

How to increase the impact of SDGs for peaceful societies

Global Partnership for
the Prevention of Armed Conflict



A Network of People
Building Peace

Five years after the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), civil society engagements, and review of local implementation provide one clear message:

There is not enough progress on SDG 16 and all other related SDG targets that drive peace, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16+).

This is worrisome as delivery on SDG 16+ impacts our joint ability to achieve sustained progress on all goals. Governments, civil society and their partners need to accelerate and broaden bottom-up, people centered realisation of SDG 16+.

Major challenges

- Lack of awareness, ownership, oversight, demand and input by the broader public on SDG related policies.
- Lack of political will at all levels, which is particularly weak when looking at the 'peace goals'.
- Space for civic action is increasingly reduced. Civil society often cannot operate, organize, assemble and express itself freely or demand accountability safely.
- Inadequate and insufficient localisation of SDGs, including lack of localized indicators, plans, implementation and monitoring mechanisms, leaving out the essential views, needs, capacities and experiences of people most affected by issues at hand.
- Lack of integrated implementation, coordination and partnerships, which are essential in achieving progress on SDG 16+.

Recommendations

Governments, intergovernmental bodies and civil society must jointly

1. Foster greater political incentives and will at local, national and international levels to prioritise and jointly implement SDG 16+.
2. Support and create national, regional and international SDG 16+ coalitions that guarantee civil society's active participation. Such coalitions must advance the full participation of and respect for the rights of women and youth, promote transformative change in societies through the integration of relevant peace targets and generate more joint action.
3. Secure a people-centered approach to peace, security, justice and social, economic and political inclusion when developing, implementing and monitoring SDG-related policies and practices. This must be done through ongoing, inclusive multi-stakeholder participation and consultations that involve young people, women and minorities.
4. Raise broad awareness and build capacities about SDG16+, the SDGs in general and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process among a broader population through traditional and new channels and methods. This will create broader public ownership, oversight, actions and policy input.

Governments must

5. Use SDG 16+ as the lens through which an integrated, whole of society and government approach, priority setting and implementation of the SDGs is developed.
6. Localize the SDG agenda in a way that builds on and strengthens existing, context specific capacities for peace and existing inclusive national developmental frameworks. Only then can the SDGs effectively help to address local issues and needs and promote the necessary ownership and accountability.
7. Enter into wide, systematic and deep SDG 16+ partnerships with CSOs for policy development, implementation and monitoring, including the VNR. In the process government must ensure that CSOs are adequately resourced, informed and equipped to play these roles, for example by formally including diverse CSOs throughout the VNR process.

8. Promote transparent, accountable, representative and participatory institutions, decision making and implementation through greater meaningful civil society and community engagements.
9. Expand and protect civic space and guarantee an open and secure environment for civil society by ensuring the respect of fundamental freedoms and rights.

The United Nations (UN) and member states must

10. Ensure political and financial support for conflict prevention and peace building.
11. Scale up investment in civil society and grassroots approaches that respect their independence towards implementing the SDG16+ agenda.
12. Expand the SDG 16 indicator framework and implementation plans to include qualitative localized national and sub-national SDG indicators and milestones, developed in an inclusive and participatory manner.
13. Review SDG 16 annually and have it included in all VNRs as a mandatory requirement and provide increased structural space for civil society participation during the HLPF (including shadow reports and questions) following the example of the Universal Peer Review mechanism of the Human Rights Council.

Civil Society must

14. Co-lead in the localisation of the SDGs so that they address local priorities and strengthen capacities for peace, inclusion, and justice, involving relevant government and UN agencies in the process.
15. Improve the evidence base and better explain what works to reduce violence, build peace, strengthen governance institutions, and advance justice through the provision of alternative localised data, qualitative experiences and analysis by civil society organisations.
16. Help ensure governments and the UN are more responsive, representative, transparent and accountable through the structured involvement of people at the center of the SDG agenda.