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YEARS

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United Nations Development Programme

Building Inclusive Societies and Sustaining Peace through Democratic Governance and Conflict Prevention

An Integrated Approach



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United Nations Development Programme

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Two men congratulate each other after the adoption of the Doha Darfur Peace Document. © UNAMID/Olivier Chassot

Voters are standing in a queue to vote at a local polling station set up in Varanasi, India. © UNDP India/Prashanth Vishwanathan

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Executive Summary

We live in an increasingly fragile world: many previously 'stable' countries and cities have experienced sudden disruption and breakdown, undoing years of hard-won development gains. The traditional binary view which distinguishes conflict from non-conflict settings no longer holds. Fragility, conflict and violence can affect any country or society, and not just those affected by, or emerging from, protracted warfare.

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In response to this steady rise in fragility, two recent reports examining the peace operations and peace architecture of the United Nations have called for a stronger focus on prevention, and for more comprehensive investments towards 'sustaining peace' in all development contexts, not only in the aftermath of conflict. Similarly, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has woven democratic governance and peacebuilding targets into a single goal, recognizing here again the indivisible links between 'peaceful societies' and 'effective, accountable and inclusive institutions'.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) acknowledges that there is no single pathway to engineering resilience in the face of fragility, conflict and violence. Responding to today's challenges, the UNDP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) calls for the seamless integration of democratic governance, conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions. This integrated approach is applied across all settings: investments in human rights, the rule of law and accountable institutions are geared towards building social cohesion and preventing conflict, and vice versa, investments in social cohesion, national dialogue and mediation capacities lay the foundations for sustaining peace, even in seemingly peaceful settings.

In line with the Strategic Plan, UNDP's Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster (GPC) addresses four interrelated areas of work: (1) Rule of law, justice, security and human rights; (2) Inclusive political processes; (3) Responsive and accountable institutions and (4) Conflict prevention. Through an integrated approach, UNDP aims to support the building of a robust and inclusive social contract which reflects people's expectations and to strengthen the institutional capacity of state and non-state actors to meet them.

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The Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster has representation at UNDP's New York Headquarters (HQ), at the five regional hubs in Addis Ababa, Amman, Bangkok, Istanbul and Panama and in the two Global Policy Centres that support the Cluster's mandate: The Oslo Governance Centre and the Singapore Centre for Public Service Excellence,

The GPC's experts at HQ and regional level provide policy and programme support to the UNDP Country Offices, ensure knowledge is linked up and innovation fostered, and establish and cultivate partnerships with donors, financial institutions, other UN agencies and civil society to advance UNDP's vision of combatting exclusion and making sure no one is left behind. The Global Policy Centres steer knowledge production, in-house policy formulation and networking with academia, think-tanks and the private sector.

The GPC also dedicates its expertise to emerging challenges and cross-cutting issues, such as supporting SDG 16 on building peaceful, just and inclusive societies, addressing governance and peacebuilding in early recovery, fighting corruption, promoting gender equality and empowering youth, finding development solutions to violent extremism and to the governance of multi-cultural societies, addressing governance in urban settings and in conflict-sensitive management of natural resources.

GPC's work is financed through UNDP's core contributions and the Governance for Inclusive and Peaceful Societies Funding Window.

An integrated approach to governance and peacebuilding is in line with the latest thinking on building peaceful and inclusive societies as set out in SDG 16.



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Introduction

“The United Nations system must pull together in a more integrated manner in the service of conflict prevention and peace. Conflict prevention and mediation must be brought back to the fore. The United Nations has not invested enough on addressing root causes of conflict. It must do that in partnership with others, while strengthening its own capacities to undertake prevention work, including through inclusive and equitable development. ... and agree on innovative approaches that integrate conflict prevention, governance, development and human rights.”

Uniting our Strengths for Peace - Politics, Partnerships and People,
Report of the High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations, June 2015

“Peacebuilding – the term that this report proposes is 'sustaining peace' – needs to be liberated from the strict limitation to post-conflict contexts. 'Sustaining peace' should be understood as encompassing not only efforts to prevent relapse into conflict but also to prevent lapse into conflict in the first place. When considering the peace and security activities of the United Nations, therefore, a strong emphasis must be placed on conflict prevention.”

The Challenge of Sustaining Peace, Report of the Advisory Group of Experts
for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, June 2015

“Sustaining peace ... should be broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.”

Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture,
General Assembly (A/RES/70/262), 27 April 2016

The world is rapidly changing and the development sector must adapt along with it. Alongside extraordinary progress in poverty reduction and economic growth, new transnational threats and national vulnerabilities arise. Climate change and pandemic diseases like Ebola, growing disparities in wealth and political representation, urbanization, social unrest, and violent extremism are all generating new challenges and stresses for governments, communities, civil society¹ and other non-state actors. Many governments – whether affected by fragility and violent conflict or not – are struggling to deliver on their promises and to respond to rising expectations of a more educated and better informed population. The increasing gap between people’s expectations and institutional capacities to respond to them is generating new forms of instability, mistrust between governments and citizens² and threatening hard-won development gains. Violent conflicts have become more complex and intractable and fueled by new drivers of violence such as radicalization and extremism.

The recent reviews of the UN’s work in the area of peacekeeping and peacebuilding stress the need for a more preventive approach and a focus on 'sustaining peace' throughout rather than only restoring peace after war and violent conflict. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development follows a similar approach as it calls for a specific Goal 16 on promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies³.

UNDP is committed to supporting states and societies worldwide to address these challenges. On the basis of its 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, it has created the Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster (GPC), which offers a range of services aimed at strengthening the resilience of state-society relations, with a focus on four work streams: (1) Promoting the rule of law, justice, security and human rights; (2) Building inclusive political processes; (3) Supporting responsive and accountable institutions and (4) Promoting conflict prevention.

This paper is intended for UNDP and its partners, donors and the global development community. It sets out the vision, policy and programming offer for the GPC. It first considers the global challenges confronting states and societies, which heighten their vulnerability to a wide range of interconnected risks – social, political, economic and environmental. It then turns to the importance of building-in resilience to external and domestic threats and vulnerabilities. In line with UNDP’s Strategic Plan and responding to recent rethinking of the nexus between development and peacebuilding, the paper highlights how UNDP is re-orienting its approach to democratic governance, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. A focus on prevention through democratic governance calls for increased attention and investment in processes that strengthen the state-society social contract, in particular in situations where that social contract has come under severe stress. Finally, the paper describes the global offer of the GPC for each one of its four work streams, the cross-cutting initiatives as well as two Global Policy Centers that are part of the Cluster.

A key priority of the GPC is to leverage the breadth of governance and peacebuilding expertise spread across the four work streams to design a comprehensive package of support to Member States on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular on SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and establishing effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

1 — Development in a turbulent and changing world



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