

16 PEACE AND JUSTICE STRONG INSTITUTIONS



PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Peace, justice and the institutions that support and protect the rights of citizens are the foundations of sustainable development. People need to be free of fear from violence and feel safe wherever they go, regardless of their ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation. Crime and violence threaten peaceful societies, and even in the world's greatest democracies, corruption, crime and human rights violations still occur. This goal is all about ensuring our communities, governments and institutions protect and promote inclusion and respect toward people of all backgrounds.

TARGETS

- Reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.
- End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, violence and torture against children.
- Promote equal access to justice for all through the strengthening of transparent, inclusive, participatory and responsive legal systems at national and international levels.
- Substantially reduce bribery and corruption in all forms through accountable and transparent institutions.
- Provide a legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030.
- Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

“Justice and peace can only thrive together, never apart.”

Oscar Arias Sanchez
Costa Rican Politician
& Nobel Laureate



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1** Learners will understand concepts of justice, inclusion and peace and their relation to law, both in their country and internationally.
- 2** Learners will understand the importance of individuals and groups upholding justice, inclusion and peace in their country and internationally.
- 3** Learners will be able to connect with others to facilitate peace, justice, and stronger institutions in their country.
- 4** Learners will be able to reflect on their role in issues of peace, and show solidarity for those suffering from injustice in their own country and abroad.
- 5** Learners will be able to critically assess issues of peace, justice, inclusion and strong institutions in their region, nationally, and globally.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Media

Why is it important to be critical of media in relation to reporting conflict?

Environment

How do peace and justice impact our environment?

Poverty, wealth and power

How does extreme wealth and corruption contribute to the poverty cycle?

Indigenous Peoples

What is unique about Indigenous justice systems and what can we learn from them?

Oppression and genocide

How do genocides begin and what can be done at different levels to intervene?

Health and biotechnology

How does peace impact our health?

Gender politics

How are justice systems impacting gender inequalities?

Social justice and human rights

What is the process of reporting a human rights abuse?
How are they dealt with?

Peace and conflict

How has the idea of world peace changed over time?
How are genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity prosecuted?



THE BIG QUESTIONS

1 Where did it begin?

- A **legal system** refers to the processes of dealing with offences and the institutions (courts, police, prisons and lawyers) that enforce and enact these laws. A well-functioning legal system is efficient, protects **human rights** and promotes inclusion, with comprehensive laws that are easily understood and accessed by citizens.
- Each country has their own legal system, with their own laws and institutions; however, human rights are moral principles that have been understood as **inalienable**, meaning they can't be taken away by anyone. An example of a human right is the freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture or execution.
- Many of the basic ideas that became a part of the human rights movements were developed in the aftermath of the Second World War and the events of the Holocaust, resulting in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.¹
- Human rights are enforced at international, national and regional levels. If an individual commits a crime, they are dealt with by the police and the judicial system. But what if a state commits a crime? When this happens, the United Nations or a regional court system like the European Court of Human Rights can become involved to maintain or restore peace and security. There is also the International Criminal Court (ICC), which investigates and prosecutes individuals responsible for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Considered a court of last resort, domestic courts still have a primary responsibility to act.²
- When countries want to recognize or support a cause, they often sign **treaties** with other countries or international organizations. Treaties are agreements recognized under international law that hold those that sign them accountable to protect or promote a particular collection of just rights. An example of a treaty is the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) or the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.
- While human rights and treaties exist to protect the rights of all, many countries and political organizations continue to **marginalize**, oppress and attack groups either directly through force, or indirectly by not recognizing them or their rights. Amnesty International found that torture and abuse still exists in 81 countries, unfair trials in at least 54 countries and restricted freedom of expression in at least 77 countries.³ At the same time, many countries are advancing legislation that protects the rights of marginalized communities, such as LGBT and migrant communities.
- Conflicts differ greatly because of their particular histories and causes. However, inequalities within societies and regions, discrimination, competition, and the lack of political, social and economic support are often responsible for conflicts at different levels. Finding common ground, a common agenda and practical solutions are important steps to manage conflict between different groups to bring peace. Strong laws, equitable judicial systems and responsible enforcement are also key to maintaining peace.



2 Why does this issue matter?

- **We need to ensure equal access to justice and legal information for all**

Without transparent and effective legal systems or representation and protection through laws, conflicts go unresolved and people cannot obtain protection and redress, or compensation for a wrongdoing. When institutions don't function according to legitimate laws, they can often be inconsistent, abuse their power and fail to deliver public services to all. When legal systems and institutions exclude and discriminate, not only do they violate human rights, but it can lead to political unrest and violence.

- **Justice needs to be timely**

When people are accused of a crime, but haven't been found guilty, they can be held in detention until their court date. When judicial systems are inadequate, people can end up spending years detained for a crime they did not commit. Globally, the proportion of people held without sentencing has decreased slightly, from 32 per cent of detainees in 2003-2005 to 30 per cent between 2013-2015.⁴ However, improvements still need to be made to improve the efficiency and adequacy of judicial systems and process cases to respect the dignity of their citizens.

- **Laws need to be dynamic and current**

It is vital that laws are flexible, current and reflect changing social dynamics as well as basic human rights. These are particularly important to protect people who are often taken advantage of, such as women, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, **Transgender** and Queer) communities and Indigenous populations. LGBTQ rights have been considered human rights by Amnesty International, however, many governments refuse to recognize same-sex relationships, penalizing consensual same-sex individuals with fines, jail terms or the death penalty. In addition, many countries' laws do not adequately address human trafficking issues.

- **Corruption is still a problem**

Corruption costs us all. Dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, such as bribery, theft and tax evasion, costs US \$1.26 trillion for developing countries per year.⁵ Government, institutional and business corruption means we have less money to support sustainable development. This impacts citizens' trust in their representation. Did you know that the amount of money we lose to corruption could easily be used to lift those living under the international poverty line (of US \$1.90_ per day above this mark for at least six years)?⁶

- **We need to end violence against children**

Violence against children, while terrible, does happen. From physical punishment to psychological aggression, trafficking or discrimination, the long term repercussions for children are often grave and damaging. More than half of children between the ages of 1 and 14 were subjected to some form of psychological aggression and/or physical punishment at home. In Northern Africa, this applied to more than 90 per cent of children.⁷



3 Who and what are affected?

- **Women and children**

When it comes to **trafficking** or the illegal trading of humans, women and children are often the most vulnerable to exploitation. Both women and children are often taken advantage of in situations of poverty. Trafficking is a violation of human rights and condemned by international conventions. Policy action and effective security and judicial systems are needed to effectively investigate and prosecute traffickers and help victims.

- **People without ID**

Having legal documentation, like an ID card or birth certificate, helps ensure your rights are protected and proves you are who you say you are. However, not everyone has one. Many people around the world can't access political, legal and social services because they don't have a secure legal identity. Administrative hurdles, discrimination, poverty and limited awareness keep many women and vulnerable groups from securing citizenship or registering their marriage or child's birth.⁸

- **Vulnerable populations**

In many countries and states, discrimination is common against minorities on the grounds of their sexual orientation, ethnicity, **gender**, age, marital status, ability and religion. Anti-discrimination laws ensure the rights of all people to be treated equally. For example, the criminalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people serves as justification to prosecute and punish people solely for their sexual orientation. Laws banning the promotion of LGBTQ exist to punish people from promoting LGBTQ inclusion and their rights.

Many Canadians are proud of our progressive and welcoming stance for new Canadians. However, we must consider the effects of racism, colonialism and other settler impacts within Indigenous communities today. In one compelling article, the author argues that on almost every measurable indicator, Canada's Indigenous populations have worse outcomes than African-American populations in the USA.⁹

“Women, who are a majority of the peoples of the earth, are indispensable to the accumulation of the kind of social capital that is conducive to development, peace, justice and civility.”

Mahnaz Afkhami
Iranian-American human rights activist



4 What needs to be done?

- **Social justice**, or the fair and just relation between the individual and society, is an ongoing struggle for the inclusion and equity of all people within social, economic and political institutions. Promoting opportunities for diversity through social justice movements encourages innovation and improves participation. Promoting social justice in health means providing services that address the particular needs of everyone, such as the homeless and other vulnerable populations.
- In tackling violence, governments, civil society and communities need to improve systems and channels to deliver justice, combat corruption and ensure inclusive participation at all times.
- Policies promoting anti-discrimination, justice and inclusion are essential to representing all humans and their particular identities. Access to capital, freedom of movement and protection from exploitation need legal affirmation to improve the ability for programs to address issues related to poverty.
- Particularly for women and girls, the violence against them is rooted in discrimination, social norms and stereotypes. In order to make an impact in stopping violence, prevention should start early in life and at the root of the cause, through education about respectful relationships and **gender equality**.
- People need to be able to contribute to decisions that affect their lives, without discrimination. Working to improve awareness of human rights legal documentation is essential to accessing necessary services and stopping exploitation.

“Every time we turn our heads the other way when we see the law flouted, when we tolerate what we know to be wrong, when we close our eyes and ears to the corrupt because we are too busy or too frightened, when we fail to speak up and speak out, we strike a blow against freedom and decency and justice.”

John F. Kennedy
Former US President



CONNECTION TO THE OTHER GOALS



Malnutrition, unequal access to education and poor **sanitation** can be caused by corruption at government, business, and community levels.



Decent work, innovation and infrastructure, and economic growth means promoting the inclusion of everyone in the workforce and stopping human trafficking through legal systems.



In order to have **sustainable cities** and communities, local and national governments need to be transparent and responsive and ensure marginalized populations are heard and recognized.



Partnerships between different institutions and nations are important for promoting and understanding sustainable development and justice, including international treaties. Recognition and respect of existing treaties is necessary in achieving peace and justice collectively.



Consequences of Inaction

- If we fail to promote peace and put an end to violence, we are subjecting vulnerable populations to injustice and the violation of their human rights. By failing to address trafficking, we are denying 800,000 men, women and children per year access to education, healthcare, **food security** and basic human rights.¹⁰
- When corruption goes unstopped, public funds are removed from valuable projects and initiatives that support us all. Mistrust of public institutions and businesses lack of transparency can result in violence and civil unrest from.
- If we do not support efforts to ensure everyone has access to justice, people around the world will continue to find themselves without access to effective, accountable institutions or legal standing under the law.

REFLECTION AND ACTION QUESTIONS

- 1 How do you feel about the issue now that you know more about it?
- 2 How might this issue have been prevented? What could have been done differently?
- 3 How has this problem changed over time? Where do you see it going in the future?
- 4 What questions do you still have?

“There can be no peace without justice and respect for human rights.”

Irene Khan

Bangladeshi lawyer and former Secretary
General of Amnesty International



RESOURCES

How to take action

- **Know your rights, know your risks.** Learn about all the ways human rights protect you from violence, exploitation, and discrimination. Share this information with your community and help others understand how they can get help if they need it. Knowing your rights is the best way to ensure you receive fair treatment.
- **Sign up and speak up.** Get informed about corruption and take a stand against greed by signing petitions to end corruption and holding public servants and business owners accountable for their actions.
- **Raise awareness about human trafficking** and initiate action through your local community. Learn what the signs of someone being trafficked are and find out where people can turn to for help.
- **Support local organizations.** Find out what social justice struggles are important to you and your community and find ways to support organizations doing this kind of work. Give your time, talent and resources to help make a difference for people who have faced exploitation, violence, and discrimination.
- **Support anti-bullying efforts in your school and promote peace.** Or, consider hosting a conflict resolution workshop and help others learn new skills. Safe Schools Manitoba has some [great resources](#) on these topics.
- **Consider joining an advocacy campaign**, such as the Development and Peace [advocacy page](#) or Mennonite Central Committee [advocacy campaign page](#). You can decide what issues are most important to you and build your own campaign for peace.
- **Start a [Peace Club](#) in your school** or attend a peace gathering in your community to show your support for peace.



Educational resources

- The World's Largest Lesson page for Goal 16 has downloadable comics, posters and lesson plans [here](#). You can also download [The Power of Peace](#) (ages 8 to 11). This lesson explains some definitions of peace and explores the role of peaceful activists. [Understanding Community Violence](#) (ages 11 to 14) discusses violence around the world and helps students develop solutions for preventing violence.
- Another great resource is [Humanitarian Perspective](#) (ages 10 to 17). Made available by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, this activity explores the ideas of human dignity and humanitarian action.
- Younger students can explore the idea of forced migration and fleeing a crisis through the [Holiday Bag or Get-Away Bag?](#) (ages 6 to 12) activity. This lesson helps students understand the impact fleeing from a desperate situation can have on someone's life.
- For more resources and activities, download the YMCA's [Peace Building Activity Guide](#). It includes activities for children, youth and adults.
- Check out this list of [lesson plans and resources](#) from UNICEF for teaching children's rights to Canadian students.



CASE STUDIES

1 Gacaca Courts

Following the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, more than 130,000 alleged **genocide** perpetrators were being held in prison by 2000.¹¹ In order to deal with the quantity of citizens on trial, the country adopted a traditional cultural communal law enforcement system called the [Gacaca courts](#). The courts placed an emphasis on communal healing and rebuilding in the wake of the Genocide, relying on community members to help reconcile disputes and crimes within their area.

2 Journalists for Human Rights

[Journalists for Human Rights](#) (JHR) is an international media organization that promotes the empowerment of journalists to cover human rights stories objectively and effectively. The organization wants to make sure everybody in the world is aware of their rights. By working with local journalists to understand what human rights are, how to identify media angles that are empowering for victims, and how to seek action and retribution for stories they cover, JHR is helping to improve the ability for journalists to speak up for people that don't have a voice and make positive changes in their communities.

3 Pro Bono Students Canada - The ID Project

The ID Project, run by [Pro Bono Students Canada](#) in Ottawa, is coordinating lawyers, non-profit organizations and students to help vulnerable populations obtain and replace identification cards. For people who are illiterate or do not have a fixed address, the process of obtaining identification can be a barrier. Ensuring everyone is represented and able to obtain social services is a huge step forward in addressing important elements of the poverty cycle.

4 University of Winnipeg Faculty of Education

The [University of Winnipeg Faculty of Education](#) is providing teacher training on peace-building and counselling skills in South Sudan. Their work enables partners from the University of Juba, UNICEF South Sudan and the University of Winnipeg to develop teacher training to better prepare teachers to meet the needs of children living in post-conflict situations.

5 Make Music Matter

[Make Music Matter](#) is working to empower children of children-headed households through a one-year project using music production to provide psychosocial support to child-headed households and their communities in rural Rwanda through song. This work assists in reducing trauma and supporting economic opportunity within a post-conflict and extreme poverty context.



6 Inter Pares

[Inter Pares](#) is working in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru to promote human rights and peace throughout Latin America. They are strengthening the effectiveness of Project Counseling Service, a Latin American organization that supports people regaining control of their resources, asserts the political participation of women and Indigenous peoples, challenges economic exclusion and the impunity of the powerful, and builds democratic and authentic peace.

End notes

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDgIVseTkuE>

² <https://www.icc-cpi.int/>

³ <http://www.humanrights.com/what-are-human-rights/violations-of-human-rights/>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

⁵ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice>

⁶ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice>

⁷ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3Q21H624KI>

⁹ <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/out-of-sight-out-of-mind-2/>

¹⁰ <https://www.stopthetraffik.org/the-scale-of-human-trafficking>

¹¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/28/rwanda-justice-after-genocide-20-years>