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As conflicts surge around the world, new approaches to prevention can save lives and be cost-effective

WASHINGTON, March 6, 2018 — A surge in violent conflicts in recent years has left a trail of human suffering, displacement and protracted humanitarian need. Since 2010, the number of major violent conflicts has tripled, and fighting in a growing number of lower-intensity conflicts has escalated. Today, an unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from their homes. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.

A new study, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, the first study on conflict prevention prepared jointly by the World Bank and the United Nations, argues that the world must refocus its attention on prevention as a means to achieving peace and advancing sustainable development. Highlighting the enormous human and economic cost of conflicts around the world – up to \$70 billion per year – the study recommends more concerted and collaborative efforts by the international community, with the Sustainable Development Goals at the core of an inclusive approach that identifies risks early and puts people at the center.

“Efforts to build and sustain peace are necessary not only once conflict has broken out, but long beforehand through preventing conflict and addressing its root causes,” said **UN Secretary-General António Guterres**. Reiterating that prevention is an essential means of reducing human suffering and enabling people to reach their full potential, *“we must work better together across the peace continuum, focusing on all the dimensions of conflict”* he continued.

The study recognizes that violent conflict is a major cause of poverty today, and notes that by 2030, more than half the world’s poor will live in countries affected by high levels of violence.

“It’s increasingly clear that violent conflict is one of the biggest obstacles to ending poverty,” **World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim** said. *“Conflict impacts a growing number of people within countries, but it does not confine itself to national borders, and its spillover effects can imperil entire regions and pose risks worldwide. Preventing violent conflict is one of the most critical development challenges of our time, one that requires more resources, innovative approaches, and intensified collaboration among international partners.”*

Violent conflict today affects countries at all income levels. The study highlights that the best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis -- including but not limited to armed conflict -- is to build resilience through investment in inclusive and sustainable development. For all countries, the study

suggests that addressing inequalities and exclusion, making institutions more inclusive and ensuring that development strategies are risk-informed, are central to preventing the fraying of the social fabric that could lead to fragility and violence.

The study demonstrates that prevention works and is cost-effective. Analysis undertaken for the report finds that preventing the outbreak of violence would always be economically beneficial. It is estimated that violent conflict could cost up to US\$13.6 trillion per year globally, a figure equivalent to 13.3 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP). The study says that prevention is cost effective; it highlights three cost-saving scenarios ranging from US\$5 billion to almost US\$70 billion annually.

The study points to many examples of countries that have successfully managed to address high levels of risk and avoided a descent into violence. It recommends that the international community create the necessary incentives that will enable all partners -- including development, diplomatic and security actors, and those at the international, regional and local levels -- to act early and act together to build and sustain peace and development.

To read the full study, please visit www.pathwaysforpeace.org

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