

Key trends on peace, justice and inclusion



From the Global Alliance Report on SDG 16+: **Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+: Anchoring peace, justice and inclusion**, prepared for the High Level Political Forum in July 2019.



Peace

70.8 million

people are **forcibly displaced** as a result of persecution, conflict and violence.

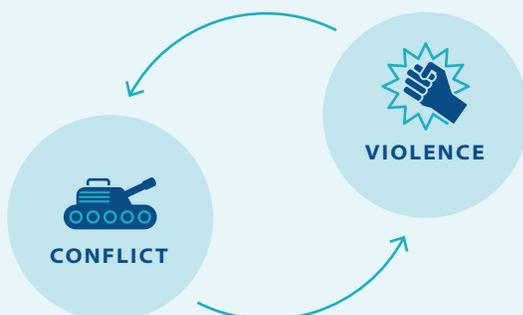
80%

of the **extreme poor** are expected to live in countries affected by **violence and conflict** by 2030.

Violence has become the biggest obstacle to reaching the SDGs. More than 80% of the extreme poor are expected to live in countries affected by violence and conflict by 2030. UNHCR's Global Trends Report 2018 details that an unprecedented **70.8 million people (and increasing) are forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict and violence.** Seminal studies like the [joint United Nations and World Bank Group 'Pathways for Peace'](#) report are also showing that violent conflicts today are more complex than in the past and increasingly protracted, involving more non-state groups as well as regional and international actors. **All countries, including those in the Global North, face risks of violence and societal unrest as governments and institutions contend with perceptions of exclusion related to inequalities across societal groups.** This calls for increasing efforts from multiple actors to focus on preventing both the occurrence and escalation of violence.

Protracted conflicts and wars have resulted in chronic fragility, psycho-social and economic trauma, and the destruction of cultural heritage. Societies enduring active conflict require **dialogue, trust, consensus-building, inclusive political settlements and reconciliation to build bridges for peace.** Without ensuring sustained positive peace in these countries, progress across the SDGs will be lacking or unsustainable. In order to live up to the commitment of leaving "no one behind," promoting peace in conflict-affected countries must be prioritized.

High levels of **violence against women** can signal that a society might tip into **conflict**. Once conflict breaks out such violence may be exacerbated.



87,000

women were intentionally **killed** in 2017 — and more than half by a partner or family member.

1 billion

children experience some form of **violence** every year.

There have been positive trends in some indicators on violence. Global homicide rates have slowly declined between 2000 and 2017. However, **high levels of interpersonal violence, especially violence against women, can be a warning sign that violence in societies may degenerate into conflict.** Once violent conflict breaks out, violence against women and girls may be exacerbated. SDG 16 is stimulating more and better data and statistics on violence against women which is enabling countries to better understand the extent of the problem and respond more effectively.

The aspirations of sustaining peace (as adopted in the 2016 UN Security Council and UN General Assembly Resolutions) and sustainable development are intrinsically linked. Countries are looking beyond post-conflict peacebuilding to embrace the concept of “sustaining peace”. This concept is focused on addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict, highlighting issues of inclusivity, national ownership and the need for a “whole of society” approach. SDG 16+ provides a framework that spans the development, governance, and peacebuilding nexus. The framework can be used to underpin the sustaining-peace approach and align it with the more comprehensive SDG agenda.

Goal 16+ is central to sustaining peace and preventing and responding to conflict by strengthening institutions (including multilateral institutions). It also addresses the root causes of poverty, forced displacement, statelessness and the marginalization of people, as well as educating for a culture of peace and non-violence. UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on youth, peace and security recognize the positive role young people play in sustaining peace. The developing world is now witnessing its largest youth generation in history. Indeed, youth are often the majority of the population in countries, and this younger generation needs a seat at the table in decision-making. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security also reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The resolution stresses the importance of women’s equal participation and full involvement in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The 2030 Agenda, particularly SDGs 4 on education, 5 on gender equality, 10 on equality, and 16 on peace, justice and inclusion, encompass the spirit of these important Resolutions. It recognizes sustaining peace as an inherent component of sustainable development.



Justice

Hundreds of millions of people, including 650 million children, lack proof of legal identity. People **excluded from society through the lack of a legal identity** cannot seek protection from the law or claim their rights and entitlements. They are often invisible to the state and at high risk of being left behind. Lack of legal identity poses significant barriers to accessing public services (health or education, for example), exercising the right to participate in civic processes (vote, participate in politics), or seek out justice for grievances. Similarly, access to rights is denied when laws do not live up to key international standards and exclude population groups — such as the right of refugees to access education.

Seeking justice is often **prohibitively expensive and legal proceedings are lengthy**. Moreover, for many marginalized groups, confidence in the justice system’s ability to protect their rights is often very low. The [Taskforce on Justice](#), an initiative of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, has estimated that there is a ‘justice gap’ affecting more than 5 billion people worldwide who cannot access legal services to resolve their problems. The [High-Level Group on Justice for Women](#) posits that **women’s justice needs are shaped by overlapping disadvantages, legal discrimination and discriminatory practices**.

Countries around the world are grappling with ineffective justice systems that often reflect and perpetuate the structural inequalities, low levels of integrity and power disparities in broader society. However, there is an increasing recognition that a **human rights-based and people-centered approach to access to justice** is necessary to ensure that legal frameworks do not exclude certain population groups, that justice institutions are more responsive to people seeking redress for grievances or to resolve disputes and that people themselves are more empowered to seek out and claim their rights.

With shrinking democratic space in many countries, **the robustness and independence of institutions can be critical to safeguarding the rights of marginalized populations and upholding the rule of law**. The judiciary can play a critical role in such situations — whether in fragile or conflict-affected contexts or high/middle income countries. However, **the independence of the judiciary is under threat** in a number of countries where politicians attempt to exert control

650 million

children lack proof of legal identity.

Lack of legal identity limits people’s access to:



justice



education



work



health services



civic processes



property rights

over the judiciary. Governments have made use of parliamentary majorities to **change the statutory rules on judicial appointments and the composition of appointment panels**. Furthermore, population surveys show that experiences with and perceptions of corruption in the courts are widespread.

People are increasingly turning to **informal, traditional and customary justice systems** to seek quick, accessible, inexpensive resolution of disputes. This tends to happen more frequently in areas outside the reach of state authority, although these systems may not be aligned with the human rights protections afforded under international law. Countries are searching for **efficient and effective ways to deliver justice**, including alternative dispute resolution fora, mobile courts and legal aid provision. They are also looking into community-based legal services and paralegals who can advise and assist people through the justice system, focusing on those most at risk of being left behind.

People seek resolution for a range of civil, administrative and criminal needs. In criminal matters, access to legal aid is the foundation for the enjoyment of the right to a fair trial and a safeguard that prevents corruption and ensures fairness and public trust in the criminal justice process. The [UNDP/UNODC Global Study on Legal Aid](#) identified improving the coverage and quality of legal aid services (including for vulnerable groups) and quality of legal aid services as priority needs in most countries. **To deliver justice for all countries must also recognize the civil justice needs of people.** Legal aid to access justice in a range of civil and administrative matters from property and housing issues to employment and education needs is lacking for many people around the world. The [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) notes that a conservative estimate of the cost of leaving civil legal needs unmet ranges from 0.5 to 3% of GDP in most OECD countries.

Building just societies contributes to preventing violence and conflict: group-based grievances around exclusion and feelings of injustice as well as abusive actions by state actors accelerate violence and the risks of conflict. Sustainable peace and development are more attainable **when justice is pursued for those grievances, including through transitional justice measures**. These will include establishing victim-centric processes to deal with legacies of mass violations of human rights, incorporating victims' voices in peace processes, returning property to people in the aftermath of conflict and investing in more broad-based, institutional reforms.



Inclusion

Civic space is shrinking in many countries across the world. Civil society organizations report an increasing number of cases in which legal and political barriers are suppressing and weakening civil society. **Shrinking civic space is highly likely to halt or reverse progress towards reducing inequality, ensuring inclusion and improving sustainability.** It is often precisely those at greatest risk whom civil society seeks to empower and protect, including women, youth, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex community and other marginalised groups. From a human rights perspective, this trend also impinges upon the fundamental freedoms of the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

There has been **good progress in recognizing the right of individuals to access information held by public authorities**. However, **certain groups — such as women — are disproportionately disadvantaged in the exercise of this right**. Moreover, the protection of freedom of expression is being threatened by **violations of the safety** of those who gather and report information to the public, principally **journalists, media workers and human rights defenders**. Media freedom, journalist safety, freedom of assembly — not to mention an independent and effective National Human Rights Institution in accordance with the Paris Principles — are all prerequisites for establishing effective, accountable and transparent institutions.

+5 billion

people worldwide cannot access **legal services**.

People are often **unable to seek justice** due to:



elevated
costs



lengthy
proceedings



lack of legal
identity

80%

of people turn to **informal justice systems** to solve their problems.

0.5 - 3% GDP

is the estimated **cost** of leaving civil needs unmet.

181 restrictions

have been imposed on **CSOs** in **82 countries** since 2013, targeting:



the ‘lifecycle’ of CSOs (formation, registration or operation)



peaceful assembly



access to international funding

125

countries have adopted **laws and policies** to guarantee people’s **right to information**.



1,456

journalists and human rights defenders have been killed in 61 countries since 2015.



Countries are recognizing that **responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making can strengthen the legitimacy of public institutions** and also facilitate the adoption of policies that address the needs and rights of all people. This is as true for education (SDG 4) as it is for decent work (SDG 8). The picture of **women’s representation in public institutions (the judiciary, parliament and the public service), however, is mixed**. Some regions are steadily improving the proportion of women occupying decision-making positions in public institutions, whereas other regions remain stagnant. Representation of other demographic groups in public institutions — e.g., youth, ethnic groups, the disabled — is more challenging to assess, as only a handful of countries are systematically producing and monitoring this data. **Young people’s participation and representation in deliberative bodies and in policy making processes is impossible** in some contexts. This is due to formal rules restricting the age of participation, a lack of space for expanding membership and financial constraints on facilitating meaningful participation to ensure a real influence on decision-making.

Women’s representation in national parliaments varies widely per region but the average stands at

24%

Young people make up the majority of the world’s population, yet **MPs under 30** make up less than

2%

Among children of primary age, **girls** are still more likely to be **out of school**.



Asylum seekers and refugees might be **legally excluded** from accessing certain rights and associated services.



Inclusion, or its lack, starts early and is often determined by legal status and identity. It begins at the time of birth — underscoring the importance of birth registration for proof of official identity and nationality — and continues as children enter the education system. **The gap between male and female out-of-school rates has narrowed over the years, but among children of primary age, girls are still more likely to be out of school than boys**. Depending on the country, **asylum seekers and refugees might be legally excluded from accessing certain rights and associated services**. Legal identity secures important legal protection mechanisms, safeguards equal access to key social services such as health and education and foster income-generating opportunities. It also helps to ensure that these individuals are counted in official statistics.