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# Towards SDG 16:

PROMOTING JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE  
SOCIETIES IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

## 1 CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING





## TOWARDS SDG 16:

Promoting Just, Peaceful and  
Inclusive Societies in Europe  
and Central Asia

# CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

## OVERVIEW

The legacy of conflict and the prevalence of protracted and so-called frozen conflicts throughout the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) region has long undermined development efforts and progress on a range of socio-economic and other indicators. In addition, a number of places in the region exist where tensions between different ethnic, religious and political groups risk escalating into more formal conflicts.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) work on conflict prevention and peace-

building aims to promote social cohesion and empower nations and communities to become more inclusive and resilient to external and internal shocks. In order to achieve these aims, UNDP utilizes overlapping approaches with different focuses, which in the region can be classified into several broad categories:

- **Conflict Analysis and Risk Assessment** – Sound analysis is not only central to understanding the causes and drivers of conflict, capacities for peace, and key stakeholders, but is also critical to developing strategic approaches for the UN system to comprehensively support national efforts to address con-

licts and protect development gains.

- **Opening Dialogues and Confidence-Building** – In areas where conflict and/or re-occurring violence have led to divisions, opening dialogues and confidence building aims to increase engagement and trust between people and communities on opposite sides of conflict divides by identifying and addressing shared challenges, and establishing formal frameworks to pre-empt future conflict.
- **Reconciliation and Peacebuilding** – Where communities with a history of tension and conflict continue to live together, an increased emphasis on reconciliation and the prevention of violence is required to mitigate the higher risk of conflict re-emerging and sustain peace over the long term.
- **Conflict Management and Recovery** – Typically combining elements of cross-border peacebuilding and confidence building, managing active conflict and facilitating recovery requires a specialized approach that also aims to reduce and eliminate violence, reintegrate internally displaced persons (IDPs), support reforms that address the causes of conflict, and identify priorities for rebuilding.

## KEY TRENDS

### PROTRACTED CONFLICTS AND ONGOING TENSION

The ECIS region provides a wide and diverse range of examples of protracted conflict and conflict-related political complexity. These range from highly volatile situations with regular outbreaks of violence, to situations where conflict is not an immediate risk and/or sovereignty is not overtly contested, but where structural tensions, conflict drivers and/or the legacy of armed conflict have complicated the political landscape.

The most recent, and arguably most significant, conflict to occur in the ECIS region since the end of the wars in the Western Balkans is the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Initiated by a series of events starting in 2013, the conflict continues in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine. Despite a series of ceasefires negotiated over the past two years, regular violations continue to occur.

In other parts of the ECIS region, ceasefires have ended formal conflicts and contributed to a fragile stability, but internationally mediated peace talks have, broadly, failed to bring lasting solutions.

UNDP's *Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding* work is designed to help countries meet targets under:

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



### GOAL 5 – ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



### GOAL 16 – PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

- Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

This can be seen in locations such as Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Often, in the absence of a political settlement, these conflicts continue in political form, perpetuating the divides in and polarisation of societies. The legacy of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have similar qualities, as political challenges continue to haunt the region. Concessions arising from negotiations are often hard fought and suffer from a lack of support from the population, as was evidenced in 2015 by the large-scale protests in both Pristina and Belgrade after an EU-brokered agreement was signed. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the presence of a peace treaty has not addressed the country's divisions along ethnic lines, both politically and geographically. In 2015, several issues reinforced this polarization and placed a renewed strain on peacebuilding efforts. Similarly, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, tension between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians has led to occasional flare-ups, including a gun battle between Macedonian Police and ethnic Albanian gunmen in Kumanovo in May 2015.

The Fergana Valley shared by Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan represents another source of volatility in the ECIS region. As a result of the multi-ethnic composition of the valley and the historical rivalries between those ethnic groups, disputes often arise due to the location of different ethnic communities across modern boundaries, and the need to share resources, such as arable land, water and transport.

While many of these conflicts appear small and localized, they present a considerable threat to the wider European and Eurasian security architecture, with a risk that outbreaks of violence can spread quickly and/or lead to undesirable political and economic outcomes. It is also for this reason that developments that can exacerbate existing tensions, like the migration crisis in the Western Balkans and Turkey, or the economic slowdown impacting countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, are carefully considered in the context of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

## **NEW AND OLD THREATS FROM VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

Violent extremism in the ECIS region threatens to reverse the development gains made over the past twenty years. Some places are more impacted than others, with the situation in parts of the Western Balkans, Turkey and the Caucasus being particularly challenging. More recently, the threat level has been increasing substantially in Central Asia.

Much of the discourse on violent extremism paints it as a religious phenomenon, and while religious drivers are a factor, this is not always the case. Many of the causes of violent extremism relate to a broad range of identity-based concerns, such as political exclusion of certain groups and ideologies around separatism. Broadly, radical ideologies are associated with high and extreme inequality and injustice (or the perception of inequality and injustice) – whether it be social, economic and political. Resorting to violence can therefore be understood as being motivated by hopelessness and frustration.

Extremist organizations look to take advantage of this frustration by preying on vulnerable members of society, such as the marginalized and unemployed, particularly among the youth. Another group at a high risk are economic migrants, for example Central Asian migrants to Russia who, by virtue of being in a foreign country, are cut off from their normal social networks. Social and other forms of new media are also a factor in higher and more active means of recruitment.

A relatively new threat that has emerged as a result of violent extremism, both in the ECIS region and in Western Europe, is that of individuals who opt to become foreign terrorist fighters. In the ECIS region, Turkey and Uzbekistan have seen the largest number of people leave to fight in foreign conflicts, at least partially due to their proximity to active conflicts (Syria and Afghanistan respectively), but several other countries and territories in the region have also seen significant numbers of citizens take up arms.

In order to counter the violence of extremists, some governments in the ECIS region, particularly those in Central Asia, have resorted to security responses, including restrictions on movement, assembly and free speech. While this type of response is often effective, if it is not carefully targeted or combined with prevention and development efforts, there is a risk of exacerbating feelings of injustice and grievance. This in turn can heighten the risk of further violent extremism and create new populations that can be targeted by extremist recruiters.

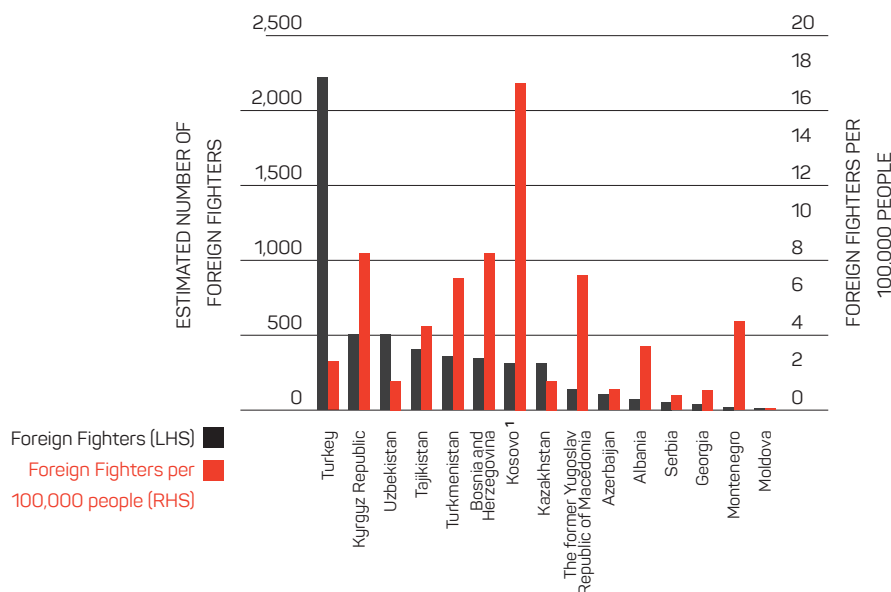
Some governments have also modified or introduced laws to ensure foreign fighters can be prosecuted when they return. However, due to the transnational nature of the phenomenon making it difficult to know whom among a population has become a foreign fighter or even how many there are, the effectiveness of this strategy appears limited.

## WHAT WE DO

### CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

UNDP has been working in contexts of conflict-related political complexity in the ECIS region for more than 15 years, particularly in partnership with the EU and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA). It has developed a range of tools in these contexts to drive an increasingly analytical and evidence-based approach, and has cultivated a strong knowledge base in effective programming that ranges from conflict-sensitive approaches to area-based development to more active work using development assistance to foster confidence in protracted conflict situations. The development mandate provides UNDP with political neutrality and substantial operational capacities to deliver development solutions in these challenging environments.

#### ESTIMATED FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ - 2015



Source: Foreign Fighter Estimates: The Soufan Group<sup>2</sup> | Population Estimates: The World Bank<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

<sup>2</sup> The Soufan Group, "Foreign Fighters", December 2015.

Available from [http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG\\_ForeignFightersUpdate\\_FINAL.pdf](http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank, "Population, total". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL> (accessed 19 August 2016)

Based on this extensive experience, UNDP's approach has two key dimensions:

- Accurately identify and assess development needs and priorities at the local level, in order to effectively target assistance, and thus adhere to core principles of conflict sensitivity, including the 'do no harm' philosophy; and
- Directly engage with and facilitate inclusive participation of people at the community level in decision-making, to focus on addressing shared challenges and development issues at the inter-community level, irrespective of the higher level political context.

A key pillar in UNDP's conflict analysis and risk assessment work, as well as conflict and peace-building programming more generally, is the deployment of Peace and Development Advisors, with the UNDP-DPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention being the primary facilitator of these deployments.

This global programme enables access to a global network of specialized expertise at the local level, helping Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams analyse, adapt and respond to complex political development with conflict-sensitive programming. In 2015, Peace and Development Advisors were deployed in eight countries in the ECIS region.

UNDP also has a number of other partners in its conflict analysis and risk assessment work. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has deployed Human Rights Advisors to provide guidance on navigating politically complex situations where human rights violations are in question and the Human Rights Up-Front mechanism has reviewed risks in specific countries in the region. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also been an important and long-term partner in this work across the region.

## TURNING IMPARTIALITY INTO ACTION – HOW DPA AND UNDP WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT CITIZENS IN AREAS WHERE FEW OTHERS CAN OPERATE

In most of the region's protracted conflicts, the situation has worsened considerably over the course of 2015 and 2016. In some cases, such as Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, long-standing political processes have ground to virtual stalemate. In others, the protracted conflicts have returned to open combat. In eastern Ukraine, the conflict continues to simmer dangerously, with violence at times escalating significantly. Within this increasingly polarized regional and international environment, the number of actors considered "impartial" has continued to decrease, having the unfortunate overall effect of further isolating these communities and making the situation for already-vulnerable communities that much more precarious.

In recognition of the fact that delivering basic welfare and livelihood-improving assistance requires careful political calibration, throughout the course of 2015, UNDP continued to strengthen its joint work with DPA. This work focuses on supporting UN Country Teams with Peace and Development Advisors that assist UN programming in these highly sensitive conditions – including in BiH, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

In BiH, at a time of heightened social tension between youth and the Government, and with considerable residual inter-ethnic divisions, the Dialogue for the Future programme opened up a new form of structured dialogue between young people and the (mainly older) members of the Government about what type of future citizens want for their country, as well as nation-wide opportunities to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue. The project went on to support a number of innovative initiatives that corresponded with this vision.

In Georgia, at a time of reduced dialogue between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, the highly political and long-stalled project to resurface the Enguri Bridge – the principal connection between communities separated by conflict and living on both sides of the Enguri River, was finally agreed. This has allowed for contact to be re-established, families to be reunited and a reduction in operational obstacles for businesses.



Photo by: UNDP Georgia

Resurfacing the Enguri Bridge, the principal connection between the territory of Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia

In the fertile Fergana Valley between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, UNDP's long-standing area-based work in ethnically-divided communities, where violent clashes are frequent, intensified and expanded to embed a community-owned early warning system. This system uses metrics to alert community leaders to deteriorating conditions and allows for targeted development assistance to be provided to those leaders, facilitating community-level decisions that can lead to community-level projects. Early indicators demonstrate that tensions and violent clashes are reducing as a result.

All of this work has been enabled by an increasingly functional Joint Programme between DPA and UNDP delivering development assistance in areas beset by division and conflict.

*"UNDP and DPA continue to strengthen their partnership in the ECIS region, in an increasingly complex geo-political environment. In particular, UNDP and DPA work together closely to support the UN Country Teams in a growing number of challenging socio-economic, governance and peace and security settings.*

*Some of these challenges include latent, deep-rooted and unresolved inter-ethnic and/or religious tensions; tensions related to disputed territories or unresolved or protracted conflicts undermining peace and security; democratic governance deficit and adverse impact of global trends, including migration, transnational crime and violent extremism.*

*As evidence of this support to UN Country Teams, we can point to our close cooperation in developing coordinated, UN system-wide responses to politically-sensitive events, including election-related violence, constitutional reviews efforts and legislative changes that may contribute to political instability.*

*The UNDP-DPA partnership helps bringing together the UN's political and development capacities in more efficient and effective ways to address such challenges. The partnership has augmented the capacity of the UN to carry out its mandates for early warning/early action, conflict prevention, mediation, peace-building, reconciliation, promotion of dialogue and development and helps to reinforce the UNCT's ability to work with relevant Member States and to send coherent messages at critical moments. These increased efforts often take place within the framework of the UNDP-DPA Joint Programme to support strengthening national capacities for conflict prevention, which uses various tools, including the deployment of Peace and Development Advisors, in several countries of the ECIS, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Tajikistan."*

– **Mr. Levent Bilman**, Director, Europe Division, UN Department of Political Affairs



Peace and Development Advisors were deployed in 8 countries in the ECIS region.



## OPENING DIALOGUES AND CONFIDENCE-BUILDING

With a goal of improving the relationships between people, communities and eventually populations that are divided due to conflict, UNDP employs a range of measures to open dialogues, build confidence, encourage interaction, and establish shared understanding.

In Moldova, the absence of a political resolution to the Transnistria dispute and the functional separation of societies and political structures on both sides of the Dniester river has complicated future negotiations and hinders socio-economic development, stability and security. The protracted division has also led to the emergence of parallel systems, which in turn have created both practical and psychological barriers to inter-communal interactions. As such, UNDP's goals in affected communities are to increase positive interactions and diminish the negative impact of high-level political disputes on the local populations.

To achieve this, UNDP has been working in partnership with the EU since 2009 to employ a range of confidence building measures, including a combination of infrastructure works, capacity development initiatives, and financial support mechanisms for communities on both sides of the Dniester. Although activities tend to focus on reducing the isolation of Transnistria, they strive to balance the benefits received by both sides to avoid creating resentment or exacerbat-



Event to announce funding for infrastructure projects in communities from both banks of the Nistru River in Moldova

Photo by: UNDP Moldova

ing tensions, and place priority on initiatives implemented by cross-river partnerships.

Local development has also been a key focus during this work. Social infrastructure, such as the rehabilitation of shared healthcare institutions, community markets, roads, and educational institutions in strategic locations, often provides a place for individuals from different communities to interact and engage through common interests. Infrastructure projects also help to alleviate unemployment through the creation of short-term employment during the construction phase and long-term employment through agreements with the community to take over maintenance of the facilities.

The integration of civil society has proven to be one of the more successful aspects of this work. With grant eligibility often conditional on the partnering of civil society organisations representing communities on both sides of the river, these projects have helped establish ongoing and meaningful partnerships.

## UNDERSTANDING WHAT DIVIDES AND UNITES SOCIETIES – HOW THE SOCIAL COHESION AND RECONCILIATION INDEX (SCORE) HAS BETTER TARGETED UNDP'S PEACEBUILDING ASSISTANCE

In societies beset by conflict and division, tools are needed to measure the cohesiveness, or lack thereof, between groups in order to guide peacebuilding policies and activities. For too long peacebuilding approaches have sought to promote peace through addressing known grievances – but these have not always reflected the full spectrum of what divides and unites a given community.

In response to this need, SCORE was developed in Cyprus in 2012 by the UNDP Action for Cooperation and

Trust programme, in collaboration with the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Development (Seed) and with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The primary benefit of SCORE in guiding peacebuilding policies and activities is that it is both a descriptive and predictive model for ascertaining the level of social cohesion and potential for reconciliation that exists within a society. It does this by:



- a) Measuring social cohesion (the extent to which co-existence between individuals in a society and the institutions that surround them is harmonious) and reconciliation (the propensity to come closer to formerly adversarial groups) in any given society as two key indicators of peace;
- b) Monitoring the levels of these two indicators over time; and
- c) Using the results to formulate evidenced-based policy and targeted programmes which can respond more precisely to conflict transformation needs.

Initially, rolled out in Cyprus in 2013, results for SCORE have been utilized in the development of evidence-based policy recommendations that have been shared through Track 1 and Track 2 political processes, as well as the UN Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission, civil society, political parties and local authorities. The continuing impact of SCORE is evident in several developments in the Cyprus peace process, which have been informed by the policy recommendations generated using evidence collected by SCORE. Examples of these recommendations, and subsequent policy decisions, developed based on the information gathered by SCORE in Cyprus are:

**SCORE recommendation 1:** The need to enhance pluralism to help both communities become more comfortable with cultural diversity.

**Policy Decision 1:** Establishment of a technical committee on culture. This has led to the leaders from both communities attending cultural events together for the first time in the history of the conflict, to public acclaim.

**SCORE Recommendation 2:** Create practical ways to reduce the social distance between the two communities.

**Policy Decision 2:** Change in policy by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, who abolished the requirement to complete administrative forms at crossing points. This requirement had been often cited as a barrier to Greek Cypriots being able to cross to the Turkish Cypriot side.

**SCORE Recommendation 3:** The perspectives of women need to be better understood in the peace process, as women are more likely to reject political compromise.

**Policy Decision 3:** Establishment of a committee on gender equality.

Based on the success of SCORE in Cyprus, it was subsequently extended to UNDP's peacebuilding work in BiH (2013-2014) and Ukraine (2016-2017). Further expansion is also expected in the future.

Similarly, in Georgia, UNDP has been using confidence building measures to help bring communities closer together on the ground. Working in partnership with the EU and the Kingdom of the Netherlands since 2010, the Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM) programme is a status-neutral, apolitical and flexible programme designed to provide support to confidence building opportunities throughout Georgia (including the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) at the grassroots level.

At its core, COBERM is a small-scale grants facility for civil society organisations to strengthen their capacity to monitor and improve the accountability and transparency of authorities (both *de jure* and *de facto*). With improved skills and other capacities, and the financial motivation to re-establish connections across the conflict divide, there have been corresponding improvements in transparency and accountability, and a reduction in tensions and the potential for conflict.

COBERM has also provided a platform for civil society organizations, together with local communities from conflict-affected areas, to identify

conflict triggers and propose ways to address them in the form of development projects. The large number and wide geographical coverage of the grants, as well as the wide range of civil society partners, have ensured an increase in direct interactions across the conflict divides. This has provided numerous opportunities for joint cooperation on issues of common interest, normalizing cooperation between communities, and helping to establish sustainable partnerships involving youth groups, writers, farmers, linguists, and veterinarians. An independent evaluation has confirmed that COBERM is an effective model for confidence building and has changed the civil dialogue climate, which is particularly crucial in Georgia, where little progress has been made on the political front on bridging the divide between communities.

In the South Caucasus, existing high tensions and the lack of any direct contact between civil society groups and/or other actors from Armenia and Azerbaijan, have created a situation where there is little opportunity to discuss possible paths forward. In an attempt to open up a new dialogue, the Peace and Development Advisor in Georgia took the lead in organising two



A young gamer plays 'Peace Park' – an online game developed as part of COBERM to encourage peace and cooperation in the South Caucasus

Photo by: COBERM

roundtables with representatives from the UN and partner civil society organisations from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to discuss the future of the United Nation's development agenda and the 'World We Want' in the South Caucasus. In this case, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offered an entry point for the UN in the South Caucasus to link peacebuilding and devel-

opment. Civil society actors from the South Caucasus were brought together for an open joint discussion on common issues, with interactions between participants from all three countries remaining constructive, and a set of common issues, opportunities and challenges being agreed by everyone.

## Highlights



*Infrastructure works, capacity development initiatives, and financial support mechanisms have helped communities work together on both sides of the Dniester river in Moldova.*



*Grants provided to fund numerous rounds of projects aimed at rebuilding connections between communities, including a project to resurface the principal connection between Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia – the Enguri Bridge.*



*Constructive dialogue established between civil society organizations from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia on the SDGs in the South Caucasus.*

## RECONCILIATION AND PEACEBUILDING

In many places in the ECIS region, historically conflicted communities remain in close proximity and are required to interact on a daily basis despite the legacy of conflict and division. In these cases, UNDP's work focuses facilitating reconciliation and preventing outbreaks of violence.

In 2014 and 2015, one of UNDP's major initiatives aimed to address ongoing tensions between communities in the border areas of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, particularly in and around the Fergana Valley where communities are often in close proximity and not always in alignment with modern borders.

UNDP's interventions were based on the assessment that much of the tension between these communities arises due to a lack of information. With local community leaders being important figures in these communities, UNDP provided these leaders with information on the challenges and risks facing their communities, allowing them to advocate for joint projects and activities with other communities to address those problems. As a result, this cooperative problem solving helped to normalize relationships, build trust, and reduce the potential for violent conflict.

The project was designed on three pillars:

- Providing Kyrgyz and Tajik community leaders with access to reliable and balanced information about local conflict dynamics and trends;
- Strengthening local mechanisms for dialogue, deliberation, and problem-solving; and
- Support for jointly agreed and jointly implemented activities to build trust and establish a pattern of practical cooperation between communities.

To address the first pillar, a community-based conflict monitoring mechanism, TRACTION (TRENds for ACTION), was developed to monitor the conflict situation based on a list of ten substantive policy areas including water resources, access to land, road/transport, and prevailing attitudes toward the other side. TRACTION also

allows for the tracking of conflict likelihood over time, the categorization and quantification of reported disputes and clashes, and the identification of trends and patterns. With this information, themes and issues for community dialogues were identified, allowing the subsequent implementation of confidence-building infrastructure initiatives to remain focused on addressing specific conflict causes and drivers.

The results of this cross-border intervention were so convincing that, in 2015, the UN country teams in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan developed a joint programme, supported by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office Peacebuilding Fund and the Swiss Development Cooperation, to be implemented with assistance from five UN agencies between 2015 and 2017.

Addressing the legacy of the conflicts in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia is also a focus of UNDP's engagement. In BiH, the Dialogue for the Future remains one of the flagship projects for reconciliation in the ECIS region, helping to address past grievances, bring together communities from different ethnic groups, and build understanding. To date, Dialogue for the Future has directly engaged over 54,000 citizens with Dialogue Platform Conferences, youth forums, trainings, and various grants facility projects. Similarly, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNDP is working to reconcile differences between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians in Kumanovo and Gostivar. With the goal of strengthening social cohesion among youth living in multi-ethnic areas, in 2015 this work focused on establishing youth councils, with workshops, trainings, street art performances and debates to raise awareness of the councils, as well as bringing youth from different communities together.



Dialogue for the Future conference in Sarajevo

Photo by: UNDP BiH



## Highlights



*A new system (TRACTION) established in Tajik and Kyrgyz border communities in the Fergana Valley to monitor the conflict situation and encourage community dialogues.*



*UNDP's positive impact inspired UN country teams in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to develop a joint programme that will be implemented with assistance from five UN agencies.*



*Dialogue for the Future continues to engage large numbers of people in BiH through a number of events.*



*Youth Councils established in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to help strengthen social cohesion between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians.*

### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY

In situations where violence and conflict are still occurring, a different approach must be taken to peacebuilding that recognizes the fragility and dangers of the situation, as well as the risks of exacerbating violence and underlying tensions. UNDP's support in the ECIS region's most active conflict in Ukraine has centred around a two-pronged approach: supporting broad scale reform linked to the drivers of conflict and the Maidan protests, and facilitating recovery and peacebuilding, specifically in the Donbas region.

At the national level, UNDP aims to facilitate government reform processes in several areas, including decentralisation, rule of law, human rights, voice and participation, anti-corruption, as well as those that seek to address the often difficult political, social and regional aspirations with-

in Ukrainian society. A survey on decentralisation and the rights of women in rural areas was implemented in partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman, with the information collected by this survey to be used to help inform future decentralization reforms. UNDP has also been working extensively with local civil society and NGOs in the areas of decentralization, constitutional reform, and parliamentary development. Looking forward, two major projects are planned targeting parliamentary reform, and rule of law and community justice. Developed in 2015, these projects have now secured funding from the EU and the Netherlands respectively, ensuring UNDP's work in these areas can continue.

In support of recovery, UNDP launched a Dialogue Support Platform to help improve coordination and cooperation between organizations working in Ukraine, allowing for the sharing

of knowledge and expertise, and improving the impact of development efforts. UNDP also supported the provision of legal aid in conflict-affected communities, allowing people in those communities to seek justice without resorting to violence or other forms of retaliation. The Restoration of Governance and Reconciliation Project in the Donbas, with support of Switzerland and Sweden, also launched a number of important initiatives aimed at reducing social tension and enhancing the capacity of local governments to improve public service provision and include citizens in decision-making process. Funds from the EU will support expansion of the project to the implementation of decentralization reform and the strengthening of gender equality impact in cooperation with UN Women.

As a framework for this work in 2015, UNDP helped to coordinate and complete the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment of government controlled areas of Eastern Ukraine. Aimed at providing a review of the current state of governance and infrastructure in conflict-affected areas, the assessment was widely circulated amongst national and international stakeholders and formally endorsed through a Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, establishing it as a government-owned framework for prioritizing recovery and peacebuilding programming in the short to medium term.

Following up on the assessment, UNDP has provided technical support to the inter-ministerial working group charged with implementing the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment. Already this work has led to a draft resolution on the establishment of a Council for Donbas Recovery. This council, when established, will serve as a high-level forum for policy dialogue with international partners on rolling out the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment, under the Government's leadership.

Finally, with a risk of conflict spreading to neighbouring areas, UNDP performed an early assessment of the risks to inter-community relations, and the implementation of the steps to mitigate those risks. This included confidence-building measures and dialogues at the local level in four neighbouring oblasts (Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia and Kherson).

Tree planting at the launch of a project to restore social services at the Sloviansk Rayon Hospital in the Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine



Photo by: Eugene Zelenko/UNDP Ukraine

## Highlights



*Completion of the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment, which was subsequently endorsed by the Government, providing a framework for future recovery and peacebuilding efforts.*



*Funding secured for two new projects on parliamentary reform and rule of law and community justice, and Restoration of Governance project expanded.*



*Launched a Dialogue Support Platform to facilitate co-operation and effective knowledge sharing.*



