



Lena embraces a fellow member of her CRS women's livelihoods group at the Burundi-DRC border.
Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS

Driving Mission Agility: *Promoting Peace*

Conflict currently drives 80% of all humanitarian needs. One seventh of the world lives in fragile or conflict-affected countries, and more people than ever are displaced. Discrimination remains widespread—threatening families, communities and livelihoods.

Without question, inequality and violence are at the root of poverty and suffering. Only when our world is safe and just for all people can the most vulnerable truly thrive.

The key to peace is social cohesion and justice. These bedrock elements must be integral to everything we do.

Going Far

Social cohesion takes root when members of a community can cooperate and coexist, regardless of their differences. And trustworthy systems of justice make that possible.

Across all regions and program areas, we cannot achieve lasting results without also integrating social cohesion and justice in our approach. Otherwise, too many critical programs are built on shifting sands and our investments are not utilized to their greatest potential.

Through **Go FAR: The Campaign for Catholic Relief Services**, we will elevate our focus on social cohesion and justice, weaving peacebuilding activities throughout each of our agency-wide strategic priorities. This will amplify our overall impact, effectiveness and sustainability across all sectors. **Because we should and because we can.**

“I was living with prejudice, and it was blocking my full potential.”

—Lena

Need

We know from experience that holistic support is complete support, and we are not alone. Increasingly, funders are requiring that organizations incorporate social cohesion into their grant requests—not just for peace-focused programs, but also for projects ranging from health to agriculture.

It is vital to act now to lead the movement forward. Because, although we recognize its importance, no one—across the entire field of international development—has demonstrated how to apply this approach at scale. Experience and information about social cohesion are scattered or siloed at the country or program levels. Comprehensive reporting is difficult to find and access universally. This prevents stakeholders from learning from one other and sharing best practices.



All people deserve to live in peaceful communities. With campaign support, CRS will incorporate social cohesion and justice approaches into all of our priority programming. Photo by Sam Phelps/CRS

Opportunity

In alignment with our faith-based mission and the Church principle of integrated human development, CRS has been championing a holistic approach for decades. And since the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s, CRS has viewed our work through a “justice lens,” ensuring we follow Catholic social teaching’s call to pursue peace through justice.

These concepts are rooted in our Catholic identity. So, while adaptations must be made to integrate social cohesion across our strategic priorities, we are not starting from zero.

With our proven experience, CRS feels a moral imperative to document and share our knowledge, to improve not only our own approaches but those of our peers. Together, we will bring this initiative to scale through our strong network of partners, supporters and influential alliances.

The Impact

As CRS launches our Vision 2030 strategy, we will actively weave social cohesion and justice approaches into all priority programming, across sectors:

- CRS will first compile a study of internal and external sources that evaluates what we know and do not know about integrating social cohesion and justice into humanitarian programming. The study will also outline how best to use and share this evidence.
- CRS will pilot integration models across our strategic priorities, incorporating social cohesion into projects such as Building Homes in Uganda and Transforming Livelihoods in Madagascar. Additional pilot countries may include El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kenya, Lesotho and Senegal. This wide range of pilots across program areas and geographies will help us test and build concrete models that can be easily adapted and applied in a variety of contexts.
- With our pilots underway, CRS will develop a system to track best practices and improve the way we manage and share relevant information. We will also continue to conduct new research studies to test and demonstrate findings.
- Having identified and documented best practices for how to effectively integrate social cohesion and justice, CRS will communicate these learnings across our own agency as well as with peers, partners and governments. Through our influence in the field, we will help others adopt and scale our proven approach. We will additionally equip our partners through trainings, conferences and joint program activities.

Healing Trauma, Mending Fences

Growing up amid war, Lena Munezero had reasons not to trust. “My father and brother were killed in conflict, and my mom always told me to be careful—that I shouldn’t collaborate with certain people,” she says. But her work as a trader along the Burundi border meant Lena needed to engage with people from many different backgrounds. Otherwise, her business could fail.

Enter CRS, which helped Lena and 100 more cross-border tradeswomen learn how to build relationships and encourage conflict resolution within their homes and communities. “I was living with prejudice, and it was blocking my full potential—both in entrepreneurship and personal relationships,” Lena says.

The Legacy

Historically, social cohesion and justice have been afterthoughts too often. But our faith and experience prove peace is fundamental. CRS is giving it the priority it deserves, and we will help our partners follow suit. The world can no longer afford for any stakeholders to duplicate efforts or operate without their best chance of success. Together, we will work to ensure all people can work, eat, study, build, grow and simply live in peace.

Learn More
about our vision for
promoting peace
crs.org/go-far-peace

