# Pathways for Just Peace

Addressing Resource Conflicts with Human Rights and Peacebuilding to achieve the SDGs

**Brot**
**für die Welt**

# Content

# Preface

In the wake of the global crises, and with the number of wars and violent conflicts increasing again worldwide, established concepts of how to build peace seem to have failed. Instead, traditional concerns of national security and defence have gained more public attention, with budgets for the military and the defence sector increasing in ways reminiscent of the Cold War era. Our partner organisations in the so-called Global South, however, have different stories. They continue to act as human rights defenders and peacebuilders, often under extremely dangerous and challenging conditions. Too little is known about these local peacebuilders and human rights activists, their approaches and their successes in defending rights and working towards just and peaceful societies.

Wars between countries, but also violent conflicts over natural resources, are on the rise – as is violence against local activists and communities who are often disregarded in favour of international commercial interests. Marginalised groups, such as indigenous people and pastoralists, but also women and youth, are particularly affected by human rights violations, violence, displacement and human insecurity in local conflicts over natural resources. For our partner organisations from civil society who advocate for human rights and just peace, the challenges are therefore manifold and growing. Many of them have long-term experience of working in fragile and conflict-affected settings. They are confronted with the growing complexity of conflicts and the diversity of conflict actors who compete over contested natural resources. Against this background, the organisations have developed and use various approaches and methods to address the root causes of conflict, show the interlinkages between policies from the Global North and their impacts in the Global South, and engage in advocacy against human rights violations, injustice and growing violence. They also work on the conflicts themselves and search for pathways towards their nonviolent transformation. We can learn so much from these partner organisations. We want to build on their experiences to show how civil peacebuilding is linked to human rights advocacy and how resource conflicts can be addressed and transformed successfully. We also aim to increase knowledge about the potentialities and successes of local peacebuilding in various contexts around the world and bring them to the attention of the national and international public and policy-makers. We see a need to increase political engagement for human rights and peacebuilding, to advocate for better policies and donor approaches, and to raise awareness of the impacts of the industrialised countries' resource policies on disadvantaged groups in poorer countries. Adequate support must be provided to strengthen the work for just and peaceful societies – as called for by the 2030 Agenda, especially Sustainable Development Goal 16.

This publication showcases how the struggle for human rights and just peace can be successfully conducted and presents lessons learned from five case studies of civil society organisations (CSO) in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Our special thanks go to Mrinal Tripura from the Maleya Foundation, Dr. Nene Morisho from the Pole Institute, David Pred from Inclusive Development International/IDI, Mohamed Sorie Conteh from the Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food/SiLNoRF and León Pérez from Serapaz, who shared their experiences and lessons learned with us and other colleagues from partner organisations at a five-day learning workshop in June 2022. They also agreed to provide their material and input from the learning journey for this publication and added details and stories during the later stages. And we also thank Susanne Friess, who provided the excellent documentation of the learning journey, and Carsten Jasner, who elaborated a summarizing text as basis for this publication.

Dr. Jörn Grävingholt
Head of the Policy Department
Brot für die Welt

# Introduction and Overview

**"Dialogue and efforts to address the growing conflicts with the company became possible through (…) regular public gatherings (…)."**

**(Mohamed S. Conteh, SiLNoRF, Sierra Leone.)**

Numerous conflicts worldwide have been simmering for years, often escalating into violence and claiming human lives. The Global South generally bears the brunt of these conflicts, many of which revolve around natural resources such as land, water and forests, but also minerals and metals. These valuable resources in Africa, Latin America and Asia fuel power and profit interests, leading to intense struggles involving politicians, military forces, armed groups, and domestic and international investors. Since the global economic crisis of 2008/2009, the pressure has intensified, with natural resources becoming lucrative investments that are traded on the global market.

Adding to the complexity, the climate crisis exacerbates the risks of these conflicts as water and arable land grow scarce due to ongoing and intensified natural disasters like droughts and floods. At the same time, global demand for land and other natural resources is rising, particularly in sectors such as food production, fossil fuel extraction, carbon-offsets and the mining of minerals – lithium and rare earths, for example. As the value of resources increases, the pressure on markets intensifies, affecting financial flows, foreign investment and supply chains and extraction sites. These disputes over scarce resources disproportionately burden the local population, often leading to forced expropriation, displacement and other grave human rights violations, as well as direct violence and armed conflict.

In many of these conflicts, civil society organisations are striving to defend the rights of disadvantaged communities. However, they face a significant dilemma: advocacy for the protection, respect and fulfilment of human rights can unwittingly fuel further conflict and violence if social divides are not addressed adequately or human rights advocacy is followed by massive oppression of certain interest groups or activists. This pressing issue sparks intense debates among civil society actors from different countries and continents. While addressing injustices on the ground is imperative, it is also important to prevent conflicts from escalating into violence. The goal is therefore to pursue nonviolent conflict transformation and work towards justice and sustainable peace.

But what does this work at the intersection of human rights and peace entail? In this text, we present some of the specific approaches and methods employed by civil society organisations. Their methodologies include investigative research, actor mapping, systemic context and conflict analysis, psychological and group-dynamic interventions, and mediation, as well as advocacy, lobbying and public relations. These practices are presented as case studies of five civil society organisations – four national and one international – working in diverse conflict contexts in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Mexico. Each of them follows a specific approach and shows, how human rights work and the transformation of resource conflicts goes hand in hand.

**Chapter 1**

# Complex violent Conflicts: The Need for Conflict Sensitivity and Systemic Analysis

## The Struggle for Justice in the Mountains of Bangladesh – The Maleya Foundation's Experience

The Maleya Foundation, established in 2003, is dedicated to supporting actors in the realms of environment, human rights and development, with a particular focus on indigenous peoples' organisations. Its work centres around the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), a region in south-eastern Bangladesh bordering India and Myanmar. The CHT, inhabited by Bangladesh's indigenous peoples, is geographically separated from the rest of the country by a mountain range. A long-lasting armed struggle for self-determination ended in 1997 with the signing of a peace agreement promising regional autonomy for the CHT peoples. However, the agreement was not implemented. State-owned and private companies then attempted to access resources in the mountain region, leading to a protracted and violent conflict over the ancestral lands of various indigenous communities.

Even before the Maleya Foundation's official establishment, civil society actors were addressing human rights violations in the CHT, seeking to support indigenous peoples in their quest for sustainable, self-determined development. From the start, the Maleya Foundation placed particular emphasis on respect for indigenous knowledge, cultural sensitivity and recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, and initially focused on linking advocacy with human rights issues. However, the Foundation soon became aware that inter-group and intra-community violence was continuing,[1] resulting

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[1] — Examples are the communal violence which erupted between indigenous peoples of the CHT and Bengali settlers at Mahalchari in 2003, with killings, rape and multiple injuries; looting and burning of several villages with hundreds of households; and ransacking, destruction and looting of temples, schools and shops.
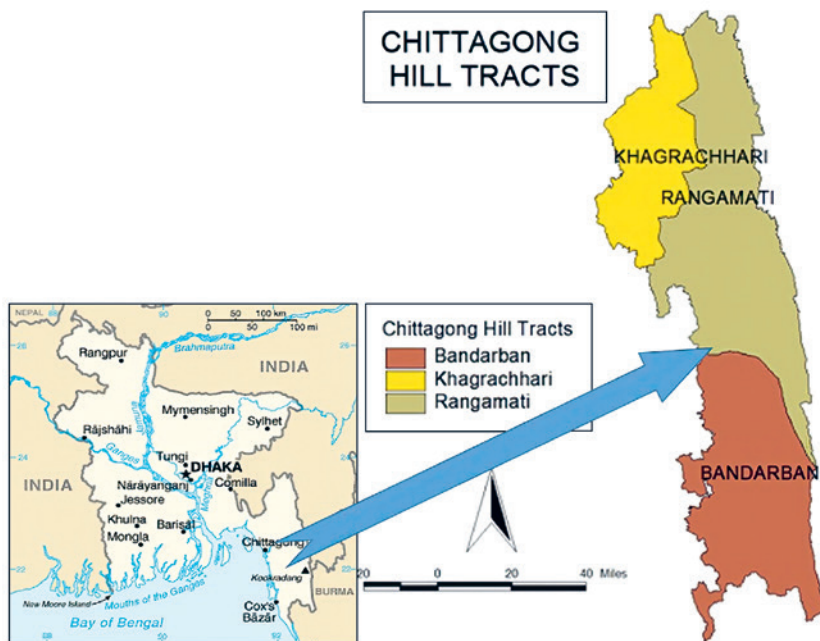


**Map of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in eastern Bangladesh**
*Source: Maleya Foundation*

in further human rights abuses. In 2005, the organisation therefore shifted its strategy towards a stronger emphasis on local conflicts and their root causes. This strategic shift was operationalised through the integration of the "Do No Harm" (DNH) [2] approach into the Foundation's work from 2005 onwards. Human rights work was combined with conflict sensitivity, with a clear analytical approach to identify not only the nature and causes of conflict and human rights violations in the specific situations, but also the dividing and connecting factors that undermine or strengthen the social fabric on the ground.

In order to avoid unintentionally worsening the situation and fuelling conflict through its own interventions, the Maleya Foundation reorganised its work and focused on issues of mutual interest between the conflict parties, thus strengthening connectors rather than competitive and dividing elements. These local connecting elements (e.g. mutual interests like environmental protection and health) and/or persons (e.g. respected elders or persons with high integrity, acknowledged as bridgebuilders or similar) are considered to be local capacities for peace and are essential in dealing with conflicts by peaceful means. In order to integrate DNH into its organisational systems, the Foundation drew on the experiences of other organisations and networks through field visits and then passed on this knowledge at training sessions for young people, women and other civil society actors.

To ensure that the Do No Harm approach is integrated effectively, Maleya emphasises the importance of building capacity for conflict analysis, often facilitated through mixed teams and interdepartmental staff exchanges. Continuous monitoring and reflection on the DNH integration process are also crucial.



Harvest in the mountainous area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Since 2008, Maleya has also adopted a conflict transformation approach, employing "Systemic Conflict Analysis" [3] and the "Reflecting on Peace Practice" [4] tool in an attempt to comprehend and positively influence conflict causes and dynamics. Systemic Conflict Analysis helps identify leverage points that can be addressed through

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**2** — Do No Harm is a leading tool for the application of conflict sensitivity. Conflict sensitivity recognises that aid, whether development, peacebuilding or humanitarian assistance, has the potential to support either conflict or peace. Practising conflict sensitivity enables an organisation to: understand the context in which it is operating, understand the interaction between the intervention and the context. And to act upon that understanding, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on the conflict. (https://www.cdacollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Do-No-Harm-A-Brief-Introduction-from-CDA.pdf).

**3** — Conflict analysis from a systems perspective is a complementary approach to other types of conflict analysis. Systems analysis helps to build an understanding of the dynamic relationships and causalities between different conflict factors, and the interconnectedness between conflict factors and stakeholders (https://www.cdacollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Conflict-Systems-Analysis-Benefits-and-Practical-Application.pdf).

**4** — The "Do No Harm" criteria developed by Mary B. Anderson are a proven instrument for peace- and conflict-sensitive project work in emergency aid and development cooperation in conflict regions. The criteria can be used to identify the unintended, conflict-intensifying side-effects of projects. The "Reflecting on Peace Practice" tool was developed in a subsequent step. The focus here is on the effectiveness of peace work. The question underlying RPP is: How do we actually know what good we are doing?
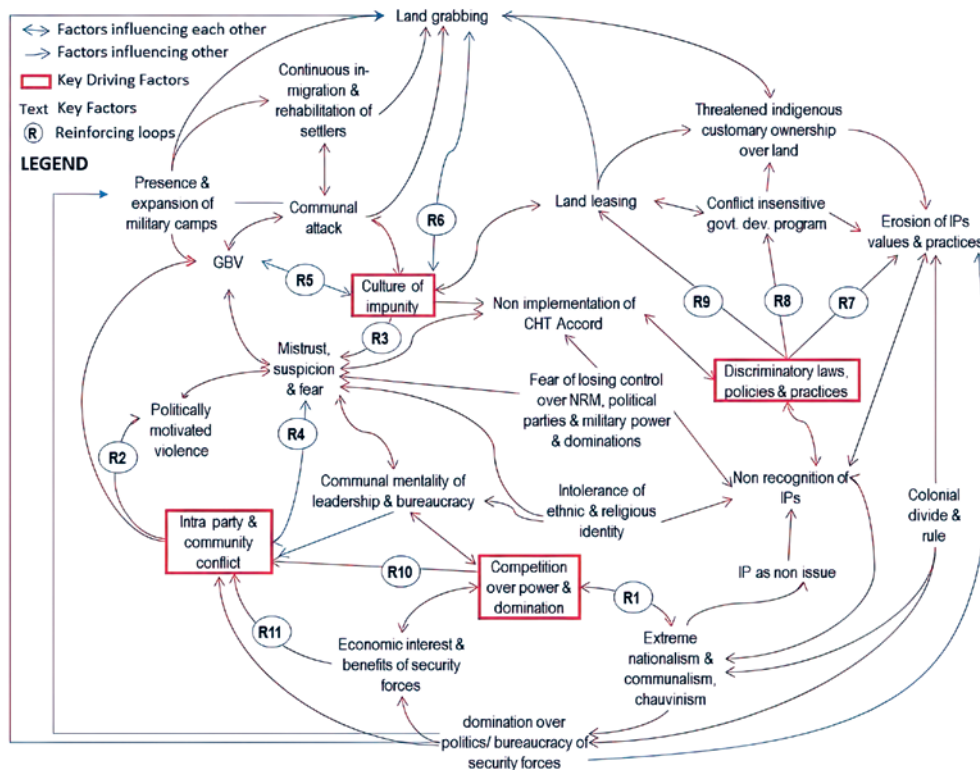
**A "System Map" showing CHT Conflict Dynamics from 24 March 2016**
*Source: Maleya Foundation*

conflict transformation. A significant challenge lies in bridging the gap between high-level causes of conflict, such as military rule, and community-oriented work, which is the primary focus of most civil society actors. Addressing gender-based violence, for example, has proven to be a promising entry and leverage point in some conflict contexts, as it affects all actors and extends beyond indigenous groups and minorities.

Together with key people from local groups, such as elders, influential members of the community, women, young people, representatives of local faith communities and representatives of marginalised groups who are committed to peace and justice, a strategy is developed for dealing with the resource conflicts in a nonviolent way. Crucially, this strategy must be developed collaboratively on multiple levels, from local to global, and involve all relevant actors. Visual tools such as the

"conflict tree", showing the root causes, effects and core problems of a conflict situation, and a "system map" (see above) are helpful in revealing key factors and relationships within the conflict and identifying leverage points for positive change.

# Youth-led Movement against Land Grabbing for a 5-star Hotel complex affecting Indigenous Peoples in Bandarban District

In September 2020, the Bangladesh Army Welfare Trust and the Sikder Group, a conglomerate of companies under R&R Holdings Limited, started the construction of a large 5-star hotel complex on the Mro community's customary land in the Bandarban Hill District. The construction of the hotel was announced as a tourism project under the management of the Marriott Hotel chain. An extensive network of buildings, roads, drainage and sewage systems was required, which was likely to cause pollution and harm biodiversity in the area. If it went ahead, the construction of the complex would put some 10,000 people at risk of eviction. According to information from civil society actors in the CHT, the security forces swiftly cordoned off some 500 acres of land to build the resort and denied the indigenous Mro community access to these ancestral farmlands.

The Mro community fears that, once completed, the project will lead to the eviction of 150 indigenous Mro families and will also indirectly affect the 250 Mro families living on 1,000 acres of land in the vicinity. Already, the local Mro people no longer have access to the cordoned-off area which they had been collectively using for years. Additionally, there are plans to build two dams in order to create a reservoir for swimming and boating and supply water to the hotel. These dams and water basins will have an impact on the adjacent indigenous Mro villages, their social and natural environment, and their sacred sites and cemetery.

A youth group formed by CHT-based Adivasi students' organisations was trained by the Maleya Foundation and its partners at a series of learning events, where they reflected on gender, leadership, human rights, conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The aim was to improve social relations and build peace in the CHT.

The members of the youth group first identified and discussed the issue of land grabbing by R&R Holdings Ltd. in 2020. Members of the youth group visited the affected Mro villages and talked about the threat of eviction with community members at door-to-door meetings. This was the first time that the Mro people, the most evicted community in the CHT, became aware of their land rights, enabling them to mobilise and organise nonviolent resistance. The members of the youth group facilitated the movement in peaceful, creative and nonviolent ways despite experiencing harassment by various groups with vested interests in the project, including the security forces. They submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister and organised a cultural showcase together with hundreds of Mro villagers. As one of the organisers explained: "We analysed the situation, factors and actors, but we did not organise a rally that involved blocking the road because this might have escalated the tension and conflict. Instead, we have showcased our identity peacefully by highlighting our culture." In the absence of a response from the government, the public pressure intensified when a march was held in the region, with hundreds of members of the Mro communities and human rights groups urging the government to abandon the project. Some weeks later, another large-scale event in the capital city Dhaka was jointly organised with national human rights organisations to highlight the Mro communities' indigenous rights and traditions and to promote their right to survival. Over time, these events attracted increasing attention from the national and international media. Since December 2020, there has been growing support for this youth engagement from international organisations, and several United Nations experts have highlighted their concerns about the Mro communities' survival in a joint communication to the Government of Bangladesh, R&R Holdings Limited and Marriott International.

The struggle continues, but the construction of the 5-star hotel complex is currently on hold due to the nonviolent movements organised and facilitated in a conflict-sensitive way by youth activists in the CHT.

**Chapter 2**

# Research: Entry Point for Work on Conflicts

## Brutal Territorial Struggles in Eastern DR Congo – Insights from the Pole Institute

For over two decades, the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been embroiled in a deep crisis, mainly caused by conflicts around issues of identity, power, land and resources. Numerous actors are involved, including politicians, members of the judiciary, the army, police and various armed groups. In the provinces of North and South Kivu, near the major city of Goma, approximately 120 armed factions operate. Diverse ethnically related armed groups are fighting for political and economic power, access to land, and control over extractive mineral resources at local and national level. These conflicts, particularly territorial disputes, have led to grave human rights violations, massive population displacement and tremendous loss of life. From 1998 to 2008 alone, 5.4 million deaths were recorded.[5] The dire situation persisted, with the UN Refugee Agency/UNHCR documenting more than 1,200 civilians killed, over 1,100 rape cases and about 25,000 human rights violations in North Kivu and Ituri provinces during the first nine months of 2021.[6] Furthermore, some 5.3 million people are internally displaced in the DRC, with attacks by armed groups being the leading cause (92 %) of displacement, especially in North Kivu and Ituri.[7]

In this challenging environment, the Pole Institute plays a crucial role in mediation efforts. Based in Goma in Eastern DR Congo, the Pole Institute is a research and action institute specialising in peacebuilding. Its activities extend to the entire eastern part of the country, as well as Rwanda and Burundi. The Institute's staff have a wealth

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**5** — https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/irc-study-shows-congos-neglected-crisis-leaves-54-million-dead

**6** — https://www.barrons.com/news/over-1-200-civilians-killed-in-two-dr-congo-provinces-this-year-un-01631280008

**7** — https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/democratic-republic-congo/r-publique-d-mocratique-du-congo-personnes-d-plac-es-internes-et-18



Session and communication with leaders in Ituri, DR Congo

of experience in addressing resource conflicts involving armed groups, the military, security forces, international and national actors, and companies, while also engaging with local artisans, mountain dwellers and small farmers who have lost their land. The Pole Institute conducts practical, community-centred research and engages in advocacy towards local, national and international political actors. Its research teams investigate the political, social and economic contexts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region and produce context analyses that are updated weekly.

The Pole Institute utilises its research activities in two key ways: to gain a deeper understanding of a problem or phenomenon, and to foster trust in conflict transformation within communities. Through this approach, research serves as an entry point to address specific conflicts and needs of the local communities.

The process begins with the Pole team brainstorming and selecting one individual without personal connections to the conflict to lead the research project. A multi-disciplinary research team is then set up, covering economic, social and political aspects. The involvement of the local population is also crucial as a means of accessing sensitive information (e.g. about conflicts with elites and/or armed groups in the region, land disputes and the like), gaining local acceptance and ensuring that the results are consensus-based. Researchers recruit assistants from within the community, taking care to include representatives from all relevant groups. Transparency is maintained throughout the process, with regular sharing and discussion of collected data with community members. Finally, the data is presented, validated and shared with other stakeholders, including funding providers, public authorities and NGOs.

## How the Pole Institute actively engages with armed Actors and how positive Change can be achieved:

A year ago, in a project funded by the EU and supported by the Programme de Désarmement, Démobilisation, Rélevement Communautaire et Stabilisation (P-DDRCS), the Pole Institute organised a mediation process between representatives of armed groups in Djugu, more precisely in Lita. Community leaders from this area, which is under the control of the armed groups, also participated in the dialogue. This process was only possible because the Pole Institute and its partners were already well-known in the area and had been working with the communities for some time, which meant that trust and expertise had already been established.

The process started with a public meeting at which local communities denounced the abuses and harassment they had experienced at the hands of armed groups. They also expressed their frustration at local leaders' inability to protect them. Through detailed analysis, intensive communication and dialogue with all stakeholders, Pole and its partners were able to identify incentives and increase the readiness on all sides to participate in the mediation process.

Through this process, which also involved the organisation of a dialogue with armed groups, the following progress was achieved:

1. At the end of the process, the armed groups authorised the reopening of the community market. This market is now frequented by the two largest communities in the region (Hema and Lendu), which had been engaged in conflict through their respective armed groups.
2. In addition, road traffic resumed on a key economic axis (the KATOTO-DRODRO axis) which had been inaccessible due to the local violence involving these armed groups.
3. Cultural events and religious services restarted – e.g. faith leaders returned to their respective parishes and resumed their religious activities.

A mediation session with
leaders of armed groups
in Ituri, DR Congo

After conducting research and obtaining valuable insights, the Pole Institute initiates a process of conflict transformation, employing four key instruments:

- Mediation/conciliation: Under the guidance of an impartial moderator or team, conflicting parties work towards voluntary and autonomous resolution of the conflict.
- Building civil society organisations: The Institute empowers young people through training initiatives, fostering the growth of civil society.
- Lobbying with various interest groups: Engaging with a range of stakeholders, from official local structures to representatives from the national or international governmental or business sector, through lobbying efforts to promote positive change.
- Information and communication: Pole uses a radio station to direct targeted messages to conflict actors, including representatives from village communities, artisanal miners, politicians, companies and even armed rebels.

## Based on its extensive Experience, Pole has developed Recommendations on Conflict Transformation for other Civil Society Organisations:

- **Conduct contextual analysis:** A robust contextual analysis helps to build an understanding of conflict causes, dynamics and actors as a basis for defining strategies.

- **Emphasise practical relevance:** Ensure that research outcomes have practical applications in real-world situations.

- **Utilise indigenous knowledge:** Incorporate indigenous and ancestral knowledge, rather than relying solely on academic methods.

- **Build trust:** Trust-building is essential in all conflict management and transformation efforts. Long-term engagement, transparency, honest communication and follow-ups are prerequisites to build trust and good relations.

- **Involve the community:** Engage community members in the research process to gather sensitive information and gain an understanding of the context.

- **Promote gender balance:** Ensure women's inclusion in research initiatives, striving for gender balance.

- **Honest communication:** Be transparent with the community about the possibilities and limitations of the research.

- **Community-centred approach:** Stand by the community and consider their customs and expectations.

- **Stakeholder analysis:** Develop an overview of the various stakeholders, their functions, influence, activities and connections to each other.

- **Reflect on community perceptions:** Research data should reflect the perspectives of the communities involved.

- **Safety measures:** Pay careful attention to the researchers' safety, especially in insecure areas or when dealing with critical issues.

- **Neutrality:** Maintain a neutral stance, particularly when collaborating with individuals from communities that are involved in conflict. Actions or statements by the researchers should not put communities at risk.

- **Manage risks:** Acknowledge the risks of publishing information about armed groups and inform the authorities to minimise potential dangers.

- **Build relations with local authorities:** Cultivate good relationships with local authorities without succumbing to corruption.

- **Community engagement:** Present research results to the community first, then share with other stakeholders.

- **Adequate planning:** Allocate sufficient time and budgetary resources to implement recommendations and agreements from mediation processes, enhancing credibility within the community.

## Chapter 3

# "Follow the Money": for Justice and Conflict Transformation

## Community-led Advocacy – Insights from Inclusive Development International

"Follow the Money" is the key strategy employed by Inclusive Development International (IDI), a US-based organisation committed to supporting communities affected by land grabbing and forced eviction in their pursuit of equitable and inclusive development. Many land grabs involve international companies, brands, commodity traders, investors and international finance institutions, such as development banks that provide financing for private sector engagement and are linked to the EU or the World Bank. With "Follow the Money", IDI aims to unveil these otherwise hidden global linkages, identify individual actors and hold them publicly accountable for the harm caused.

Founded by human rights activists in 2012, IDI draws inspiration from individuals who risk their lives and freedom to resist eviction and human rights violations driven by unchecked power and corporate greed. In collaboration with international and local partners in Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa, IDI assists communities in developing innovative and effective strategies to protect their rights and resources. In cases where harms have already occurred, IDI works with those affected communities to pursue redress.

IDI capitalises on the fact that many of the global actors whose involvement in land grabs often goes unnoticed are bound by international rules and commitments requiring them to respect human rights and protect the environment. Moreover, well-known brands and companies are often involved and are mindful of the need to safeguard their corporate image. To mitigate reputational, legal and financial risks, they are frequently willing to use their leverage to address the harms and abuses that they are linked to. The more IDI and local communities learn about the financiers of harmful projects, the purchasers of



Explaining the investment chain and strategizing: community-led advocacy

the goods produced and other enablers of these projects, the more opportunities will arise to hold them accountable for their actions.

## How to hold Companies accountable

Holding companies accountable for their actions is not an easy task. The Follow the Money approach advocated by IDI acknowledges the imbalance of power in the global economic system, which generally favours wealthy corporations over disadvantaged communities. To counter this, Follow the Money employs the levers of capitalism to empower communities and makes use of the human rights due diligence obligations adopted by many companies or their countries of origin.

The role of banks in this process is crucial. Understanding their influence on and oversight of companies' conflict-sensitive operations is essential. Various questions arise in this context, including whether funds are provided to cover losses and reparations, compensate for the destruction of farmland or for unfulfilled job promises, or mitigate lack of access to land, water, fisheries and forests. Additionally, it is vital to consider providing forms of compensation if investment projects fail or financial institutions withdraw their support.

One specific challenge arises when financial institutions have already withdrawn and credit agreements with donors have expired. In such cases, the grievance mechanisms established by development finance institutions may not adequately address the long-term problems that surface as a result. This lack of long-term accountability and proper regulation is unacceptable.

Even when agreements are negotiated, their implementation is not guaranteed. In many cases, there is a lack of adequate legal instruments to ensure that companies honour their commitments. In others, the international/foreign-based justice system is inaccessible to affected communities. The inclusion of arbitration clauses in contracts may empower communities to hold companies accountable. Under an arbitration clause, the contracting parties voluntarily but bindingly decide in favour of out-of-court arbitration proceedings.

Conducting a safety and risk analysis with local communities and developing risk mitigation strategies is



Father tends a small garden with vegetables for the family, Nzérékoré, Guinea

important to minimise risks. In some cases, filing complaints on a confidential, anonymous basis, using the name of an NGO instead of community representatives, may be advisable until the prospects of success can be properly assessed.

Given the limited time, energy and financial resources available to community members and human rights activists, IDI focuses its research on international investment and supply chains in order to identify the most promising pressure points for advocacy. An effective starting point may be an actor who exhibits two characteristics: a likelihood of responding to the public pressure generated by advocacy (e.g. fear of reputational damage) and the ability to influence decision-making on the ground (e.g. a major shareholder or a development finance institution that provides funding for the project). Actors such as these have emerged in various contexts, including in the case of a bauxite mine in Guinea which is described in detail in the following.

Joint venture with Alcoa

part of Pechiney group

Pechiney (owned by Rio Tinto)

Pechiney Reynolds Quebec

Alumina refined from CBG bauxite (potentially)

Aluminerie de Bécancour Inc. smelter

Canadian facilities supply primary aluminum to Alcoa US operations

Alcoa & Arconic US production facilities

**Food & Beverage cans:**
– Coca-Cola
– AB In-bev
– Ball Corp
– Crown
– Ardagh
– Silgan

**Automobiles:**
– Fiat Chrysler
– General Motors
– Ford

Arconic Rolling Mill, TN

(refinery curtailed)

Alcoa Point Comfort, Texas refinery (US – curtailed)

5

(potential bauxite)

3 Bauxite

4 Bauxite

Solar panel technology

SUNGEM®

STABILOY®

NUAL®

Construction in US & Canada

General Cable wire brands containing aluminum

General Cable

8

Other Rio Tinto smelters in the Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean region

Rio Tinto Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean smelters

Laterrière Works Smelters

Rio Tinto Vaudreuil refinery (Canada)

Alumina

Bauxite

6

2 Bauxite

purchase agreement

Alumina Española (Alcoa subsidiary, Spain)

11

Bauxite

Alcoa San Ciprian refinery (Spain)

Alcoa European Smelters

Buyers in European market

Chemical manufacturers

12

Oswego aluminum sheet fabrication plant

potential customers

Rolled aluminum sheets

**Automobiles:**
– Audi
– BMW
– Fiat Chrysler
– Ferrari
– Ford
– GM
– Hyundai
– Jaguar
– Land Rover
– Mercedes-Benz
– Porsche
– Volvo
– Honda

100%

Novelis

Primary aluminum

9

50%

Logan Aluminum (rolling mill)

(General customers)

potential customers

**Food, beverage & packaging companies:**
– Coca-Cola
– AB In-bev
– Ball Corp
– Crown
– Ardagh
– Silgan Containers

Major US consumer brands

10

50%

Tri-Arrow

(General customers)

(previously held stake)

Supply parts

Constellium-UACJ, Bowling Green, KY (rolling mill)

potential customers

100%

Constellium

(General customers)

**Automobiles:**
– Audi
– BMW
– Daimler
– Fiat Chrysler
– Ford
– GM
– Porsche
– Peugot
– Renault-Nissan
– Valeo
– Volkswagen

CBG

1

13 Bauxite

Rusal Aughinish refinery (Ireland)

Alumina

Rio Tinto Dunkerque aluminum smelter (France)

14

– Coca-Cola
– Volkswagen
– BMW

Bauxite

Alteo Gardanne refinery (France)

15

Bauxite

Dadco AOS refinery (Germany)

16

Alumina

Norsk Hydro smelter (Germany)

Primary aluminum

Norsk Hydro automotive parts production plant

17

**Automobiles:**
– Audi
– BMW
– Mercedes-Benz
– Peugot
– Citroen

Bauxite

EGA Al Taweelah refinery (Abu Dhabi)

18

Bauxite

Bauxite

Bauxite

**Guinea** (unknown customers)

**China** (unknown customers)

**India** (unknown customers)

**Map: The Downstream supply Chain of a Bauxite Company in Guinea, 2019**
*Source: IDI*

# Step-by-step Guide to "Follow the Money": a Bauxite Mine in Guinea

Guinea has the world's largest bauxite reserves, with the Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée (CBG), established in 1973, operating the country's oldest bauxite mine. Aluminium extracted from bauxite is an essential raw material for the industrial production of many goods worldwide. CBG holds concessions for bauxite mining across an area of more than 3,000 square kilometres in Guinea's main agricultural region. Since the mid-1970s, CBG has conducted extractive operations on local farmers' and traditional landowners' land without their consent, compensation, or rehabilitation and restoration of former mining areas.

Through its extensive research on investments and supply chains, IDI identified several pressure points – including the publication of human rights violations and the use of grievance mechanisms – that can be used to influence investors and financiers. It also uncovered information on major car brands that source raw materials from the mine. IDI informed affected communities, outlined the various options available to them and supported decision-making on the most suitable and effective measures.

To gather solid evidence in Guinea, IDI conducted interviews and group discussions with women, young people and elders. Community members documented impacts through photos and videos, building a robust evidence base. IDI engaged community members in a mapping exercise to document their customary land and resource use, highlighting how mining had affected their rights over the years. This exercise not only strengthened the evidence base but also helped in organising and mobilising the community.

In the search for an effective grievance mechanism, it became clear that the investment chain researched by IDI opened up several channels through which affected communities could lodge complaints if the underlying standards were violated. Complaints could be submitted to internal and external bodies set up by the companies themselves or by financial
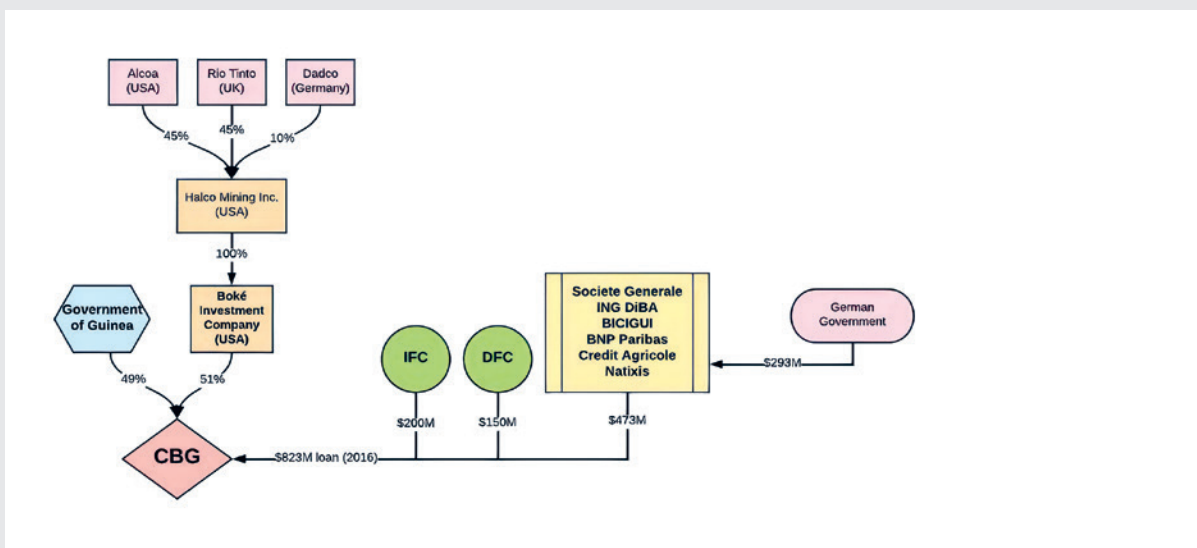


**Map: CBG's Upstream Investment Chain, 2019**
*Source: IDI*

**Downstream Pressure Points**



**Major Companies involved in the CBG Project through their supply Chain (compiled by IDI, 2019)**
*Source: IDI*

institutions: the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Office of Accountability of the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative's mechanism could all be considered. After assessing their effectiveness, the community opted for the complaint and mediation procedure through the IFC's CAO. In addition to the mediation efforts, IDI wrote letters to shareholders, lenders, car companies and other stakeholders to raise awareness of the complaint and urge them to encourage the mine operator to come to the negotiating table. Emphasising the human rights responsibilities of the actors involved had previously been identified as an important pressure point. While some companies did not respond, others engaged in productive discussions, becoming unexpected allies in the community's struggle.

Throughout the process, IDI utilised the media to increase the reputational stakes for companies, applying a range of strategies to exert significant pressure.

The mediation processes in Guinea are ongoing and at times challenging and frustrating. However, tangible successes are being achieved: power relations have shifted, with improvements being observed on the ground. Community representatives feel engaged, mobilised and empowered. The use of several pressure points, including media pressure, has led to a change of direction. They have compelled CBG to participate in negotiations and gained the attention of influential players in the international automotive industry, who are now monitoring the case. Financial players like the International Finance Corporation and companies such as Rio Tinto and Alcoa have committed to participate as observers in the mediation process and address the mine's environmental and social impacts. Agreements have been reached on safeguards for dynamite blasting and compensation payments, and CBG is rehabilitating water resources to ensure sufficient water access for communities.

Supported by Brot für die Welt, IDI has developed a comprehensive step-by-step guide[8] which explains how to follow the money, identify leverage points, gather evidence, utilise international grievance mechanisms and advocate for community interests:

1. **Foster community solidarity and mobilisation**
   When initiating the process, allow the community sufficient time and space for discussions. Thoroughly consider all available options while designing the strategy. Explore the possibility of litigation or alternative dispute resolution and assess potential violations of laws and standards. Ensure unanimous support for the strategy chosen to address the issue. Conduct a security risk analysis, acknowledging that patience is key.

2. **Gather solid evidence**
   It is crucial to have solid evidence, as companies tend to deny, conceal and deflect the negative impacts of their operations. Build a robust evidence base through participatory analysis, focus group discussions and research.

3. **Participatory resource mapping**
   Engage in a mapping exercise with community members and document and highlight effects on communities' resource rights over the years. This strengthens the evidence base but also helps mobilise the community.

4. **Seek an effective grievance mechanism**
   Identify the existing complaint mechanisms. Gather all relevant information on grievance mechanisms up- and downstream, including those operated by financiers such as banks or national and international development finance institutions and actors in the supply chain.

5. **Mediation or investigation?**
   Most grievance mechanisms offer two options: either mediation/arbitration or, alternatively, an investigation to determine whether standards or rules have been violated. Community representatives have to weigh up which route they want to take.

6. **Include pressure points**
   Raise awareness about the complaint and emphasise the human rights responsibilities of the actors involved.

7. **Lobbying in the media**
   Work with the media to increase the reputational stakes for companies and intensify public pressure.

**Key factors for success include:**

- Long-term commitment and perseverance
- Utilising international human rights instruments to develop strategies and press the government to fulfil its obligations
- Combining conflict sensitivity with a human rights approach
- Conducting a thorough conflict analysis to identify visible and invisible actors
- Analysing security risks and developing corresponding mitigation strategies
- Engaging in effective grassroots work and forming alliances with national and international civil society organisations.

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8 — https://followingthemoney.org

**Chapter 4**

# Multi-Stakeholder Formats: Addressing Harm, Human Rights and Environment



Cleared areas prepared for the irrigation cultivation of sugar cane (Addax project, Sierra Leone)

## Bioethanol Production – Insights from the Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food

The Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF) emerged in 2008 as an African civil society organisation dedicated to the right to food. SiLNoRF collects, documents and publishes evidence of injustice in the allocation of land, particularly in the northern region of the country. This includes violations of women's land rights, marginalisation of vulnerable groups, and non-transparent processes and agreements on the settlement of land disputes, which often fail to consider the value of land for its rightful owners and users. SiLNoRF strives to ensure responsible governance and tenure of land and resources in Sierra Leone as an effective basis for realising citizens'

human right to food. To achieve this, the organisation engages in advocacy, capacity-building, research and livelihood support for rural communities.

Sierra Leone endured a brutal civil war from 1991 to 2002, during which warring factions funded their activities through the exploitation of the country's rich resources, including "blood diamonds", and engaged in violent conflicts against each other and civilians. Land disputes and violent displacements played a significant role in this civil war and continue to pose challenges today. Post-war, the government pursued a strategy to attract large-scale foreign investment. Between 2008 and 2012, it granted large areas of land to foreign companies for the extraction of mineral resources and the production of agricultural and industrial raw materials such as palm oil, rubber and bioethanol. Driven by the desire to bring foreign capital into the country, the rapid allocation

# An illustrative Example is the Addax Case

The Swiss-based company Addax Bioenergy and Oryx Group (AOG) invested 500 million Euros in the Makeni Project in the Republic of Sierra Leone to be operated by Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone Ltd (ABSL). The project, which consists of a sugarcane estate, an ethanol refinery and a biomass power plant, was partially financed by AOG and funded by seven European and African development financial institutions (DFIs).[1] The objective was to produce bioethanol for export to the EU market and supply electricity to the national grid. The project received early support from Sierra Leone's then-president, who saw it as a flagship initiative and dismissed criticism and human rights demands. Land rights activists and critical civil society groups faced pressure from government agencies and influential politicians. With the support of some of the most powerful chiefs, Addax secured a 50-year lease after negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding with the national government of Sierra Leone. However, communities voiced concerns about the unfair and non-transparent land lease negotiations, inadequate compensation for their loss of access to land (previously used for rice and vegetable cultivation, fruit gathering and firewood) and negative environmental impacts on the only river with a fish stock.

The situation changed when SiLNoRF began documenting the project and releasing annual monitoring reports. The communities became aware of their rights and began campaigning. This resistance made it challenging for the company to expand its activities, leading to hardened positions on both sides. The company's local management and government agencies remained unresponsive to the local communities' grievances.

**Addressing Human Rights Violations and Grievances through Dialogue and Multi-stakeholder Engagement**

Dialogue and efforts to address the growing conflicts with the company became possible through the introduction of "multi-stakeholder meetings" – regular public gatherings involving all stakeholders, including traditional chiefs and local authority representatives. To facilitate this process, SiLNoRF established a "Multi-stakeholder Platform/MSP" in parallel to the MSP set up and dominated by the company. This approach allowed SiLNoRF to co-determine the agenda, secure results and give local people affected by the project the opportunity to express their opinions. During the MSP meetings, information was shared, grievances were raised and agreements were reached on how to address concerns and make improvements.

When SiLNoRF initiated the multi-stakeholder process, the following aspects were considered:

• Who should participate in the dialogue? It was crucial to choose the "right" people and to identify the right chairperson for the dialogue, i.e. someone who was trusted by all stakeholders. The people selected for the dialogue from the communities had to represent landowners and land users, chiefs, women and other groups. Everyone must feel included.

• Women's participation was prepared through SiLNoRF's continuous engagement on women's empowerment and their participation in community discussions. Women's quotas and preparatory discussions in women's groups were helpful tools. Issues that particularly affect women should also be negotiated in the MSP.

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1 — For detailed documentation of the case, see the study "The Weakest Should Not Bear The Risk" and the monitoring report by SiLNoRF: https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/blog/2020-investoren-kommen-und-gehen-die-schaeden-bleiben/.

• Through its long-term engagement with the communities and its support, SilNoRF gained trust and was able to use its convening power to bring communities, traditional leaders, local authorities and the company to the table. With an agreed agenda and procedures, SILNoRF also successfully created an open atmosphere where affected community members were able to freely express their concerns. This was vital, as community members had previously felt betrayed and under pressure and feared losing their livelihoods.

• It was also necessary to build trust on the company side: the management had to be convinced that dialogue and compliance with agreements would also have positive outcomes for the investment project. Through the dialogue, it became clear that SILNoRF and the affected communities did not want to prevent the investment project from going ahead, but they did want to change it.

• Focusing on a limited number of priority issues helped to avoid confusion and facilitated effective dialogue, e.g. on lease payments, jobs in the factory, and water scarcity and pollution in communities.

• Transparent follow-up mechanisms for the issues and grievances raised in the dialogue were critical, as were changes in stakeholders' behaviour and attitudes and fulfilment of promises made; for example, settlement of outstanding payments built confidence in the MSP's progress.

of land reached its peak during this period.[9] Land became a valuable resource, but also and again a source of conflict.

Communities were expropriated so that arable land could be offered to foreign companies, resulting in the loss of their livelihoods. The support payments provided were insufficient to compensate for their loss. Hardship and despair also led to conflicts within communities and families.

During the foreign investment boom, Sierra Leone's legal system was too weak to hold companies accountable. Even when communities raised concerns about irregularities in land allocation, these issues were often ignored. Moreover, conflicts were exacerbated by Sierra Leone's complex land rights system and the traditional property rights prevalent in large parts of the country. Traditional rule was exercised by the local leaders, the chiefs, and their families, with 190 chiefdoms serving as

traditional units of governance, where chiefs acted as the political and economic representatives of their communities. Until 2022, land distribution was the responsibility of the local chiefs. Women had no rights of land tenure or ownership, nor any right to participate in decision-making processes. As a result, companies exclusively negotiated with men, particularly traditional chiefs and chiefdom councils.

Numerous large-scale projects initiated by international companies, such as road and plant construction and irrigation schemes, had significantly altered the country's infrastructure. Extensive land clearing and use of chemicals had caused environmental damage and the depletion of communities' water resources. It was only when SiLNoRF and other organisations began documenting and publicising environmental pollution that companies came under pressure to monitor their environmental impacts.

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**9** — In 2009, according to SiLNoRF reports, the area leased to foreign investors was 1.5 million hectares. On its interactive world map for Sierra Leone in 2023, the Land Matrix Initiative still shows an area of 543,074 ha for land leases, both concluded and planned (data retrieved on 17.07.2023 at: https://landmatrix.org/map/).

But multistakeholder engagement doesn't stand on its own. In order to be prepared for the dialogue with the stakeholders, enhance the active participation of the affected communities at the multistakeholder meetings and to address the issues effectively, SiLNoRF embedded the multistakeholder meetings into a set of activities and tools, that were developed and continuously implemented together with European partners such as Brot für die Welt and Brot für alle (Switzerland):

1. Collecting evidence through research, observation and documentation: SiLNoRF closely monitored the companies' behaviour and regularly documented the impacts of their activities, e.g. degradation of water resources that caused water scarcity for the local communities, or conflicts in the communities due to a lack of transparency and interrupted lease payments. Independent studies and observation/monitoring reports, published with European partners, were presented and discussed at the multi stakeholder meetings and put pressure on the actors concerned. These annual "shadow reports" counterbalanced the company's reports, helped to raise public awareness and provided important recommendations for stakeholders.
2. Community mobilisation and empowerment: SiLNoRF supports affected communities in organising groups within the landowners' and users' associations. These groups were trained in engagement, negotiating skills and human rights awareness. They also learned how to effectively document the impacts of the companies' activities.
3. Lobbying and advocacy using shadow reports, testimonies and results from Multistakeholder meetings: SiLNoRF and European partners took complaints to various actors, including development banks, and engaged the media to raise awareness about negative impacts.

In the specific Addax case MSPs have been successful because pressure points were found that induced the company to accept changes. With the contributions made by multi-stakeholder platforms and civil society engagement, the conflicts were managed and transformed and violence



Company sign on the highway to Makeni, Sierra Leone (Sunbird owned previous Addax plantation 2016–19)

was prevented. Other large-scale projects involving European and other international investors in Sierra Leone without the openness for multistakeholder engagement have created major problems and, as in the Socfin case,[10] have led to massive violence against villagers, arrests and shootings.

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10 — https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/mediapool/blogs/Kruckow_Caroline/EN-Land_Briefing_Socfin.pdf.

# Potential, Risks and Limitations of Multi-Stakeholder Formates

All Multi-stakeholder engagement (institutionalized as platforms/MSPs, or in continuous dialogues or meetings) is utilised by SiLNoRF to initiate constructive dialogues aimed at effectively realising the right to food in Sierra Leone and has become a vital tool for non-confrontational advocacy. However, it is essential to differentiate between the types of Multistakeholder formats and MSPs, especially how these processes are initiated and by whom. It is critical to clarify the roles and intentions of the initiator and other stakeholders.

### Dealing with Power Imbalances
Furthermore, it matters how the power imbalance between local activists and affected communities, on the one hand, and the authorities, government and companies, on the other, is reflected in mechanisms and regulations around the MSP. MSPs can be organised by civil society (as described for the Addax case – see textbox), but also by companies around their projects or can also be initiated by governments with or without support from international donors.

### National Laws and international Guidelines
The MSPs organised at national level, as in Sierra Leone, in line with the UN's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) and the National Land Policy, offer scope for constructive political dialogue between ministries, a broad range of civil society actors, and representatives from business and other entities. Successes have been achieved at national level, e.g. in 2022 with the introduction of the new "Customary Land Rights Act".[11] This new land law grants land rights to women, regulates chiefs' authority over land distribution and is monitored by local government bodies. This achievement is the result of continuous civil society lobbying and advocacy through multi-stakeholder initiatives and advanced them using international human rights-based

guidelines such as the VGGT and new, more inclusive and elaborate land laws.

### Contextual Challenges
However, MSPs also have limitations and various challenges need to be acknowledged. Discussing sensitive issues such as land leases is sometimes difficult, as large sums of money and political interests are often involved. In the Sierra Leonean context, the role of the all-male Chiefdom Council, the highest council of traditional authorities, adds to the difficulty. Land is usually owned by a family or community, whose head, the chief, is in charge of land allocation and supervision. The chiefs are supposed to protect their communities and look after their interests, but they are sometimes overwhelmed by this highly political task – or, in some cases, pursue their own interests at the same time. In addition, they are in principle hierarchically subordinate to state institutions.

The role of local authorities and government officials can also be ambivalent. It is a success when they participate in the dialogue. But their presence is often intimidating and can limit participation by affected communities.

### Engaging Companies and Financiers
Getting companies to the table is perhaps the biggest challenge. For them to engage in the multi-stakeholder process, other stakeholders such as financiers, European citizens and development banks need to exert pressure. This in turn is only possible through strong international networks. Building such networks and organising an MSP is extremely resource-intensive.

But even if a company is willing to negotiate, the road is long. Companies have a wide range of resources at their disposal and sometimes it seems more cost-effective for them to sit out problems instead of solving

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**11** — https://namati.org/resources/customary-land-rights-act-2022-sierra-leone/.

Community meeting with SiLNoRF in Tonka village on resettlement plans due to the risk of explosion from the biogas plant

them. There are also frequent reports of communities being pressured to make decisions in favour of the companies instead of seeking support from civil society organisations. In some cases, certain sections of the community may feel that it is a betrayal to participate in an MSP.

Finally, it is difficult to prove that companies are responsible for problems such as pollution of water sources. This requires money and expertise that communities usually do not have.[12]

Multi-stakeholder platforms reach their limits when a company or government is unresponsive, or if armed groups are involved.

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12 — In 2016, Addax announced its withdrawal from the project at short notice. Due to poor financial returns and lower prices for bioethanol on the EU market, the Swiss group withdrew as the main owner of the project, retaining a small shareholding but passing on the land leases to other transnational companies. A corresponding multi-stakeholder dialogue in the previous form could not be established with the new companies. Production on the land is stagnating, local communities' living conditions have not improved and questions about the future remain unanswered.

## Chapter 5

# Trauma and psychosocial Support: Essential in Human Rights and Peace Work

## Resource Conflicts in Mexico – Insights from Serapaz

Mexico is a diverse country with 68 ethnic groups on its territory. With its abundant natural resources, Mexico has long attracted significant investment in industries such as mining, timber, water and oil. In 1994, the Mexican government introduced land law reforms that opened the way for land privatisation. This triggered an armed uprising by the indigenous Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in the state of Chiapas. The movement protested against land and resource theft, corruption, incompetence and the government's neoliberal policies, demanding justice, peace, freedom, education, health, adequate housing, work and food. After a 15-day armed uprising, civil society organisations called for a peacebuilding dialogue.

As a result, for the first time in Mexico's history, a public debate on the protection of indigenous peoples' rights took place. The Zapatista Army and the federal government took part in the dialogue and negotiated the San Andrés Peace Accords in 1996, which included programmes for land reform, indigenous autonomy and cultural rights. Members of the National Mediation Commission (CONAI) who advised the Zapatista Army, including Bishop Don Samuel Ruiz, founded Serapaz – Servicios y Asesoría para la Paz.

The problems started anew when the changes to the Federal Constitution were elaborated but the San Andrés Peace Accord was only partly included. The new Federal Constitution acknowledged the existence and presence of indigenous ethnic groups and the importance of recognising their rights. But it conceded the power to decide whether or not to recognise the rights of the indigenous people on their territory to the states and their local constitutions. Consequently, some local constitutions did not recognise any self-determination rights at all.

As a result, the conflicts between the indigenous population and the government intensified, particularly when massive foreign investment increased the pressure on land as a resource.

The struggle for natural resources and territorial control became increasingly violent, especially because it involved organised crime with links to local government and business, often also to transnational corporations.

The influence of the drug cartels, with their mafia-like structures and disputes over areas of influence, was also
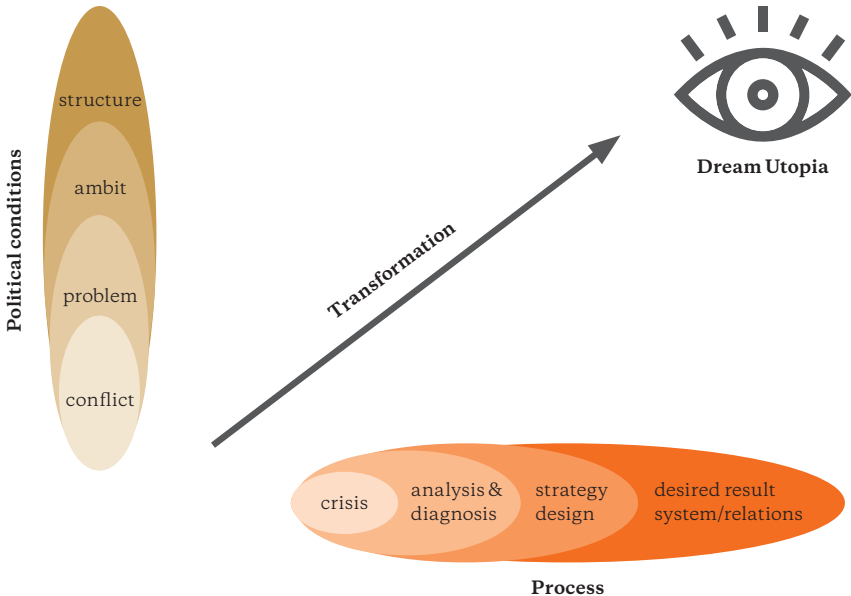


**Interconnectedness of Process and political Conditions for the Transformation**
*Source: SERAPAZ*

Group work with religious leaders – spiritual rituals at holy places

added into the mix. In 2006, the government declared war on drug cartels. The generalised violence and the government's inability to protect citizens sparked uprisings by civilian armed groups across the country. This resulted in homicide, disappearances and displacements.

Furthermore, persons engaged in social movements and land rights defenders faced criminalisation, harassment, persecution and isolation. These pressures cause physical, emotional and economic stress, leading to divisions within the movements.

## SERAPAZ's transformative Concept and Approach

In this context of violence, Serapaz is an independent non-profit organisation that advocates for peace, justice and dignity. Serapaz believes that conflicts are an expression of social structures that create inequality, poverty and injustice, and therefore aims to transform these structures. The organisation tries to address these causes of conflicts and seeks pathways towards political and nonviolent solutions, which indigenous peoples in particular should experience as liberating.

Serapaz endeavours to mediate in this complex and violent landscape but acknowledges the limitations it faces. Dialogue based on partnership is unfeasible with criminal organisations or armed groups that defy agreements. Moreover, Serapaz cannot rely on the security that a neutral position would afford since, like many civil society actors and human rights defenders, it intentionally stands in solidarity with the oppressed. To address both horizontal conflicts within communities and vertical conflicts between local communities and powerful actors such as elites, the government and corporations, Serapaz employs a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, Serapaz seeks to challenge power imbalances and political conditions through positive conflict transformation tools that may include mass mobilisation, public pressure, political initiatives, advocacy against the criminalisation of land rights defenders, and the promotion of new laws.

The Chichicaxtepec co-operative on the way to the maize fields, Oaxaca, Mexico

On the other hand, the organisation is committed to developing dialogue tools that engage communities on an equal footing, fostering a sense of empowerment and shared understanding.

## Building effective Alliances for Conflict Transformation

Networking with other relevant actors and forming strong alliances at the local, national and international levels are essential for successful conflict transformation. At the local level, several approaches have proven effective:

1. Empowering women and youth: It is crucial to involve women and young people in the conflict transformation process. Gender equality, the different political rights of women and men, women's workload, and

traditional cultures and roles should be addressed. Providing safe spaces for women to openly discuss sensitive issues and potential harm is essential. Empowering women and young people to share their knowledge in their communities and organisations fosters more inclusive and diverse perspectives.

2. Peacebuilding schools: They offer spaces for encounter and capacity-building for organisations and social movements on the way to social conflict transformation, i.e. to overcoming conflicts through knowledge transfer and social interaction. These schools impart knowledge, tools and experience in peace work, conflict analysis, and the design of positive transformation strategies. They teach dialogue strategies, negotiation and mediation skills, political lobbying, strategic communication, and security measures. Emphasising the use of language that resonates with different conflict parties enhances effective communication. The schools are based on Positive Conflict

## Andrea's Story illustrates the transformational Effect

Two years ago, a young woman named Andrea was participating in the "fortalecimiento del corazón" (strengthening the heart) group process and meetings about ancestral land rights. She suspended her participation when she became aware that community members at home had started to gossip and speak negatively about her in her absence. After a year, she came back to the group, asking to get involved in the process again, and described what had happened to her.

After consultation and reflection with the group, she felt sufficiently empowered to engage with the women and men of her village and discuss why they had damaged her reputation. She called for meetings with the community members and addressed the injustices and false rumours that had caused stress and had very negative effects on her and her position in the community. She was even able to address these issues with the men in the community and the authorities, which she had previously felt was impossible. She achieved higher respect within her family and recognition in the community. And the authorities issued a public apology to Andrea for what they had said about her. She felt rehabilitated and strengthened.

Now Andrea has organised a group in her village supporting women who have been attacked for trying to get involved in the political process. Together, they are now advocating for ancestral and women's land rights and have gained recognition from the local authorities. In Andrea's view, in order to transform the conflict, it is critical to raise awareness of the right of self-determination and increase the defence of the community's ancestral land. People need to accept each other instead of hurting and insulting their neighbours. And they need to understand that when defending legitimate rights, it is better to stand together. For Andrea, that is the meaning of "strengthening the heart".

In another case, a male participant said: "Strengthening the heart is being able to liberate the heart from violence and being able to propose nonviolent strategies to face up to the violence that is surrounding us."



Group work on peacebuilding methods and "strengthening the heart"

Group work and spiritual rituals

Transformation (PCT), which in turn goes back to Paulo Freire's didactic and methodological approach to popular education.[13]

3. Psycho-emotional support and trauma work: People involved in land defence processes suffer in many ways as a result of their experiences of violence, threats and loss of land. In many cases, they themselves or their relatives have been affected by displacement and/or land grabbing. They often face physical, emotional and economic challenges, not least because their families' basic needs are not being met. Their work is time-consuming, mentally stressful, dangerous and, in some cases, costly.[14]

Addressing all these dimensions is crucial for conflict transformation and human rights work to be successful. Against this background, Serapaz focuses on trauma work and psychosocial support alongside its services for social movements. Incorporating a gender perspective into emotional and trauma work is essential. Serapaz employs the "fortalecimiento del corazón" (strengthening the heart) psychosocial approach, helping individuals express and manage their emotions and fostering solidarity among women. The cooperation with traditional, cultural, religious and spiritual actors is also of relevance in this approach.

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**13** — Paulo Freire was an educator from Brazil. His work attempted to contribute to the liberation of the oppressed through popular education. See also: https://www.pfz.at/paulo-freire/

**14** — Every year, international human rights organisations such as Global Witness provide fresh evidence that the number of murders of environmental and land rights defenders is steadily increasing and that they are among the human rights defenders who are most at risk.

# Trauma Healing and Cooperation with traditional, cultural and religious Actors

Working in conflict contexts, as in Mexico, and engaging in conflict transformation is often dangerous and challenging and usually takes place under very difficult and threatening conditions. In such cases, cooperation with traditional, cultural and religious actors and the strengthening of cultural and spiritual roots can be of great significance as they provide security and support within the social fabric of the community. At the same time, conflict transformation also requires efforts to address the psychosocial effects of the conflict, including the immense mental strain caused by the constant threat or uncertainty, but also the intergenerational effects of unresolved trauma that are passed on to the next generation through stories and certain behaviours.

Trauma healing therefore emerges as one of the key dimensions in conflict transformation. Here too, churches and other (religious) institutions can play a decisive role by offering a space for spiritual healing. They can be strategic allies on the path towards justice, peace and trauma healing.

In summary, effective conflict transformation must include comprehensive efforts to embrace diverse perspectives, empower marginalised voices and address the emotional and cultural dimensions. Networking and collaboration across multiple levels enable a more holistic and impactful approach to promoting lasting peace and justice.

# Conclusions and Pathways for constructive Human Rights and Peace Work

Resource conflicts are a pressing global issue, often rooted in historical injustices and power imbalances. These conflicts arise at various levels and take various forms, from local disputes within communities to struggles between national economic actors, political elites, and international companies and investors. Large-scale investment projects exacerbate land grabbing with human rights violations and resource-related conflicts, with highly adverse consequences for local communities, including pollution, forced displacement and violence. The effects of climate change increase the risk that resource conflicts will become violent. This puts the most vulnerable communities under additional threat and creates more challenges for local civil society, human rights activists and peacebuilders alike.

As all our cases show, civil society organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in supporting communities and raising awareness about human rights demands and violations. However, their interventions can also escalate violence, necessitating careful analysis and conflict-sensitive approaches, as the case from the Chittagong Hill Tracks in Bangladesh describes. A systemic analysis of the conflict, with a focus on visible and invisible actors, is essential to understand their roles and interactions. Methodologies like Do No Harm (DNH), Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) and Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) and multistakeholder platforms are the backbone of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding and can help to work on human rights in conflictive areas.

Collecting data, research and evidence is critical and, as illustrated from DR of Congo, important to conduct it with local expertise and in a trustful and continuous relationship with the respective local communities. Focussing on their needs and demands with a conflict sensitive and human rights based approach and combining research with follow-up activities that help to address these needs is important to make research relevant and useful for inclusive development and conflict transformation.

Monitoring companies involved in national and foreign investment projects is crucial to gather evidence of environmental damage and human rights violations. The "Follow the Money" approach and example from Guinea explains how financial actors and companies can be hold accountable. Working closely with affected communities and build evidence-based pressure through lobbying and mediation processes are prerequisites to success.

In many contexts, as the case from Sierra Leone shows, large-scale foreign investment schemes, which do not take local and historical conditions into account and may even adversely affect them, can spark conflicts which lead to violence and human rights violations at various levels. Multi-stakeholder engagement and platforms/MSPs are under certain conditions important and useful to create a process for dialogue and addressing critical issues but are not a panacea on their own. Their success depends on the context, case and enabling environment. Parallel strategies and advocacy are needed to achieve comprehensive goals.

As the Mexican case describes, the struggle for justice can be emotionally and psychologically taxing. Emotional support and trauma work are therefore essential for community members and CSO workers alike. Safety policies and protection strategies become increasingly important as their work becomes more dangerous.

All cases illustrate that in times of growing pressure on civic space and likewise on livelihoods of local communities, the issue of "neutrality" poses a challenge for CSOs. Especially for CSOs seeking to balance research and mediation roles with advocating for marginalised communities and addressing power imbalances in very volatile and continuously changing political contexts and acute violent conflict or post-war situations.

The five examples show how crucial it is to find the right balance between human rights, sustainable peace and effective conflict transformation. The cases explain in what way civil society actors and their engagement for human rights and peaceful transformation of resource conflicts are critical to achieve SDG16 of the 2030 Agenda.

All five cases demonstrate furthermore that gender specific and feminist approaches always matter. Experiences show that a combined human rights based approach with conflict- and gender-sensitivity and vice-versa advances successful transformation of resource conflicts. This knowledge is an asset also for donors and political decision makers worldwide as it draws on pathways for just and peaceful societies, helps achieve the SDGs and appropriate support bears chances for positive impact and success.

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **ABSL** | Addax Bioenergy Sierra Leone Ltd. |
| **AOG** | Addax Bioenergy and Oryx Group (Switzerland) |
| **CAO** | Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (IFC) |
| **CBG** | Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée (Guinea) |
| **CHT** | Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh) |
| **CONAI** | National Mediation Commission (Mexico) |
| **CSO** | Civil society organisation |
| **DFC** | International Development Finance Corporation (US) |
| **DFI** | Development Financial Institution |
| **DNH** | Do No Harm approach |
| **DRC** | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **EZLN** | Indigenous Zapatista National Liberation Army (Mexico) |
| **HEKS** | Relief organisation of the Protestant Reformed Church of Switzerland |
| **IDI** | Inclusive Development International (US) |
| **IFC** | International Finance Corporation (World Bank) |
| **LCP** | Local Capacities for Peace approach |
| **MSP** | Multi-stakeholder Platform |
| **NGO** | Non-Governmental Organization |
| **PCT** | Positive Conflict Transformation |
| **P-DDRCS** | Programme de Désarmement, Démobilisation, Rélevement Communautaire et Stabilisation (DRC) |
| **RPP** | "Reflecting on Peace Practice" tool |
| **SDG** | Sustainable Development Goals |
| **SERAPAZ** | Servicios y Asesoría para la Paz (Mexico) |
| **SiLNoRF** | Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **UNHCR** | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Refugee Agency) |
| **US** | United States |
| **VGGT** | UN's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests |

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