



## Strategy Retreat Summary

*From February 5–6, senior city officials and civil society representatives, organizational partners, and campaign facilitators gathered in Amman, Jordan, for the Peace in Our Cities Senior Staff Planning and Strategy Retreat. Over two days, participants discussed operational and advocacy goals for the campaign, which is aimed at significantly reducing and transforming violence by 2030 using state-of-art evidence and models. The event was organized by campaign cofacilitators (the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies at the New York University Center on International Cooperation [Pathfinders]; +Peace; and Impact:Peace) in partnership with the Stanley Center for Peace and Security and hosted by Generations for Peace.*

### Campaign Context

The retreat began with a discussion of the Peace in Our Cities campaign, focusing on the origins, framework, and vision for 2020 and beyond. When creating this campaign, facilitators expressed acute awareness of the existence of city-to-city entities working on violence prevention yet were also conscious of the rising levels of global violence. To address this gap, Impact:Peace, Pathfinders, and +Peace joined to form the Peace in Our Cities campaign to create concrete, participatory, and evidence-based platforms for progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16+, with an initial focus on SDG16.1 (to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere).<sup>1</sup> The campaign launched on International Day of Peace in September 2019 and currently consists of 15 early adoption cities, subnational leaders, and more than a dozen partner organizations, all of whom have pledged to lead a 12-month Action Committee to spur progress on halving violence within cities by 2030.

Many of the cities involved have already implemented evidence-based initiatives to reduce violence in their communities and strengthen institutions toward a goal of long-term, sustainable peace. Like the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, the Peace in Our Cities Campaign seeks to build and mobilize an international network that allows subnational leaders to develop and promote commitments, best practices, and accountability measures.

During the first morning of discussions, the mayor of Amman, Dr. Yousef Al Shawarbeh, spoke on his city's commitment to halving violence. He emphasized violence reduction as the key to protecting the present and future, with this campaign bringing about a key opportunity to learn from each other and confront all forms of violence. In addition to Amman being a pioneer city on the campaign, Al Shawarbeh highlighted its history as a center of peace. Amman was a center of commerce and known as “Philadelphia” during its Greek and Roman periods, a name that translates into “city of brotherly love.” This legacy continues today, and Al Shawarbeh shared Amman's experience with a range of community-based projects focused

on reducing and preventing violence. Many of the city's projects, which are completed in partnership with both local civil society organizations and international organizations, focused on engaging youth through social and economic programs. Heart of Amman, implemented in partnership with the United Nations Development Program, is one ongoing initiative aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods and building the capacity of subnational leaders to strengthen the socioeconomic resilience of Amman. While Amman has seen success with many of its programs, the mayor acknowledged its interest in adapting its programs based on best practices shared through the Peace in Our Cities campaign.

## Campaign Vision

Despite progress in many cities, violence containment still costs the global economy \$14 trillion annually.<sup>2</sup> Nine out of 10 instances of lethal violence occur outside of conflict zones, with trends predicting a 10 percent increase in overall levels of violence by 2030.<sup>3</sup> With the UN secretary-general's announcement of a "[Decade of Action](#)" on SDGs and the approaching [75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations](#), 2020 represents a crucial opportunity to develop commitments and spur sustainable action to achieve the goals of SDG16+. With half of the global population already residing in cities, the decade of action must emphasize the importance of halving urban violence with engagement across sectors and violence-related fields.

Peace in Our Cities seeks to tackle these challenges through a series of advocacy and operational objectives, and outputs, including an *Action Committee Roadmap Report*, to support the campaign's mission beyond 2020.

Our year one advocacy objectives:

- ❖ Building a global coalition of political and public champions to halve and transform urban violence.
- ❖ Scaling local leadership for the achievement of the SDG16+ and SDG16.1 agendas.
- ❖ Increasing public and political fluency and demand for effective, nonsecuritized approaches to violence reduction and prevention.

Our year one operational objectives:

- ❖ Identifying best practices, policies, structure, and capacities for reducing and preventing violence.
- ❖ Curating sharing of existing state-of-the-field evidence of what works to reduce urban violence.
- ❖ Sharing ways to best engage constituents in creating political conditions conducive to a preventive, evidence-based agenda.

By September 2020, the campaign seeks to utilize a collaboratively developed *Action Committee Roadmap* and substantive pledge with specific violence-reduction commitments for city leaders and partners to sign on and publicly share on September 20, 2020, the International Day of Peace. In parallel, to build and sustain local and global political commitment, the campaign aims to build membership beyond the early adoption cities, secure financial support, advance national-level legislation, and shift public narratives in support of prevention.

In this regard, city representatives questioned best practices for monitoring progress and highlighted the need to seek immediate violence reduction and address the root causes of violence. Some participants emphasized an interest in engaging with regional networks or connecting Peace in Our Cities to other initiatives, such as the New Urban Agenda. To support localization of the SDGs, many highlighted the need to bring more civil society organizations on board and support their work. Civil society leaders stressed the need for a multisectoral approach that brings those who are often excluded into the conversations and solutions.

## Advocacy and Mobilization

In breakout groups, participants discussed ways to build and sustain the campaign's current momentum by shifting narratives, building local and global political will, utilizing global financial instruments, and developing domestic model legislation.

Key points include:

- ❖ Local and global narrative shifts: The campaign will need to work to streamline messaging and language to make it universally appealing but broad and accessible enough for local implementation. A positive peace framing with restorative-justice elements and an emphasis on the role of individuals can help sustain political will. The narrative should seek to humanize those experiencing or victimized by violence and perpetrators who see violence as their only recourse. More research is needed to highlight the dichotomies and intersections between different kinds of violence (e.g., political versus nonpolitical, violent extremism versus slow violence).
- ❖ Local mobilization: Building and sustaining local political will requires embedding efforts into local policy systems to ensure commitments will continue when mayors leave office. Localized data on best practices will need to be collected and shared and should be used to create city-specific action plans. These action plans must engage diverse stakeholders, including civil servants and champions on the ground, to promote local ownership. Ideally, initiatives would include some tangible aspects to allow the public and political leaders to see the vision and progress.
- ❖ Global mobilization: By linking Peace in Our Cities to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), the campaign can identify like-minded partners and ensure the definition of violence expands beyond homicide. While the 2030 Agenda provides shared language and targets for violence reduction, it is not widely known by subnational leaders, meaning the campaign should assist in translating and localizing the language to inspire city action.
- ❖ Global financial instruments: Creating sustainable financial instruments should be a campaign priority. While some cities are able to allocate funds for violence-reduction programs, most participants agreed that global funding would be necessary to support prevention-focused initiatives. In order to allocate funds, many cities or national governments would need legislative frameworks, making political will and model legislation important. Technical support will be necessary to ensure funds are effectively utilized, and research on the economic case for prevention would be useful to cities looking to engage the private sector. Cities identified the potential in creating tax measures to support initiatives after the campaign gains public support.
- ❖ Model legislation: Participants agreed that model legislation could be helpful to promote implementation and provide a concrete campaign output. Groups discussed legislation to address treatment of prisoners (such as the Nelson Mandela Rules or Bangkok Rules), gender-based violence, or peacebuilding acts. While such model legislation could serve as a helpful tool, the campaign would need to generate public support for it and ensure root causes are also addressed.

## Building a Metanarrative

Participants also explored the communications strategy employed by the climate change policy community and the ways the Peace in Our Cities campaign could learn from these efforts and elevate the discussion on reducing and transforming urban violence. The large number of actors in global movements

means that many experiences and solutions are competing for attention, yet the climate community identified two commonalities across its efforts:

1. The need for global, national, and subnational political attention to further its overarching goal.
2. The strength of existing data, as compiled in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports.

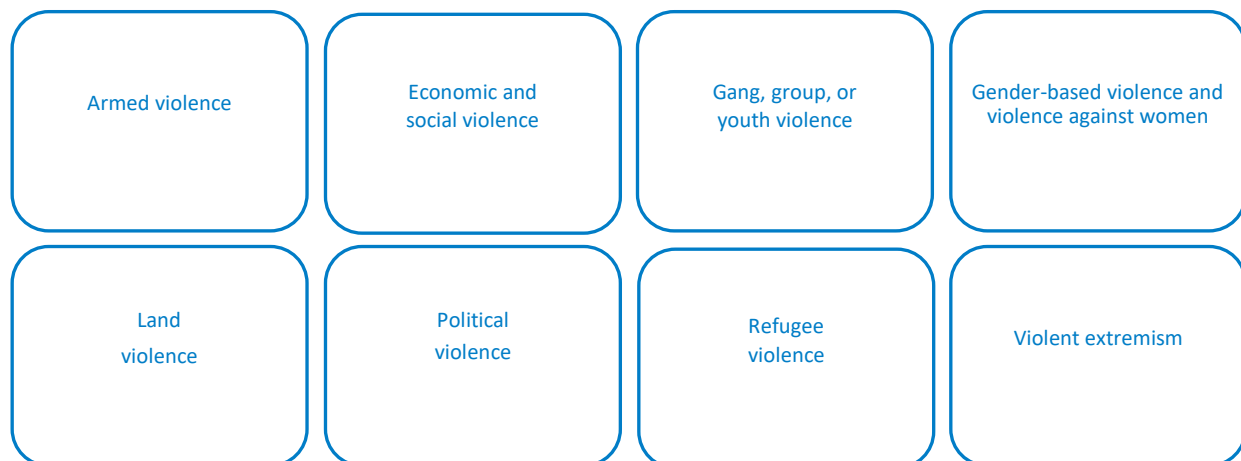
In the climate community, communications teams across organizations created a joint strategy, including a metanarrative and opportunities for engagement during major political moments. Representatives of these organizations set the following priorities: public mobilization, clarifying national commitments, emphasizing the science, and sustaining attention for the movement, particularly noting the difficulty in balancing the need for urgent action with long-term, optimistic solutions. Using these priorities, the community drafted a global metanarrative with opportunities to incorporate localized proof points.

In reflecting on this strategy, Peace in Our Cities retreat participants noted the need to have a narrative that is forward looking, action oriented, and citizen focused. Those on the ground will need to be involved in shaping the definition of violence and the metanarrative as whole, ensuring the use of inclusive language. Because the media are often saturated with violence, the Peace in Our Cities campaign should consider its channels for communication carefully, noting that a metanarrative might be most useful for communicating campaign efforts to local outlets or city leaders. To build urgency, this narrative should seek to denormalize violence as well as rehumanize and destigmatize victims and perpetrators of daily violence. Participants acknowledged a need to investigate the intersections between different expressions of violence to consider ways to promote a positive, prevention-focused narrative. It is essential that cities can localize the points of the metanarrative while remaining connected to a united global narrative.

## Violence Priorities

The second day of meetings focused on the campaign’s operational objectives, centered on ways that Peace in Our Cities can get violence down, keep violence down, and sustain positive peace. While city representatives shared diverse perspectives on the triggers and manifestations of violence in their communities, they were also able to discuss a number of commonalities.

After discussion, cities identified the following expressions of violence as their top priorities, while noting that some of these terms are imperfect and require greater definitional clarity:



Participants then broke into groups, and city representatives discussed ongoing initiatives to reduce violence, the key challenges they are facing, and the support needed to overcome these struggles. Cities discussed approaches for addressing various types of violence, including gender-based, group or gang, and economic, social, or political.

The key points include:

- ❖ **Approaches:** Creating a violence task force to coordinate across silos; mainstreaming language into internal human resource policies and trainings; focusing on the highest risk population; balancing criminal deterrence with restorative transformation; promoting awareness and “know your rights” campaigns; implementing programs that incorporate psychosocial and socioeconomic support; encouraging disarmament and disengagement from violent groups; mapping of community issues; engaging diverse stakeholders in design and implementation of initiatives (e.g., youth, sports teams, local security officials, members of the media).
- ❖ **Challenges:** High levels of poverty and a general lack of services (due to limited funding a capacity); absence of trust between civil society and local governments; coordination issues (across sectors and levels of government); limited capacity to monitor and evaluate initiatives; absence of reliable data or informative materials that could be provided to community members.
- ❖ **Needs:** Research and discussion on the interlinkages between different forms of violence; best practices for reporting and referrals; awareness-raising campaigns to build public support and political will; toolkit for training current and incoming city officials; engaging religious and traditional leaders as champions; technical support to centralize and coordinate efforts; effective partnerships between cities and researchers/academic institutions; increased data collection; greater subnational authority over violence-related funding and programming; best practices for mainstreaming gendered approaches.

In sharing these initiatives, city representatives began to analyze the linkages between their approaches and needs in reducing and transforming violence. Many acknowledged the need for an accessible information-sharing platform that could connect cities, address language barriers, and bring new voices to the table.

### Action Pledge and Closing

Before closing the meeting, participants discussed a draft of a Declaration for a Decade of Action for Peace in Our Cities for signature by city leaders. The draft highlights the campaign vision, the threat of violence in cities, and the significant role of city leaders in addressing the urgent epidemic of violence. The draft declaration further highlights violence-reduction priorities, the commitments of cities, and a call to action for national governments, international partners, civil society, private sector actors, and other subnational leaders.

City representatives were supportive of the pledge and agreed to continue to contribute to its development. Many representatives committed to bringing other cities into the movement by September 2020, both within and outside of their own countries. City representatives emphasized that before signing the declaration, leaders would want clarification on the campaign’s benefits to cities, monitoring and evaluation criteria, and financial commitments. Other retreat participants highlighted how other UN documents, including UN Habitat’s legislation on Safer Cities and the New Urban Agenda, could contribute to the development of key language and indicators for Peace in Our Cities. City and organizational partners noted interest in attending global events in support of the campaign in advance of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and the International Day of Peace in September 2020.



In closing, campaign facilitators highlighted the following goals for 2020:

- 1 Expand the campaign to new cities, partners, and methods of communication (including webinars, evidence briefs, and media outreach).
- 2 Focus the campaign's messages, evidence, and grounding in types of violence priorities.
- 3 Declare the campaign's intentions and commitments through the Declaration for a Decade of Action.
- 4 Build the campaign's architecture and financing through the collaboratively developed *Action Committee Roadmap Report*.



#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> SDG16+ includes 12 targets from SDG16 and 24 targets from seven other goals that directly measure an aspect of peace, justice and inclusion. Find out more at [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/6c192f\\_cbb14879fd904b308df8ee9dcac2d5cc.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/6c192f_cbb14879fd904b308df8ee9dcac2d5cc.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Rob Smith, "Conflict Costs the Global Economy \$14 Trillion a Year," World Economic Forum, January 15, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/01/conflict-costs-global-economy-14-trillion-a-year/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Claire McEvoy and Gergely Hideg, *Global Violent Deaths 2017*, Small Arms Survey, December 2017, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-Report-GVD2017.pdf>; Gergely Hideg and Anna Alvazzi del Frate, *Darkening Horizons: Global Violent Deaths Scenarios*, Small Arms Survey, May 2019, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP-Violent-Deaths-Scenarios.pdf>.