The threats of international homicide, violence against children, human trafficking and sexual violence are important to address to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. They pave the way for the provision of access to justice for all and for building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.

While homicide and trafficking cases have seen significant progress over the past decade, there are still thousands of people at greater risk of intentional murder within Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and around Asia. Children’s rights violations through aggression and sexual violence continue to plague many countries around the world, especially as under-reporting and lack of data aggravate the problem.

To tackle these challenges and build a more peaceful, inclusive societies, there needs to be more efficient and transparent regulations put in place and comprehensive, realistic government budgets. One of the first steps towards protecting individual rights is the implementation of worldwide birth registration and the creation of more independent national human rights institutions around the world.

Among the institutions most affected by corruption are the judiciary and police.

Corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion cost some US $1.26 trillion for developing countries per year; this amount of money could be used to lift those who are living on less than $1.25 a day above $1.25 for at least six years

Birth registration has occurred for 73 per cent of children under 5, but only 46% of Sub-Saharan Africa have had their births registered.

Approximately 28.5 million primary school age who are out of school live in conflict-affected areas.

The rule of law and development have a significant interrelation and are mutually reinforcing, making it essential for sustainable development at the national and international level.

The proportion of prisoners held in detention without sentencing has remained almost constant in the last decade, at 31% of all prisoners.

Violence against children

Violence against children affects more than 1 billion children around the world and costs societies up to US$ 7 trillion a year.

50% of the world’s children experience violence every year.

Every 5 minutes, somewhere in the world, a child is killed by violence

1 in 10 children is sexually abused before the age of 18.

9 in 10 children live in countries where corporal punishment is not fully prohibited, leaving 732 million children without legal protection.

1 in 3 internet users worldwide is a child and 800 million of them use social media. Any child can become a victim of online violence.

Child online sexual abuse reports to NCMEC has grown from 1 million in 2014 to 45 million in 2018.

246 million children worldwide affected by school-related violence each year.

1 in 3 students has been bullied by their peers at school in the last month, and at least 1 in 10 children have experienced cyberbullying.

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

Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime

Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

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

Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

Advances in ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions and increasing access to justice are uneven and continue to deprive millions of their security, rights and opportunities and undermine the delivery of public services and broader economic development. Attacks on civil society are also holding back development progress. Renewed efforts are essential to move towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

The number of intentional homicides per 100,000 people increased from 6.0 in 2015 to 6.1 in 2017. This slight uptick was largely the result of an increase in the homicide rates in Latin America and the Caribbean and in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Various forms of violence against children persist. In 83 countries (mostly from developing regions) with recent data on the subject, nearly 8 in 10 children from 1 to 14 years of age were subjected to some form of psychological aggression and/or physical punishment at home. In all but seven of these countries, at least half of children experienced violent disciplinary methods. Sexual violence is perhaps the most disturbing of children’s rights violations. Based on the limited data available, in 14 of 46 countries with comparable data, at least 5 per cent of women between the ages of 18 and 29 experienced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts that were forced, physically or in other ways, for the first time before they were 18 years of age.

There has been an overall increase in the detection of victims of trafficking in persons, which could reflect either a positive (enhanced efforts by authorities to identify victims) or negative (larger trafficking problem) development. In a departure from prior findings, recent data show that most trafficking victims were detected domestically: 58 per cent in 2016, up from 43 per cent in 2014. The vast majority (70 per cent) of detected victims of human trafficking were women and girls, most of whom were trafficked for sexual exploitation.

The share of unsentenced detainees in the overall prison population has remained largely constant at 30 per cent in recent years. This occurred in a context where the total prison population grew in absolute values while remaining constant as a share of the total population.

Killings of human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists are on the rise. From 2017 to 2018, the United Nations recorded and verified 431 killings across 41 countries. Every passing week saw at least eight people murdered at the front lines of efforts to build more inclusive and equal societies – a worrying increase from the previous average of one victim per day observed from 2015 to 2017. Ninety-nine journalists and bloggers were among the victims.

Birth registration plays a primary role in ensuring individual rights and access to justice and social services. Even if many regions have reached universal or near universal birth registration, globally the average is just 73 per cent. Fewer than half (46 per cent) of all children under the age of 5 in sub-Saharan Africa have had their births registered.

Binding laws and policies giving individuals a right to access information held by public authorities have been adopted by 125 countries, with at least 31 countries adopting such laws since 2013. Among the 123 countries for which data on the legal framework is available, 40 do not include the right to appeal to an independent administrative body, which has been assessed as key for the proper implementation of this right.

The pace of progress to put in place national human rights institutions compliant with the Paris Principles must be accelerated. In 2018, a total of 39 per cent of all countries had in place an institution that was fully compliant with the internationally agreed standard, seven countries more than was the case in 2015. If growth continues at the same rate, by 2030 only a little over one half (54 per cent) of all countries worldwide will have compliant national human rights institutions.

The difference between the approved and the implemented budget reflects a government’s ability to achieve development objectives, including delivering services to the public. Deviation between the approved and actual spending during the period 2006–2017 in 108 countries shows that actual spending was within plus or minus 5 per cent of the approved budget in about half of the countries. One out of 10 countries had a deviation of more than plus or minus 15 per cent. Almost half of low-income economies showed more than plus or minus 10 per cent deviation in budget execution.