

Conflict Prevention

Why is it important:

In more than 40 countries around the world, conflict has torn through farmland, villages and cities, claiming unacceptable human casualties. Today, there are some 35 million survivors of conflict scattered throughout the world – 10 million refugees and 25 million internally displaced people. Conflict has invaded their communities, destroyed their homes and livelihoods, killed, maimed and tortured loved ones, and exposed daughters, wives and sisters to sexual violence. It leaves survivors impoverished with little hope of security or stability for the future—a long-term consequence that does not fade away quickly after the violence stops.

One of the key lessons of the past decade is that the costs of preventing violent conflict are far lower than the costs associated with recovery. Promoting prevention efforts is also important in post-conflict settings to avoid a resumption of violence within years after hostilities have ceased.



Kenya © Julius Mwelu/IRIN

UNDP's assistance includes: improving local capacities to resolve conflict through both traditional and modern mediation mechanisms; facilitating dialogues to help build consensus on divisive issues; strengthening the skills of key stakeholders for negotiation and consensus-building; ensuring higher education institutes have the ability to teach this area of work; and supporting women's networks engaged in peacebuilding activities. A strong focus on gender equality is an important part of all UNDP's programming, particularly in the area of conflict prevention, as women and girls are not only the greatest victims of violence, but also, in many cases, the strongest proponents for dialogue and peace.

What we do:

- In Ghana, UNDP supported the establishment of the National Peace Council, which brings together highly respected Ghanaians across different sectors of society to manage conflicts at the national level.
- UNDP helped Sierra Leone manage a violence-free political transition in August 2007. Assistance was provided for building the capacity of the Political Parties Registration Commission to strengthen confidence and dialogue among different levels of political party leadership. These channels were used when tensions arose between the first and second rounds of the presidential vote.
- UNDP supported women's organizations in the province of Sucumbios in the Northern Border Zone of Ecuador to identify key areas of concern to them and an action plan to address them.
- UNDP provided technical assistance to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. As a result, Pacific Island Forum Leaders agreed on 12 principles for land management and conflict prevention, and recognized land as one of the main underlying causes of conflict in the region.

How we do it:

Conflict prevention support can be provided prior to the eruption of violence, or in instances of long-term post-conflict peacebuilding. UNDP helps key sectors of society—such as the government, the media, civil society, women and youth—play constructive roles in the management of disputes. UNDP focuses on empowering national actors to carry out their own conflict management efforts—helping countries develop lasting skills to manage competing interests.

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