

A MOVEMENT TO

REDUCE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE EVERYWHERE

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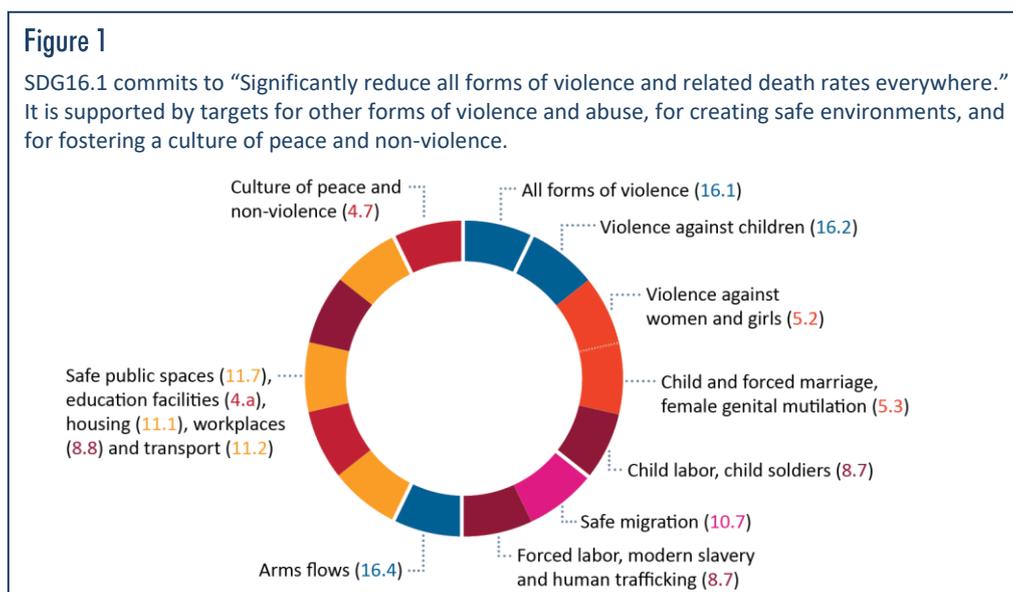
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This challenge paper has been prepared as part of the Center on International Cooperation’s support for the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. It has been prepared for discussion at the Workshop on “How can we significantly reduce all forms of violence everywhere?”, which is hosted with the Graduate Institute on International and Development Studies (Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, and the Small Arms Survey).

Violence and the 2030 Agenda

SDG16.1 makes a commitment to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.”

It is backed up by targets from SDGs 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, and 16 for ending violence against women and children, tackling specific forms of violence and abuse, creating environments that are safe for people to live in, and promoting a culture of peace and non-violence. SDG16.b underlines the importance of strengthening the institutions that are needed to prevent violence.



SDG16.1 has the potential to emerge at the forefront of the 2030 Agenda (as *halving poverty* did for the MDGs), and to be an enabler for broader progress on the SDGs:

- It places a measurable target for violence prevention and reduction at the heart of the development agenda, highlighting the threat that violence, insecurity, and injustice pose to the delivery of all 17 SDGs.
- The target addresses “all forms of violence... everywhere,” requiring comprehensive and integrated strategies that are responsive to countries and regions with different burdens of violence.
- It offers the opportunity to unite communities working on different forms of prevention, given that threats are interconnected, while most solutions will prevent multiple types of violence.¹

But SDG16.1 has been neglected in the early years of the 2030 Agenda. This must now change if the full potential of the target to drive change is to be seized in the 2020s.

Obstacles to Action

Three obstacles inhibit greater action on SDG16.1.

Advocacy focuses primarily on problems, rather than solutions. Awareness of the scale of violence is important, but without proposing solutions, awareness increases fatalism. Policymakers and publics may accept high levels of violence and insecurity, but do not believe that the underlying causes and risk factors can be addressed through collective action.² *We need to make the case that violence is a preventable epidemic.*

Resources flow to responses, rather than prevention. Some forms of violence – in particular, conflict and criminal violence – are highly visible and attract a heavy-handed response. Expenditure on military and criminal justice responses to this violence dwarfs the money available for prevention.³ Yet coercive responses are often counter-productive, creating new grievances and eroding the social inclusion that underpins effective prevention. *We need a stronger case for investment in prevention.*

There is no strategic vision for how SDG16.1 can be delivered. Targets for specific forms of violence have attracted greater attention than SDG16.1, reflecting the differences in focus of those working on the prevention and reduction of violence. Within the international system, there is no single point of ownership for ‘reducing all forms of violence everywhere’ – increasing the importance of a collective vision. Strategies are needed to scale up and finance implementation, and to expand the range of partners actively engaged in preventing violence. Effective tools are available in many sectors and success is more likely when they work together. *Partners should unite around a compelling vision for delivering significant and measurable reductions in violence by 2030.*

Opportunities to Act

Despite these obstacles, there are growing opportunities to act.

Experts agree that levels of violence can be reduced. Recent years have seen a substantial investment in understanding how to prevent violence, with an expert consensus that rapid reductions can often be achieved with sufficient commitment and resources.⁴ Attempts have also been made to translate this evidence for policymakers, for example through the UN-World Bank Pathways to Peace report on conflict prevention,⁵ the joint UN framework for preventing violence against women,⁶ the INSPIRE strategies for ending violence against children,⁷ or the renewed focus on ‘what works’ in torture prevention.⁸

There are signs of a shift to prevention. The Secretary-General has called for prevention to permeate everything the United Nations does,⁹ while the UN and World Bank are cooperating increasingly closely on prevention. WHO has found that governments are beginning to invest in the prevention of interpersonal violence (although “not on a scale that matches the burden”).¹⁰ New partnerships have recently been launched, including the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls, and Alliance 8.7 (focusing on modern slavery and child labor). In Africa, Agenda 2063 aims to “silence the guns by 2020”, while preventing violence against women and children.¹¹ Latin America’s Instinto de Vida campaign has set the challenge of halving lethal violence in ten years.¹²

SDG16.1 is here to stay. Some underestimate the power of the 2030 Agenda, but the SDGs will gain importance as they are absorbed in national, regional, and global strategies. This is especially true of a target such as SDG16.1 where awareness will inevitably grow of the gap between a lofty commitment and business-as-usual trajectories. As scenarios from the Small Arms Survey demonstrate, “the annual global number of violent deaths is predicted to increase from about 560,000 in 2016 to more than 610,000 by 2030 if current trends persist.”¹³ A significantly more negative scenario is also plausible. Given the importance of building more peaceful societies to the success of the 2030 Agenda, it is inevitable that attention will eventually focus on this target. The question is: how quickly?

The Grand Challenge

The Roadmap on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies identifies SDG16.1 as one of three 'grand challenges' where there is potential to set a policy and learning agenda, to raise ambition, and to increase political will.

To explore whether and how to take this grand challenge forward, we should:

1. Map the 'ecosystem' – convening key organizations, partnerships, and coalitions working on different forms of prevention.
2. Synthesize the evidence across the major forms of prevention and reduction, clarifying common ground and major areas of difference.
3. Identify the most promising opportunities for reducing in violence in groups of countries that experience a similar burden of violence.
4. Make a compelling and unifying case for action, demonstrating to partners why and how significant and sustained reductions in all forms of violence can be achieved.
5. Explore the potential for a 'global movement' that will turn the 2020s into a decade of successful violence prevention, with Geneva as a 'solutions hub' for this movement
6. Form a guiding coalition to design, launch and sustain the movement.

Further reading

Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: *Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies – A Call to Action to Change our World*

<http://www.cic.nyu.edu/pathfinders>

Small Arms Survey: *Global Violent Deaths 2017 – Time to Decide*

<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-Report-GVD2017.pdf>

World Health Organization: *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014*

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/145086/1/9789241564793_eng.pdf?ua=1&ua=1

University of Cambridge and World Health Organization: *Global Strategies to Reduce Violence by 50% in 30 Years*

<https://www.vrc.crim.cam.ac.uk/VRCconferences/conference/violencereductionreport>

Center on International Cooperation: *An Integrated Approach to Prevention – the links between prevention, the 2030 Agenda, and Sustaining Peace*

http://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/cic_prevention_sdgs_sp_2017.pdf

Endnotes

¹ Sarah Cliffe and David Steven (2017), *An Integrated Approach to Prevention – the links between prevention, the 2030 Agenda, and Sustaining Peace*. New York: Center on International Cooperation, available at http://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/cic_prevention_sdgs_sp_2017.pdf

² Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2012), *Communications and Technology for Violence Prevention: Workshop Summary*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, see Chapter 7, available at <https://doi.org/10.17226/13352>. <https://www.nap.edu/read/13352/chapter/7#38>

³ United Nations; World Bank (2017), *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank, available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>

⁴ Mark A. Bellis, Katie Hardcastle, Karen Hughes, Sara Wood and Joanna Nurse (2017), *Preventing Violence, Promoting Peace – A Policy Toolkit for Preventing Interpersonal, Collective and Extremist Violence*. Cardiff: The Commonwealth, available at <https://www.thecommonwealth-healthhub.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Preventing-Violence-Main-Report.pdf>

⁵ United Nations; World Bank (2017), *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank, available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>

⁶ UN Women (2015), *A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women*. New York: UN Women, available at http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/prevention_framework_unwomen_nov2015.pdf?la=en&vs=5223

⁷ WHO, CDC, End Violence Against Children, PAHO, PEPFAR, Together for Girls, UNICEF, UNODC, USAID, and World Bank (2016), *INSPIRE – Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children*. Geneva: WHO, available at <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/207717/1/9789241565356-eng.pdf?ua=1>

⁸ Association for the Prevention of Torture (2016), *“Yes, Torture Prevention Works” – Insights from a global research study on 30 years of torture prevention*. Geneva: APT, available at https://www.apr.ch/content/files_res/apr-briefing-paper_yes-torture-prevention-works.pdf

⁹ United Nations (undated), ‘The Vision of the Secretary-General on Prevention,’ available at https://www.un.int/sites/www.un.int/files/Permanent%20Missions/delegate/attachment_the_vision_of_the_sg_on_prevention.pdf

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ The African Union Commission (2015), *Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want: A Shared Strategic Framework for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development – First Ten-year Implementation Plan 2014-2023*. Addis Ababa: The African Union Commission, available at <http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063-first10yearimplementation.pdf>

¹² Igarapé Institute (2017), ‘Instinto de Vida,’ available at <https://igarape.org.br/en/issues/citizen-security/instinto-de-vida/>

¹³ Claire McEvoy and Gergely Hideg (2017), *Global Violent Deaths 2017 – Time to Decide*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, see Chapter II, available at <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-Report-GVD2017.pdf>