

FAST FACTS

United Nations Development Programme



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Conflict Prevention

War, violence and high levels of crime affect over 1.5 billion people around the world; destroying communities; disrupting social cohesion; imposing economic burdens on countries that can ill afford them and extinguishing any hope of eliminating poverty for millions of people. More than 526,000 people die each year as a result of violent conflict - just over one per minute.

UNDP's approach

Preventing conflict and violence allows communities to develop, prosper and achieve sustainable peace.

UNDP works to build resilient societies with the capacity to promote tolerance and dialogue; where processes exist for the peaceful mediation of differences; where a widely accepted social contract ensures trust between the state and society; and where patterns of inclusiveness and participation contribute to sustainable human development.

Lasting peace requires that communities in countries prone to conflict possess their own skills, forums and institutions to work together across political and sectarian lines. UNDP works to support countries to strengthen national capacity for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts; providing training and advice to national and local institutions and leaders, so they can manage conflicts constructively and engage peacefully in political transitions, through such activities as:

- Supporting the development of national and local conflict early warning and response systems to address recurring violence, and ensure peace during moments of high stress, such as elections;
- Building the conflict management capacity of key national institutions so that they can mediate conflict around contested issues and resolve specific disputes without the need for external mediation;
- Training national and local mediators and facilitators to serve as intermediaries that build the community's trust in institutions, improve relationships and facilitate collaboration and coordination among polarized groups and sectors; and
- Establishing and convening formal and informal opportunities for dialogue to address specific conflicts, and build consensus around constitutional or governance reforms.

Prevention is cheaper than cure. The cost of measures to promote dialogue and peaceful mediation in a country in order to prevent conflict is, on average, just 10 per cent of the cost of recovery after a civil war.

Innovative solutions are built into this approach. For instance, increasing the level of community access to new technologies has been shown to improve participation and rapid information sharing so that societies facing conflict may map, analyse and predict where violence is more likely to occur.

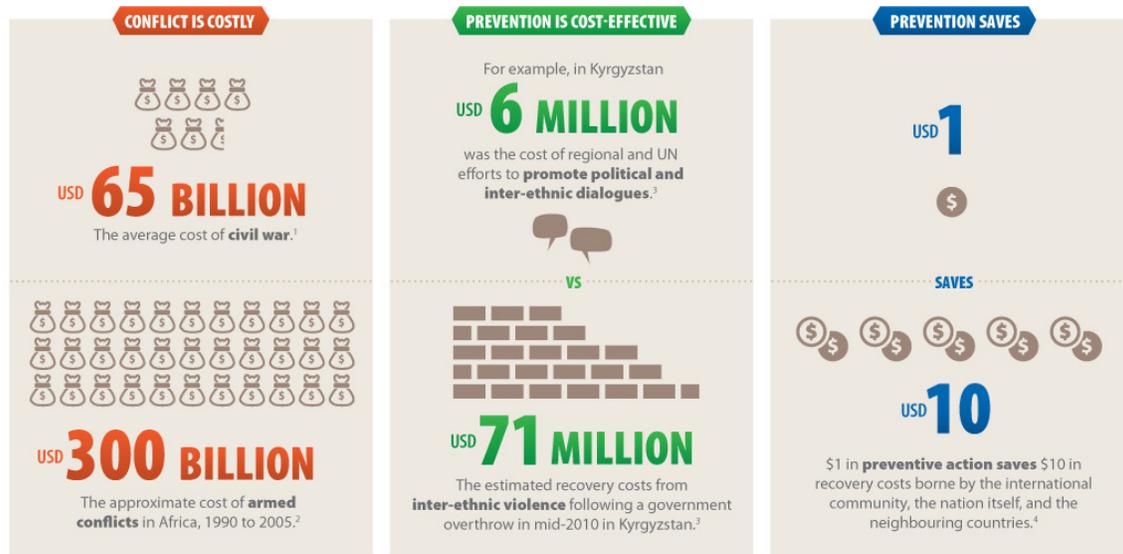
Trusted and respected locals have been particularly successful in promoting peace and conducting formal and informal mediation. UNDP takes advantage of the local standing and respect that these individuals hold, training them as "insider mediators" to resolve tensions and promote dialogue.

Efforts to prevent conflict are closely linked to other aspects of UNDP's work in crisis affected countries, such as efforts to support government institutions in conflict-affected countries, reintegrate and provide livelihoods for former combatants, and support efforts to improve the level of community security.



A young Kenyan pledges to support peace. Photo by UNDP Kenya

INVESTING IN CONFLICT PREVENTION PAYS OFF



¹ World Bank, World Development Report 2011 http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INT/WDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf

² Oxfam/ IANSA/ Saferworld, Africa's mission billions: international arms flows and the cost of conflict <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/africas%20missing%20bills.pdf>

³ UNDP

⁴ Chalmers, Malcolm (2007), "Spending to Save? The cost-effectiveness of conflict prevention", Defence and Peace Economics, Volume 18, Number 1, pp. 1 – 23

UNDP in action

In **Ghana**, UNDP support to the National Peace Council helped to ensure a peaceful presidential election in December 2012. UNDP helped facilitate meetings and mediation between opposing parties to mitigate tension and hostility.

Following **Tunisia's** 2011 transition to democracy, UNDP supports the constituent assembly, electoral commission, and security and justice sectors (including transitional justice) to ensure their legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness, as well as to help implement necessary reforms. Political inclusiveness is key to conflict prevention. For example, in late 2012 and early 2013, dialogue sessions on the second draft of the constitution, facilitated through UNDP, helped more than 3,000 citizens and representatives from civil society meet their elected representatives, debate, and provide inputs to the draft document. Other measures to promote political inclusiveness include working with civil society to involve more women in the political process. UNDP is also working with a range of partners in Tunisia to improve livelihoods and address regional socio-economic disparities, particularly in disadvantaged rural areas.

Insider mediators played a crucial role in **Lesotho** in 2012, when the country - for the first time in its history, saw a peaceful political transition as a civilian government willingly handing over power to its opposition. In the past, external mediation efforts have failed, due in part, to insufficient local ownership. Insider mediators encouraged local ownership of the process and the disputing parties committed to peace.

Nigeria's Plateau State, known for recurring inter-community violence, benefited from UNDP-supported conflict early-warning-and-response efforts, which helped civil society and the police to work together so that the country remained peaceful following national elections in April, 2012.

In 2010, **Kenya**, a country with a history of election bloodshed, defied expectations by holding a constitutional referendum without a single incidence of violence. UNDP trained police, peace councils, the government and civil society in how to use new technology to identify potential violent hot spots, and act, through improved security or mediation, to defuse local conflicts. This prevention effort identified and pre-empted nearly 150 incidents of violence, and helped political parties reach consensus on the draft constitution before the vote. The system is now in place for the elections planned for March 2013.

In **Fiji** in recent years, UNDP-facilitated high-level negotiations have brought together the government and civic leadership to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the country's political impasse. By early 2012, public emergency regulations were being lifted by the government as a result, and electoral reform was in the pipeline for the first time since the military takeover in 2006. In June 2012, voter registration officially started in Suva for elections that the government says will be held in 2014.

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