

What makes us different?

INTRODUCTION

We are an international NGO working to make peace a reality where people don't have the freedom to exercise their rights.

Founded in 1967, for over 50 years, Cord has been equipping communities to collaborate with those in authority, resolve their differences and lay the foundations for peaceful and inclusive societies.

Rooted in and guided by the Christian faith, Cord's understanding of relationships is inspired by the Christian understanding of God who demonstrated the power of relationships through being three in one — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Through the outworking of healthy and life-giving relationships with each other and with the world around us, we can see people live in the fullness of peace that God intended.



Cord is a UK-registered peacebuilding organisation currently implementing projects in Bangladesh, Burundi, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Uganda and Vietnam

Our vision is of a world where all people live in the fullness of peace; having the freedom to flourish and live free from fear.

Our mission is to transform dysfunctional relationships between individuals and communities and those holding power into positive and thriving relationships built on mutual dependency and trust.



In order to achieve this Cord takes a three-strand approach:

Strand 1: We enable local organisations and community representatives to become more resilient to the pressures they face and to develop constructive relationships with key power holders.

Strand 2: We work with governments and other power holders to build their commitment to mutually beneficial relationships with grassroots organisations.

Strand 3: We create space for relationships to develop and grow between local organisations, community representatives, governments and other power holders.

Working with people and communities of all faiths and none, Cord aims to address the root causes of conflict and promote and build sustainable, long-lasting peace. As outlined in our strategy [Promoting the Power of Peaceful Relationships](#), **we work in highly sensitive contexts to transform dysfunctional relationships** between individuals/local communities and powerholders into positive and thriving relationships built on mutual dependency and trust.

For the past 15 years Cord's work has focused on addressing inequality, marginalisation, and exclusion: issues that fuel tension between communities

and that can lead people to resort to violence as a way of settling their grievances. The impact of this work varies from context to context.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

Southeast Asia

Cord's programmes in the region focus on strengthening civil society and human rights defenders to effectively engage with authorities on a range of topics. The projects have successfully seen over 800 land titles granted, strengthened over 220 Indigenous Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), mobilised networks, and strengthened collaboration with state and private sector actors.

Civil Society Capacity Development: Cord is widely recognised by **Lao** Civil society and institutional partners as being the leading capacity development provider for local CSOs in Laos, known for providing quality training, coaching and mentoring. Through its projects local CSOs have been empowered and strengthened at organisational, management and technical levels. Networking opportunities and exchanges have directly contributed to forming a sense of belonging to a respected Lao Civil Society. Cord's projects have been found to have enabled a shift in the perception of local CSOs, in the eyes of local authorities, from being a mere technical partner for service delivery to being local experts whose expertise can be harnessed and were found have had a determinant impact in opening the space for local CSOs. Furthermore, local CSOs have reported positive changes in their interactions and relationships with local authorities

Land Rights: Cord supports indigenous Human Rights Defenders in **Vietnam, Cambodia** and **Laos** to protect their traditional land from deforestation and illegal grabbing, by providing training and coaching on digital security and the legal frameworks and processes for securing land rights; supporting sustainable livelihoods projects, and establishing grievance mechanisms for private sector, government and civil society actors to constructively discuss issues.

Women's Empowerment: Building on our work in land rights Cord is using a gender transformative approach to improve the participation of women human rights defenders in community action and decision making on natural resource management in **Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand** and **Myanmar**.



Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB): In **Myanmar**, Cord works with human rights organisations to develop their understanding of FoRB and to build their skills in effective, non-adversarial advocacy. Organisations engage with diverse groups to understand the issues they face and run interfaith community events and meetings to build social cohesion and tolerance.

Great Lakes Region, East Africa

Cord's programmes have focused on building social cohesion between host communities and returnees, different ethnic and socio-economic groups. As individuals begin to realise the power they have for change in their communities, Cord has built the capacity of marginalised groups to be peace actors, capable of reducing tensions before they erupt into violence.



Cord's work in this region focuses on:

Supporting the social and economic (group) empowerment of vulnerable community members, especially youth and women, to improve resilience and help prevent the (re)occurrence of conflicts, instability and irregular migration.

Restoring trust and tolerance among community members from diverse political and ethnic backgrounds to help mitigate the effects of conflict, address the barriers to peaceful coexistence, and strengthen the conditions for peace.

Responding to inter-community tensions caused by trauma and conflict - including providing training in non-violent conflict management skills and supporting grassroots-level dispute resolution efforts to improve physical security and freedom.

Increasing awareness of and strengthening capacities in transitional justice - to help contribute to reconciliation and the non-recurrence of violence in Burundi.

Reducing tension through community-led land demarcation - which in turn will improve socio-economic wellbeing, particularly for women in Uganda.

PROGRAMMING APPROACHES

Capacity Development

We support civil society, human rights defenders and individuals through training, mentoring and coaching to develop their capacity for organisational development and peacebuilding. We take an asset-based approach, which focuses on building confidence by enhancing existing skills, knowledge and interests. In-depth capacity assessments are employed to develop personalised capacity development toolkits. Cord uses a blended model of coaching, group workshops, action learning and adult learning to support organisations and individuals to reach their learning goals.

Engaging powerholders

We engage powerholders by creating and supporting opportunities for civil society and government cooperation e.g., review of proposed laws and amendments. We develop partnerships with relevant ministries and engage governments in capacity development activities and communities of practices to build an environment where rights holders and duty bearers can freely discuss sensitive issues.



Creating enabling spaces

Cord creates and facilitates safe spaces for engagement in which meaningful, trusting relationships can be built between communities and powerholders. These spaces provide ways to tackle entrenched issues. Cord has extensive experience facilitating dialogue between diverse groups, including on sensitive topics such as religious freedom, land rights, and ethnic division. Through our approach, functional relationships have been built between groups who traditionally viewed themselves as adversaries.

Do No Harm and Non-Violent Communication

Cord addresses the underlying causes of conflict and supports powerholders and communities to build constructive and trusting relationships, to reduce the likelihood of violence erupting again. This is done through training on Do No Harm (DNH) and non-violent communication (NVC); as well as through supporting human rights defenders and civil society organisations to see powerholders as partners, rather than adversaries.

Rights-based approach

Through our work, we support communities, human rights defenders and vulnerable individuals to understand and collaborate with powerholders to realise their fundamental human rights, such as access to education, justice and land rights. However, rather than demanding their rights through adversarial means, when combined with peacebuilding tools, Cord's rights-based approach has proved effective for navigating complex conflicts and driving meaningful, sustainable change through building lasting relationships.

Capacity

Average annual income: GBP 1.6 million

In 2021 we trained over **2,628** people (including community members, government representatives & Human Rights Defenders) in topics including: digital security, non-violent communication, land rights registration, dialogue & debating skills and business planning. We supported **329** Human Rights Defenders and over **121** civil society organisations with Cord's programmes impacting the lives of more than **10,039** people.

Key Institutional Donors

Cord's primary donors include: the European Commission (EC), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Affairs (DRL).

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