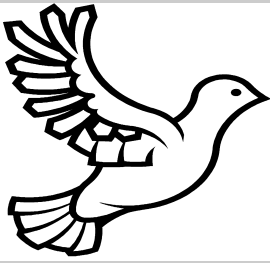


## Peacebuilding in our World, our Nation, and our Communities



**Catholic Relief Services (CRS)** is the official international humanitarian agency of the U.S. Catholic community. Much of the work of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) occurs in places that are recovering from or are on the edge of violence and war. Over time CRS has learned that the way they do emergency and development programming can help prevent or transform conflicts. Ignoring conflicts and their underlying causes may result in development work prolonging the conflict by providing new resources to the warring parties (such as food and supplies), or programs may be destroyed in the chaos and violence. If CRS helps partners address the injustices in their society that cause conflict and facilitate respectful relationships between conflicting parties then their work together helps build sustainable peace.

The principles that Catholic Relief Services uses in its peacebuilding work can transform our own communities if we commit to applying them. Whether working on reconciliation and forgiveness in Rwanda, youth programs in the Holy Land, or developing soccer teams for Albanian and Serbian youth, Catholic Relief Services provides a working model for our own community peacebuilding. According to CRS:

### *Peacebuilding*

- Is a process of changing unjust structures through right-relationships
- Transforms the way people, communities and societies live, heal and structure their relationships to promote justice and peace
- Creates a space in which mutual trust, respect and interdependence is fostered

### *Peacebuilding*

- Responds to the root causes of violent conflict, including unjust relationships and structures, in addition to addressing its effects and symptoms.
- Is based on long-term commitment.
- Uses a comprehensive approach that focuses on grassroots while strategically engaging leaders at middle-range and top levels of leadership.
- Requires an in-depth analysis with broad participation.
- Provides a methodology to achieve right relationships that should be integrated into all programming.
- Strategically includes advocacy at local, national and global levels to transform unjust structures and systems.
- Builds upon indigenous non-violent approaches to conflict transformation and reconciliation.
- Is driven by community-defined needs and involves as many stakeholders as possible.
- Is done through partners who represent the diversity of where we work and share common values.
- Strengthens and contributes to a vibrant civil society that promotes peace.

Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith. We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus. The content and context of our peacemaking is set not by some political agenda or ideological program, but by the teaching of his Church." *The Challenge of Peace* #C.5

"Peace is both a gift of God and a human work. It must be constructed on the basis of central human values: truth, justice, freedom and love." #68

## Building Communities of Peace at Home with CRS Strategies

How can we make our parishes foundations for

- Building the respect for the dignity of each other so we live in right-relationships?
- Transforming the way we live and relate to each other to promote justice and peace?
- Creating a space in which we trust one another, support each other and speak to each other respectfully?

### *Working towards Peacebuilding:*

- In our cities, what are the root causes of youth violence - failure to educate? Lack of economic opportunity and hope for the future? Failure to instill a vision in our youth? Racism? Family disintegration? Lack of role models? Negative Cultural influences? What do we have the power to change or influence?
- Where can we commit for the long-term?
- How do we engage those at the grassroots level (parishioners, parents, youth...) while strategically identifying and engaging people in positions of leadership? Which leaders can impact the situation?
- Who will come together to analyze the situation (causes, players, history)?
- We already have a methodology for achieving right relationships that should be integrated into all programming - it's called the Gospels. How do we engage people in committing to apply love and respect in every interaction with each other? We can disagree and still get along.
- What local, national and global issues call for our advocacy to transform unjust structures and systems?
- What community resources exist to help teach non-violent approaches to conflict transformation and reconciliation.
- Who in the community is directly impacted by conflict? How do we educate others in the community that conflict and violence hurt us all?
- How can we engage diverse groups that share some common values?
- What specific role can we play in building a vibrant civil society that promotes peace?

*Source: Peace Subcommittee, Diocesan Public Policy Committee, Rochester, NY, 2008*