

Urban violence and cities of peace

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Abstract

There is no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Cities and territories are the scenario where measures to build sustainable development and coexistence are implemented. When talking about violence and inequalities, closely linked concepts, we find cities and territories essential spaces to consider. Cities and their environments are becoming laboratories where these tensions coexist and where, at the same time, proposals for coexistence and peace are being tested.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 of the 2030 Agenda calls for the promotion of just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. The first target of this goal calls for "Significantly reducing all forms of violence and violence-related death rates worldwide" (target 16.1 of the 2030 Agenda). Likewise, in its SDG number 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), the 2030 Agenda states the need to "make cities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". In the logic of the 2030 Agenda, the approach to the urban violence issue must be based on a multi-stakeholder commitment between public institutions, civil society, academia and the private sector, in which each actor contributes within its own capacities (SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals). In order to address the issue of urban violence, this alliance must rely on a solid leadership by the institutions that can be closest to the citizens - namely, local and regional governments.

Humanity and the planet are going through very troubled times, facing great challenges. These include, as

various international organizations are warning us about, the growth of inequalities, the progressive destruction of the environment and its consequences on climate change. Moreover, these global tensions are generating more and more scenarios of armed tension, threats to world peace, or the advance of totalitarian ideologies that jeopardize the progress of global commitments such as the 2030 Agenda, a global consensus approved in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly that aims to strengthen the values of equality, equity, sustainability, and human rights.

Humanity and the planet are facing opposing trends. On the one hand, a development trend that proposes cultures, values, policies, strategies and consensus as the necessary elements for the recovery and management of a peaceful, sustainable and fairer world. While on the other, a trend of increasing hatred, confrontation, unlimited and unequal growth with consequences of destruction / self-destruction.

A culture of peace consists of promoting dialogue as an attitude for conflict resolution, considering respect for human rights as the starting point for conflict resolution. This proposal clashes with the culture of violence, which tends to recognize violence as the way to resolve the conflict, and, to this end, is endowed with a construction of values that legitimizes it (cultural violence).

It is time for action: cities and territories are essential scenarios to address the threats of direct, cultural and structural violence, and instead, to build coexistence and peace.

1. Human Security, Violences and Inequalities: role of local and regional governments

1.1 Human Security

Assuming the term coined by Paul Jozef Crutzen, Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1995, we live in the "Anthropocene"¹ era in which human beings are the main factor in the alteration of nature.

Unfortunately, the moment we are living in is the result of the mismatch between the growth of human development and the growth of human insecurity.

According to the Human Development Report Office and its 2022 Special Report "New threats to human security in the Anthropocene call for greater solidarity". Shortly before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, 6 out of 7 people worldwide had a high or very high perception of insecurity, a feeling also present in countries with a very high HDI. This document recovers this concept of "human security" coined in 1994 and adopted by the General Assembly in 2012, a sad paradox becomes evident:

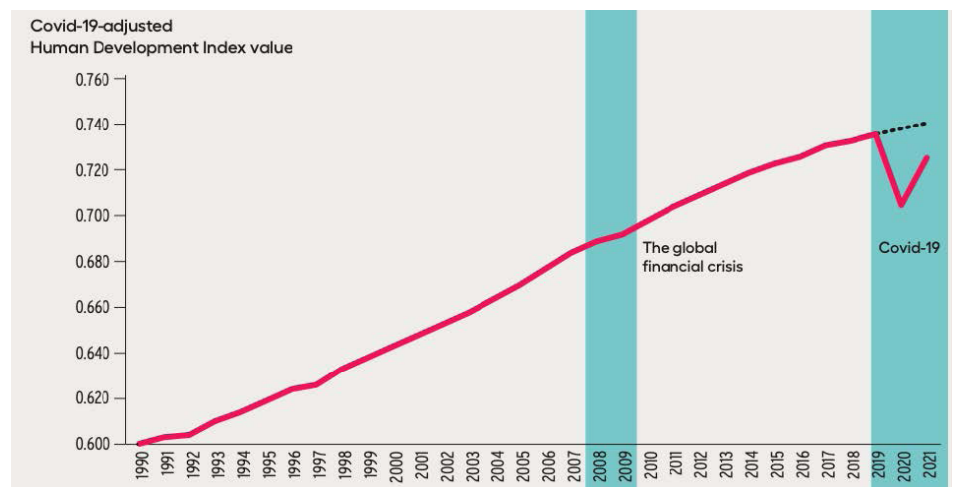
"As the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, the world had been reaching unprecedented levels of human development on the Human Development Index (HDI). People were, on average, living healthier, wealthier and better lives for longer than ever. But under the surface, a growing sense of insecurity had been taking root. An estimated six out of every seven people across the world already felt insecure in the years leading up to the pandemic. And this feeling of insecurity was not only high—it had been growing in most countries for which data was available, including a surge in some countries with the highest HDI values."²

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated, not generated, this trend. And it has accentuated it in an alarming way: the global HDI values in 2020 have declined to the levels they were at 10 years ago, with a recovery in 2021 that still puts humanity in the same place as we were 5 years ago.

The mantra of unlimited economic growth, which disregards the

importance of sustainable human development –with equity, equality, and human rights– has produced marked inequalities that are at the root of violence, as well as global climate changes that we can also qualify as environmental violence. And no less remarkable is the impact that this mantra of unlimited economic growth and control of resources has on the most intense expression of human violence: war.

Peace is not the absence of war; this assertion will be further developed below. Peace is the guarantee of rights, while war, as described above, is the most intense expression of human violence. Nowadays, in the 21st century, this intense expression of violence has an increasingly greater impact on cities, which have become battlefields, spaces of destruction.



COVID-19-adjusted

Beyond this intense expression of human violence, we live in scenarios of unresolved conflicts that generate multiple expressions of violence: gender violence, racist and xenophobic violence, aporophobia (rejection of the poor), violence in sports, school bullying, violence generated by religious intolerance or violence against LGBTQIA+ populations, violence in social networks, police violence, organized crime, violence against nature, (...) or political corruption felt by citizens as an aggression, a violation of their rights.

1. See: <https://www.geosociety.org/gsatoday/archive/18/2/pdf/i1052-5173-18-2-4.pdf>

2. Available at: <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2022-special-report-human-security>

1.2 The concept of violence

Violence is a complex concept. It is often translated as the use (or threat of use) of force that can cause injury, damage, deprivation or even cause the loss of life, exercised verbally, physically or psychologically. It can be exercised against oneself or strangers, be they nearby or far away.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as:

“The deliberate use of physical force or power, whether threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or a group or community, that causes or has a high probability of causing injury, death, psychological harm, developmental disorder or deprivation”.³

This paper considers interpersonal violence, suicidal behavior and armed conflict, threats and intimidation, or the myriad consequences of violent behavior as violence, including those consequences that are often less noticed, such as psychological harm, deprivation and developmental impairments that compromise the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

The WHO report previously cited mentions numerous biological, social, cultural, economic, and political factors

that influence violence. The model identifies four levels at which violence is experienced: individual, relational, community and societal. At the same time, it proposes a typology that helps to better understand the phenomenon of violence. It includes:

- ▶ Interpersonal violence, committed by an individual or a small group.
- ▶ Self-inflicted violence and suicide. More than 700,000 people committed suicide worldwide in 2020.
- ▶ Collective violence, meaning the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group against another group or set of individuals.

The report also notes that “around the world, authorities tend to act only after violent acts have occurred. However, investing in prevention, especially in primary prevention activities that operate before problems occur, can be more cost-effective and bring considerable and lasting benefits”. In this sense, local and regional governments (LRGs) have an essential role to play: investing in prevention or mediation. Thus avoiding different expressions of violence and saving lives.

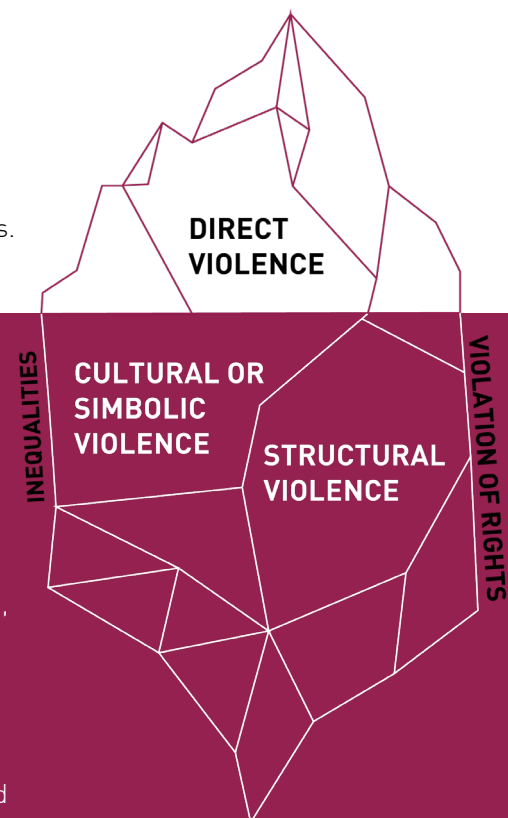
1.3 Galtung and his pyramid of violence

Johan Galtung, Norwegian sociologist, developed a concept to represent the dynamics of the generation of violence in social conflicts. In this construction, – which has been widely used in reflections on violence, conflict resolution and the culture of peace – Galtung argues that the causes of direct violence against a given group are related to structural violence or are justified by cultural violence, which feeds them.

Violence is like an “iceberg”, which has a visible part [direct violence] and an invisible part [structural violence and cultural violence]. It is often the case that the causes of direct violence respond to situations of structural violence (inequalities, violation of rights, repression, contamination) and are

sustained and legitimized by cultural violence (attitudes, beliefs, ideas, values, traditions or ideologies).

Although direct violence is often visible, it is also true that it leaves invisible after-effects (hatred, trauma, unjust international relations). Galtung's conception, assumed by the culture and education for peace movement, shows the importance of structural and cultural violence and the importance of its identification in order to develop educational and preventive actions. Although one may find themselves in a territory with low rates of direct violence, peace is not complete as long as structural and cultural violence persist.



3. See: <https://www.who.int/publications/item/9789241564793>

1.4 Inequalities

The report "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2021",⁴ developed by five UN agencies, alludes to 811 million people who do not know what they will eat today. The scenario was thus already quite bleak before the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The report also points out that some 118 million more people suffered from hunger in 2020 than in 2019, with estimates ranging from 70 million to 161 million. In addition, 2.4 billion people are food insecure due to the cumulative socioeconomic and environmental dynamics that had been taking place prior to 2019, exacerbated by the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. This is "structural violence".

Globally, according to UN Women, an estimated 736 million women (about one in three) have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence perpetrated by a non-partner at some time in their lives (30% of women over the age of 15). Moreover, according to UN Women in its report "Facts and figures: Ending violence against women",⁵ some 81,000 women and girls were murdered in 2020, some 47,000 of them (58%) at the hands of their partners or family members. This is direct violence caused by cultural violence.

There are other instances of direct violence that stems from cultural violence. There are still 11 countries that condemn homosexuality with the death penalty, in addition to the worldwide persecution, institutional or cultural, of people with a gender identity different from the normative binary.⁶

In Africa, UN-Habitat finds that only 55% of urban residents have access to basic sanitation services, and access to health care has declined in slum communities in cities such as Nairobi, Ibadan and Lagos as a result of the pandemic.⁷

In 2021, a year in which the COVID-19 pandemic had reduced global mobility in general terms, more than 84 million people were forcibly displaced, according to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This is a number

that exceeds those recorded in 2020 and 2019, years in which records had already been broken in terms of the number of forcibly displaced people in the world.⁸ This is something that has never been seen before in the history of humanity.

Cyber-violence has generated new types of aggressions that cause enormous physical (suicides) and psychological harm. The online environment provides anonymity and makes it easier to insult, denigrate, threaten, harass – especially using sex in its different dimensions – extort and commit cybercrimes with impunity.

As of March 15th, 2022, COVID-19 infections were still increasing in 26 countries. There have been at least 463,259,000 reported infections and 6,443,000 reported deaths caused by the new coronavirus.⁹

In 2020, South Africa and India asked for an exemption related to TRIPS (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) for vaccines against COVID-19. However, major wealthy countries opposed this measure, as did the major private pharmaceutical companies that market the vaccines, blocking technology transfers and rallying support against the exemption that would allow the expansion of global vaccine manufacturing.

These are examples of some direct, visible violence, caused by cultural and structural violence, and some structural violence that causes and will cause direct violence, based on the feeling of aggression and violation of rights and in the aggravation of inequalities.

4. For more information: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb4474es/online/cb4474es.html>

5. Know more: <https://www.unwomen.org/es/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

6. See: <https://www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/blog/historia/articulo/asesinatos-colectivo-lgbti/>

7. Further details: https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/covid-19_in_african_cities_impacts_responses_and_policies_2.pdf

8. For more information: <https://news.un.org/es/story/2021/12/1501972>

9. Available at: <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/>

Violence and inequality represent a binomial with broad, strong, and complex links. Undoubtedly, the respect for human rights contributes to countering violence in its multiple expressions, as we have already pointed out in some examples. The "2022 Special Report: New threats to human security in the Anthropocene. Demanding greater solidarity" (prepared by UNDP) concludes the following:

The local-territorial dimension is the best approach for landing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, applying a territorial approach to an agenda that is at risk of fragmenting its sectoral thematic objectives without applying comprehensiveness to them.

"Permanent and universal attention to an enriched frame of human security can end the pathways of human development with human insecurity that created the conditions for the COVID-19 pandemic, the changing climate, and the broader predicaments of the Anthropocene.

In the Anthropocene context, it is imperative to go beyond fragmented efforts to jointly address climate change, biodiversity loss, conflict, migration and refugees, pandemics, and data protection. We must give systematic, permanent, and universal attention to solidarity; not as a concept of optional charity, but as a call to pursue human security through "the eyes of humankind".¹⁰

The construction of coexistence and peace in cities and territories becomes a cross-cutting approach that affects the entire 2030 Agenda. The "eyes of humankind" intersect in the local space, in the proximity of people who live together as neighbors and who can cultivate, together with their closest institutions, the culture of care. By building coexistence and peace in the local and daily space, we help to build a culture that also helps to reach global peace.



10. Ibid

2. Culture and Peace Education

Based on this complex conception of violence(s) and its links with inequalities – and as a counterpoint to it – a movement which seeks to build a so-called "culture of peace" is gaining traction at the global level.

During the 80s, under the recognized leadership of UNESCO, this global movement began to take shape, bringing together the concerns of social organizations and the governments of states with the political will to address the issue of violence, as well as the United Nations system and its General Assembly.

The culture of peace consists of promoting dialogue as an attitude for conflict resolution, considering the respect for human rights as the starting point for conflict resolution. This proposal clashes with the culture of violence, which tends to recognize violence as the way to resolve conflict, and, to this end, is endowed with a construction of values that legitimizes it (cultural violence).

After a long process, in 1999, the UN General Assembly approved resolution 53/243 "Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace",¹¹ which recognizes that:

"Peace is not only the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic and participatory process in which dialogue is promoted and conflicts are resolved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation".

This declaration defines a culture of peace as "a set of values, attitudes, traditions, behaviors and lifestyles based on:

- A)** Respect for life, an end to violence, and the promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation;
- B)** Full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of states and non-interference in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of states, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law;
- C)** Full respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- D)** Commitment to the peaceful settlement of conflicts;
- E)** Efforts to meet the development and environmental protection needs of present and future generations;
- F)** Respect for and promotion of the right to development;
- G)** Respect for and promotion of equal rights and opportunities between genders;
- H)** Respect for and promotion of the right of people to freedom of speech, opinion and information;
- I)** Adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations;

and encouraged by a national and international environment conducive to peace."

11. See also: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/774/46/PDF/N9977446.pdf?OpenElement>

The year 2000 was the year in which the Millennium Declaration and its Millennium Development Goals were adopted, but it was also celebrated as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. This date can be considered an important milestone that projected the "culture and education for peace" as a lever that mobilized all kinds of actors, from institutions, the academia, social organizations, as well as personalities,¹² private actors, and leaders of all kinds (cultural, religious and intellectual). LRGs have also joined with their own means to promote the culture of peace.

The *Global Campaign for Peace Education*¹³ is an international network founded in 1999 in The Hague that brings together more than 130 platforms from various parts of the world and promotes peace education to transform the culture of violence into a culture of peace. This is another major way for the promotion of a culture of peace: formal and informal education and teacher training, as well as the promotion of peace-related values through outreach campaigns.

Another important network to highlight is the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)¹⁴, which promotes working in a coordinated manner to prevent armed violence. This network has three lines of action:

- ▶ encourage and support locally-led peacebuilding action to truly advance peacekeeping;
- ▶ include the needs, perspectives and experience of local peacebuilders from diverse social backgrounds, with a specific focus on women and youth peacebuilders;
- ▶ apply and promote a conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding approach to climate-related risks and other emerging threats.

There are multiple initiatives at the global level that bring together initiatives at the local level to promote a culture of peace. At the local and regional government level, the work of the Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments to promote a culture of peace from local governments¹⁵ is worth highlighting. This is also the case of the UCLG

Peace Prize, which recognizes and disseminates successful initiatives to prevent conflicts, build and rebuild peace and coexistence in post-conflict stages.

Another particularly relevant network worth mentioning is the work of Mayors for Peace, an international organization of cities founded in 1982 with the support of the city of Hiroshima, the city that suffered the impact of the nuclear bombing in 1945 which killed around 140,000 people. More than 8,000 cities around the world are affiliated to this network, which has developed campaigns, as well as other activities which are today in full force, for the total abolition of nuclear weapons.¹⁶

In this section, the concept of "sustainable peace" promoted by Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations is also worth mentioning:

"We need a comprehensive response that addresses the root causes of conflict and integrates peace, sustainable development, and human rights in a holistic manner. From conception to implementation."¹⁷

This new concept of sustainable peace has been advanced since 2015 and represents a major shift in the UN's work. Prioritizing conflict prevention is more engaging and saves more lives than conflict management.¹⁸ The great challenge that this concept presents is that, in order to fully apply it, it is necessary to promote a leapfrog to a multidimensional vision of the concept of peace and the causes of conflict.

In short, the culture of peace, based on prevention, mediation, respect for human rights, and the correction of inequalities as tools to avoid violence, has become stronger. It has developed as a narrative that should bring together actors from civil society, LRGs, national governments, international organizations and academia, without leaving behind the private sector, which needs scenarios of stability, human security and sustainability in order to develop its business activities. In this line, the research published by AIPAZ on "Research for Peace"¹⁹ updates the state of the art on the culture of peace.

12. More information at: <https://fund-culturadepaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Manifiesto-2000.pdf>

13. Ibid

14. See: <https://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/>

15. Accessible at: https://www.gppac-net.translate.goog/who-we-are?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=es&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=sc

16. For details, see: <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/english/>

17. See: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/ga11884.doc.htm>

18. For more information, visit: <https://revistadigital.sre.gob.mx/index.php/rmpe/article/view/288>

19. Accessible at: <https://aipaz.org/jornadas-aipaz-2020/>

3. Cities and Territories: scenarios for coexistence and peace building

According to United Nations' forecasts, a population of approximately 6.5 billion people will be urban by 2050, which corresponds to nearly 70% of the world's population. Until the middle of last century, only the European continent, Japan, India and the Americas were predominantly urban. However, now the prospects of urbanization are even more rapid for Africa and Asia. In fact, the three most populated cities in the world are currently located in Asia (Tokyo, Delhi and Shanghai) followed by Latin America (Sao Paulo and Mexico City).

As the world's urban population grows, cities are becoming the arenas where the major development challenges of the future are being tackled.

The world generates between 7 and 10 billion tons of waste per year and the vast majority is generated in urban areas. Cities emit 70% of CO₂ and 50% of greenhouse gasses.²⁰ More than 80% of the world's GDP is generated in cities and more than two thirds of energy consumption now takes place in cities.²¹

Most of the population that migrates and seeks refuge seeks cities as a destination, where this phenomenon generates tensions of coexistence and the need to deploy reception policies.

Cities concentrate the highest homicide rates and Latin America, the continent with the highest levels of inequalities, is home to 42 of the 50 most violent cities in the world.

Racism, xenophobia or aporophobia are most present in cities where economically plural communities coexist. Cities are home to people with diverse ethnic-national origin religions and from different generations. When inequalities cut across these different realities, they give rise to spatial segregation.

The philosopher Adela Cortina, in her work "Aporophobia, the rejection of the poor: a challenge for democratic society", points out that:

"Those who produce real phobia are not foreigners or people of a different race,

but the poor. Foreigners with means do not produce rejection, but quite the opposite, because they are expected to bring in income and are received with enthusiasm. Those who inspire contempt are the poor, those who seem to be unable to offer anything good, whether they are emigrants or political refugees".²²

As the world's urbanization is advancing, so are decentralization and local development processes. The sociologist and writer Saskia Sassen analyzed this in her conceptualization of the "Global City" in the early 1990s, which refers to the role of large cities in the world economy.²³

As mentioned above, urbanization processes have been accompanied by the enlargement of the roles played by the levels of government closest to the citizens, both at local and regional levels. Decentralization processes are taking place across the world and sub-national governments are assuming more competences and responsibilities day by day. The political will of their leadership, the pressure of citizens- who feel the proximity to their closest institutions- are reinforcing decentralization processes and the role of LRGs in the governance of the territories.

As stated in the "Durban Political Declaration", the conclusion of the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders held in 2019:

"The transformation that needs to be carried out in our development model will only be possible if it responds to the dreams and expectations of the communities, and if we assume the collective responsibility to adapt and sacrifice for more egalitarian, just and sustainable societies. The change we need to transform societies will be local, or it will not be a change. Communities, in relation to their territories, must be at the center of decision-making to locate meaningful achievements on global agendas and ensure a sustainable future."²⁴

Cities and their surrounding territories form microcosms where people relate,

20. More details at: <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-waste-management-outlook>

21. See: <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/topic/urbandevelopment/overview#1>

22. From the Ancient Greek ἀπορος (áporos), 'without resources, indigent, poor,' and φόβος (phobos), ('fear') is fear of poverty and of poor people. It is the disgust and hostility toward poor people, those without resources or who are helpless.

23. More information available at: The Global City: Introducing a Concept | OpenMind (bbvaopenmind.com)

24. Visit: https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/sp_uclg_theurbanpoliticaldeclaration_final_rttc_1_0.pdf

dream, interact, prosper, take care of each other, confront each other, train, have fun. Borrowing the title from the work of Argentine writer Julio Cortázar, the city allows us to go "around the day in 80 worlds".²⁵

Cities are culturally rich and diversified spaces that belong to their inhabitants, who should be legally granted equal rights that prevent them from suffering inequalities because of their gender, nationality, age, ethnicity, academic background, income, ideology, religion, or sexual orientation, among other factors. However, although national and international laws recognize this, these inequalities exist in most cities around the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic shocked Humanity in a state of shock: at first, not understanding what was happening and denying the reality. But after that initial moment, reacting with multiple initiatives of solidarity and care and building neighborly coexistence, as is usually the case with humanitarian catastrophes in their first phase.

It has been the local environment that has responded in the first place to cover the limitations and deficiencies of public systems. The inability of state public systems to protect citizens in the first state of emergency has been perceived as a fragility, as an aggression against security. Beyond the global nature of the pandemic, the need to strengthen public care systems and local responses have been highly valued by citizens.

SDG 16 of the 2030 Agenda calls for the promotion of just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. The first target of this goal calls for "Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates worldwide".

Likewise, in its SDG number 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), it states the need to "make cities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".²⁶

In the forceful logic of the 2030 Agenda, the approach to the urban violence issue must be based on a multi-stakeholder commitment: public institutions, civil society, academia and the private sector in which each actor contributes its own capacities (SDG 17: partnership for the goals). An alliance with huge leadership in the territory' institution that can be closest to the citizens.

In short, to talk about violence and inequalities implies that cities are key scenarios where tensions coexist. Coexistence initiatives are tested and developed in cities, where public policies can and should also be implemented. According to the 3rd World Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace:

"LRGs and institutions can play a key role in promoting peace in all territories, fostering the creation of cultures of peace from the cities, channeling the conflicts that may arise in our streets and territories, to prevent them from turning into violence and thus promote belonging, creativity and cultural development that can save us from the chaos and senselessness of violence."²⁷

25. See: <https://www.lecturalia.com/libro/8224/la-vuelta-al-dia-en-ochenta-mundos>.

26. Access more information at: Cities - United Nations Sustainable Development Action 2015

27. See: https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/wp-content/uploads/11.1.SP_WorldCouncil_Mexico-declaration-28.10-1.



4. World Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace

As a result of this debate, the UCLG World Council meeting in Paris in 2015, during the Climate Summit (COOP 21), took up a proposal submitted by several women mayors and led by the then mayor of Madrid, Manuela Carmena. This proposal initiates the path of a World Forum to consider the importance of urban violence and education for coexistence and peace from the cities.

An international organizing committee with the participation of United Nations agencies, cities and networks of cities and civil society organizations²⁸ was developed. The Forum has become a space for exchange and shared reflection where the issue of urban violence as an urgent matter in the design of public policies, whether at the local, national or international level. The II World Forum on Urban Violence and Peace Education (WFUVPE), in its final declaration stated:

"In recent years, the international community has recognized that the current trend of urban development and violence are two conditioning elements for the sustainability of our societies. The 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015, states among its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (SDG 11). Likewise, the Agenda states as Goal 16 "Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies". For its part, the New Urban Agenda, approved in 2016, reinforces the idea of sustainable urban development as one of the great challenges facing humanity in the coming decades" (SDG 16). [...]

[...] The 2030 Agenda is inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and develops the aspirations and roadmap for humanity to live better, collectively and individually "leaving no one behind". All its development is aimed at building coexistence, peace, as the basis of this sustainable development. Without peace there is no sustainable development. Peace means food security, the right to migration and refuge, eradication of gender violence, access to water, housing, communication and decent work. Peace means protection of the rights of children and the elderly. Peace means caring for the environment as a heritage for generations to come. [...] [...] Peace is not only the absence of war but also the absence of violence. The Cities of Coexistence and Peace must pursue the eradication of violence in all its expressions. Direct violence, from wars to criminal violence, including terrorist and gender violence; structural violence (economic and political) that is at the root of the inequality and produces hunger, poverty, and unhealthy living conditions of so many populations;

cultural violence (which is symbolic and originates in ideologies and beliefs). This symbolic violence exists in science, law, art, in the language used in the media and in education. Its function is to legitimize the other violences, the direct and the structural ones." }"²⁹

28. To know more, visit: Who are we? - Foro Mundial Territorios de Paz (ciudadesdepaz.com)

29. See: <https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/COMPROMISO-AGENDA-Ciudades-de-Convivencia-y-Paz.pdf>

The 3rd World Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace, the new name assumed by this global meeting in the edition held in Mexico City in October 2021 (in a context of limited mobility and global shock produced by the pandemic of COVID-19) deepens the reflection and exchange and declares:

"Achieving peace is a necessary condition for transforming our societies. LRGs and institutions can play a key role in promoting peace in all territories, fostering cultures of peace from the cities, channeling the conflicts that may arise in our streets and territories, to prevent them from turning into violence and promoting the creativity and cultural development that can save us from chaos and the senselessness of violence".

"LRGs have accepted the challenge of imagining a world free of violence. We do so by thinking about the components of coexistence in our streets, warning about its fragility. It is from proximity and on a day-to-day basis that stories, realities and dreams are forged. Without them no treaty will be lasting or transformative".³⁰

The Forum has become a space for articulation rather than an event and it is a very important process to deepen reflection on the link between inequalities and violence. As well as: the role of cities and territories as laboratories of coexistence and peace, the importance of rethinking the concept of "security" and recovering-regenerating the concept of "human security" (including physical integrity and human dignity of people).

Each city, each territory, will feel the impact of violence in different ways. The impact of organized crime in Rio de Janeiro or Johannesburg is not the same as that which may be experienced in Berlin or Beijing. There is a great distance between the impact of violence based on religious fundamentalism in Paris and in Buenos Aires, Tokyo or Bogota. However, the impact of school bullying or violence through networks (sexting, cyberbullying, happy slapping, ...) in all these cities may be more similar.

As we have already seen, the links between violence and inequalities are strong. The map of violence(s) is complex, as is the map of inequalities.

UCLG and the World Forum have been a meeting place for multiple "multi-stakeholder" and "multi-level" experiences that address the need to build education and a culture of coexistence and peace.

Throughout the three editions of the Forum, from 2017 to 2021, more than 400 events have been held (plenaries, events, workshops, presentation of campaigns, film cycles, ...), both in virtual and face-to-face formats. They have been piloted by several institutions and organizations from different parts of the world where thousands of experiences of multiple dimensions have been exchanged. We find examples that range from major international agreements in peace building promoted by the Secretary General of the United Nations –which recognize the role of cities and territories– to peace mapping initiatives at the local level. From training and awareness-raising activities in universities to elaboration of action plans to address urban violence.

30. Available at: https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/wp-content/uploads/11.1.ENG_WorldCouncil_Mexico-declaration_28.10.pdf

4.1 Experiences

Within the framework of the Forum, more than 1,000 experiences are presented and analyzed and can be consulted in the reports available on the website³¹ and in the magazine "Cities of Peace".³²

The following experiences are a sample of the melting pot of action proposals shared. These proposals share the need to promote culture and education for coexistence and peace, reflecting on the concept of security, the concept of peace, promoting campaigns, political advocacy, or small actions on the street.

► UCLG, with the impulse of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and the support of several local institutions, convenes since 2016 the Peace Prize, an award that recognizes initiatives of cities to prevent conflicts, promote peace and rebuild coexistence and in the post-conflict. The UCLG Peace Prize generates international public attention for the role local governments play in ensuring sustainable and peaceful development. Local governments that have implemented an innovative and high impact approach towards peace-building and the creation of dialogue are eligible for nomination.³³

► An example of an award-winning city is Kausawagan, a municipality in the province of Lanao del Norte in the Philippines. Since the 1970s, it has been the scene of the Moro conflict between an Islamic secessionist insurgency and the Philippine military. In 2010, the local government intervened in the conflict, whose root causes were poverty, food insecurity, and inequalities between population groups, particularly Muslims and Christians. The 'From Guns to Farms: Walking the Paths of Peace' project proved to be a great success in addressing these issues.³⁴

► Another award-winning municipality, Arsal (Lebanon), was selected as the winner of the UCLG Peace Prize 2019 because it shows great efforts to address possible sources of conflict in a community that has gone through a very difficult time since 2014, when the Islamic State invaded Arsal. The community of Arsal still faces complex challenges, but the municipality shows the transformative power that local governments can have in reinforcing social cohesion, by reacting 24/7 to outbreaks of conflict with the risk of escalation and applying the Sulha principle that connects with Arsal's traditional culture. The fact that the municipality allocates part of its budget to cover repairs and compensation to prevent an escalation of the conflict, even with a tight budget and hosting many more refugees than the original population of the community, is an example that shows the importance of local people in protecting community cohesion.³⁵

► The PILARES (Points of Innovation, Freedom, Art, Education and Knowledge) is an initiative of the Mexico City government. They are socio-cultural centers located in areas with the highest incidences of crime or social marginalization. The main objective of PILARES is to recover the rule of law through social inclusion and a culture of peace and prevent violence. It is about promoting the presence of all government agencies and their services in neighborhoods forgotten by past authorities, always from a vision of human rights and democratic strengthening. It also seeks to strengthen the economic autonomy of families with a gender perspective, putting women at the center of the solution.³⁶

► The District Observatory of Victims of the Armed Conflict (*Observatorio Distrital de Víctimas del Conflicto Armado*, ODVCA in Spanish) is an initiative of the Bogotá city Council. During a national context of post-conflict and violation of rights, Bogotá became the main city hosting refugees and victims in the country. The ODVCA was established as a body to manage information regarding public policy on care, assistance, comprehensive reparation and guarantees of non-repetition for victims of the armed conflict residing in Bogotá. It is also in charge of the promotion and implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreements in the Capital District.³⁷

31. See: <https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/>

32. See also: <https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/revista-ciudades-de-paz/>

33. Visit: About – UCLG Peace Prize

34. Ibid. pg 30-33.

35. Ibid. pg 60-61

36. More details at: <https://www.uclg-cisd.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/2021-06/LocalGovOHCHRHumanRights.pdf>

37. Accessible at: [JOURNAL-1-Ciudades-de-Paz-V10-02-21-1.pdf](https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/JOURNAL-1-Ciudades-de-Paz-V10-02-21-1.pdf) [ciudadesdepaz.com]

► The vast favela of Paraisópolis, with more than 100,000 residents, is surrounded by the skyscrapers of the Morumbi neighborhood, one of the wealthiest in the city of São Paulo. The lack of government services in the favela has prompted the local residents' association to intensify its fight against the coronavirus pandemic. In an attempt to support the community's already overcrowded public clinics and emergency rooms, the local residents' association has set up field hospitals in empty schools, where they keep people with mild symptoms in isolation. As emergency vehicles from the city's public health system take hours to arrive (if they enter the favela at all), the group has used donated funds to rent three ambulances for the community. The crisis management 'Favela Committee - Presidente de Rua' in São Paulo's second largest slum is replicated in 14 states.

► Mayor for Peace, a municipalist organization mentioned above, launched the 2020 Vision Campaign, aimed at promoting a world free of nuclear weapons. It was launched in 2003 as the "Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons". In August 2005, the World Conference endorsed the continuation of the Campaign under the title '2020 Vision Campaign'. Mayor for Peace has carried out intense work to promote the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a campaign that had outstanding results with the signing of this proposal by a significant number of countries. In 2009 they promoted the Nagasaki Appeal.³⁸

► The Safe Cities Index (SC Index) is a report produced by the research department of The Economist magazine. The report is based on the interaction of 76 indicators covering digital, health, infrastructure, personal and environmental safety, ranking 60 cities.³⁹

► On the other hand, UN Women produces the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Report (an initiative launched in 2010). The first report was published in 2017 and presents successful experiences, results, initiatives implemented in cities over the world to help prevent violence against women.⁴⁰

► Metropolis published a report in 2020 that analyzes the phenomenon of violence in metropolitan areas. It shares different strategic policies of metropolitan management for coexistence, proposing some lines of action related to the provision of public goods and the implementation of measures that respond to the needs of the most vulnerable populations.⁴¹

► SaferSpaces, a violence-prevention interactive platform run in South Africa, has developed the "Guide to Designing Integrated Violence Prevention Interventions", with the support of GIZ's inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) Program together with the National Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading Program. This guide, the result of technical cooperation between South Africa and Germany, becomes a very useful methodological resource for work in cities.⁴²

► In 2020, ICLEI celebrated 30 years of activity towards sustainable urban development at the local scale. The document "Road to a Green City" reinforces ICLEI's support to LRGs in promoting solutions to urban challenges aligned with a vision of sustainable development. ICLEI coordinated the panel on cities and territories with environmental justice that addresses the concept of environmental violence with the participation of multiple experiences of cities from different parts of the world.⁴³

► The International Association of Educating Cities is a global network of cities founded in 1994 with more than 500 cities in 36 countries which promotes the Educating Cities award. In 2020, the prize was won by Santos (Brazil) for its Anti-Racist Education Program for the valorization of the city's ethnic diversity and culture as a way to strengthen coexistence and peace and prevent racist violence.⁴⁴

► The meeting "Local Governments for Human Rights: Social and Economic Inequalities at the Local Level" was organized in 2019 by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Democratic Participation and Human Rights. It established a dialogue between local governments from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, the United Nations Human Rights Office, human rights experts and civil society organizations.

38. To know more, visit: The Nagasaki Appeal (mayorsforpeace.org)

39. More information at: <https://safecities.economist.com>

40. See: <https://www.unwomen.org/es/digital-library/publications/2017/10/safe-cities-and-safe-public-spaces-global-results-report#view>

41. Visit: https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/Observatorio_Violencias-metropoli-respuestas-cuestion-global_Gutierrez-Llamas-Martinez_2020.pdf

42. Know more: <https://www.saferespaces.org.za>

43. For more details: https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/wp-content/uploads/REVISTA-4-Ciudades-y-Territorios-de-Paz_oct2021.pdf

44. Visit also: <https://www.uclg-cisd.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/2021-06/LocalGovOHCHRHumanRights.pdf>

A reflection on the role of Local Governments in the protection and promotion of human rights was opened as well as a call for the support of national and international institutions on this matter in local ecosystems. ⁴⁵

► *Atlante delle Guerre* is a publication promoted by an Italian association (46 Parallel), which for the past 14 years has been very active in peace building. Among its most recognized products, we find an atlas that lists all wars, narrating their causes. It provides a tool for analyzing conflicts from the only perspective that matters: the victims. *Atlante* promotes the adhesion of Italian cities to the Cities and Territories of Peace Commitment of the World Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace. ⁴⁶

► The City Hub and Network for Gender Equity (CHANGE)⁴⁷ is founded by six cities (Barcelona, Freetown, London, Los Angeles, Mexico and Tokyo) to empower women in all their diversity. Through this initiative, which is adding new cities along the way, experiences to achieve gender equity are addressed from 4 perspectives: the innovative city, the provider city, the employer city, and the articulator city. CHANGE has prepared a manual for gender equality at the service of the world's cities.

These are only some good practices and initiatives out of the thousands of experiences that demonstrate the great interest that exists worldwide in building a culture of peace.

The next edition of the World Forum of Cities for Peace will be hosted in Bogota in 2023 and will place the theme of care as a central theme of the construction of coexistence and peace.

45. For reference: <https://www.uclg-cisd.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/2021-06/LocalGovOHCHRHumanRights.pdf>

46. See: atlante guerre – Atlante delle Guerre e dei Conflitti del Mondo

47. Visit: https://citieschangeorg.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/changepdf_spanish_web_final-1.pdf

5. Local agendas for coexistence and peace

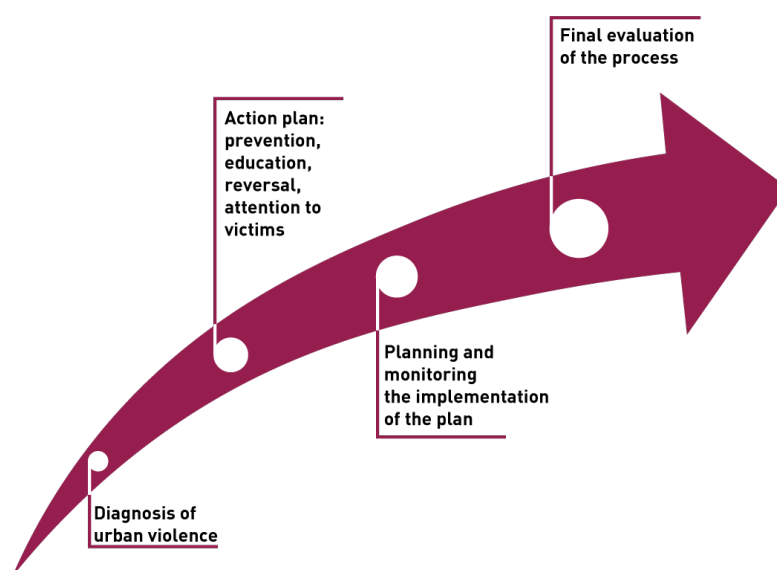
The final declaration of the 2nd World Forum on Urban Violence and Education for Coexistence and Peace⁴⁸ was a great step forward at the local level in the construction of a coexistence and peace methodology. This declaration was assumed by the 3rd World Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace.

The AIPAZ organization and the DEMOSPAZ institute, together with *Mayor for Peace*, and the support of UNDP-ART, have advanced in the systematization of this methodological proposal that aims to be a tool for LRGs around the world.

The first experience was developed in the city of Madrid, and was followed by preliminary advances in Montevideo (Uruguay), Praia (Cape Verde) and Sucre (Bolivia), which approached the methodological phase of the diagnosis. Subsequently, the city of Granollers (Catalonia, Spain), with the support of AIPAZ and Mayor for Peace, decided to undertake the elaboration of a Local Agenda for Coexistence and Peace, currently underway.

At the same time, the city of Bogota exchanges its development plans with a territorial approach (PDET),⁴⁹ a tool derived from the peace agreements in Colombia.

The Local Agenda for Peace and Coexistence aims to make the culture of peace a cross-cutting issue in different policies developed by local governments. This implies recognizing that the life of citizens, in its multiple aspects (social and cultural development, employment, social protection, perception of human security, racism, use of public spaces, access to housing, health, education and other basic needs) are parameters related to coexistence and peace, and, if poorly managed, causes of direct violence.



This proposal, based on principles of citizen participation and multi-stakeholder co-creation, proposes the need to analyze direct, structural, and symbolic violence. It allows to elaborate a diagnosis of urban violence in each case and to construct a map for each city and territory.

This diagnosis helps to draw up an action plan, in a participatory manner, which prioritizes the eradication of violence and the strengthening of the culture of peace heritage. It also emphasizes the strength of the territory to address its weaknesses and threats, establishing actions for prevention, education for coexistence and peace, reversal, attention to victims and the development of cross-cutting strategies.

The implementation of this action plan implies co-responsibility among actors and the leadership of the coordinating institution. It shows its political will to implement with resources, spaces for participation, monitoring instruments, quantitative and qualitative indicators, and regulatory frameworks. The final evaluation of the process makes it possible to measure the progress and situation of the so-called "critical nodes of each territory", turning this action into a stable public policy in the territory, aimed at improving people's lives and their perception of human security, trust and coexistence.⁵⁰

Local agendas for coexistence and peace (Source: Eduardo Fernández www.eduardofernandezramos.com)

48. Accessible at: <https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/compromiso-agenda-ciudades-de-convivencia-y-paz-en.pdf>

49. See: <https://victimasbogota.gov.co/noticias/bogotá-pone-marcha-los-pdet-bogotá-región-cumplirle-al-acuerdo-paz>

50. See: <https://aipaz.org/jornadas-aipaz-2020/>

6. Conclusions: 10 pillars

Without peace there is no sustainable development. Without sustainable development there is no peace. Cities and territories are the scenario where measures to build sustainable development and coexistence are implemented.

There is a worldwide consensus on the need to build peace, not only in international scenarios and not only in wars, which are the most intense expressions of human violence. Also in local scenarios, in daily life. When we speak of violence, we understand its complexity –visible and invisible, direct, structural, and direct violence–. We speak of violence as bad practices of conflict resolution.

Inequalities are the beginning of violence. Violations of rights are the breeding ground for the proliferation of violence. Confronting violence means confronting inequalities and building full respect for human rights. Cities and territories are scenarios where violence is expressed in all its crudeness. But at the same time, they are spaces where coexistence and peace can be built based on the alliance between the multiple actors involved.

Spatial, gender and income inequalities, and others symbolic constructions that endorse marginalization, coexist in cities.

The culture of peace is based on the need to invest in prevention rather than in repression, to invest in education rather than in the reconstruction of damage. The culture of peace is a fundamental tool to build coexistence in cities.

In summary, we propose 10 pillars to build solid coexistence and peace in cities and support the public policies of LRGs:

Pillars to build solid coexistence and peace in cities and support the public policies of LRGs

1. Share political will and consensual will among all the political actors of the territory, making the culture of peace something unquestionable.
2. Provide local governments with technical and methodological capacities, with administrative offices, observatories, and dedicated human resources.
3. Invest adequate budgets. Budgets are the expression of political will.
4. Legislate and regulate at the territorial level to promote the culture of peace, using all the administrative instruments that cities and territories have.
5. Use a cross-cutting approach to coexistence and peace in the design of public policies in all areas.
6. Establish alliances with all the actors of the territory to assure its participation.
7. Generate spaces for citizen participation, both for diagnosis and for the implementation of concrete initiatives.
8. Network with other cities, promoting the exchange of experiences and developing political advocacy in other national and international spheres.
9. Communicate and be accountable to citizens by identifying critical issues and highlighting the strengths and opportunities of the culture of peace in the territory.
10. Elaborate diagnoses of urban violence and implement action plans at the local level with monitoring and evaluation instruments.

This decalogue can help to strengthen the coexistence and peace agendas as public policies that are actively supported by society.

Building cities without violence may be an utopia, but to paraphrase uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano:

“Utopia is on the horizon. I move two steps closer; it moves two steps further away. I walk another ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I'll never reach it. So, what's the point of utopia? The point is this: to keep walking.”

“Peace is not just the absence of conflict; peace is the creation of an environment where all can flourish regardless of race, color, creed, religion, gender, class, caste or any other social markers of difference.”

Nelson Mandela

“There is no road towards peace; peace is the road”.

Mahatma Gandhi

“It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it”.

Eleanor Roosevelt

“Peace is the only battle worth fighting.”

Albert Camus

“War is only a cowardly escape from the problems of peace”.

Thomas Mann

“Peace is not only the absence of war; as long as there is poverty, racism, discrimination and exclusion, it is difficult to achieve a peaceful world”.

Rigoberta Menchú

Acronyms

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| AIPAZ | Spanish Research Association for Peace |
| CHANGE | City Hub and Network for Gender Equity |
| COOP 21 | 21st Conference of the Parties |
| DEMOSPAZ | University Institute of Human Rights, Democracy, Culture of Peace and Non-Violence |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| GIZ | German Society for International Cooperation |
| GPPAC | Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| IAEC | International Association of Educating Cities |
| ICLEI | Local Governments for Sustainability |
| LGBTQIA+ | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual+ |
| LRGs | Local and regional governments |
| METRÓPOLIS | Global network of major cities and metropolitan areas |
| NPT | Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons |
| ODVCA | Observatorio Distrital de Víctimas del Conflicto Armado |
| PDET | Development Programmes with a Territorial Approach |
| PILARES | Points of Innovation, Freedom, Art, Education and Knowledge |
| SC | Index Safe Cities Index |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SOFI | State of Food Insecurity in the World |
| TRIPS | Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights |
| UCLG | United Cities and Local Governments |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UN-HABITAT | United Nations Human Settlements Programme |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNDP-ART | Articulation of Territorial and Thematic Networks of Cooperation for Human Development of UNDP |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNW | United Nations Women |
| UCP | Violence and Crime Prevention |
| VNG | Association of Netherlands Municipalities |
| WFCTP | World Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace |
| WFUVPE | World Forum on Urban Violence and Peace Education |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

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