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Breaking the Silos: Pragmatic National Approaches to Prevention

Through the twin resolutions on sustaining peace, member states have agreed on the relevance of a cross-pillar approach to prevention. Now the challenge lies in implementation. One place to look for positive examples is at country level, where governments tend to have a more pragmatic and less "siloed" approach to prevention, addressing the different risk factors simultaneously. In this policy briefing, we draw on examples from Côte d'Ivoire and Timor-Leste to illustrate how countries have developed integrated actions on prevention that cut across sectors, including security, development, and human rights. We then highlight options for the UN to better support these strategies through cross-pillar approaches and identify practical ways forward for governments implementing prevention approaches.

Upstream prevention relies on identifying and addressing risk factors and strengthening protective factors to prevent violence. Those factors are found across many dimensions, including economic development, security, justice, psychology, human rights, governance, social cohesion, and civic culture. From a practical perspective, therefore, upstream prevention naturally takes a cross-sectoral approach. Countries address these risk factors on a daily basis. To do so, most of them have developed collaboration mechanisms between different areas of the government and civil society to ensure a whole of society approach.

Implementing such approaches at the United Nations (UN), however, remains a work in progress, since the UN is organized around pillars and entities with distinct mandates and incentive structures (development, peace and security, human rights). Hence, it can be challenging for the UN to support integrated prevention approaches at national level. The UN has acknowledged the need for a more integrated approach to prevention by supporting a "cross-pillar" approach. Even before the incoming Secretary-General called for renewed focus on prevention in 2017, the twin sustaining peace resolutions in 2016 signaled member state understanding of and commitment to this approach: "*Recognizing* that an integrated and coherent approach among relevant political, security and developmental actors, within and outside of the United

Integrated approaches in recent key reports

Nations system, consistent with their respective mandates, and the Charter of the United Nations, is critical to sustaining peace."

This policy briefing surveys national efforts in Côte d'Ivoire and Timor-Leste that demonstrate how countries themselves undertake integrated, cross-sector approaches to addressing risks and enhancing their resilience to violence. Based on these practical examples, the briefing suggests specific steps that the UN can take to support a more pragmatic, cross-pillar approach to upstream prevention.

The need for integrated prevention approaches

National actors recognize that the underlying causes of violence are complex. Building on our previous policy briefs, it is important to start by understanding why violence may emerge. Evidence shows that the specific risk factors creating the potential for conflicts to turn violent is multidimensional. Examples of such risk factors include lack of trust in the state, grievances over violations of socio-economic rights, lack of clarity on land ownership, violations of civil and political rights, dehumanization, lack of social cohesion and civic culture, and the presence of facilitators of violence (e.g., guns, armed groups).[1] These risk factors coexist and can feed into each other. At country level, this translates into hot spots—a portion of a territory where high levels of risk factors are concentrated—or in particularly vulnerable groups.

Evidence has also shown that prevention is more effective when targeting root causes, instead of just re-branding existing, general activities (e.g. development, good governance) as prevention.[2] Programs that target these hot spots and support vulnerable groups to address underlying risk factors are more effective than isolated prevention measures.[3] Targeted prevention considers hot spots to be ecosystems; risk factors cut across the whole society and are interrelated. To prevent violence, many actors (in human rights, justice, development, security, etc.) will thus need to join their efforts. Addressing one risk factor while others remain unaddressed is unlikely to be successful.

The examples of Côte d'Ivoire and Timor-Leste show how national actors have been able to identify and address multiple factors at the same.

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[1] See, e.g., World Bank and United Nations, Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict (The World Bank, 2018); Oskar N.T. Thoms and James Ron, "Do Human Rights Violations Cause Internal Conflict," Human Rights Quarterly 29, no. 3 (2007): 674–705; Gail B. Murrow and Richard Murrow, "A Hypothetical Neurological Association between Dehumanization and Human Rights Abuses," Journal of Law and the Biosciences 2, no. 2 (July 13, 2015): 336–64; Manuel Eisner, "How to Reduce Homicide by 50% in the Next 30 Years," Homicide Dispatch (Rio de Janeiro: Igarapé Institute, August 2015).

[2] Sarah Cliffe and David Steven, "An Integrated Approach to Prevention: The Links between Prevention, the 2030 Agenda, and Sustaining Peace" (Center on International Cooperation, December 2017).

[3] Thomas P. Abt, "Towards a Framework for Preventing Community Violence among Youth," Psychology, Health & Medicine 22, no. sup1 (March 6, 2017): 266–85.

Dealing with risks across sectors

Côte d'Ivoire

In its recent past, Côte d'Ivoire has suffered two civil wars, the last one in 2011. The government and civil society have undertaken serious efforts to prevent the resurgence of violence that have already borne fruit; they also have taken the positive step of acknowledging that some root causes are still present and striving to address them through a set of specific actions.

The government consistently undertakes **universal prevention efforts** to increase peaceful coexistence. Some examples include the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty and the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons[4] to curb arms proliferation; the implementation of the Commission on Dialogue, Truth, and Reconciliation, which addresses the abuses committed during the civil wars; and efforts to increase employment opportunities as reflected in its development plan. In addition, Côte d'Ivoire undertakes constant efforts to build a stronger sense of community through the implementation of its National Strategy on Social Cohesion. The National Chamber of Kings and Traditional Chiefs as well as national researchers at the UNESCO Chair for the Culture of Peace at the Félix Houphouët-Boigny University are also documenting and socializing traditional alliances between different ethnic groups with a view to strengthening social cohesion and preventing the emergence of violent conflicts between the different groups.

The government also understands that when tensions rise in specific areas, **different risk factors are present simultaneously and are often interconnected**. In May 2019, in the town of Béoumi, inter-ethnic clashes resulted in at least 16 deaths, about 100 wounded and 500 displaced.[5] According to analysis by governmental and non-governmental organizations, the eruption of violence was linked to an erosion of social cohesion, perceptions of political and economic exclusion, unemployment, a feeling of mistrust toward political representatives, a lack of dialogue, and deep-seated grievances. Weapons in circulation also increased displays of force that fueled violence.

Recognizing this interconnectedness, both government and civil society have **acted in concert to implement a targeted prevention approach**. An ombudsman's office exists to dispatch mediators when crises are brewing. Human rights organizations defend victims' interests. Other organizations create space for political dialogue between parties to decrease tensions and prevent calls for violence. Traditional chiefs and kings offer alternative conflict resolution mechanisms and remind the population that there have been alliances between different ethnic groups in the past. The Observatory of Solidarity and National Cohesion implements awareness campaigns and trainings to increase social cohesion and conflict prevention skills. The West

Colombia: restoring human security through interagency collaboration

In July 2018, the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, and the Security Council convened a high-level dialogue on advancing sustaining peace through a cross-pillar approach. During this meeting, the Colombian Permanent Representative UN highlighted her country's efforts to implement a coordinated approach to building peace. Specifically, she presented the *Acción Social* program, which has worked to restore security and human rights in regions formerly outside the control of the government. The program has involved a collaboration across multiple agencies of the Colombian government to provide citizens with security, justice, and social and development assistance.

African Action Network on Small Arms works towards a better control of small arms and light weapons across the country.

This wide-ranging and multisectoral approach demonstrates the positive commitment of Ivoirian society to build long-lasting, peaceful coexistence as well as to implement targeted prevention when needed. More recently, the prime minister's office has integrated a new structure, the National Coordination Center for Early Warning Mechanism, with a view to better coordinating these efforts. This coordination effort should increase the depth of the analysis of the drivers of violence and the effectiveness of the response through a more integrated approach. This mechanism is presented below.

Timor-Leste

Despite 25 years of occupation by Indonesia and a violent crisis in 2006 that resulted in widespread human rights violations, Timor-Leste now has very low levels of violence.[6] The Timorese government at national and subnational levels, together with civil society organizations, has consolidated these impressive gains by implementing efforts to **address a wide range of interrelated risk factors** that were present in the Timorese society in the aftermath of the 2006 crisis.

For instance, since the police and military were central protagonists of the violent 2006 crisis, a comprehensive **security sector reform** was implemented, with a particular focus on police forces at the local level to ensure local ownership.[7] Today this effort continues; the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice has signed a memorandum of understanding with the national police and delivered human rights training.[8] The government is also striving to **clarify the deficient land legal framework** inherited from Portuguese colonialism and Indonesian occupation, which gives rise to recurrent conflicts.[9] In addition, it is increasing **access to justice** in remote areas, for instance through mobile courts. Timor-Leste has also undertaken important efforts to reduce **gender inequality and gender-based violence**, which in addition of being an end in itself is also an important prevention effort since studies show that these are correlated with higher risks

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4 Full name: ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, which entered into force in 2009

5 Vincent Duhem, "Côte d'Ivoire : à Béoumi, l'engrenage de la violence intercommunautaire," JeuneAfrique.com, June 3, 2019.

6 The last homicide rate calculated by WHO in 2015 was only 4.4 for every 100,000 inhabitants (compared to a world average of 6.4 for that same year), declining steadily over the past decade WHO, "Violence Info—Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste," Violence Info, 2015.

7 Yuji Uesugi, "Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Timor-Leste: The Challenges of Respecting Local Ownership," Asia Peacebuilding Initiatives, January 9, 2014.

8 Estevão Nuno, "PDHJ Trains PNTL on Human Rights," The Dili Weekly, August 21, 2018.

9 Megumi Makisaka, Sasiwan Chingchit, and Patthiya Tongfueng, "Timor-Leste," in The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia (Bangkok: The Asia Foundation, 2017), 180–91.

of armed conflicts.[10] As a result, Timor-Leste has now one of the highest rates of women's representation in Parliament in the world.

The interrelation between risk factors is particularly striking. For instance, if the legal framework for land ownership is clarified, but the population does not trust the police or does not have access to courts to obtain justice, the risk for violent conflicts may not decrease substantially. This example highlights the limited effectiveness of prevention approaches taken in isolation. Effective prevention strategies address more than one risk factor.

> Effective prevention strategies address more than one risk factor.

Toward a more strategic, integrated approach to prevention

Both Côte d'Ivoire and Timor-Leste have developed mechanisms that can feed into a more strategic, whole of society approach to prevention that cuts across security, development, human rights, and other issues.

The National Coordination Center for Early Warning Mechanism in Côte d'Ivoire

Last year, Côte d'Ivoire established a National Coordination Center for Early Warning Mechanism. The center is a nationally led initiative that takes ownership over the Strategic Framework adopted by ECOWAS Heads of State and Government to **bridge the gap between early warning and response**.[11]

The center sits in the prime minister's office and has a Crisis Statutory Board made of key line ministries cutting across security, justice, health, economy, women, human rights, and other issues. This structure creates the potential for a whole-of-government approach to prevention by providing information to all decision-makers who need to be involved.

The functions of the center are to alert the government in case of threats to human security; to ensure that quality information and analysis feeds into decision-making; suggest appropriate responses, particularly by encouraging actors to address the root causes of conflicts; coordinate preventive efforts at national and subnational levels; and monitor the adequacy of government's response. The center is governmental, but one out of five field monitors who collect information on ECOWAS' early warning mechanism indicators is a civil society representative.[12] Civil society and local actors are further involved in the

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[10] Caprioli et al. 2007; GIWPS and PRIO 2017; Hudson et al. 2009; Kelly 2017 in World Bank and United Nations, Pathways for Peace.

[11] ECOWAS, "National Coordination Centre for Early Warning Mechanism Opens in Cote d'Ivoire," Economic Community of West African States(ECOWAS), August 6, 2018.

[12] Paige Arthur and Céline Monnier, "Creating the Political Space for Prevention: How ECOWAS Supports Nationally Led Strategies" (New York: Center on International Cooperation, August 2019). The civil society representative is selected by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP).

Prevention strategies: examples from Colombia

Colombia has been in the forefront of developing violence prevention strategies. A few of the relevant instruments in their prevention infrastructure are:

- The President's Plan, *Peace with Legality* (*Paz con legalidad*), which reflects the peace agreement's commitment to non-repetition.

- The *National Development Plan* (2018-2022), which includes a pact for peacebuilding, targeting regions most affected by violence and ensuring support for victims.

- The *Decree on a public policy for the prevention of violations of the rights to life, integrity, liberty and security of person of individuals, groups and communities* (Decree 1581 [2017]) was sanctioned by the former president and also guides Colombia's prevention efforts through inter-institutional and cross-sectoral approaches.

- Municipal plans: For instance, Bogotá has adopted the *Comprehensive Security Plan, Citizen Coexistence and Justice*, which presents a prevention strategy for the city, based on a risk analysis.

design and implementation of conflict prevention measures at local level, thus ensuring a whole-of-society approach.

The center adopts a **comprehensive approach** to prevention. It looks at threats to human security—defined across a range of key issues, including security, crime and criminality, environment, governance and human rights, and health. The approach also combines short- and long-term actions for prevention. When the center produces an alert on imminent risks for human security, it informs the prime minister's office and recommends an early response. In turn, the prime minister's office will alert the relevant ministry to deploy an immediate action. The center also collaborates with ECOWAS, especially to discuss openings for preventive diplomacy. In parallel, the center identifies longer-term risk factors, notably through the ECOWAS Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment.

The center addresses risk factors **from the local level** (through the involvement of local communities and local governments to address their specific dynamics) **to the international level**, by collaborating with other national centers in ECOWAS countries to better understand and tackle transnational security issues.

The Early Warning, Early Response System and the Directorate on Community Conflict Prevention in Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste has also created an early warning mechanism that plays a similar role of integrating responses across sectors, including engaging a variety of line ministries to address rising risks.

As described in a previous briefing, the organization NGO Belun created the Early Warning, Early Response System (EWER), which **collects data** systematically to identify early signs of conflicts or potential triggers for violence across social, political, economic and other categories.[13] On this basis, NGO Belun produces **alert documents**, in cases of immediate concern, as well as **longer-term analysis** to identify trends and conflict potential.

EWER relies on Conflict Prevention and Response Networks (CPRNs) to diffuse its findings at community level. These networks include the police, national government representatives, local governments, traditional local councils, civil society, and community members, which ensure an **inclusive and participatory approach**. Involving the community (and particularly vulnerable groups, at risk of being either perpetrators or victims) has a series of advantages: it ensures that root causes for violence are understood from a

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[13] Paige Arthur and Céline Monnier, "Nationally Led Prevention: Practical Examples of Approaches to Risk and Resilience" (New York: Center on International Cooperation, June 2019).

Sovereignty-supporting prevention

Preventive approaches at national level are sovereignty supporting, benefiting both the government and society as a whole. At a basic level, prevention initiatives increase the government's legitimacy among its citizens by showing that it fulfills its first sovereign duty: ensuring human security through the anticipation of threats.

Prevention is also cost-effective. Recovering from a security crisis can prove extremely costly; adopting a preventive approach provides better chances for development over the longer term, particularly as it permits the government to address cyclical issues.

variety of perspectives, and it creates a shared vision for peaceful coexistence. The array of actors also makes it easier to address risk factors at all levels. All actors can become agents for peace.

When EWER identifies a concern—which is commonly related to land disputes, conflicts between young people, domestic violence, and interactions between communities and the police and the military—the CPRNs often deploy teams to **mediate the disputes or support local conflict resolution mechanisms**. Alongside these immediate efforts, more structural approaches are implemented both at the local level and nationally. Locally, the CPRNs develop plans of action together with the local community to address underlying issues.

Some potential drivers of violence are also best dealt with at the **national level**; for instance, unemployment or the legal framework regulating land disputes. When the early warning systems identifies rising tensions, it shares an alert with the Directorate on Community Conflict Prevention, which sits in the Ministry of Interior. In turn, the Directorate circulates the information to the Council of Ministers, which determines which ministry is in the best position to address the issue, including through joint initiatives. For instance, if there is a land conflict, the Ministry of Justice and the Secretary of Land will be involved to resolve the situation, including through mediation at local level, or an improvement in disseminating the law. When there is no alert, NGO Belun still meets periodically with the National Security Working Group, which is part of the prime minister's office, as well as with the Directorate on Community Conflict Prevention, to share the data they collect.

Combining local and national approaches ensures that there is an integrated approach to prevention, cutting across sectors, and including government, civil society, and the communities.

Three conclusions for national governments

Prevention in national development plans
Prevention activities should be adequately budgeted for, otherwise—as it is too often the case—they will not be implemented. One effective way to tackle this issue is to include prevention priorities in national development plans. Such inclusion facilitates both national and international financing, particularly in the current climate where the UN is trying to align cooperation frameworks to the national development plans.

Establish a coordination mechanism for preventive efforts
In order to implement effective cross-pillar prevention strategies, the government benefits from establishing a coordination mechanism that has enough convening power to ensure contribution from all key stakeholders. In

Timor-Leste, early warning alerts and reports are dealt with by the Council of Ministers, and in Côte d'Ivoire, the center sits in the prime minister's office. Having coordination mechanisms that cut across ministries is important to ensuring whole-of-government solutions.

Ensure implementation from national to local level

A national prevention strategy should include a mechanism to implement programs at local level. In Timor-Leste, for instance, the CPRNs make sure that recommendations adopted at national level are translated into local initiatives, while at the same time involving the local community to participate in the design and implementation of the strategy.

Implications for multilateral organizations: 4 options for better support

National political will is the foundation for effective upstream prevention. Indeed, it requires a pragmatic approach to address risk factors across a range of issues, including development, security, human rights, justice, social cohesion, and civic values.

As highlighted in this brief, many countries have developed sophisticated prevention mechanisms. Some of them could benefit from some reinforcement to become even more effective. Multilateral actors have at least four options for supporting integrated approaches at the national level.

Option 1: Identify and support national prevention efforts in a more systematic way

Governments can be supported in efforts to adopt an integrated prevention strategy to increase the effectiveness of their prevention efforts. When such a prevention strategy exists—such as the ones presented in this brief—multilateral actors should make sure to identify and support these efforts. This can be achieved by aligning assistance provided through the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework—the new UNDAF—to national priorities on prevention. As an example, in Indonesia, the government has prioritized conflict prevention in its development plan, and some donors have aligned assistance with these priorities.[14] This said, it is worth noting that conflict prevention strategies are not necessarily in country development plans.

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[14] President of the Republic of Indonesia, "Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 17 of 2007 on Long-Term National Development Plan of 2005-2025," State Ministry of National Development Planning/ National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS) in Frontier Design, "The Strategic Prevention Project: Assessing the Role of Foreign Assistance in Preventing Violent Conflicts in Fragile States" (Washington: Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources, 2019).

Option 2: Capacity and technical support

Effective prevention is not a simple matter of project-level fixes; it requires an understanding of underlying drivers for violence across the whole society and efficient coordination mechanisms to address their interlinkages.

Hence, **technical support** for upstream prevention strategies is a core component of what multilateral actors can provide. For instance they can offer:

- Advice to the government in terms of **processes**; in other words, how can a government build a national prevention architecture and/or strategy; how can different actors align around key priorities and risks
- Technical support to address **specific issues** (farmers and herders' conflicts, tensions linked to massive displacements, phenomena of urban violence and so on) or risk factors
- Capacity building in terms **analytical skills** (e.g., joint analysis, statistical knowledge, identifying patterns and clusters)

A lot of relevant expertise exists within the UN system, but it will be up to resident coordinators (RC) or peace and development advisers (PDA) to identify demands and coordinate an appropriate response. RCs and PDAs can also provide direct guidance if they have a strong grounding conflict prevention, or they can connect national actors with expertise inside and outside of the UN.

The HIPPO report suggested the creation of a "light team" that could be deployed upon government demand from headquarters level, which remains a strong idea in concept. Guidelines for conflict prevention to inform government efforts could be developed, for instance in the Economic and Social Council, which has long-standing guidelines on crime prevention (ECOSOC Resolution 2002/13). The idea for a "prevention platform" to coordinate the system around prevention—if created—could provide a central mechanism for guidance and deployment of capacity.

Option 3: Convening

Multilateral actors can also play an important **convening role** by raising the profile of national prevention efforts to attract funding and political support, and to facilitate the exchange of good practices. They can also facilitate agreement among a range of actors on key risks and priorities for action.

Member states could in time increase their voluntary use of the Peacebuilding Commission to achieve this goal. Greater interaction between the commission and the World Bank could play a helpful role. New RCs can tap into the new UN-World Bank Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Partnership fund for support, and could also advise on available funds and undertake additional fundraising efforts to support prevention. In this regard, as highlighted in the

Pathways for Peace report, the UN and the World Bank should work more closely together on analysis and programming at national level.

Option 4: Advocacy for prevention

National political will is the foundation of upstream prevention approaches. In its absence, multilateral actors can play an advocacy role with authorities to explain and promote the effectiveness of prevention approaches. In this regard, the role of the RC and PDA is particularly crucial and it would be important to ensure a degree of expertise in prevention. At international level, encouraging countries, including middle-income and high-income countries, to share their nationally led approaches in prevention would also help normalize these approaches.

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