

Thematic Headlines - 2018

1. Addressing Inequality as Prevention

Widening social and economic inequality between countries, as well as between demographic groups within countries, are currently seen as critical drivers of political disaffection, violence and migration. Unequal opportunities and disparities in access to institutions or protections from harm can transform into grievances and destabilize communities. Growing evidence of how inequality can lead to violence has spurred new attention for addressing inequality as a way to help prevent violent conflict. The recent *Sustaining Peace Agenda* of the UN, as well as the *Pathways for Peace* joint study by the UN and the World Bank, and numerous initiatives catalyzed by the Sustainable Development Goals all seek to galvanize action for reducing inequality across myriad fronts.

When it comes to preventing violence, inequality is not limited merely to economic or class disparity. Inequality is not determined by GINI coefficients alone. Addressing unequal structures of power and grievances that stem from systemic social inequality can be essential in preventing the outbreak of violent conflict. But more can be done to demonstrate how: rather than asking ‘what does prevention look like in practice?’, this headline poses the question, ‘what does addressing inequality look like in practice, and how does that contribute to preventing violence conflict?’

Examples of issues to investigate might include the impact of power relations on experiences of security, and justice, and their provision; how promoting gender parity could benefit sustainable peace efforts; whether and how including minority groups’ participation in peacebuilding, transitional justice or constitution building lowers the recurrence of violence; or how to fit perceptions of inequality into conflict sensitive programming in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS). Against this backdrop, this theme asks what social, legal, political and economic inequalities are driving conflict, and what are the best ways to transform them, build peace, and prevent violence.

2. Moving the Needle on Goal 16.3 of the SDGs

Sustainable Development Goal 16.3 seeks to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all. Making certain that people are able to access legal protections, impartial settlements, and redress is essential to building a society in which people feel their rights are recognized and will be defended. In this way, access to justice is the foundation of empowerment, both a goal in and of itself and an enabler for the other goals.

As the High-Level Political Forum of 2019 approaches, the international community must improve its understanding of the ways in which access to justice contributes to building peaceful and inclusive societies. Currently, focus primarily remains on the establishment of justice institutions. However, it is also important to investigate the variety of ways in which people seek recognition, safeguards, reconciliation, just arbitration and amends. Especially in fragile and conflict affected settings, access to justice means more than the affordability of a lawyer or the proximity of a courthouse (though these are important). It also means enabling individuals and groups to have their grievances addressed through trusted systems, and preventing disputes from devolving into violence. In this way it is also important to see the role access to justice plays in strengthening and maintaining social cohesion. This means understanding, from a *people-centered perspective*, how just outcomes can best be pursued, addressing not only economic or institutional barriers, but also barriers of trust between authorities and populations.

This Knowledge Management Fund Headline will designate a space for proposals that seize upon opportunities to move the needle on Goal 16.3, in particular ensuring equal access to just outcomes, addressing issues of marginalization, and building respect, recognition and trust within societies.

3. Change and Learning Processes

This theme explores how people, organizations and institutions working on SRoL learn and why situations, practices and behaviors really change – for better or worse. Specifically, this theme will help elucidate how to translate research findings and lessons into better programming and policy. Example areas for investigation might be (but are not limited to): what really nudges behavioral change (at all levels) and how can this improve the quality of SRoL work; how can accountability and oversight mechanisms better induce positive change processes; and how can interventions hope to reshape institutional practices or shift cultural norms in ways that are meaningful, sensitive and sustainable?