

PATHWAYS FOR PEACE

INCLUSIVE APPROACHES TO PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT



WORLD BANK GROUP



UNITED NATIONS

A JOINT UNITED NATIONS–WORLD BANK STUDY

Since 2010, the number of major violent conflicts has tripled, and fighting in a growing number of lower-intensity conflicts has escalated. By 2016, more countries were experiencing violent conflict than at any time in nearly 30 years; the number of people displaced by violent conflict reached levels not seen since the aftermath of World War II.

While states remain militarily involved in conflict, we are witnessing changes in the nature of conflict that increasingly involve nonstate actors, are characterized by violence far from the battlefield, and feature a resurgence of international interference, cross-border spillovers, and fighting in urban settings.

While most violence remains entrenched in low-income countries, some of today's deadliest conflicts occur in higher-income countries with stronger institutions—and all contemporary conflicts show continuing signs of protraction.

This upsurge in violence occurs in a volatile global context where the balance of geopolitical power is in flux. Developments in information and communications technology, population movements, and climate change are creating shared risks and opportunities that must be managed at both national and international levels.

Taken together, these trends challenge the long-standing assumption that peace will accompany income growth, and upend the expectations of steady social, economic, and political advancement that defined the end of the 20th century.

By 2030—the horizon set by the international community to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals—more than half of the world's poor could be living in countries affected by high levels of violence.

Most societies regularly implement strategies intended to address potential causes of conflict and launch initiatives aimed at preventing violence. When effective, these strategies save lives and money. Despite this evidence base, current spending on prevention by the multilateral system amounts to a fraction of what is spent responding to crisis or on rebuilding afterward.

THE VALUE OF PREVENTIVE ACTION

A scaled-up system for preventive action could save between US\$5 billion and \$70 billion per year, which could be reinvested in reducing poverty and improving populations' well-being. For this to happen, a much stronger focus is needed on identifying and acting early to address risks of violence. The present system is overly focused on addressing outbreaks and escalation of violence after situations are already critical.

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THE PATHWAYS FOR PEACE STUDY ORIGINATED FROM THE CONVICTION THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S ATTENTION MUST BE URGENTLY REFOCUSSED ON PREVENTION.

While the United Nations and the World Bank Group are governed by different yet complementary mandates, they share a commitment to preventing conflict, as expressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions on Sustaining Peace, and the 18th replenishment of the World Bank Group's International Development Association (IDA).

The study's objective is to improve the way in which domestic development processes interact with security, diplomatic, justice, and human rights efforts to prevent conflicts from becoming violent.

THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVE IS TO IMPROVE THE WAY IN WHICH DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES INTERACT WITH SECURITY, DIPLOMATIC, JUSTICE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS TO PREVENT CONFLICTS FROM BECOMING VIOLENT.

WHY A NEW APPROACH IS NEEDED

The study stresses the importance of exclusion-related grievances that are at the root of many violent conflicts today; it particularly focuses on grievances related to access to power, natural resources, security, and justice.

While societies have a shared responsibility to ensure that conflict does not become violent, governments and states are particularly accountable in this area. However, in addressing the multiple global risk factors that drive violent conflict today, governments are often one actor among many.

Faced with these multiple challenges, prevention efforts require a shift in approach to address the risks of violence before violence starts. Yet to a much greater degree, the problem is one of incentives. Actors at all levels do not always

have incentives to act effectively or collectively to prevent conflicts from turning violent.

Based on its review of cases in which prevention has been successful, the study has articulated several recommendations for both countries facing emerging risks of violent conflict and the international community. These include the following:

- Prevention requires sustained, inclusive, and targeted attention and action. Prevention is not only about avoiding or stopping repeated violent crises. While it is necessary to mitigate the impact of shocks, prevention also requires

proactively addressing deeper, underlying risks that prevent sustainable development and peace.

- Most successful prevention is endogenous, undertaken by local or national actors. International actors need to support these broad and inclusive processes. In this sense, prevention enhances sovereignty, empowering each country to be in control of its own destiny and the state to build positive relationships with its citizens.
- Exclusion from access to power, opportunity, services, and security creates fertile ground for mobilizing group grievances to violence, especially in areas with weak state capacity or legitimacy or in the context of human rights abuses.
- Inclusion is key to prevention—in institutions, development policies, and provision of security and justice. Preventive action needs to adopt a more people-centered approach that includes mainstreaming citizen engagement in programs.
- The primary responsibility for preventive action rests with states, both through their national policy and their governance of the multilateral system. However, in today's shifting global landscape, states are often one actor among many. States are increasingly called to work with each other and with other actors to keep their countries on a pathway to peace.
- Development policies and programs must be a core part of preventive efforts. Growth and poverty alleviation are crucial but alone will not suffice to sustain peace. Preventing violence requires departing from traditional economic and social policies when risks are building up or are high. It also means seeking inclusive solutions through dialogue, adapted macroeconomic policies, institutional reform in core state functions, and redistributive policies.
- To be more effective, new mechanisms need to be established that will allow greater synergy to be achieved much earlier among the various tools and instruments of prevention, in particular, diplomacy and mediation, security, and development.
- Efforts to address the economic, social, and political aspirations of young people are central to prevention and require innovative approaches.
- Societies in which women have more equal access to livelihoods and education are more resilient to violent conflict. Women's voice and engagement is a core aspect of effective prevention policies and fundamental to sustaining peace at all levels.

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