an IDP camp in Maiduguri



We also provide religious and psycho-social counselling for victims, giving them the opportunity to start rebuilding their lives.

When Boko Haram invaded her village, Ladi had just lost her husband. Together with her sister and children, she ran into an abandoned house to hide from the insurgents. They found them, brutally raped Ladi in front of her children and left. Scared that they would come back, the women decided to escape. After walking for 60 miles with their children strapped to their backs, they finally reached an IDP camp in Maiduguri.

"I discovered I was pregnant soon after I arrived at the camp – a pregnancy created out of violent rape, not out of love ... I cried daily. I wasn't eating or sleeping. I was deeply depressed. After participating in the International Alert

programme, I was able to talk about my problems and engage in conversation with other women who experienced similar problems. The issue of being raped and carrying a baby from sexual violence, the stigma, the isolation from suspicious people in the camp. It was emotionally overwhelming. The sessions have been crucial in my moving on in my life."

Ladi has now given birth to twins, who were born out of rape. ●

"They are innocent. I love them equally to my other children."

Ladi (pictured above), at an IDP camp in Maiduguri

Supporting the peace processes in the Philippines

In the Philippines, whole generations have never seen peace. The country has suffered from two of the world's longest-running conflicts, with ideological divisions that first emerged nearly 60 years ago still alive today. One is a communist insurgency that began in the late 1960s and has resulted in widespread violent outbreaks that continue to be felt across the country.

The other is a separatist struggle by the Moro peoples in the island of Mindanao, who have been negotiating for decades over gaining an autonomous political region called Bangsamoro.

In 1988, we co-staged the first international conference to support the peace processes. As Teresita 'Ging' Quintos-Deles, who advised the president on the peace process until 2016, said: *"International Alert was the first one to bring the international dimension and interest into the Philippines peace process with the Waging Peace conference."*

The now annual conference brings together peace advocates from all conflicting sides, giving Filipinos who wouldn't ordinarily be able to reach one another a chance to move

forward with negotiations. Over the years, we have been advising the official negotiating panels for the Filipino government as well as both communist and Moro insurgents.

Francisco Lara Jr, who leads our work in the Philippines, has been supporting this process through chairing the Ceasefire Working Group for the Expected Resumption of Peace Talks.

But as Quintos-Deles says: *"We cannot win peace just at the talks table. Peace was signed at the top, but it grows at the grassroots. Citizens' participation in the peace process is clearly critical."*

Alert is in for the long haul, as we believe in staying with processes and engaging people right through society – from community groups to major businesses. That is why we are guiding those investing in conflict areas to ensure that they become part of the solution rather than the problem.

This is particularly important for the energy and mining sector, which operates in indigenous peoples' areas.

For example, we set up a dialogue group to connect community members, local government and a major power plant in Davao

"There were times when the peace negotiations got tough – and you need civil society pushing to help keep talks on track."

Teresita 'Ging' Quintos-Deles, former presidential adviser to the peace process

to address local concerns and discuss ways of reducing conflict. When nearly 250 Muslim families living in areas near the plant were resettled, the group ensured that their welfare, livelihoods and cultural heritage were given utmost attention.

Technology can also be a key tool for understanding the causes and costs of violence. Our pioneering online tool for tracking conflicts in the divided Bangsamoro region – the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System – achieves exactly this. Since its launch, the website has attracted users from more than 1,500 organisations and has been frequently referenced in parliamentary debates on the best ways forward for peace.

The data has highlighted the causes of conflict in this region, underscoring the importance of tackling ethnic and political divisions as well as 'shadow' economies (such as cross-border trade, informal land markets and illegal guns) as part of the government's efforts towards peace and development. ●



Girl from Simunul Island, Tawi-Tawi, Mindanao

Inspiring hope for young people on the margins in Tunisia

“The country needs to take care of its youth, because people in neighbourhoods like mine are pushed to the edge, desperate, and that leads people to desperate things.”

Mehdi (pictured), from Tunis’ Hay Ettadhamen suburb

When President Ben Ali was dramatically overthrown by a popular uprising in Tunisia in 2011, a wave of protests and unrest was triggered throughout the Middle East and North Africa that became known as the Arab Spring. The revolts were a response to corrupt and often violent dictatorships that had widened inequalities and led to a spiral of economic decline and poverty across the region.

Young people were at the heart of many of these revolutionary movements. They felt alienated by their lack of basic rights and

opportunities and angry at the status quo, and demanded change. Yet for many, fresh hope was soon overshadowed by political infighting and violence.

Even in Tunisia, which democratically elected a new government, many of those living in deprived areas still feel excluded and deeply suspicious of the state. The optimism of young people in particular has turned to bitterness and resentment in the face of severe unemployment, underdevelopment and political marginalisation. This has left them vulnerable to joining gangs and violent



groups, including ISIS, to regain a sense of purpose in their lives.

Since 2015, we have been collaborating with young men and women in two of the most deprived suburbs of the capital Tunis, Ettadhamen and Douar Hicher – often described as hotbeds of radicalism. Using a mapping tool on their phones, they have marked out their neighbourhood and added details previously only available in more affluent parts of the city. They also identified areas that require basic services, such as rubbish collection or health centres, and are now working with the local

council, where they help shape how half of the public investment budget (€300,000) is spent.

And in Kasserine, on Tunisia’s border with Algeria, our work has led the local authority to engage with marginalised young people on tackling substance abuse. With our partner Huna AlGassrine, we have set up a youth-led radio station to help build vital lines of communication and trust between the community and security services. This includes training 30 aspiring journalists on how to produce a radio show on border security issues. ●

Striving for gender equality

Understanding how violence affects us all in different ways, whether we are adults, children, men or women, and addressing these differences, is fundamental for building lasting peace. Everyone, regardless of their gender, should be able to have an equal stake in society. They should be able to do what many take for granted: earn a living, access justice, take part in political processes and live a life free of violence. Only then does peace stand a chance.

This is the vision we brought to the global advocacy campaign, 'From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table'. Together with other NGOs, we successfully lobbied for the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000, which changed the global approach to peace and security. It was the first recognition that women's participation and perspectives are essential to building peace, while also highlighting the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls in conflict.

That is why we continue to this day to support local efforts to make women and girls influential peacemakers in their communities and countries.

In Burundi, for example, we are proud to have played a pivotal role in the creation of the women's network Dushirehamwe ('let us

reconcile'), by training the group's founders on peacebuilding techniques. They have shared their knowledge with thousands of women across the country, who are now resolving local disputes and conflicts.

In 2012, for example, we brought together 37 women's organisations to lobby for the inclusion of women's voices in government policies in Burundi. As a direct result, all 18 of the political, economic and social priorities advocated by the group were included in the country's second poverty reduction strategy.

In DRC, we helped create the Rien Sans les Femmes ('nothing without women') movement, in which almost 160 organisations are campaigning to increase women's role in decision-making in government and society. This includes the passing of the women's rights and parity law in 2015 and the governor of South Kivu appointing 40% women in the newly formed government in 2016. As one of our partners in the movement, Solange Lwashiga, says: *"There won't be any peace, any sustainable development, without women in DRC."*

Yet focusing on women in isolation can't achieve equality. Societies are structured around gender norms and it is crucial to reach out to men, women and gender minorities.

"I am a member of the campaign Rien Sans les Femmes, a collective of Congolese organisations and individuals that promotes women's rights. When we first started our dialogue groups, people didn't want to know. So it's a major success in DRC to have a woman elected to office. The members talk about how Alert offers a school for peace – training and equipping us to consolidate peace."

Solange Lwashiga, Executive Secretary, Caucus des Femmes Congolaises du Sud-Kivu Pour la Paix

That's why in Afghanistan we have been supporting local organisations such as the Peace Training and Research Organization and the Afghan Women's Network to encourage men and boys to be influential allies in the fight for gender equality, and engage with them to bring about tangible changes in behaviours and practices.

And in Pakistan, men and women came together to tackle sexual and gender-based violence, including forced marriage, domestic violence, abduction and rape. By running over 10,000 'study circles', we have seen a shift in people's attitudes and behaviour around the role of men and women in society. This has led to communities stopping and boycotting practices such as early and forced marriage. *"The support I received has given me the confidence to rise against injustices,"* says Maqsood from Muzaffargarh, who has introduced over 150 families to the programme. ●



A march organised by Rien Sans les Femmes in DRC

Shaping a peaceful economy in Uganda

In Uganda, the discovery of oil has tremendous potential to transform the country's economy and development. However, local communities must have a stake in these changes, otherwise tensions can quickly escalate and turn violent.

We supported the formation of the Northern Uganda Business Forum for Peace (NUBFP) and collaborate with the Uganda Investment Authority to ensure business and economic activities underpin rather than undermine peace in the country. Together, we are advising investors on how to act responsibly to avoid causing harm in what remains a fragile environment – as Ugandans are still recovering from decades of conflict.

We bring together authorities, companies and communities to make sure oil is harnessed for peaceful development for everyone. This has included organising public dialogues, lobbying the government to ensure transparency and accountability in oil legislation, and ensuring women's lives are also improved by the developments.

“Previously, the government was very secretive about its engagement with oil and gas companies,” says Joyce Santa Laker, a NUBFP member. “However, with Alert’s intervention, both the government and oil companies were encouraged to have direct conversations with

members of the community. The relationship is now cordial and information is readily available, to the extent that even a primary school child knows about oil and gas. The communities understand the importance of maintaining good relations with oil companies and vice versa.”

Together with the NUBFP, we developed a widely used guide for investors to advise them on how to negotiate fairly the use of land. Businesses and community leaders alike have acknowledged the guide has helped avoid conflicts breaking out while also allowing economic growth to take place.

Cities in Uganda are growing apace, creating new challenges, especially as unemployed young people become frustrated. Kampala, the capital, has seen a number of violent demonstrations, as well as business disputes, which spill over into the streets.

Working closely with young people and authorities through the Safer City campaign, we have provided conflict-resolution training and helped establish a mediation process, so more disputes are now being resolved before they get out of control and become violent. And we are improving economic opportunities for young people, for example by helping them get business loans. ●



“Bwaise is one of the most notorious areas for riots. At any time, a conflict could happen and people would break into our shops and take almost every item. The Safer City campaign helped raise awareness about the need to promote peace and security, without which businesses would suffer. Now there are fewer riots and we can work with our hearts settled.”

Kafeero (pictured), mobile phone repairer

Encouraging cooperation across divides in the Caucasus

When the Soviet Union collapsed, struggles for autonomy began throughout the Caucasus, leaving this multi-ethnic region on the border of Europe and Asia deeply divided.

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia gained independence but were mired in territorial disputes. Georgia fought over the autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, while Armenia and Azerbaijan were drawn into the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. Former friends and neighbours were cut off from one another as borders closed, and mass displacements dramatically changed the make-up of the region.

There was an urgent need to build trust and strengthen links among the Caucasian peoples, so in 1998 we helped peacebuilders in the region establish a platform for dialogue, the Caucasus Forum of NGOs.

This allowed people from across the conflict divides to meet on an equal footing and find common ground. It created a rare space where they could begin to better understand

“This project gives society facts about what’s happening in the lives of ordinary people on both sides. This information is not reported in the official media, which focuses on the political situation and spreading propaganda.”

Seymur Kazimov, journalist

and appreciate one another’s varied opinions, and overcome stereotypes fuelled by the wars and resulting propaganda.

We were one of the first organisations to bring together and be trusted by people

from all sides. The forum generated a wealth of dialogue projects between women, youth, journalists and ex-combatants. It also developed a network of civil society peacemakers who to this day continue to push forward a peace agenda within their societies.

As one of the forum participants said: *“One of our greatest achievements is that, as partners, we have learned that, in order to do something real, we must be open with each other. This can be quite painful, because we still have different interests and views, but it is necessary. We can create an island of stability among ourselves from which we can then work on our societies.”*

In 2005, we also helped to establish the Caucasus Business and Development Network (CBDN), a pioneering, locally driven initiative promoting greater economic interaction across the region and with neighbouring Turkey. This includes bringing together cheese, tea, wine and honey producers from across the region to create a series of products called ‘Caucasus Brands’ – showcasing the power of economic cooperation to unite divided communities.

After over 20 years of conflict, there are generations of people who only know their ‘enemies’ by what they read in the state-controlled media. We provide journalists with the chance to report on how the wars have affected the lives of ordinary people living on all sides of the conflict. Armenian and Azeri journalists involved in this project contact each other for fact-checking and exchange information, even when tensions rise and violence escalates.

While some politicians remain rooted in the past, these collaborative regional initiatives

are continuing to inspire people to believe they can be part of building a more united, peaceful future for the Caucasus. ●

“Previously I was against this type of work, but this has convinced me that it’s possible to collaborate with ‘the enemy’. These projects can change people – if it changed me, it could change others too.”

Caucasus Business and Development Network member



Market trader in Georgia



The path to peace

We have learned so much with our partners over the last three decades – what works in building peace – and also what doesn't. Always seeking innovative ways forward, we have been at the forefront of new ways of addressing the root causes of conflict.

Together we have secured the inclusion of women in peace processes, through the approval of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. We have developed guidelines for the mining and oil sector to respect people's rights and ensure companies don't contribute to conflict. And we have partnered with the G7 countries to tackle the increased risk of conflict for communities affected by climate change.

As the nature of conflict continues to change, we are now also working with young people in the northwest of the United Kingdom to reduce tensions between communities and we have uncovered the impact of organised crime on peace in countries like Mali.

Over the next 30 years, together with our partners, we will redouble our efforts to build a more peaceful world by:

- Working with people directly affected by conflict to find peaceful solutions;
- Shaping international policies and practices to support peace; and
- Collaborating with all those striving for peace globally to strengthen our collective voice and impact.

It will take all of us working together to build this everyday peace that people seek and deserve. We need to galvanise the public and political consciousness, whether in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo or Ukraine, to forge a whole new consensus for peace. So that we can once again expand peace globally, from the villages to the nations. ●

Start building your own everyday peace now

Peace is within our power. Small everyday actions can make a huge difference in building a more peaceful future. You can play a part by...



Becoming a peace champion

Spread the word about the importance of building peace by sharing an article, signing a petition, or even organising an event in your own community.



Joining in

Sign up to our newsletter, follow us on social media and tell us about how you are supporting peace.



Supporting peace

From equipping children in Syria with the skills to build a future free from violence to rebuilding lives in Rwanda, your support will transform thousands of lives. Visit intalert.org/donate



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We believe in a world where people
resolve their differences without violence
and can build a more peaceful future
for their families and communities.

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