

CIVIL SOCIETY – UN PREVENTION PLATFORM

Collective Pathways to Advance Prevention Across Sectors and Institutions

Key Findings from the 2020 Discussion Series
on Prevention

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Contributors:

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The Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform is co-facilitated by the Quaker United Nations Office and The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict in conjunction with the UN - Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and a coordinating group of the following organizations: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, Center on International Cooperation - New York University, Conciliation Resources, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Social Science Research Council, and The Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. The Platform also relies on an extensive network of global expert CSOs.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Prevention encompasses a diverse range of arrangements, approaches, and actions aimed to prevent the outbreak of violence and reinforce capacities to avert conflict and crises.¹ Through the diversity of its approaches, the current United Nations Secretary-General's vision on prevention encourages long-term commitment to sustainable development and peace, partnerships, and preventive diplomacy.²

The global demographic, technological, political, social, and economic shifts in recent years and now the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated threats on an unprecedented scale. Since 2010, the number of major violent conflicts has tripled, and a growing number of lower intensity conflicts have escalated.³ This context has been further compounded by mass migration and refugee flows (with the highest numbers of displaced peoples since WWII) and the impacts of climate change.

Such a context has encouraged the international community, including, but not limited to, Member States, the United Nations, civil society, and regional organisations, to be more creative in their individual and joint prevention efforts. It has encouraged diverse stakeholders to work cohesively and complementarily together to manage risks, build resilience, and avert the outbreak of conflict.

Against this background, the Civil Society - UN Prevention Platform facilitated a series of discussions in 2020 that brought together Member States, UN agencies, and international and local civil society. The series, entitled, *UN Prevention Across Sectors and Institutions: Pathways for Effective Prevention*, created transformative learning spaces to practically assess ongoing prevention efforts and foster candid discussions to advance prevention.

Lessons learned

As a result of joint learning, the Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform preliminarily identified six critical lessons in prevention that, when acted upon, can drive progress:

- LESSON 1:
Proactive and forward-looking multilateral leadership is critical for prevention.
- LESSON 2:
Reinforcing the role of youth in prevention changes the narrative and practice.
- LESSON 3:
Transformative gender approaches support preventive action across the conflict cycle.
- LESSON 4:
Advancing inclusive mediation results in better prevention.
- LESSON 5:
Integrating climate-sensitive analysis across sectors and institutions is essential for prevention.
- LESSON 6:
Prevention efforts should happen early, be integrated, context-specific, evidenced-based, and be sustained over time.

¹ United Nations Secretary-General, "Priorities: Prevention," Priorities: Prevention | United Nations Secretary-General.

² United Nations Secretary-General, "Vision on Prevention," 2017.

³ UN World Bank Report, "Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict (Main Messages and Emerging Policy Directions)", March 2018.

Key Findings

The following key findings emerged from the 2020 series on *UN Prevention Across Sectors and Institutions: Pathways for Effective Prevention*.

To advance proactive and forward-looking multilateral leadership on prevention, the UN and Member States should:

- Continue strengthening systematic, cross-pillar early warning data collection, analysis, and communication channels that inform action on prevention at all levels.
- Strengthen regional arrangements that provide localized support for prevention and de-escalation of violence.
- Increase dedicated personnel mandated to advance policy coherence and prevention.
- Systematize and, where possible, institutionalize community engagement at the country level through senior leadership.

To ensure meaningful engagement of youth on prevention, the UN and Member States should:

- Encourage and demonstrate by example national and institutional commitment to youth leadership, including through developing national action plans and roadmaps, and holding online consultations with youth networks.
- Create systemized and institutionalized mechanisms for meaningful participation of youth in prevention efforts, including the launch of youth ministries and youth parliaments.
- Recognize that youth are not a monolithic group and commit to understand the array of qualities, capacities, and priorities of individual groups and actors.
- Identify and operationalize strategic synergies between the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and other UN agendas.

To develop transformative gender approaches to prevention, the UN and Member States should:

- Support and uplift opportunities for women to lead in prevention at all decision-making levels and create safe spaces for women to connect, exchange and organize.
- Commit to systematic analysis of women's experiences in prevention at the early stages of crisis and create channels for this analysis to inform programming and policy priorities at all levels.
- Undertake deliberate steps to overcome a gender gap in the access to and use of technology.
- Identify and operationalize strategic synergies between the Women, Peace and Security agenda and other UN agendas.

To advance inclusive mediation to prevent recurrence of conflict, the UN and Member States should:

- Commit to approach peace processes in a multi-track, multi-stage way and encourage local level mediation.
- Engage regional organizations and sub-regional partnerships to lead mediation efforts where appropriate for the context.
- Explore opportunities to engage with digital mediation frontiers for positive messaging and mobilization of supporters during peace and mediation processes.
- Build capacities for dialogue and trust within communities.

Key Findings

To integrate climate-sensitive analysis in preventing conflict, the UN and Member States should:

- Develop robust analytical tools for understanding climate security resilience.
- Build a community of practice around climate security to accelerate prevention action on climate change.
- Incorporate local solutions, insights, and priorities in climate programming.
- Create more spaces for discussing and acting on opportunities that remain to prevent the further impact of climate change on peacebuilding and conflict.
- Leverage the human rights infrastructures and apply rights-based approaches to climate security.

To develop and design effective conflict prevention strategies, the UN and Member States should:

- Ensure that diagnostics and reliable cross-pillar data collection are at the core of upstream prevention programs; the diagnostics should highlight local, national, and (where relevant) international risk and resilience factors.
- Base data collection on academic research on violence and include local knowledge.
- Design integrated upstream prevention strategies that cut across sectors, including security, development, and human rights.
- Increase available, long-term flexible funding for prevention, which would enable joint projects to address numerous and often interconnected risk factors.
- Build capacity amongst the UN system and donors to undertake a whole of society approach to understanding the underlying drivers of violence.
- Ensure adequate protection of civil society and peacebuilders when they are directly partnering or engaging with multilateral donor prevention strategies.

ABOUT THE CIVIL SOCIETY-UN PREVENTION PLATFORM

The Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform aims to support the UN's prevention agenda through strengthening coordination and information sharing between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the UN at all levels, through close collaboration with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).

The Platform seeks to identify concrete, practical steps to enhance the UN and CSOs' collective capacity to carry out preventive work, through sharing examples of good practices, identifying areas of potential collaboration, and supporting UN efforts to bridge early warning and early action. The group considers prevention broadly as encompassing inclusive activities aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and supporting societies in preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict, at both structural and operational levels. The Platform believes that the UN's work on prevention would benefit from a systematic engagement with civil society and that the inclusion of diverse civil society expertise is crucial to achieving sustainable peace and development.