

## ICRA DISCUSSION PAPER

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*“..When conflict is inflicted on a community and the community breaks down, whether members of the community pick up arms or display helplessness, or turn to criminality, nearly all behaviour across the community becomes dysfunctional with respect to pre conflict "normal life in the community".*

*A common denominator of thought across all the population of the community regardless of their chosen path of "dysfunctional behaviour" with respect to "normal life in the community" is an underlying immensely powerful yearning for life to return to "normality".*

*.....It is a basic human instinct that when we suffer trauma we yearn for pre trauma circumstances. When we are forced to act out of character whether that be the picking up of arms or criminal behaviour, "normality" becomes our everything, our dreams, our hope, our freedom. (This is my own personal experience). [James Brett: Founder ‘Plant for Peace’]*

*“.....: the continuance of civil unrest is inevitable without access to Bread and/or Land. Without, I hope, over reliance on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the resolution of Education, in isolation, without the fair resolution of safety, food and employment may only lead to better educated combatants.....*

*...training in agriculture is key for post combatants, others affected by conflict and their families as part of a return to normality in agrarian communities. But it is only one node of the system necessary for restoration of peace in rural areas. The others are: access to land rights or at least, to some sort of ownership, over the fruits of their labours - the alternative is exploitation; access to fair finance for equipment, seeds, plants, tractors etc.; - the alternative is corruption; and, access to commercial markets - the alternative is subsistence farming..... “ [Christopher Cleverly: Founder, ‘Made in Africa (MIA)’]*

## **“BACK TO THE LAND”**

### **AGRICULTURE and 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

**By**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper is not an expert viewpoint on issues of agriculture, conflict and sustainable livelihoods. It has been written in order to highlight the perception that traditional means of generating income damaged or destroyed by violence are often accorded low priority in development and resolution programmes. The authors contend that taking agrarian peoples back to traditional lifestyles and means of income generation should be one of the first steps towards resolution. In a hierarchical sense it proposes local economic solutions supported by politics over military solutions.

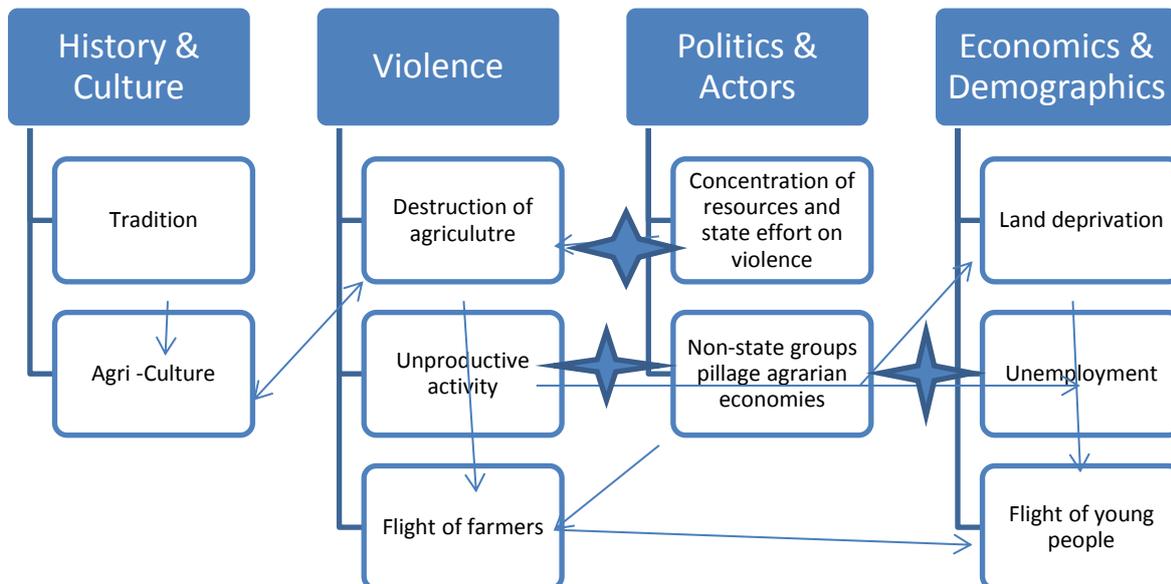
*‘Agriculture’ and ‘land’ are used in this paper to highlight a more general notion encompassing other means of traditional income generation such as fishing, and other activities where food is not the product such as forestry, flowers and crops for bio-fuels.*

Education is an important component in the debates that surround development and the re-building of conflict-ridden societies. The purpose of education is to equip young people for the future. This implies playing a part in the economic prosperity - or re-building it - of their country. If the means to do this are missing education loses its meaning and there has to be training to provide the skills necessary to generate income for a sustainable future. In many cases, education has been the priority for development agencies in post-conflict agrarian regions. The re-establishment of the school system with focus on the young elements of society as the first step towards the restoration of confidence and towards empowerment of the new generations can be more effective when jobs are already available to the future workforce. Therefore, it appears to be important that a plan to restore the agriculture-based economy is also being implemented.

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*The paper does not aim to provide solutions; but to highlight the linkages between conflict elements and factors that have to be considered in reaching solutions to the problem of broken agrarian economies and highlight practical ways that give farmers the incentive and opportunity to return to the land in a sustainable fashion.*

*A crude graphic of elements and factors shows the focal points where the greatest effort might be placed in achieving this. However, the actions that are possible at any given point in time on the continuum of a conflict is something that will differ from conflict to conflict; and within a conflict from one phase in its life to another. There are no template solutions and objective analysis to work out the 'art of the possible' is essential with attention being paid to changes in the conflict environment that affect the degree that one initiative or another is possible.*



= areas where resolution effort can be applied.

1. Governments in conflicts where agriculture is damaged need support and incentive to concentrate resources on its restitution
2. Non-state groups/insurgents have to be influenced and incentivised to understand how their prospects are damaged by the destruction of the agrarian economy. They become a stake-holder in its restitution.
3. Flight and unemployment may be reversed if 1 & 2 gain some momentum.

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## **Aim**

The paper aims to raise three points for wider discussion:

- In conflict zones, and regions affected by conflict, is the question of the restitution of traditional economies destroyed by war being addressed correctly? Traditional economies in the context of this paper are agrarian economic systems
- Are development initiatives structured and prioritised in a way best suited to restore agrarian communities?
- Should agriculture in this instance come before other development initiatives such as education and schools for example?

## **BACKGROUND**

21<sup>st</sup> Century conflicts have by and large been characterised by forms of violence that are prosecuted not just against state governments but also against civil communities not only as innocent casualties of war, but as targets at a very local level. For example, the conflicts in Afghanistan since 1979 have affected rural communities more than urban communities with insurgents and their adversaries destroying traditional village communities and recruiting many members of the male populations to be fighters. The same can be said of Pakistan and conflicts elsewhere in the world. In disrupting or destroying communities in this way local economies are also destroyed.

The rash of asymmetrical insurgencies and Islamist uprisings against governments and the West has left countries with broken or badly damaged traditional agricultural economies. The international community has, for its part, not done enough to restore or protect these economies.

A large number of violent conflicts that have occurred after the Cold War have arisen in areas that mostly rely on agriculture, including South Asia, Central Africa, and Latin America<sup>1</sup>; but also in more developed regions including Europe where the conflicts of the post-soviet space in the South Caucasus and Moldova are two examples.

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<sup>1</sup> De Soysa, I., Petter Gleditsch, N, Gibson, M, Sollenberg, M. "To cultivate peace: agriculture in a world of conflict" in *Environmental Change & Security Project Report*, Issue 5 (Summer 1999).  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/105027183/To-Cultivate-Peace-Agriculture-in-a-World-of-Conflict>

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The form of destruction of agrarian economies of the type afflicting the territories of the former Soviet Union (FSU) is less easily discernible. Conflicts in the FSU have reached uneasy conclusions with a ceasefire or similar arrangements that are in character temporary mechanisms. Some of these conflicts have been called ‘frozen conflicts’. One effect of their temporary ‘frozen’ nature is to divide communities and to separate local people from traditional markets. Where this separation of agrarian peoples from their traditional markets occurs so too does a fracture in their means to livelihoods and economic prosperity resulting in the ‘flight’ of farmers and young people who see their prospects lying elsewhere. These circumstances can be seen as one result of the conflicts of the South Caucasus and Moldova. There have been no sustained attempts in any of these territories to restore the local agricultural economies. In the worst affected areas this failure to support grassroots economies has led to local poverty, the growth of ‘black market’ economies in place of legal economic activity, and ingrained corruption. The land has often been affected by “exploitation” in some cases and “neglect” in others, causing once arable plots to become uncultivable for long periods of time.

**Agriculture is comprised of two main aspects, food production and distribution.** Political, economic and environmental issues play a major role in the agriculture sector in any society. If a violent conflict is present, these issues and how they are addressed affect its resolution.

If the agriculture sector is restored and access to food is reestablished, poverty has a good chance of being reduced, environmental issues are addressed, and violence declines. A sustainable peace in rural areas is linked in this way to sustainable farming. The required conditions on the ground to achieve this are linked to conflict elements and factors, such as **politics and the government’s decisions in the agricultural sector**, including agreements with neighboring countries on mutual markets,. The reduction of **violence through security guarantees** for farmers is an obvious and essential component to allow normality to return and violence to decrease in order to give confidence to those returning to the land.

If the agricultural sector in countries with a mainly agricultural economic tradition is not restored there are two negative outcomes. The roots of conflict remain and even if resolution is achieved, the prospects of it being sustained over time are reduced. Conflict resolution demands that people afflicted by the conflict, either as combatants or non-combatants, have visible and sustainable economic prospects in order for them to have the confidence to

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change from a conflict lifestyle which may be generational to a lifestyle of normality and economic growth.

These are communities who have relied on traditional agricultural practices before the outbreak of a conflict to generate an acceptable level of personal wealth. The effect of the conflicts we witness today has been to damage or destroy the wealth producing capacity of the village communities most affected. Infrastructure is destroyed by the conflict and the flight of farmers to escape the fighting or to join the violent movements further damages traditional economies of countries to a degree that makes restoration of local economies a near impossibility in conditions of weak governance.

The question is how farmers can be brought back to the land in a sustainable fashion? The incentives and security guarantees have to be resilient enough to provide for sustainable restitution of livelihoods. Re-training in the necessary skills is a fundamental component requiring the allocation of human and technical resources as well. For the long term future of a project bringing farmers back to the land the next generation has to be trained into agriculture. Their general education too is important but may be a secondary issue in the immediate post-conflict phase.

The problem of getting agrarian communities ‘back to the land’ cannot be separated from issues such as land ownership and registration which have to be dealt with early in the post-conflict phase if conflicted communities are to be persuaded to return to the land.

### **Education vs. Agriculture**

Development initiatives that aim to restore rural communities afflicted by conflict sometimes target other sectors apart from agriculture, such as education and schools; and they place the restoration of the traditional economy low in the list of development priorities.

The case of Nepal, a country with 81 per cent of the population relying on agriculture<sup>2</sup>, shows how education was at first central to the initial post-conflict development programme with a shift in focus only in recent years to traditional skills lost through conflict. During the civil war from 1996-2006, children were unable to attend school as a large number of local youth was recruited into armed groups, schools were not allowed to open or function regularly through intimidation and so a rush to restore education as a priority was understandable.

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<sup>2</sup> AGP-Nepal, Youth Mobilization for agriculture promotion. <http://agpnepal.org.np/>

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Large numbers of males and young people were diverted from education but also from farming meaning that they became conflict dependent for wealth creation which is a theme running through most 21<sup>st</sup> century conflict environments. In Nepal the result was a break down in the traditional agricultural sector of the country that received little attention from post-conflict development agencies. During the peace process, outbreaks of violence and unrest also prevented the implementation of a regular school programme across the country. With the initial focus of the development programmes during the immediate post-conflict years seemingly on education as violence decreased, and the return of young combatants to civil life had to be backed by proper education to prepare them for future employment, the need to restore the main pre-conflict employment sector seemed to be partially forgotten, or given less priority than it required.

The attempt to guarantee education in conflict-affected areas through the creation of Schools as Zones of Peace (SZOP) under the aegis of UNICEF and partner organisations<sup>3</sup> is an example of the single focus approach that in the post-conflict phase gave low priority to restoring the agricultural economy.

As the peace process was under way, development agencies seemed to shift focus to the promotion of sustainable livelihoods, although agriculture in itself did not become a priority for most development programmes. In an agrarian economy such as the one in Nepal, agriculture seems to be the natural target of development efforts. Instead, it appears to have been overlooked for the most part.

Sustainable livelihood represents one of the five priority areas for Nepal's development within the United Nations Development Agency (UNDP)'s framework. The agency has allocated 22 per cent of its 2011 funding to improve the livelihoods in order to support economic growth. Nevertheless, the three UNDP projects do not include the agriculture sector as a development area, although the project's aim is promoting the rural productive regions by generating new job opportunities. The Micro-Enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP)<sup>4</sup> and the Livelihoods Recovery for Peace project (LRP)<sup>5</sup>, in particular, focus on micro-enterprises for poor women, young and disadvantaged people. According to a local

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<sup>3</sup> Schools as Zones of peace (SZOP). Education for stabilization and peace building in post-conflict Nepal. 2010. [http://www.educationandtransition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/WCCES\\_Nepal\\_SZOP\\_06062010.pdf](http://www.educationandtransition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/WCCES_Nepal_SZOP_06062010.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The Micro-Enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) has been implemented between 1998 and 2012. [http://www.undp.org.np/pdf/factsheet/13.%20MEDEP\\_2011.pdf](http://www.undp.org.np/pdf/factsheet/13.%20MEDEP_2011.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The Livelihood Recovery for Peace project (LRP) has started in 2009 and aims to be completed in 2014. [http://www.undp.org.np/pdf/factsheet/15.%20LRP\\_2011.pdf](http://www.undp.org.np/pdf/factsheet/15.%20LRP_2011.pdf)

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NGO<sup>6</sup>, today in Nepal there is the need to promote agriculture because potential farmers are leaving due to the lack of opportunity in the agrarian sector. The country is currently unable to meet domestic demand for food, although agriculture accounts for 32 per cent of GDP and 68 per cent of the labor force<sup>7</sup>. A professional and modernized agriculture instead of a traditional system is considered a way to achieve sustainable farming<sup>8</sup>.

The European Union's development programme in Afghanistan is also an example of how agriculture does not represent a priority in a country where 80 per cent of the population relies on it. In 2012, the EU's funding accounted for €190 million, of which only €60 million were allocated to the agriculture sector, aimed to replace the poppy cultivation with sustainable farming, against €125 million committed to the health sector<sup>9</sup>.

Only recently, some international donors have started to recognize the central role of agriculture in the post-conflict assistance approach in rural communities. The US Development Agency USAID, for example, has recently highlighted the importance of supporting agriculture and food security activities to strengthen local capacity. It is believed that more choices need to be made available to farmers in order to increase agricultural productivity<sup>10</sup>. This represents a step forward towards the recognition of the agriculture sector as a priority within post-conflict development initiatives in rural areas.

### **Plant for Peace**

The Plant for Peace initiative<sup>11</sup> in Afghanistan with its potential to be adopted more widely in other countries represents an example of a bottom-up approach in supporting rural communities. The initiative that was started in 2007 by James Brett aims to enable farmers in Afghanistan to become self-sufficient and create food security for themselves after years of war have destroyed the economy and forced the country to rely heavily on international aid. Sustainable economic development is to be achieved through the implementation of agro-ecological farming systems, while new processing and trading facilities are expected to create

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<sup>6</sup> AGP-Nepal, Youth Mobilization for agriculture promotion. <http://agpnepal.org.np/index.php/about-us.html>

<sup>7</sup> Country Assistance Strategy Nepal. 2009-2013. [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PDACN451.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACN451.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://agpnepal.org.np/index.php/about-us.html>

<sup>9</sup> European Commission- Directorate-General for Deve: Afghanistan – EU cooperation. 28 January 2013. <http://www.4-traders.com/news/European-Commission-Directorate-General-for-Deve-Afghanistan-%96-EU-cooperation--15977007/>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Country Assistance Strategy Nepal

<sup>11</sup> The Plant for Peace initiative. <http://plantforpeace.org/>

job opportunities throughout the country and markets are created and supported through the scheme which also provides farmers with resources and training.

### **FARMER EDUCATION - AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION**

In any discussion on this topic the education and training of farmers and young people in farming communities damaged by conflict can be suggested as a priority for any development initiative. Agricultural extension represents a possible approach.

#### **What it is**

Agricultural extension is a development institution that aims at applying scientific research and knowledge to agricultural practices through farmer education. Extension specialists from various disciplines, such as agriculture, agricultural marketing, health and business, provide farmers with tools, including educational and communication programs, to improve and modernize the sector. Farming techniques are taught, and advices on what markets to target are provided. Extension agents can also play the role of facilitator in organizing farmers in self-help groups that aim to share problems and their solutions. A growing number of agricultural extension agencies in developing countries are largely funded by international development organizations such as the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Extension agents can be described as “the most trusted of the government representatives in rural communities<sup>12</sup>.”

#### **How to communicate the information**

The way the information is given to the farmers has been central to the debate of agricultural extension. Communication with farmers, either belonging to older or younger generations, can be challenging when conditions on the ground prevent it. Information technology has recently been employed as a tool to support the delivery of this information. Farmers in Moldova are expected to receive information about the weather, diseases and pests, and market prices for agricultural products via SMS, IVR service (voice communication), or email. The service, which is part of the project “Disaster and Climate Risk Management in

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<sup>12</sup> Andrew Robertson. Enabling Agricultural extension for peacebuilding. USIP, December 2012. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR320.pdf>

Moldova” and funded by the World Bank, highlights the role that the Internet and mobile phones can play in an environment where access to media information is limited<sup>13</sup>.

### **History and Culture - Innovative Agricultural Extension Methods**

Recently, a few innovative methods have changed the agricultural extension methodology by introducing a participatory approach and by preserving the rural culture.

1. The Compact area Group approach (CAGA)<sup>14</sup>, which was developed by Dr. K. Abdul Kareem, aims at promoting and sustaining group action in a contiguous area with the aim of adopting control measures that are durable and sustainable. In order to address the fatal fungal disease affecting coconut trees in India, CAGA focused on two affected regions, identified the farmers, initiated group discussions, training sessions and method demonstrations took place. The use of practical demonstrations of the technique resulted in a higher percentage of farmers being able to implement the control measures<sup>15</sup>. It has to be noted that the approach tries to overcome a general lack of knowledge about the disease, which can facilitate its spreading. According to Kareem’s findings, CAGA has been successful in “mobilizing group action”. Although CAGA was developed to address the coconut problem in India and is likely to be applied to other areas where there is a pest or disease problem of endemic nature, this innovative agricultural extension method may help in a conflict-stricken area where there is lack of mass awareness about issues and ways to solve them<sup>16</sup>. Rural areas that have been left behind as a result of conflict can benefit from outside help aimed at empowering local farmers, promoting local leadership, and mobilizing local resources in order to achieve sustainable development that can contribute to the resolution of the conflict itself. According to some, agricultural extension has always been used to promote production using a top-down approach. Participatory and

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<sup>13</sup> Modern services for Moldovan farmers: SMS and email on weather and products prices. November 13, 2012. <http://economie.moldova.org/news/modern-services-for-moldovan-farmers-sms-and-email-on-weather-and-product-prices-233917-eng.html>

<sup>14</sup> CAGA (Compact Area Group Approach) – A new Farmer Participatory Extension Approach to mobilise group action. <http://kvkannur-agricultural-extension.blogspot.com/p/caga-compact-area-group-approach-new.html#!/p/caga-compact-area-group-approach-new.html>

<sup>15</sup> Farmers participatory programme stems coconut tree infestation. M.J. Prabu. October 4, 2012. <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/agriculture/farmers-participatory-programme-stems-coconut-tree-infestation/article3962044.ece>

<sup>16</sup> ICRA’s comment

bottom-up approaches that involve cooperation to solve problems can instead be used to manage conflict<sup>17</sup>.

2. Creative Extension, which has been developed by Krishi Vigyan Kendra Kannur<sup>18</sup> under Kerala Agricultural University, uses art forms such as folk songs to communicate agricultural information. Kerala's folk songs are used in an attempt to preserve the rural traditions and their link to agriculture.

### **Demographics - Role of rural women**

Agricultural extension is mostly designed to benefit the male population, although women's role in food production in a large number of countries in the world is significant<sup>19</sup>. According to a World Bank report, from a cost-benefit perspective, improving agricultural education of rural women has the highest rate of return compared to any other type of investment in developing countries. In Africa, where 70 per cent of staple food production is in the hands of women, agricultural extension has been extended to women to increase production and women's income. The successful project in Cameroon is believed to be linked to the focus on small farmers, recognition of women's roles, and readdressing of male bias<sup>20</sup>.

### **Assessing and responding to conflict in rural communities**

Training and information to farmers within the 'Agricultural extension system' can be used as a tool in conflict prevention and management. According to Andrew Robertson, senior program officer in the Center of Innovation for Science, Technology, and Peacebuilding at the United States Institute of Peace, agricultural extension can facilitate positive change among rural people who live in a conflict zone<sup>21</sup>. The focus is on conflict issues related to land and access in order to improve agricultural productivity in those areas and promote

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<sup>17</sup> Mostafa Ahmadvand and Ezatollah Karami, 2007. Sustainable Agriculture: Towards a Conflict Management Based Agricultural Extension. *Journal of Applied Sciences*, 7: 3880-3890.

<http://scialert.net/abstract/?doi=jas.2007.3880.3890>

<sup>18</sup> Krishi Vigyan Kendra Kannur was established in 2004. It is funded by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and aims at supporting the needs of the farming community of the Kannur district through training. <http://www.kvkkannur.com/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> L. Van Crowder. Women in agricultural education and extension. April 1997.

<http://www.fao.org/sd/exdirect/exan0016.htm>

<sup>20</sup> S. Tjip Walker. Innovative agricultural extension for women. A case study in Cameroon. Working papers 403. June 1990. [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1990/06/01/000009265\\_3960929095527/Rendered/PDF/multi\\_page.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1990/06/01/000009265_3960929095527/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Robertson. Enabling Agricultural extension for peacebuilding. USIP, December 2012.

<http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR320.pdf>

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better quality of life. It has to be noted that these issues can be caused by conflict, or can cause conflict. Land disputes, returning IDPs, access disputes and reintegration of soldiers into farming communities are the areas where extension can be used as peace-building tool. In Kenya, for example, extension has been used to assist the reintegration of IDPs<sup>22</sup>.

As elements and factors in conflict can change in importance over time, extension systems used in conflict situations are expected to change accordingly<sup>23</sup>. Flexibility and ability to adapt to the change has been highlighted as major challenges in the search for a system that provides support in conflict zones' rural areas<sup>24</sup>.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **To start a discussion** in a selected region affected by conflict with the main aim being discussion on restoration of traditional economies across boundaries and the re-establishment of traditional markets rather than the creation of new economic activities and markets that may be non-traditional and counter-cultural.
2. **Examine ways of incentivising young people and women** to adopt agriculture and any traditional economy as their livelihood.
3. **Examine ways to attract former farmers back to the land** and to 'grow' new farmers.
4. **Prioritise agriculture in development programmes** in areas where agrarian economies are the traditional means to livelihoods.
5. **Establish training programmes** through local NGOs to meet this need.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Robertson.

<sup>23</sup> ICRA

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Robertson