



**SAFERWORLD**  
PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

SEPTEMBER 2015  
**BRIEFING**

Residents, with their belongings, return to their villages after being displaced by fighting in Ras al-Ain, Syria. © RODI SAID/REUTERS



# FROM AGREEMENT TO ACTION: BUILDING PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES THROUGH THE 2030 AGENDA

## A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO SUSTAIN PEACE AND PREVENT CONFLICT

**In the 70 years since the United Nations (UN) was established “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, the overall trend has been towards a more peaceable world. However, the significant reduction in violent conflict, especially since the end of the Cold War, is now at risk: there were more direct conflict deaths in 2014 than at any time since 1989. There are currently more armed conflicts than at any time this century. Half of those living in extreme poverty are in countries suffering from, or at risk of, high levels of violence. And one person in every 122 is now a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum.**

Various multilateral tools and processes already exist to help the international community respond to these challenges. But, with peace at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is now a universally agreed vision to address the complex roots that underpin today's crises. Building peaceful, just and inclusive societies will be key for sustaining peace in countries emerging from conflict – the contexts most at risk of a relapse into violence – but it will also reduce the risk of conflict in all countries. Hence the emphasis on the universality of the 2030 Agenda, as opposed to treating fragile or conflict-affected countries as a group with distinct needs. This change in mindset will be vital if the international

community's approach to conflict is to move from reaction – often involving securitised intervention – to prevention.

Sustainable Development Goal 16 – to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” – and its accompanying targets provide an important guide for such efforts. However, there are also key peace-related targets under other Goals; and indeed the whole development framework should work in favour of peace. Progress in meeting all targets will require action on a number of fronts: primarily at the national level but supported by enabling partnerships at the global level.

# PREPARING FOR IMPLEMENTATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

**Building peaceful, just and inclusive societies at local and national levels will require action on a number of fronts. Different actor groups will have a role to play in championing progress, organising a common effort, getting engaged in implementation, monitoring progress and providing feedback.**

- 1. Mobilising champions:** The 2030 Agenda will only be transformative if local and national champions demonstrate the courage and leadership to unite people and institutions behind a progressive vision. This may be politically challenging, but where leaders, ministers, politicians and civil society recognise and affirm the relevance of Goal 16 and other key targets to people’s needs in their own countries, this agenda can translate into huge benefits for public well-being, social cohesion and confidence in the future.
- 2. Supporting inclusively defined local and national priorities:** Implementation of the global sustainable development agenda must be adapted to the realities of a wide variety of national and local contexts. It should be integrated with existing national and local plans, but should also be an opportunity to stimulate debate about what the real priorities are. The 2030 Agenda offers a platform to assess priority needs proactively, in consultation with the public, to link these priorities to existing plans, and to develop strategies for a range of different ministries and bodies, all

underpinned by a common vision of development.

- 3. Organising for action:** Identified champions can help build understanding and ownership of the agenda, through national dialogues and multi-stakeholder analysis of issues that underpin peace, justice and inclusivity in their own context. Structures will also be needed to mobilise institutions and society at large to drive progress – while taking care that any new institutional architecture will serve a clear purpose. Existing structures should be leveraged and built upon rather than replicated.
- 4. Identifying relevant indicators:** Led by champions and national statistics offices working together, there should be an inclusive process of dialogue between governments, civil society and experts in order to identify national indicators to complement global indicators. Baskets that include a balance of different types of indicators – for instance, from perception surveys as well as institutional records – will help tell a more comprehensive and nuanced story of progress.
- 5. Developing data capacities:** Identifying indicators is one thing, gathering the data is quite another. To overcome capacity limitations, this will require the mobilisation of national statistical systems working in partnership with an array of data-gatherers: UN agencies,

civil society groups, research organisations, technology companies, and the wider private sector. Independent third parties could be used to gather data for potentially sensitive indicators under Goal 16.

- 6. Setting national targets:** Where possible, baseline data should be gathered for each indicator under priority targets. Governments, in consultation with other stakeholders, will then need to set quantified benchmarks for each of these indicators: where does the country aim to be by 2030? These national targets must be ambitious but realistic for each context. Benchmark targets can still be identified where baseline data is unavailable, though they should be open for review when baseline data becomes available. See table 1 below for an example of what this might look like.
- 7. Ensuring accountability:** Champions should engage with parliaments, independent commissions, watchdog bodies, activists, the media and the wider public to ensure that they are all informed about the specific national targets for 2030. Timely, reliable and independent data available to all stakeholders will enable regular assessments of progress in implementation, can be used to hold key actors accountable for meeting commitments, and can galvanise action in areas of under-performance.

## Setting quantified benchmarks for target indicators at national level:

Some targets in the 2030 Agenda are not quantified. To know when they have been met at national level, benchmarks can be set at the indicator level (for both national and global indicators). Targets would be considered met within a country when the agreed benchmarks at indicator level have been reached. This can be demonstrated using target 16.1, as it is currently worded, for a fictional country in the year 2020. As with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), colour coding could be used to ascertain whether a country has achieved the target (green), is on track to meeting it (orange) or unlikely to meet it (red).

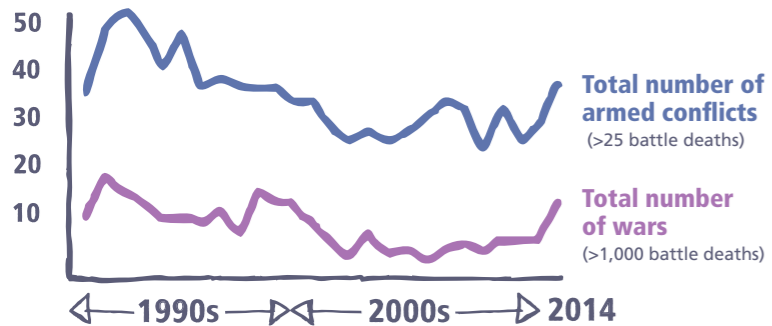
Table 1: Example country in 2020 with benchmarked indicators

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere			
Global indicators	Baseline 2015	National target 2030	Progress in 2020
Violent homicides per 100,000	12	8	8
Total conflict deaths	236	0	0
% of people who report that they feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live	42	75	48
National indicators			
Number of people per 100,000 displaced by conflict	12	0	2.3
% of people who have been violently threatened or assaulted	8	4	6.5

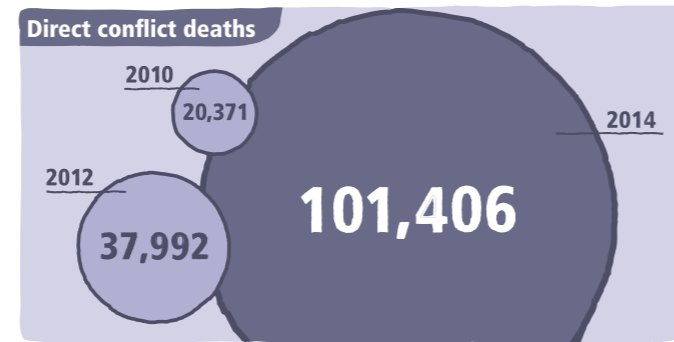
# TODAY'S WORLD...

## RECENT INCREASES IN ARMED CONFLICT ARE PUTTING LONGER-TERM ADVANCES IN GLOBAL PEACE AT RISK

Progress in reducing conflict, which peaked following the Cold War, was made in the 1990s and 2000s. However, in recent years the incidence of armed conflicts – including outright wars – has increased sharply.<sup>1</sup>



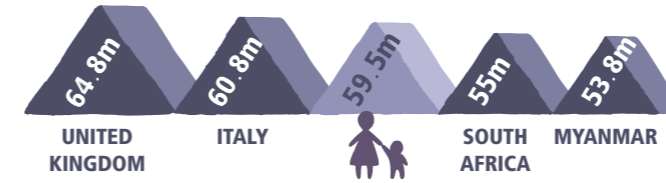
Meanwhile, the number of direct fatalities from armed conflict has risen dramatically.<sup>2</sup>



## DISPLACEMENT OF PEOPLE IS RISING AS A CONSEQUENCE OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

The number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 had risen to a staggering 59.5 million compared to 37.5 million a decade ago.<sup>3</sup> Globally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum.

If the total number of people displaced were the population of a country, it would be the world's 24th biggest.



## WIDESPREAD CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE MEANS DEVELOPMENT IN REVERSE

In 2013, half of all out-of-school children lived in countries affected by conflict, representing almost 29 million children.<sup>4</sup>

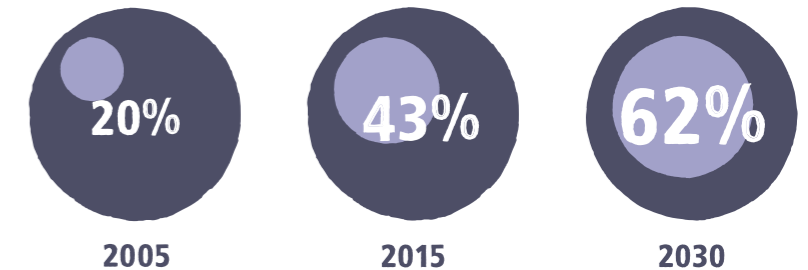


The reduction in infant mortality in conflict-affected countries is half of what it is in other countries.<sup>5</sup>



## EXTREME POVERTY WILL INCREASINGLY BE CONCENTRATED IN COUNTRIES AT RISK OF HIGH LEVELS OF CONFLICT

In 2005, 20% of the world's population living in absolute poverty resided in conflict-affected and fragile states – by 2015, this number had more than doubled to 43%. By 2030, even under the best-case scenario, 62% of the global poor will be located in conflict-affected and fragile states.<sup>6</sup>



...NEEDS PEACE



### ADDRESSING TRANSNATIONAL STRESSES THAT DRIVE CONFLICT

- 16.4** By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- 16.8** Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
- 13.1** Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

# A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT THAT ENABLES PEACE

**Implementation of the 2030 Agenda will succeed or fail at national level, but global processes will still be critical for enabling action to promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies.**

- 1. Build partnerships:** Turning commitments into action on the ground requires that the political energy generated so far is sustained and redoubled. Drawing from governments, multilateral agencies, civil society and the private sector, a global partnership that brings together supporters of peaceful, just and inclusive societies will help sustain political energy and be a source of support for champions at the national level. It should be mobilised for coordination around key processes within and outside the UN system.
- 2. Align existing global initiatives:** Existing global initiatives such as the New Deal for International Engagement in Fragile States and the Open Government Partnership should be aligned with peace-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda, with explicit linkages made between key goals and targets, in terms of implementation, reporting and data mechanisms. A global partnership could help to realise the synergies between these different initiatives under a common vision.
- 3. Enhance coherence in the UN system:** Goal 16 and other transformative aspects of the 2030 Agenda could be

used as a shared platform to bring together the development, security and human rights pillars of the UN. If the UN is to help sustain peace and prevent conflict, it must leverage the new development framework to strengthen the Peacebuilding Architecture whilst working to overcome disconnects within its system, notably between the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the Security Council, as well as between country teams and specialised agencies.

- 4. Provide context-specific support:** Depending on their national contexts, countries will start this process at different points; many will require context-specific support from the international community. Conflict-affected states, in particular, will need special and concerted attention. Some such countries have already adopted a framework to guide their efforts – the New Deal – and lessons from the pilot phase of this initiative could inform the approach taken in other contexts.
- 5. Target transnational drivers of conflict:** Not all conflict drivers can be addressed at national level. Tackling the impact of illicit financial flows, irresponsible arms transfers and organised crime will require domestic policy changes in developed countries as well as collective action at international level. Existing global initiatives, such as the UN Arms Trade Treaty, can help facilitate this action.

- 6. Facilitate learning between contexts:** There is still much to learn about best practice in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. Innovative approaches should be shared between contexts, cutting across developed, middle-income and developing countries. To enable this, it will be important to take stock of the various knowledge platforms, networks and practitioners that can offer experience and evidence to support those working for peaceful, just and inclusive societies.
- 7. Reinforce the monitoring framework:** Much-needed support should be provided to strengthen official and non-official data production capacities, as well as collaborative initiatives such as the Praia Group on Governance Statistics. Good quality and useful data on issues related to peace, justice and inclusion should be considered a public good that is central for making the 2030 Agenda a force for peace and conflict prevention throughout the world.

## PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE IMPLEMENTATION

**UNIVERSALITY** While some contexts will face larger challenges than others, all countries must strive to create more peaceful, just and inclusive societies. In addition, all countries need to reduce the risk of their own policies – foreign and domestic – impacting negatively on others in our inter-dependent world. In some cases, multi-stakeholder action at global level will be required to address transnational problems that affect people in all countries, such as irresponsible or illicit flows of finance and arms.

**PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST** The emphasis on building peaceful, just and inclusive societies is fundamental. Past efforts have often focused on strengthening the capacities of states – often at the expense of the people they are meant to serve. People must be the focus of action to sustain peace and prevent conflict: for instance, national and international security strategies should be aligned with people’s security – rather than undermining it. In addition, strong societies are required to ensure that there is healthy balance in state-society relations and that divisions within society are resolved peacefully.

**RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE STATES** This is not to deny the centrality of the state in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Effective state institutions are needed to deliver public services and create conditions for inclusive economic growth. Key institutions must also be able to uphold the rule of law and tackle impunity. At the same time, states evolve to be inclusive and effective through ensuring representation for all social groups, and by being responsive and accountable to the people they serve.



Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and

conduct wider analysis, research and surveys of local perceptions. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

**NOTES**

- 1 Petterson T, Wallenstein P (2015), 'Armed conflicts, 1946–2014', in *Journal Peace of Research* Vol 52. (4) pp 536–550.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 UNHCR (2015), 'Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase', 18 June ([www.unhcr.org/558193896.html](http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html))
- 4 UNESCO (2013), 'Half of all out-of-school children live in conflict-affected countries', *UNESCO Press*, 11 July ([www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco\\_half\\_of\\_all\\_out\\_of\\_school\\_children\\_live\\_in\\_conflict\\_affected\\_countries/#.VfA68BFVhBc](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_half_of_all_out_of_school_children_live_in_conflict_affected_countries/#.VfA68BFVhBc))
- 5 World Bank (2011), *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development* Washington DC: World Bank, p 63.
- 6 Chandy L, Gertz G (2011), 'Poverty in Numbers: The Changing State of Global Poverty from 2005 to 2015', *Global Views Policy Brief 2011-01*, The Brookings Institution, p 10; OECD (2015), 'States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions', p 9.

**PUBLICATIONS**



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