



UNICEF and Sustaining Peace

*Strengthening the Socio-Economic Foundations of Peace
through Education, Young People's Engagement & WASH*

UNICEF Thematic Paper Contribution
United Nations Secretary-General's
2020 Peacebuilding & Sustaining Peace Report

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Peacebuilding & Sustaining Peace Report

Note

The evidence for this thematic paper is drawn from several sources: UNICEF's annual country office reporting for 2018; an internal mapping and evidence-gathering exercise (2018-2019); recent UNICEF reports on water and sanitation in protracted crises; and data from two formal evaluations of UNICEF's programmes: on education for peace (2012-2016, updated by recent data) and its support to young people in peacebuilding (2020).

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Executive Summary

This paper makes the case for strengthening international focus on the socio-economic dimensions of sustaining peace. It demonstrates how UNICEF working through its equity and inclusion agenda has made substantive, at scale and innovative contributions along these dimensions of sustaining peace. This paper outlines UNICEF's approach to Sustaining Peace, highlighting its recent progress in institutionalizing the agenda and showcasing its global efforts to leverage at-scale, child- and youth-centered programming for peacebuilding impact.

The paper looks specifically at three areas along the where UNICEF has made significant investments and progress in supporting lasting and sustainable peace: 1) the role of education for peace; 2) young people's inclusion and participation; and 3) the multiple contributions of social service delivery—in particular water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)—to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Institutionalizing the Sustaining Peace agenda:

- Since 2018, UNICEF's *Strategic Plan 2018–2021* commits the organization to implementing a multi-risk approach to the prevention of crises and conflict, especially by focusing on the causes and consequences of violent conflict and their linkages to economic crises, disasters and climate change. The Plan for the first time tracks specific global targets on UNICEF's support to peaceful and inclusive societies. (Section 1)
- Since 2018, UNICEF has developed new resources, tools and partnerships on fragility and peacebuilding (Section 1) further articulating its approach and strengthen its ability to deliver effective conflict sensitive and peacebuilding programming at country-level.
- In May 2019, UNICEF's Executive Director issued a corporate directive *requiring* all Country Offices operating in fragile and conflict-affected settings to conduct regular conflict analyses, ensure that all UNICEF's programmes are conflict sensitive and to identify and seize opportunities to explicitly contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion.

Recent Programmatic Results (2018-2019):

- **Global results.** At scale impact was achieved by working through education systems, promoting young people's agency and strengthening inclusive access to basic social services. In 2019, 59 out of 128 UNICEF Country Offices had already established specific objectives in their programmes, strategies and annual work plans aimed at promoting peacebuilding and strengthening social cohesion.

- **Sustaining Peace through Education.** UNICEF is one of the largest actors supporting equitable and inclusive education. It has continued to leverage its at scale engagement with education systems to strengthen social cohesion and peace. *12 million* children were reached in 2018 with support to equitable and inclusive education—*6.9 million* in fragile settings and emergency situations. (Section 2)
- **Sustaining Peace by Supporting Young People.** UNICEF has stepped up its efforts to support young people's agency as peacebuilders. Almost *6 million* adolescents and youth across *102 countries* participated in or led civic engagement initiatives supported by UNICEF—*500,000* participated in peacebuilding programmes in conflict-affected and fragile settings. (Section 3)
- **Sustaining Peace by Strengthening Water and Sanitation Systems in Crisis.** UNICEF is at the forefront of global efforts to strengthen vertical and horizontal social cohesion through service delivery—more recently pioneering the role of WASH services in peacebuilding. In 2019, UNICEF and coalition of partners launched the global *Water under Fire* campaign to draw global attention on the key role of WASH can play in prevention. (Section 4)

Key messages

The UN has a critical role to play in supporting national and local efforts across the socio-economic dimensions of sustaining peace. To do so effectively, however, it must step up its efforts and ambition (beyond boutique, short-term interventions) to build endogenous capacities to sustain peace:

- Responding to the current global education crisis (Section 2) presents an opportunity for rethinking the role of education systems as vital institutions in building resilience and peace. Beyond expanding access, more investments are needed to harness the transformative role of equitable, relevant and conflict-sensitive education systems as social pathways for sustaining peace.
- Transforming social systems that are not functioning for and sideline young people is a key sustaining peace priority. Yet, robust support to meaningful participation of young people of all ages, continuing throughout the life cycle and at scale across social spheres continues as a major challenge.
- Inclusive, equitable and participatory social service delivery, as demonstrated by the WASH and education sectors, is a key yet largely untapped platform for sustaining peace.

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Section 1: UNICEF & Sustaining Peace – An Overview

Working across the socio-economic dimensions of peacebuilding and sustaining peace

A growing body of evidence has shown that patterns of inequality, discrimination and exclusion are at the centre of the social and political grievances driving many of today's conflicts.ⁱ Even as extreme deprivations are declining, new forms of inequalities are emerging, which straining social cohesion and the ability of societies to build and sustain peace.ⁱⁱ It is now widely recognized that preventing, managing and recovering from conflict requires developing national and local capacities at different levels to forge 'peaceful, just and inclusive' societies, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.

While peacebuilding interventions have traditionally focused on high-level political, state-building processes or security sector interventionsⁱⁱⁱ, the Sustaining Peace agenda has emphasized the importance of fostering bottom-up and system-wide prevention and peacebuilding approaches that address the underlying causes of conflict. The focus on marginalization and exclusion has specifically placed a spotlight on the need to address social grievances that emerge from persistent patterns of group-based inequality and discrimination for conflict prevention—as comprehensively showcased in the 2018 UN-WB *Pathways for Peace* report. It has also brought into sharp relief the need to scale up support to the endogenous capacities of societies to build and sustain peace.^{iv} As one of the largest operational United Nations agencies present before, during and after violent conflict, UNICEF has been at the forefront of strengthening these socio-economic dimensions of sustaining peace.^v

This paper highlights how UNICEF has used its equity-focused child rights-based approach to address the root drivers of conflict and strengthen local and national and local capacities for peace. The paper provides an overview of three key areas along the socio-economic dimensions of sustaining peace where UNICEF's has been making demonstrable progress in: 1) harnessing the potential of education systems for resilience and peace; 2) promoting young people's agency as actors in peacebuilding; and 3) addressing conflict drivers associated with the inequitable distribution of resources and basic services in the WASH sector.

In addition to demonstrating UNICEF's concrete contributions to sustain peace, the paper makes a for the need to redouble commitment to the United Nation's commitment to foster sustaining peace through socio-economic interventions that build the broad-based foundations for more resilient, peaceful and inclusive societies.

UNICEF's child-centered equity approach to Sustaining Peace

Currently, 420 million children – nearly one in five—live in areas affected by armed conflict and fragility, with severe and lasting impacts on their rights, well-being and development.^{vi} Without action, it is expected that by 2030, the number of children living in countries affected by some form of conflict or fragility will increase by 80 per cent.^{vii} The prospects of these children will ultimately determine the long-term ability of societies and the international community to stop recurring cycles of conflict and to build and sustain legacies of peace.

The ability of societies to build and sustain peace is therefore closely interlinked with their realization of children's rights everywhere. Across its humanitarian and development programmes, UNICEF has deliberately sought to harness the potential of child-centered social service delivery system and child, adolescent and youth agency to build and sustain peace. To advance this goal, UNICEF's peacebuilding programmes seek to make contributions across three interlinked areas^{viii}:

- At the **policy and institutional level** to build vertical social cohesion and improve relations between State and society in both national and local contexts;
- At the **community level** to strengthen horizontal social cohesion and relationships within and among groups; and
- At the **level of individuals** to build their capacities and contributions to anticipate, manage, mitigate, resolve and transform violent conflict, be resilient to its impact and engage in inclusive social change processes.

These contributions are focused on strengthening "bottom-up" relationships and peace capacities as well as transforming local incentives for violence associated with marginalization and exclusion. As such, they serve to build the social foundations of peace that are needed as complements to high-level political and state-building processes (whether the negotiation of peace agreements, rule of law and security sector reform).

UNICEF's progress in institutionalizing Sustaining Peace

UNICEF's commitment to sustaining peace is reflected in Goal Area 4 of its *Strategic Plan 2018–2021*, which specifically states that UNICEF will work with partners to support peacebuilding policies and programmes. The Plan commits the organization to implementing a multi-risk approach to the prevention of crises and conflict, especially by focusing on the causes and consequences of violent conflict and their linkages to economic crises, disasters and climate change. The Plan for the first time includes global targets and indicators on UNICEF's support to peaceful and inclusive societies.

Section 2: Sustaining Peace through Education

Historically, UNICEF has been among the three largest implementers of UN Peacebuilding Fund projects—with a portfolio heavily focused on initiatives in the areas of education and peacebuilding, youth empowerment and child protection (including supporting children associated with armed forces).^{ix}

UNICEF has more recently taken steps to better institutionalize the Sustaining Peace agenda and a linking humanitarian, development and peace approach throughout its field offices. In 2019, UNICEF's Executive Director issued a corporate directive (called a Procedure) on linking UNICEF's humanitarian and development programmes, which requires^x that in “settings affected by conflict, fragility or major challenges to social cohesion,” UNICEF design and implement conflict-sensitive strategies and programmes, backed by a robust conflict analyses, as a minimum requirement, and that it must actively seek opportunities to address the root causes of conflict through peacebuilding approaches.

Over the last two years, UNICEF has developed and updated a global package of tools and guidance to better support its field offices deploying and integrating conflict sensitive and peacebuilding programming approaches. Since 2018, UNICEF has developed a specific [programme framework for operating in fragile contexts](#) (2018) and an updated package of resources to support [conflict](#) and [risk analysis](#) (2020) and [conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding programming](#) (2020). These tools better reflect the interlinkages between climate, peace and security.

In the period of 2018-2020, UNICEF has continued to play an active role as a member of the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, Strategic Peacebuilding Group, and the UN-WB Partnership in Crisis-Affected Situations.

UNICEF has also recently diversified and expanded its partnerships at the global for Sustaining Peace. To better understand its added value and contributions as a peacebuilding partner, UNICEF has partnered with Interpeace to conduct a global *Evaluative Review* of its multi-sectoral contributions to peacebuilding across its 7 regions.

In recognition of UNICEF's strong support to advancing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, and to improve its ability to partner with young people on peacebuilding, UNICEF commissioned and recently completed a *Formative Evaluation* on its support to young people in peacebuilding (2020). The recent findings will help shape the organization's strategy going forward.

Global results:

- Between 2016-2018, UNICEF helped more than **34 million out-of school children** to gain equitable access to educational programmes, with **2 million children** participating specifically in skills development programmes.
- In 2018 alone, a total of **12 million** children were reached with educational support, with **6.9 million** of them reached in fragile settings and emergency situations.
- An internal mapping of UNICEF programming showed that in 2019 **60 distinct education initiatives** were implemented by UNICEF Country Offices in conflict-affected settings were deliberately aiming to build peace and social cohesion.

Education's role in building and sustaining peace

Education is a basic right and is arguably the single most transformative social institution in the lives of children and youth. It is also deeply bound up with the ability of societies to build and sustain peace. Education systems have “two faces” which can either cause and exacerbate conflict and fragility or strengthen the ability of societies to transform conflict and sustain peace.^{xi}

Research has shown that rising inequalities in education increase the likelihood of conflict, which in turn exacerbates education inequality – creating a dangerous cycle. In fact, countries are 2.5 times more likely to experience violent conflict when educational inequities are high, compared to those with low educational inequities.^{xii} Beyond inequitable access, education systems at all levels can exacerbate or sow the seeds of conflict by promoting divisive and discriminatory policies, curricula and pedagogies, or even by engaging in decision-making processes perceived as exclusionary, corrupt or unaccountable.^{xiii}

Even as extreme deprivations have decreased globally, deep inequalities across education systems now threaten to pose challenges to social cohesion and peace in many contexts.^{xiv} In fact, it is now estimated that without action by 2030, 825 million young people will not have basic secondary-level skills, while millions more will never have an opportunity to attend any form of schooling. Increasingly, young people are calling for an overhaul of ineffective education systems that are contributing to the socio-economic fragmentation of their societies and failing to deliver on their promise. Indeed, as the *Missing Peace* progress study makes clear, for young people education systems are seen as

a fundamental peace and security matter—a key engine in shaping their futures and that of their societies.^{xv}

The global education crisis, driven by horizontal inequalities, marginalization and limited state capacity to deliver equitable and inclusive social services is most pronounced in countries affected by fragility. In these settings, there are currently more non-learners in schools than out of schools. These children do not acquire basic literacy and numeracy competencies.^{xvi} It is in these settings where the impacts of unequal access to quality education and divisive curricula can have a particularly damaging effect.

Yet, as a large body of evidence demonstrates, equitable and inclusive education can play a critical role in building social cohesion and peace. Quality education systems can act as accelerators of equality and social mobility and are places where individuals acquire the habits and skills vital to their participation and employment.

Indeed, evidence shows that countries which offer increased education, livelihood, opportunities for political engagement, social mobility and employment tend to experience less violence.^{xvii} At the same time, in conflict-affected and fragile settings—where they are most needed—conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding education programmes have been demonstrated to have a marked impact on strengthening social cohesion, bolstering community resilience and fostering reconciliation.^{xviii}

UNICEF's approach and progress on promoting education for peace and resilience

UNICEF is one of the largest implementers of equitable and inclusive education programming globally and acts as a provider-of-last-resort for education services in fragile and crisis-affected countries.

UNICEF's evolving focus on programmes on conflict sensitive education and peacebuilding over the past 13 years began with UNICEF's Education in Emergencies and Post- Conflict Transition Programme (EiE PCT). It significantly accelerated under UNICEF global **Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme** (PBEA).

Between 2012-2016, through the **PBEA programme**, UNICEF spearheaded the development of an integrated approach that paired a focus on equitable access to education as a service and the transformative potential of peacebuilding interventions and content. Implemented in 14 fragile and conflict-affected countries and achieved significant results in strengthening human security, social cohesion and resilience.

The programme's novelty was to address the root causes of conflict through a holistic engagement across education systems, from education policies and

institutions (national policies, sector governance) to teaching practices (curricular development, pedagogies and student participation).

In total, about 2 million national and sub-national policies have been influenced in this process and close to 180,000 institutions were reached through training, technical assistance and outreach initiatives, successfully enhancing vertical cohesion. The programme also reached some 4 million individuals – from young children to community elders and government officials – and broadened access to education to approximately 3 million children, adolescents and youth by strengthening horizontal cohesion.^{xix} The programme's strategy, its evidence and resources, continue to guide UNICEF's approach to education for peacebuilding.

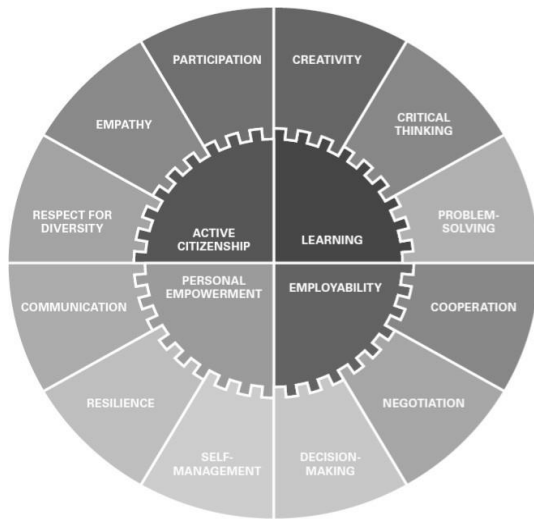
UNICEF's continued emphasis on conflict sensitive education and its role in peacebuilding and sustaining peace is now integrated in the organization's most recent **strategies and policies**:

- **UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 under Goal Area 2 ("every child learns")** emphasizes the importance of access to education as a driver of peaceful and inclusive societies.
- **UNICEF's Global Education Strategy for 2019-2030** commits UNICEF to respond to the current global learning crisis by expanding access to quality education, particularly by reaching more students through diverse "education pathways" and has a strong focus on developing both foundational and transferrable and digital skills. The focus on equity and skills is meant to support the role of education in building and sustaining peace.

Transferrable and life skills programming *has served as the foundation of all UNICEF's peacebuilding interventions* with children, adolescents and youth. (see figure 1) These skills are meant to enable young people to contribute to their communities and societies by learning how to navigate challenges using problem-solving, empathy, communication, participation, peacebuilding, emotional and mental well-being.

At the same time, the Strategy also prioritizes risk informed planning that is conflict sensitive—with its Education in Emergencies (EiE) interventions oriented around attentiveness to conflict dynamics and opportunities for building social cohesion and peace within the humanitarian response.

Figure 1 – UNICEF's - Twelve core life skills¹



- **Strengthening global partnerships:** Since 2016, UNICEF supported large-scale global funding mechanisms for equitable education services in humanitarian situations through the Education Cannot Wait global partnership (ECW). ECW has continued to yield results in fostering equity and inclusion in fragile and conflict-affected settings.
- UNICEF has continued to act as a catalyst for integrating conflict sensitive and peacebuilding approaches into the Education Sector plans of UN Member States, particularly those supported by Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

Spotlight on country-level impact through education for peace:

- In 2018, in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, 12,374 teachers (33% women) were trained in Education in Emergencies (EiE) modules, which included core components on peacebuilding education to contribute to resilience in emergency settings. This intervention has reached more than 680,000 pupils. This work has been complemented by supporting child and adolescent participation as part of in-school peace clubs. These teacher-facilitated and student-run clubs engage children and adolescents between 6 and 12 years old to implement peacebuilding initiatives for their schools. So far, the initiative has engaged 1,600 children in 34 peace clubs in conflict-affected areas.
- In **Colombia** the *Escuelas en Paz* initiative (running since 2017) has been working specifically conflict-affected, rural areas to

support schools as platforms for peacebuilding and reconciliation. Already engaging 26 schools, the initiative teaches students non-violent conflict resolution, empathy and critical thinking skill and supports student-led peacebuilding initiatives through arts, music and sports. Currently, UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education to integrate peacebuilding into the country's education strategy and mainstream peacebuilding into the national curriculum.

- In **Mali**, UNICEF since 2018 UNICEF has engaged 2,186 "back to school ambassadors" who directly helped enroll 22,025 children and return 9,324 others to school to expand access to education. At the same time, UNICEF has also engaged 2,500 adolescents and youth, both inside schools as "youth peace ambassadors" who are building social cohesion and fostering national reconciliation by organizing advocacy events, inter-communal dialogues, radio listening clubs and sports, art and cultural activities to support local social cohesion and using social media to voice their views on the recent peace agreement.

Key messages on education for peace

The following are key messages on the role of education and peace, based on UNICEF's recent engagement and experience:

- Given its transformative potential and foundational role for peacebuilding – and the current global learning crisis, **education should be elevated as a global priority for building and sustaining peace**. In particular at scale investments are needed in conflict sensitive, education for peace approaches and programming in conflict-affected and fragile settings.
- **A gap in support to education for peace approaches needs to be addressed, especially in conflict-affected and fragile settings**. The education sector still receives less than 3% of humanitarian funding, and these Education in Emergencies (EiE) interventions are currently have only a limited focus on peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity focus. With conflicts currently driving 80% of humanitarian needs, this is a key gap in advancing humanitarian efforts and a missed opportunity to use peacebuilding as a concrete entry-point for working along the HDP nexus for sustaining peace.
- **It is imperative to ground approaches to education for peace in child and human rights – especially in light of recent encroachment by the "C/PVE" agenda.**^{xx}

A number of actors have recently developed strategies and approaches that seek to expand engagement with education systems and institutions as a response to "radicalization", to "counter terrorism" and to prevent "violent extremism." These approaches—often designed through a security lens—are threatening to instrumentalise the role of education, stigmatize individuals and communities and undermine its potential to contribute to social cohesion and sustaining peace. It is urgent to advocate against the instrumentalization of education systems for narrow security purposes. Instead, the UN should promote a conflict sensitive approach to education and firmly grounding its peacebuilding potential in the realization of child and human rights.

Section 3: Sustaining Peace by Engaging Adolescents & Youth

Global results:

- To foster young people's inclusion and agency close to **6 million adolescents and youth across 102 countries** were supported by UNICEF programmes to participate in or lead their own civic engagement initiatives in 2018.
- Of these, approximately **500,000 were adolescents and youth** were directly engaged in UNICEF peacebuilding programmes in conflict-affected and fragile settings.^{xxi}

Recent trends in the global youth, peace and security agenda

Large policy shifts over the past few years (UNSCR 2250/2419 and the Sustaining Peace Resolutions), backed by a growing body of evidence have emphasized the important role that young people play in promoting peace in their communities and societies.^{xxii} These developments have led the United Nations to increasingly adopt a stronger focus on supporting the positive contributions of young people, especially by enhancing the participation of young peacebuilders and youth organizations in peace and political processes.^{xxiii} This new focus represents a welcome shift from earlier "policy panics" that adopted untenably narrow focus on responding to the threats posed by youth unemployment.^{xxiv} Yet young people can play a diversity of roles in their communities and societies at different levels—extending across not only the political and economic spheres, but social and cultural ones. And rarely has United Nations programming succeeded in adopting long-term and coherent approaches to promoting young people's agency at scale and across these spheres.^{xxv}

United Nations and Member State peacebuilding programmes and strategies in this respect therefore still remain highly specialized and fragmented in their engagement with youth constituencies and, on the whole, are still focused on creating short-term opportunities for engagement.^{xxvi}

A holistic and at scale approach to supporting young people's transformational role as agents of peace requires at least two components: 1) developing at scale approaches for fostering the foundational skills young people need to exercise their agency and contribute to peace and coexistence *across all social spheres*; and 2) long-term and coherent approaches to transform the structures and systems that exclude and marginalize them, limit their participation and sideline their peacebuilding contributions.^{xxvii}

The growing visibility at the global level of young people's participation in peacebuilding comes at a time when civic space has been shrinking. It is a time when young people, including youth organizations and human rights activists, have experienced growing restrictions on their freedom of expression and have faced increasing imprisonment, injury and other forms of harm.^{xxviii} Efforts to support young people's agency as peacebuilders must now go hand-in-hand with concerted advocacy and programmatic attention aimed at protecting their rights and persons. Of urgent concern in this respect is the recent expansion of the counter-terrorism/prevention of "violent extremism"^{xxix} discourse and policy that threatens to stigmatize young people and has in some cases been used as a pretext to erode their rights under the CRC and other human rights instruments. At the same time, when these approaches proactively solicit the participation of young people, there is serious risk that they instrumentalize young people's agency as peacebuilders and narrow the scope of their engagement toward a limited set of pre-defined security goals.^{xxx}

In this context, it is also imperative to ensure that the needs of adolescents and young people associated with armed groups receive the support and protection afforded to them under conventions related to child rights and humanitarian principles. In particular, child-rights based release and reintegration approaches should aim at helping adolescents and youth recover after experiences of violence and to become accepted, contributing members of society. These approaches start with protection efforts that prevent recruitment, help adolescents and youth in exiting armed groups, promote repatriation where relevant, and advance reintegration into families and communities where possible.^{xxxi} It is crucial that investments continue in long-term, holistic and participatory approaches to child release and reintegration that put the best interest of children and youth at the center.^{xxxii}

UNICEF’s progress in strengthening its support for adolescents and youth as peacebuilders

UNICEF’s support to adolescents and youth in peacebuilding is a core pillar of its contributions to sustaining peace and is firmly rooted in its goal to build peace through a child-centered focus on social equity and inclusion. UNICEF’s support to young people in peacebuilding is second only in project volume to its support to education for peace. It is currently the largest area of UNICEF’s thematic funding by the Peacebuilding Fund.

UNICEF’s increased focus on adolescent and youth in peacebuilding comes at a moment when it has prioritized its overall programmatic focus on the second decade of life. Adolescents and youth are now a priority in UNICEF’s current *Strategic Plan 2018-2021 under Goal Area 5*. This commitment has been operationalized throughout the organization through the development of UNICEF’s [Programming Guidance on the Second Decade \(2018\)](#). New guidance and tools have also been developed to advance the role of young people as agents of change and peacebuilders. This includes a comprehensive approach in supporting [young people’s life skills](#) and [meaningful participation](#) – including as peacebuilders and across [conflict-affected and humanitarian contexts](#).^{xxxii}

In an effort to strengthen the HDP nexus, UNICEF and the Norwegian Refugee Council in collaboration with other partners have developed the *Inter-Agency Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian Emergencies and Protracted Crises* (to be endorsed by the IASC). These guidelines have dedicated sections on Sustaining Peace and aim to strengthen the ability of UN entities and humanitarian actors to better foster the meaningful participation of young people across the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, build resilience and social cohesion.

Key Findings from UNICEF’s Formative Evaluation (2020) on its support to young people in peacebuilding:

In recognition of the key role that UNICEF plays in supporting young people in peacebuilding, in 2018, UNICEF’s Executive Director commissioned a *Global Formative Evaluation on UNICEF’s programmes supporting young people in peacebuilding*.

The Evaluation, the first of its kind, covered 29 initiatives in 20 Country Offices over the period of 2018-2019. It also included three field visits and country case studies in Burundi, BARMM in the Philippines and Guinea-Bissau. The findings of the evaluation along with a formal management response Q1 2020 are set to provide guidance on how UNICEF will continue to expand this area of work.

The Evaluation found that UNICEF’s peacebuilding programmes engaging young people are “making tangible contributions to peacebuilding outcomes” and effective at responding to the root causes of conflict and peacebuilding challenges affecting young people.^{xxxiv} In particular, the Evaluation noted that among UN partners working in support to young people in peacebuilding, UNICEF typically has a *comparative value* in the following areas:

- Ability to support at scale and highly relevant peacebuilding skills development programmes for adolescents and youth (10-18).
- Ability to engage “hard to reach” young people in conflict-affected and fragile settings.
- Ability support adolescent-led initiatives that have peacebuilding primarily at the local level.
- Ability to integrate communications methods (ICT, radio, art, theatre, social media) and social and behavioural approaches to promote relevant venues for youth-led participation and influence in at the community level
- Ability to foster trust-based engagement with local communities and government partners.
- Ability to plan and launch programmes at critical times in fast moving contexts, while working across the HDP nexus.

The Evaluation explored a range of UNICEF peacebuilding programmes engaging young people: from those supporting local school and community peace clubs and youth-led radio programmes to those supporting intergenerational dialogue, integrating peacebuilding competencies in school curricula and facilitating young people’s participation in local governance as well as national and local peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

The Evaluation found that UNICEF’s programmes engaging young people in peacebuilding were frequently built around two pillars:

- 1) Developing adolescent and youth **peace-building relevant skills** across different age groups;
- 2) Supporting **spaces and platforms** for adolescent and youth agency and influence, particularly at the local level.

Table 1- Formative Evaluation - Examples of peacebuilding programmes by primary goal(s)

Youth resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countering political mobilization and in-school violence through peace and peer-to-peer clubs (CDI/Sierra Leone) • Countering narratives and recruitment of children and adolescents by armed groups (Cameroon-Chad)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing support to reintegration (DRC/Colombia)
Vertical social cohesion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to youth exclusion decision-making and disaffection (Bosnia and Herzegovina/Guinea-Bissau) • Responding to mistrust of security sector actors (Madagascar) • Expanding access to basic services through young people-led birth registration (Cote D'Ivoire)
Horizontal social cohesion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDP/refugee and host community tensions (Ethiopia/Somalia) • Responding to cross border community tensions (Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan)
Conflict management and resolution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people mediating and resolving local conflicts (Niger) • Through school peace clubs, young people are helping manage violence and conflicts in schools (DRC)
Conflict transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming narratives of the past at the root of conflict (Burundi) • Consolidating peace agreements and/or promoting a culture of peace (Mali/Colombia/Philippines) • Transforming a negative peace to a positive peace through dialogues on the future (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

The success of many of these programmes were attributed to UNICEF's specific expertise in the areas of education, transferable and digital skills, adolescent participation, social and behavioural change and its investments in communication technologies systems (especially U Report).

The Evaluation specifically highlighted the concrete results achieved by UNICEF's skills development programmes. It noted that compared to other young people with similar backgrounds, UNICEF programme beneficiaries displayed a clear ability to "analyze, prevent, resolve, and transform conflict." The evaluation cited this as strong evidence of effectiveness of its methodologies and the sustainability of results beyond project's life cycle.^{xxxv}

Similarly, by working through formal and non-formal education systems and through a variety communication platforms (social media, radio, community theatre), UNICEF's programmes have managed to reach young people *at scale* and at the

formative stages of adolescence and youth (10-18 years old). Indeed, adolescence has been shown to be a "second window of opportunity" that can make up for poor social and cognitive development in childhood and when worldviews, participation and engagement habits crystalize.^{xxxvi}

The evaluation also notes that UNICEF's programmes have sought to bolster young people's influence by engaging adult stakeholders including, parents, teachers, school administrators and local decision-makers and extended across different spheres of young people's agency—social, cultural, political and economic.

Table 2 -Formative Evaluation – Peacebuilding themes and entry-points (of 20 countries)

Education	20
Community engagement	16
Communication for development (C4D)	15
Protection and response to needs stemming from conflict and violence	13
Protection from recruitment	9
Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)	6
Protection related to inter-personal violence	5
Employment	5

UNICEF was constituent targeting and engagement of young people who are typically considered "hard to reach" by other actors—for instance those who are out of school, from rural backgrounds or who are IDPs, refugees or children associated with armed groups.

Table 3 - Evaluation finding – No. of sampled UNICEF Country Offices targeting specific constituencies of young people (No. 20)

Rural	20
Urban	8
Out of school	14
In school	14
Specific goal on gender equality and girls	7
IDP/refugee	8
Associated with armed groups	4

Engaging with children associated with armed forces and groups was also noted as an important area where UNICEF has made contributions to youth and peacebuilding. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, UNICEF's protection on disengagement, release and reintegration (DDR) has focused on providing support to adolescents and youth on the basis of child rights and humanitarian approaches that start with protection efforts that prevent recruitment, support for adolescents and youth exiting from armed groups, repatriation where relevant, and reintegration into families and communities where possible.

Building on its strengths of engaging young people at early ages and at the community level, the Evaluation's **recommendations** pointed to areas for UNICEF to improve the impact and relevance of its programming for young people in peacebuilding:

- Increasing the involvement young people throughout the project cycle
- Expanding investments in age-differentiated peacebuilding and life skills programming
- Strengthening partnerships with local or national youth organizations/networks
- Sharpening focus on policy-level change to address the systematic/structural issues faced by young people.

Finally, the evaluation highlighted key areas where all United Nation actors could strengthen coherence and partnership:

- Even as many programmatic conflict and context assessments identify structural and social barriers excluding/marginalizing young people, few programmes develop long-term and systems-based approaches for transforming these social norms, structures and institutions.
- A high degree of fragmentation still exists in terms of the way different UN agencies engaged youth constituencies, including in joint PBF programming.

Spotlight on country-level impact:

- In the **Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in Philippines**, a historic peace agreement has promised to transform the prospects of this region. Since 2018, UNICEF has been developing the peacebuilding skills of young people from 50 networks—collectively representing 15,000 people—to implement youth-led projects to foster social cohesion among their peers and in

their communities. UNICEF has also deployed U Report as a platform for young people to participate in shaping the region's new youth development agenda. Over the next 3 years, the initiative aims to reach nearly 500,000 direct beneficiaries.

- In **Burundi**, a contentious and divisive vision of the past has been identified at the root of many inter-communal conflicts and repeated cycles of socio-political violence. Since 2018, UNICEF Burundi, as part of a PBF initiative, has partnered with young people in 15 of communities hardest hit by the conflict. Young people from 10 youth networks, representing 30,000 individuals are implementing activities to transform their communities' relationship to the past using theater, television and radio journalism, and inter-generational dialogues. By 2020, the programme will reach nearly 300,000 young people.
- In **Guinea-Bissau**, through an ongoing PBF programme, UNICEF has been working with partners to strengthen the resilience of youth and adolescents, enabling them to have an influence on decisions affecting their lives, particularly in relation to natural resource management and usage. Thanks to this project, young people develop their peacebuilding and leadership skills to implement their own projects while becoming environmentally conscious and gender-sensitive peacebuilders. The project has trained 60 youth facilitators that have engaged 1,187 adolescents on peacebuilding and life skills.
- In **South Sudan**, UNICEF (in 2018) supported the participation of approximately 36,000 marginalized young people from three states in peacebuilding (Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity). The initiative focused on developing the participation skills of adolescents in vulnerable situations, which included those associated with armed forces, IDPs and other vulnerable groups. The skills training strengthened their ability to participate by articulating and expressing their views without violence, using those skills to protect themselves and their peers, and to better cope with the impacts of conflict. These adolescents are now serving as peer role models and leaders in their schools, community and youth centers, as well as other child friendly spaces.
- In **Jordan**, in 2019 UNICEF's Nashatati initiative, a cross-sectoral innovative approach for integrating life skills and social cohesion through after-school activities was offered in 1,000 schools for 150,000 children. According to the participatory evaluation, schoolteachers and students participating in

the programme improved peer-to-peer relationships, increased confidence and tolerance, and enhanced communication and problem-solving skills and a greater sense of community.

Key messages on young people and peacebuilding

The following are key recommendations on supporting young people's participation in peacebuilding, based on UNICEF's recent engagement, experience and data:

- The UN's should move beyond boutique projects engaging small segments of young people to **support broad-based agency of young people across all social spheres for peacebuilding**.
- UN actors should develop coherent and collaborative strategies—**adopting a systems approach**—to engage and address the complex needs of young people in all their diversity. At the same time, a conflict sensitive approach should ensure that programmes reach the most vulnerable and marginalized and have a focus on transforming systems of exclusion.
- Greater investments are needed in support of **programmes aimed at developing adolescent and young people's life skills and peacebuilding competencies**. These, when complemented with meaningful opportunities for participation, have proven to be effective in empowering young people as agents of peace in their communities and societies.
- **Urgent action is needed to protect the human rights of young people** and ensure that responses framed as programming to address “violent extremism” do not stigmatize or instrumentalize them.

Section 4: Leveraging WASH and Service Delivery for Sustaining Peace

Equitable and inclusive service delivery can play an important role in addressing root causes of conflict and can also act as platforms for building vertical and horizontal social cohesion.^{xxxvii} This section highlights the peacebuilding contributions of social service delivery in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector.

Access to water is a vital need and therefore an essential social service. Currently nearly 4 billion people, roughly half of the world's population, are

affected by severe water scarcity for at least one month each year.^{xxxviii} Water is also closely implicated in conflict dynamics. In 2017, access to water was identified as a major conflict factor in at least 45 countries.^{xxxix} At the same time, conflict compounds water crises. In the context of South Sudan's ongoing and civil war, for example, approximately 41 percent cannot access safe drinking water due to conflict and poor management.^{xl}

Water scarcity has been demonstrated to heighten the risks and grievances leading to conflict and impacting communities at both the local and national level.^{xli} Indeed, relationship between water, conflict and peace has taken on a new urgency particularly as patterns of water scarcity are exacerbated by climate change and are compounded by population growth, rapid urbanization, migration, malnutrition and health epidemics.

In this context, WASH programmes have demonstrated an important role in addressing underlying causes of conflict. The OECD, for instance, has identified WASH, in addition to health care, as ‘politically neutral’ service systems, which can serve as a platform for social cooperation and partnerships between citizens and government. Establishing more accountable and transparent mechanisms for water governance, bringing together state and non-state stakeholders, can lead to both more effective water management and to increased trust in the state.^{xlii} This insight is also reflected in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which has provided a framework for ensuring resilient water and sanitation services for both refugees and host communities, thus supporting refugee integration by alleviating sources of tension between refugees and host communities. However, opportunities to use WASH services for peacebuilding are rarely pursued, much less realized.

UNICEF's role in pioneering the role of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for peacebuilding

Bridging its humanitarian-development mandate, UNICEF has been at the forefront of exploring the peacebuilding potential of WASH services. UNICEF's [Water under Fire report \(2019\)](#), is one of the first to examine the pivotal role of WASH in peacebuilding. The report highlights how UNICEF's unique trust-based relationship with national and local governments allows it to support the strengthening of long-term capacity to deliver basic services equitably and inclusively, while addressing conflict dynamics. Indeed, UNICEF uses social service delivery as a platform for dialogue and bringing communities together, thus fostering horizontal and vertical social cohesion.^{xliii}

Moreover, for UNICEF, access to water and sanitation are not only rights in themselves but they also

contribute to the realization of other child rights such as health, nutrition and education, tackling multiple vulnerabilities of children living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Spotlight on UNICEF's recent programmes

- In Tripoli, **Lebanon**, UNICEF promoted engagement between members of distinct sectarian communities on joint WASH services in divided neighbourhoods across the city as a means of creating dialogue, identifying joint problems and building trust. As a second step, these inter-communal platforms were then opened up to foster discussions between local leaders and government officials on how to improve WASH infrastructures and services for all and consequently also expanded access to education following the removal of security checkpoints.^{xliv}
- In **Ethiopia**, which hosts some 900,000 refugees from 20 countries, UNICEF and partners created integrated water and sanitation services in areas hosting large refugee communities. These systems were visibly meant to benefit both both refugee populations and host communities in order to reduce tensions and strengthen social cohesion between them.^{xlv}
- In **Sudan**, a UNICEF programme in Darfur is focusing on promoting the collaboration between national and local government, communities, civil society and traditional authorities in decision-making over water resource management. The increased collaboration and joint decision-making over a shared resource has strengthened trust and relationships between these actors.^{xlvi}

Key messages -WASH for sustaining peace

The pivotal nature of WASH services allows specific interventions not only to prevent accelerating water related disputes and conflicts but also leveraging their role as a platform for building capacities to address conflict together, strengthening vertical and horizontal social cohesion and building peace.

- Exclusion from social services such as water and sanitation can fuel grievances that can lead to violence. Understanding how WASH interventions intersect with larger social, political, economic, cultural and environmental factors is necessary to uphold the 'do no harm' principle and can play an important role in preventing violence. The WASH sector should ensure that both humanitarian and development WASH interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts are conflict-sensitive

as a minimum requirement.

- Governments, WASH sector and private sector are called on to adopt a more systematic and strategic approach to leveraging WASH interventions to address the drivers and dynamics of conflict and to sustain peace. Where possible, WASH actors should leverage service delivery as a potential connector to build both vertical and horizontal social cohesion and maximize its positive impact, including by building legitimacy and trust in government and service providers as well as within and between communities.^{xlvii}
- Due to operational restrictions, the meaningful use of conflict analysis in the WASH sector has been limited. WASH actors must always analyse the ongoing conflict dynamics and the two-way interaction between intervention and context, in line with the leave no one behind principle and core responsibility. Consistent monitoring of interventions, including any unintended consequences, is required to ensure that they do no harm.

Conclusion

UNICEF's experience and work on building and sustaining peace—including its recent experience in the past two years—leads it to make three key global recommendations for how the UN system can collectively work to strengthen the socio-economic dimensions of sustaining peace.

- Responding to the current global education crisis presents an opportunity for rethinking the role of education systems as vital institutions in building resilience and peace. Beyond expanding access, more investments are needed to harness the transformative role of equitable, relevant and conflict-sensitive education systems as social pathways for sustaining peace.
- Transforming social systems that are not functioning for and sideline young people is a key sustaining peace priority. Yet, robust support to meaningful participation of young people of all ages, continuing throughout the life cycle and at scale across social spheres continues as a major challenge.
- Inclusive, equitable and participatory social service delivery, as demonstrated by the WASH and education sectors, is a key yet largely untapped platform for sustaining peace.

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