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# CONFLICT, POSTWAR REBUILDING AND THE ECONOMY

*A Critical Review of the Literature*  
**GILLES CARBONNIER**

The War-torn Societies Project



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**Photo credit:** Women sweeping the streets of Grozny. Chechnya 1995. © ICRC/Eric Bouvet

## **The War-torn Societies Project**

The War-torn Societies Project aims to assist the international donor community, international organizations, NGOs and local authorities and organizations to understand and respond better to the complex challenges of postconflict periods. Once fighting has stopped, a fragile cease-fire must be transformed into a lasting political settlement; emergency relief provided; and a process of political, economic, social and psychological rebuilding initiated to lay the basis for future sustainable development. These are gigantic tasks; they are interrelated, with progress in one depending on progress in the others and they must, therefore, be tackled simultaneously.

The project has been jointly initiated by UNRISD and PSIS in response to a widely recognized need for systematic analysis of present experience and practice; it intends to clarify policy options for both international and local actors and to redefine relevant strategies. It also aims to contribute to a better integration of different forms of international assistance — humanitarian, economic, political and military — within a coherent policy framework, to encourage a better alignment of external assistance with local efforts and thus to bring about a more efficient and effective use of limited and seriously overstretched local and international resources.

### **The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)**

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development is an autonomous United Nations research organization focusing on the most pressing problems of social development. The institute emphasizes a holistic, multidisciplinary and political economy approach in its work. Current research themes include integrating gender into development policy; environment, sustainable development and social change; crisis, adjustment and social change; and volunteer action and local democracy. New research is beginning on social policy, institutional reform and globalization; business responsibility for sustainable development; new information and communication technologies; culture and development; gender, poverty and well-being; and public sector reform and crisis-ridden states.

### **The Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS)**

The Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies is a centre for training, research, documentation and consultation on questions of international and regional conflict and security, arms control and disarmament. It is part of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva and is financed by public and private contributors.

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*Gilles Carbonnier, 26 January 1998*

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## Preface

Economic aspects and issues are obviously at the heart of efforts to rebuild war-torn societies and consolidate peace in countries emerging from years of civil war. Yet relatively little attention has focused on these issues in popular media as well as in the specialized press. This may be due to the fact that questions of humanitarian relief and the politics of peace-keeping have been in the limelight of public and political interest. It may also reflect the fact that economists, and the main institutions of economic development and finance, have long been uneasy and ambivalent about focusing directly on these issues and getting involved in complex and often messy post-war situations.

While the academic literature on these questions has remained relatively limited, assistance to economic reconstruction and rebuilding of post-conflict societies has rapidly become a major preoccupation of bilateral and

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