AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Psychological Contributions to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS









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Psychology is the study of the mind and of human behavior. As a discipline, psychology embraces all aspects of the human experience — from the biological bases of behavior, to political negotiations, to learning and cognition, to care for the aging, and much more. Accordingly, psychological science has identified solutions to many of the challenges associated with progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as they relate to improving the human condition.

The leadership of the American Psychological Association (APA) is gratified that psychological science and practice is contributing to the work of the United Nations (UN). APA is the leading scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States, with a membership of more than 146,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students. APA has more than 16,000 members outside of the United States, Memoranda of Understanding with more than 65 psychological associations around the world and serves as Secretariat for the Global Psychology Alliance.

APA's mission is to promote the advancement, communication, and application of psychological science and knowledge to benefit society and improve lives. APA applies psychology for positive impact on critical societal issues. This is accomplished by increasing the influence of psychological science and applications on both global policy decisions and the advancement of human rights, fairness, diversity, and inclusion.

Since 2000, APA has been an accredited Nongovernmental Organization at the UN. APA holds special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and is affiliated with the Department of Global Communications. Research findings from psychology directly inform policy and program recommendations within the UN community, including Member States, the Secretariat, Programs, Funds, and Specialized Agencies.

The SDGs were adopted by all 193 Member States in 2015 as a blueprint for human progress in the 21st century. As the Global Agenda of the UN, the SDGs were envisioned to be a living force which would include key metrics associated with social, economic, and environmental advancements within and among countries by 2030. Envisioning how to improve the lives of everyone everywhere requires an understanding of how human behavior, policy, and environmental factors contribute to progress, as well as how lives are affected when efforts fall short. Today, many psychologists are committed to advocating for the SDGs by applying psychological science to advance peace, prosperity, and well-being worldwide.

This booklet represents a sampling of psychological science's value in pursuing the achievement of the 2030 Global Agenda. While we recognize the interrelatedness of the 17 global goals, we illustrate here how psychological research and strategies can contribute to and guide progress on nine of the SDGs. In doing so, we are deepening our determination to engage in global partnerships for the realization of the SDGs and to our shared vision for creating the world we want. If we can provide any further details or connect you to experts who work on any of the topics described, please do not hesitate to contact international@apa.org.

Sincerely,



Thema S. Bryant, Ph.D.
2023 President
American Psychological Association



Arthur C. Evans, Jr., Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
American Psychological Association



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 1

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Psychology helps explain the causes of poverty and how it may be ameliorated.

Gabriel Twose, Ph.D.

According to the World Bank, 9.1-9.4% of the world's population live in extreme poverty, defined at less than $1.90 per day.[1] Extensive bodies of literature demonstrate that poverty is dehumanizing[2] and physically and psychologically harmful.[3] However, there remains disagreement about its causes, which leads to differences of opinion about how to alleviate it.

WHAT CAUSES POVERTY?

Attitudes toward low-income people are often characterized by disdain, harming the potential implementation of poverty alleviation strategies. People assume that others are poor because they lack the willpower or intellect to work hard and make the correct decisions – citing data showing, for example, that low-income people are more likely to miss appointments[4] and less likely to adhere to medications.[5] But this framing ignores the importance of access to resources, structural disadvantages, and other challenges.[6] Specifically, psychological research on cognitive scarcity shows that we all have limited "mental bandwidth," or brainpower, which restricts how much we can focus on at any one time.[7] When we don't have enough of something, such as money, worrying about this scarcity takes up most of

1. World Bank. (2020). Poverty and shared prosperity. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/poverty-and-shared-prosperity/.
2. Lott, B. (2002). Cognitive and behavioral distancing from the poor. *American Psychologist*, 57 , 100-110.
3. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2019). *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25246.
4. Kruse, G. R., Rohland, B. M., & Wu, X. (2002). Factors associated with missed first appointments at a psychiatric clinic. Psychiatric Services, 53, 1173-1176.
5. Rolnick, S. J., Pawloski, P. A., Hedblom, B. D., Asche, S. E., & Bruzek, R. J. (2013). Patient characteristics associated with medication adherence. Clinical Medicine & Research, 11(2), 54–65.
6. United Nations. (n.d.). *Ending Poverty.* Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ending-poverty.
7. Shah, A. K., Mullainathan, S., & Shafir, E. (2012). Some consequences of having too little. Science, 338, 682-685.

our bandwidth, leaving less brainpower for other tasks.[8] Thus, poverty may in some circumstances perpetuate itself through cognitive and emotional effects, which can lead to potentially disadvantageous behaviors. These actions are not the fault of individuals experiencing poverty; they are universal processes.[9]

HOW CAN PSYCHOLOGY HELP AMELIORATE POVERTY?

Many poverty-alleviation programs are based on traditional economic theory, dictating that individuals think dispassionately, rationally, and independently, but psychological science shows us that is generally not the case; rather, decisions and behaviors are influenced by psychological underpinnings, with implications for implementing effective interventions.[10] For example:

- People do not have the cognitive capacity to thoroughly consider every decision, so policymakers could frame choices and simplify options to make it easier for individuals to make decisions that are most likely to lead to desired outcomes.[11] For example, many low-income people rely on short-term loans with very high interest-rates. When researchers highlighted the accumulated financial cost of the loan to potential borrowers, many were less likely to pursue this option.[12]
- People are influenced by their social contexts. Policymakers could improve opportunities for social support; for example, microfinance clients who met weekly rather than monthly had more long-term social contact, were more willing to pool risks, and were three times less likely to default on a future loan.[13]
- Similarly, people draw from opinions in their communities to guide their thoughts and decisions. For example, stereotypes are fixed, overgeneralized beliefs about social groups that can even be held by the marginalized groups themselves: Lower-caste boys in India were as good at puzzle-solving as higher-caste boys when their caste was not revealed, but significantly worse when it was revealed.[14] Harmful self-expectations can be combated through public messaging, for example, poor Ethiopian households were shown inspirational videos about escaping poverty, leading to increases in savings and investments in education.[15]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member states and others in the UN community should:

- Focus on policies that support rather than penalize low-income people.
- Consider human factors that go into decision-making, including framing, stereotyping, and simplifying.
- Pay attention to social contexts, including the impact of beneficial community support and harmful stereotyping.

8. Novotney, A. (2014). The psychology of scarcity. *The Monitor on Psychology*, 45(2), Print version: 28. https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/02/scarcity.
9. Shah, A. K., Mullainathan, S., & Shafir, E. (2012). Some consequences of having too little. Science, 338, 682-685.
10. World Bank Group. (2015). World Development Report: Mind, Society, and Behavior. Retrieved from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/645741468339541646/pdf/928630WDR0978100Box385358B00PUBLIC0.pdf.
11. Thaler, R. H. & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.12. 12. Bertrand, M. & Adair M. (2011). Information disclosure, cognitive biases, and payday borrowing. Journal of Finance 66 (6), 1865–93.
13. Feigenberg, B., Field, E., & Pande, R. (2013). The economic returns to social interaction: Experimental evidence from microfinance. *Review of Economic Studies, 80* (4), 1459–83.
14. Hoff, K. & Pandey, P. (2014). Making up people: The effect of identity on performance in a modernizing society. *Journal of Development Economics, 106,* C, 118-131.
15. World Bank Group. (2015). World Development Report: Mind, Society, and Behavior. Retrieved from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/645741468339541646/pdf/928630WDR0978100Box385358B00PUBLIC0.pdf.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 3

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Target 3.4: By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and well-being

Psychology helps alleviate the global burden of mental illness and promote wellbeing.

Nigel Atter, MSc, Comfort Asanbe, Ph.D., & Michelle Bell, Psy.D.

Mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety are common across the globe, with an estimated 3% to 4% of the world's population meeting diagnostic criteria at any given time. Together they are responsible for 8% of years lived with disability globally.[16] Psychological science and practice can help better understand the nature of mental illness and identify effective prevention and intervention strategies to lower the global burden of disease.

16. Ritchie, H. & Roser, M. (2018). *Mental Health.* Retrieved from https://ourworldindata.org/mental-health.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO CARE

Equitable access to quality mental health care varies among countries across the world. Although many low- and middle-income countries suffer from a lack of trained mental health care providers,[17] data indicate that low-, middle-, and high-income countries all demonstrate an imbalance between need and utilization of services.[18]

Access to and quality of psychological support vary according to the structure of a country's healthcare system. One example of a successful public health approach to addressing mental health needs is found in the United Kingdom, where the *Improving Access to Psychological Therapies* program[19] enabled access to effective evidence-based psychological therapies for large numbers of patients, transforming services for people with low to moderate anxiety and depression.[20]

However, different approaches are necessary in specific communities. For example, many rural areas are underserved, especially remote and sparsely populated areas.[21] Psychologists struggle to deliver mental health services in rural communities that have high levels of poverty, lack basic amenities like clean water and accessible roads, and are often characterized by stigmatization of mental illness.[22]

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

In order to maximize use of psychosocial and therapeutic services, it is important that they be culturally and structurally responsive.[23] Psychologists engage with community organizations to provide support in an appropriate, accessible, and culturally sensitive way, ensuring that psychological assessments, formulations, and interventions are written in easily understandable language that is culturally sensitive, inclusive, and non-discriminatory.[24]

SCALING UP

Psychologists and others in the mental health community work to scale up interventions to ensure they are broadly accessible to community members. In 2013, the World Health Organization launched the first global mental health action plan, with a particular focus on how psychologists and other mental health professionals can train lay workers to deliver psychological interventions to improve mental health, expanding the reach of psychology.[25] A good example is provided by the

17. Demyttenaere, K., Bruffaerts, R., Posada-Villa, J., Gasquet, I., Kovess, V., Lepine, J. P., Angermeyer, M. C., Bernert, S., de Girolamo, G., Morosini, P., Polidori, G., Kikkawa, T., Kawakami, N., Ono, Y., Takeshima, T., Uda, H., Karam, E. G., Fayyad, J. A., Karam, A. N., Mneimneh, Z. N., ... WHO World Mental Health Survey Consortium (2004). Prevalence, severity, and unmet need for treatment of mental disorders in the World Health Organization World Mental Health Surveys. *JAMA, 291*(21), 2581–2590. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.291.21.2581.

18. Wang, P. S., Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., Alonso, J., Angermeyer, M. C., Borges, G., Bromet, E. J., Bruffaerts, R., de Girolamo, G., de Graaf, R., Gureje, O., Haro, J. M., Karam, E. G., Kessler, R. C., Kovess, V., Lane, M. C., Lee, S., Levinson, D., Ono, Y., Petukhova, M., Posada-Villa, J., ... Wells, J. E. (2007). Use of mental health services for anxiety, mood, and substance disorders in 17 countries in the WHO world mental health surveys. *Lancet (London, England),* 370(9590), 841–850. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)61414-7.

19. National Health Service. (nd). NHS Talking Therapies, for anxiety and depression. Retrieved from https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/.

20. Wakefield, S., Kellett, S., Simmonds-Buckley, M., Stockton, D., Bradbury, A. & Delgadillo, J. (2020), Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) in the United Kingdom: A systematic review and meta-analysis of 10-years of practice-based evidence. Br J Clin Psychol. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjc.12259.

21. Carter, R. C. (2021). Rural community water supply: Sustainable services for all. pp. 27-28. *Practical Action Publishing Ltd.*

22. Asanbe, C. B., Moleko, A., Visser, M., & Makwakwa, C. (2022). Coping strategies and mental health of adolescents impacted by parental HIV and AIDS in rural South Africa. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health*. https://doi.org/10.2989/17280583.2022.2058951.

23. United Nations Human Rights Council (2010) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health* Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/health/pages/srrighthealthindex.aspx.

24. British Psychological Society (2018) Guidelines for psychologists working with refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.bps.org.uk/guideline/guidelines-psychologists-working-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-uk.

25. World Health Organization. (2013). Mental heath action plan. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/action_plan_2013/en/.

Fairstart Foundation, which provides free international caregiver group training in local languages and has trained more than 500 instructors from partner organizations and governments around the world.[26]



HOLISTIC INTERVENTIONS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

It is crucial that mental health policies encompass broader social contexts.[27] For example, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs are a cost-effective way to mitigate intergenerational poverty, address societal inequalities, and promote a culture of peace. Holistic ECEC programs provide interventions that address multiple areas including health, education, nutrition, and maternal care. These interventions aim to provide children with resources for socioemotional, cognitive, and physical development, as well as support for caregivers. ECEC programming improves the environment in which we raise our children, which in turn helps build a more cohesive and peaceful society.[28]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member states and others in the UN community should:

- Commit to increased funding for culturally sensitive, scaled-up mental healthcare.
- Ensure that mental health services are available to hard-to-reach populations, including rural and remote communities.
- Support preventative programing such as Early Childhood Education and Care.

26. Rygaard, N. P. (2020). International Humanitarian Award: Niels Peter Rygaard. *American Psychologist, 75*(9), 1373–1375. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000786.
27. United Nations Children's Fund. (2021). Quantifying Heckman: Are Governments in Eastern and Southern Africa Maximizing Returns on Investments in Early Childhood Development?. https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/8156/file/UNICEF-ESARO-Quantifying-Heckman-Paper-2021-revised.pdf.
28. Early Childhood Peace Consortium. (2018). *Contributions of Early Childhood Development Programming to Sustainable Peace and Development.* New York: Early Childhood Peace Consortium. https://ecdpeace.org/contributions-early-childhood-development-programming-sustainable-peace-and-development..



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Psychology helps enhance learning and student mental health and wellbeing, contributing to inclusive and equitable education.

Amanda Clinton, Ph.D., Marijana Markovikj, Ph.D., & Sofia Ramalho, Ph.D.

SDG #4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by securing children of all abilities equal access to high quality education from early childhood through secondary school, as well as equitable training opportunities for adult women and men. However, children and adults around the world have unequal access to education and health, with implications that extend through the lifespan. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic enhanced inequalities in such a way that school life and longer-term outcomes have been impaired.

SCHOOLS NEED PSYCHOLOGISTS

Schools are an ideal place for psychologists to serve the community because they provide a ready context for prevention and intervention efforts,[29] fostering educational success and wellbeing. More specifically, school-based psychologists provide direct support, evaluations, and interventions for students, including on mental health, self-care, violence prevention, social-emotional skills, resilience promotion, mentoring, and career guidance. Psychologists consult with and train teachers, families, and other school-employed professionals, work with administrators on systems change and digital transitions, and engage the community as needed to help students reach their potential academically, behaviorally, and socio-emotionally.[30] Highly specialized services promoting mental health, wellbeing, and inclusion can especially benefit vulnerable students and families including low-income families, ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ people, those in conflict settings, refugees, or those who suffer chronic disease or disabilities.

ACADEMIC SUCCESS, SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS, AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ARE INTERTWINED

School psychologists are trained experts in the academic and emotional well-being of students and school communities. In many parts of the world, the quality of a child's educational system is associated with the affluence of their family, relationships with teachers, and a healthy and inclusive school climate. Psychologists who address educational issues are trained to work with the school and families to reduce inequitable access to resources.[31] Although academic learning is the primary focus of formal schooling, social-emotional learning - which incorporates skills such as resilience, emotion regulation, and attention - is key for educational success as well as health and wellbeing.[32] Psychologists who are trained to work in educational settings understand human development and the science and application of learning and behavior change.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IMPROVES MENTAL HEALTH, WELLBEING, AND LIFE OUTCOMES

Access to high quality education is important in achieving positive life outcomes, such as achieving better health, engaging in fewer risky behaviors, obtaining meaningful work, and securing higher wages. Equity in educational settings includes equal access to psychological support. If a learner is struggling because of social-emotional concerns that cause stress, sadness, or anxiety, she will not be able to absorb information taught at school.[33] According to the Global Standards for Health Promoting Schools, national governments should actively create action plans for education including health promotion and support for at-risk children.[34] Psychologists are urgently needed to help design and implement these plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member States and others in the UN community should:

- Ensure that mental health and wellbeing prevention and intervention services are available for students and school communities across the globe.
- Develop and fund systems that support referrals for mental health treatment in cases where children demonstrate need for intensive therapeutic support.
- Support the provision of psychoeducation training for teachers, administrators, support staff, and families.
- Advocate for universal prevention and promotion programs focusing on socioemotional alongside academic priorities.

29. National Association of School Psychologists. (nd). Retrieved from https://www.nasponline.org.
30. National Association of School Psychologists. (nd). Retrieved from https://www.nasponline.org.
31. Owens, A., Reardon, S.F., & Jencks, C. (2016). Income segregation between schools and school districts. *American Educational Research Journal, 53,* 1159-1197; Gutiérrez, G., Jerrim, J., & Torres, R. (2017). School segregation across the world: Has any progress been made in reducing the separation of the rich from the poor? *The Journal of Economic Inequality, 18*, 157-179.
32. Smith-Adcock, S., Leite, W., Kaya, Y. & Amatea, E. (2019). A model of parenting risk and resilience, social-emotional readiness, and reading achievement in kindergarten children from low-income families. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 28*, 2826-2841.
33. Carroll, A., Houghnton, S., Forrest, K. (2020). Who benefits most? Predicting the effectiveness of a social and emotional learning intervention according to children's emotional and behavioral difficulties. *School Psychology International, 41*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034319898741.
34. WHO (2020a). *Global Standards and Indicators for Health Promoting Schools.* Copenhagen: WHO office; Clark, H., Coll-Seck, A. M., Banerjee, A., ..., & Costello, V. A. (2020). A future for the world's children? A WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission. *The Lancet*, vol. 395, fevereiro 22, 605-658.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Psychology helps explain and ameliorate the social and psychological factors underlying gender-based inequality.

Linda Woolf, Ph.D., Roseanne L. Flores, Ph.D., & Ayorkor Gaba, Psy.D.

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) became an international treaty in 1981, establishing an international bill of rights for women.[35] The Declaration on the Status of Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, arguing that "violence against women violates women's rights and fundamental freedoms,"[36] while the 1993 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted by 189 countries and is considered among most important conventions to advance women's rights. The Commission on the Status of Women has called upon nations to implement the SDGs in a gender responsive manner to ensure no women or girls are left behind.[37]

35. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR]. (n.d.a). Convention on the elimination of all Forms of discrimination against women. New York, 18 December 1979. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women.
36. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (n.d.b). Gender-based violence against women and girls. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/Gender-based-violence.aspx.
37. Intergovernmental Support Division of UN Women. (2019). A short history on the Commission on the Status of Women. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/02/a-short-history-of-the-commission-on-the-status-of-women.

However, gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination against women and girls continues to be prevalent across the world, from exploitation in the workplace, to human trafficking, to interpersonal violence. Moreover, gender also intersects with other identity statuses, which can increase risks for violence, disempowerment, or the denial of other rights.[38] Women and girls at particular risk include religious minorities, racial or ethnic minorities, low-income women, migrants, refugees, older women, disabled women, or sexual and gender minorities.

WHY DOES GENDER INEQUALITY EXIST?

Several psychological factors perpetuate gender inequality. Women's human rights have traditionally been viewed as existing within the private sphere of the home, outside of public view and often ignored.[39] This has hindered law enforcements', policymakers', and researchers' willingness and ability to intervene.

Gender inequality is embedded in institutions and societies. For example, women may not be able to own property, vote, receive healthcare, or participate in political processes, or they may be denied inheritance rights, earn less money than their male counterparts, or lack legal protections.[40] The very right to life may not be protected for women and girls as gender-based abortions[41] and the "disappearances" of girls and women[42] are too common.

Many cultural norms are grounded in patriarchal and religious traditions. For example, women may be relegated to roles solely within the home or be defined as dependent on men.[43] These traditions are often used as bases for misogynistic practices and the devaluation of women and girls.[44]

KEY PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

Psychological science has much to offer in terms of how we understand and respond to gender inequality, including interventions targeting individuals, communities, and cultures. Significant psychological and related literatures exist on prevention, intervention, and/or treatment related to harms such as domestic violence,[45] trafficking,[46] sexual violence,[47] child marriage,[48] denial

38. United Nations Women (2020). Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Retrieved from https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs.
39. Canetto, S. S. (2018). Women and human rights: Concepts, debates, progress, and implications. In C. B. Travis & J. W. White (Eds.) *APA Handbook on the psychology of women, Vol. 2.* (pp. 521-543). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
40. United Nations Women (2019). Progress of world's women 2019-2020. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/world/progress-world-s-women-2019-2020-families-changing-world.
41. E.g., Bongaarts, J., & Guilmoto, C. Z. (2015). How many more missing women? Excess female mortality and prenatal sex selection 1950-2050. *Population and Development Review, 41,* 241-269.
42. E.g., Özsu, U. (2020). Genocide as Fact and Form. *Journal of Genocide Research, 22*(1), 62–71.
43. E.g., Glick, P., & Raberg, L. (2018). Benevolent sexism and the status of women. In C. B. Travis, J. W. White, A. Rutherford, W. S. Williams, S. L. Cook, & K. F. Wyche (Eds.), *APA handbook of the psychology of women: History, theory, and battlegrounds., Vol. 1.* (pp. 363–380). American Psychological Association.
44. Canetto, S. S. (2018). Women and human rights: Concepts, debates, progress, and implications. In C. B. Travis & J. W. White (Eds.) *APA Handbook on the psychology of women, Vol. 2*. (pp. 521-543). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
45. E.g., O'Doherty, L. (2019). Psychological impact of domestic and intimate partner violence. In C. D. Llewellyn, S. Ayers, C. McManus, S. Newman, K. J. Petrie, T. A. Revenson, & J. Weinman (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of psychology, health and medicine. 3rd ed.* (pp. 158–164). Cambridge University Press.
46. E.g., American Psychological Association. (2017). *Resolution on human trafficking in the United States, especially of women and girls*. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/about/policy/trafficking-women-girls.
47. E.g., Pemberton, J. V., & Loeb, T. B. (2020). Impact of sexual and interpersonal violence and trauma on women: Trauma-informed practice and feminist theory, *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 32,* 115-131.
48. E.g., Raj, A., Jackson, E., & Dunham, S. (2018). Girl child marriage: A persistent global women's health and human rights violation. In S. Choudhury, J. T. Erausquin, & M. Withers (Eds.), *Global perspectives on women's sexual and reproductive health across the lifecourse.* (pp. 3–19). Springer International Publishing.

of education,[49] sexual harassment,[50] infringement of reproductive rights,[51] and workplace discrimination.[52]



RECOMMENDATIONS

Member States and others in the UN community should:

- Better understand the psychological factors underlying gender inequality, develop and implement programs to combat these factors, and better mainstream gender into UN programing.
- Generate quality, disaggregated data on the nature and scope of GBV and on the availability and accessibility of services to guide funding, policy, and programming decisions.
- Provide culturally-informed psychological support to survivors of GBV and trafficking.
- Train community members, military personnel, governments, UN staff, and others on GBV and trafficking prevention and intervention.
- Develop and implement prevention and response programming that promotes positive social and gender norms to address GBV.

49. E.g., United Nations EDUCATIONAL, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2014). Girls' and women's right to education. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227859.

50. E.g., Fitzgerald, L. F., & Cortina, L. M. (2018). Sexual harassment in work organizations: A view from the 21st century. In C. B. Travis, J. W. White, A. Rutherford, W. S. Williams, S. L. Cook, & K. F. Wyche (Eds.), *APA handbook of the psychology of women: Perspectives on women's private and public lives., Vol. 2.* (pp. 215–234). American Psychological Association.

51. E.g., Apter, G., Robinson, G. E., & Stotland, N. L. (2020). Gender inequity, reproductive rights, violence, and social norms. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 7*(1), 13–14.

52. E.g., Heilman, M. E., & Caleo, S. (2018). Gender discrimination in the workplace. In A. J. Colella & E. B. King (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of workplace discrimination.* (pp. 73–88). Oxford University Press.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 8

Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

Psychology is critical to understanding (1) the factors that lead people to obtain full employment and decent work, and (2) how having a good job relates to mental health and well-being.

Blake Allan, Ph.D.

The current global context of work is marked by instability and uncertainty, particularly for vulnerable populations such as racial/ethnic and sexual/gender minorities. Over the past half century, several forces have collectively degraded the quality of work and increased the prevalence of unemployment, underemployment, and precarious work. These have included organizational restructuring, the rapid growth of technology, increased globalization, demographic shifts, the COVID-19 pandemic, and income inequality, all of which continue to rapidly transform the structure and experience of work across the globe.[53] Meanwhile, social safety nets in many nations have deteriorated, and collective bargaining rights

53. DeBell, C. (2006). What all applied psychologists should know about work. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 37*(4), 325-333. https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.37.4.325; International Labour Organization. (2019). *World employment and social outlook: Trends 2019*. Geneva, Switzerland: ILO; Kalleberg, A. L. (2009). Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American Sociological Review, 74*(1), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400101.

have become restricted, both of which previously helped people cope during career transitions and economic downturns.[54]

PSYCHOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNDERSTANDING AND PROMOTING DECENT WORK

Psychological science has shown that the quality of people's work status can affect health outcomes. For example:

1. Unemployment leads to poorer mental and physical health, but becoming reemployed can reverse these effects.[55]

2. Underemployment – that is, work that is suboptimal or poor quality – is related to poorer job satisfaction, mental health, and physical health, often to the same degree as being unemployed.[56]

3. Poverty wage employment and involuntarily temporary work are particularly harmful forms of underemployment that are strongly related to poorer well-being outcomes.[57]

4. Precarious work—work that is unstable and risky for the worker—is related to a host of negative outcomes, including greater stress and poorer health.[58]

5. Strong social safety nets protect people from the detrimental psychological effects of unemployment. People who live in countries with weak employment protections and greater income inequality have worse outcomes from unemployment than people living in countries with strong protections.[59]

In contrast to unemployment, underemployment, and precarious work, decent work meets the minimum standard for acceptable employment, such as providing a living wage and access to healthcare.[60] Adapting the International Labor Organization's decent work framework, psychologists have developed and tested psychological theories of decent work,[61] suggesting that in addition to meeting basic needs (e.g., food and shelter), decent work is critical for helping people meet their psychological needs (e.g., social connection), which promote well-being and mental health. Moreover, despite narratives that blame people for their job situation, the research highlights how systemic forces, such as political marginalization and economic constraints, affect who can choose their jobs and the quality of jobs that different people can obtain.[62]

In summary, psychological scientists are vital to understanding and advancing SDG 8 by detailing the effects of suboptimal employment and helping explain the necessity of providing decent work for all.

54. Lott, B. (2014). Social class myopia: The case of psychology and labor unions. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy, 14*(1), 261-280. https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12029; Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2009). Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses. *Journal of Vocational behavior, 74*(3), 264-282. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001.

55. Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2009). Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses. *Journal of Vocational behavior, 74*(3), 264-282. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001; Wanberg, C. R. (2012). The individual experience of unemployment. *Annual Review of Psychology, 63*(1), 369-396. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100500.

56. Allan, B. A., Tay, L., & Sterling, H. M. (2017). Construction and validation of the Subjective Underemployment Scales (SUS). *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 99,* 93-106. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2017.01.001; Dooley, D., Prause, J., & Ham-Rowbottom, K. A. (2000). Underemployment and depression: Longitudinal relationships. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 41,* 421–436. https://doi.org/10.2307/2676295.

57. Allan, B. A., Tay, L., & Sterling, H. M. (2017). Construction and validation of the Subjective Underemployment Scales (SUS). *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 99,* 93-106.

58. Benach, J., Vives, A., Amable, M., Vanroelen, C., Tarafa, G., & Muntaner, C. (2014). Precarious employment: understanding an emerging social determinant of health. *Annual Review of Public Health, 35,* 229-253. https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-032013-182500; Kalleberg, A. L. (2009). Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American Sociological Review, 74*(1), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400101.

59. Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2009). Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses. *Journal of Vocational behavior, 74*(3), 264-282. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001.

60. Blustein, D. L., Olle, C., Connors-Kellgren, A., & Diamonti, A. J. (2016). Decent work: A psychological perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7,* 407.

61. Blustein, D. L., Olle, C., Connors-Kellgren, A., & Diamonti, A. J. (2016). Decent work: A psychological perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7,* 407; Duffy, R. D., Blustein, D. L., Diemer, M. A., & Autin, K. L. (2016). The psychology of working theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 63*(2), 127-148. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000140.

62. Duffy, R. D., Blustein, D. L., Diemer, M. A., & Autin, K. L. (2016). The psychology of working theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 63*(2), 127-148. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000140.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member states and others in the UN community should:

- Consult with psychological scientists to ensure progress toward achieving SDG 8.
- Draw on psychological findings to strengthen the case for national policies supporting low-income and unemployed people.
- Take steps to ensure that psychological support is available to unemployed and underemployed workers.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 10

Reduce inequalities within and among countries

Psychology helps to understand and to reduce inequality within and across countries.

Deborah Fish Ragin, Ph.D. and Neal Rubin, Ph.D., ABPP

Inequalities, as represented in the targets and indicators for SDG10, are highly inter-related with other SDGs. Measures of wealth or income inequalities alone, as cited widely in the World Inequality Report,[63] do not capture other socio-economic disparities, for example poverty, hunger, education, environment, gender, health, and race. Ample research suggests that the interconnected and collective impacts of these inequalities can harm health and well-being, essentially leaving those most vulnerable behind.

THE CAUSES AND IMPACTS OF INEQUALITY

The COVID-19 pandemic shined a spotlight on the world's growing income and resource inequality. It accelerated the trend toward global wealth becoming concentrated among an increasingly small number of people and illuminated the effects of such disparities on other fundamental human rights, most prominently access to vaccines. Finally, it shed light on longstanding inequalities. Between 2017-2021, racial and gender discrimination on at least one of the areas prohibited according to international human rights law was experienced by at least 20% of people in 49 countries.[64]

Social science research reveals the relationship between income and social-economic inequalities. Areas of poorer population health and well-being tend to have

63. Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Zaez, E., & Zucan, G. (2022). World Inequality Report 2022 — Harvard University Press.
64. United Nations (2022). Sustainable Development Goals Report: 2022. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division.

higher rates of mental illness, especially depression and anxiety disorders,[65] while increased social problems have been linked to lower incomes.[66] Residential segregation in the United States illustrates some of these relationships: This systemic method of discrimination, which places racial minorities into under-resourced neighborhoods, negatively impacts residents' physical and mental health.[67]

Income and wealth disparities have also been shown to impact social relations.[68] Psychologists suggest that inequalities elevate the importance of social status, helping explain why "loss of face" or other forms of humiliation more often lead to violence in more unequal societies.[69] Social science findings also suggest that economic inequalities increase social class stereotyping,[70] perceiving lower-income people to be incompetent, immoral, and unfriendly, and lacking competence and assertiveness.[71] These inaccurate perceptions negatively affect the stigmatized group's physical and mental health and lead to a lower sense of well-being for both marginalized and advantaged groups.[72]

The consequences of an individual's poorer overall well-being extend to the larger society. Poorer mental and physical health results in a loss of productivity, draining social resources and diminishing the economic output of countries.[73]

HOW CAN PSYCHOLOGY CONTRIBUTE TO AMELIORATING INEQUALITY?

At the interpersonal level, psychologists have demonstrated for over 60 years that face-to-face contact between members of different groups in certain conditions is an effective strategy for reducing prejudice.[74] We also know that emphasizing what people have in common facilitates empathy and a sense of shared identity, which helps problem-solving at individual and country levels.[75]

At the systemic level, psychologists have identified programs that improve the economic well-being of children and families. Specifically, increases in access to education, training, and resources that promote health (i.e., school-based health clinics,[76] green cart initiatives providing fresh produce to low-income neighborhoods[77]) may reduce income inequality by promoting productivity and well-being. The long-term benefi-

65. Ribeiro WS, Bauer A, Andrade MCR, et al. I(2017). Income inequality and mental illness-related morbidity and resilience: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Psychiatry* published online May 25. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(17)30159-1.
66. Pickett, K. E. & Wilkinson, R.G. (2015). Income inequality and health: a causal review. *Social Science and Medicine, 128*, 316-326.
67. Smedley, B. D. (2012). The lived experience of race and its health consequences. *American Journal of Public Health, 12*,5, 933-935.
68. Wilkinson, R.G., & Pickett, K. E. (2017). The enemy between us: The psychological and social costs of inequality. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 47,* 1, 11-24.
69. Gilligan J. (2001). Preventing Violence. New York: Thames and Hudson.
70. Tanjitpiyanond, P., Jetten, J., Peters, K. (2022). How economic inequality shapes social class stereotyping. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 98.
71. Roex, L.A., Huijts, T., & Sieben, I. (2019). Attitudes towards income inequality: :Winners versus losers of the perceived meritocracy. Acta Sociologica, 62, 1, 47-63.
72. Smedley, B. D. (2012). The lived experience of race and its health consequences. *American Journal of Public Health, 12*,5, 933-935; Perry, B. L., Harp, K. L., & Oser, C. B. (2013). Racial and Gender Discrimination in the Stress Process: Implications for African American Women's Health and Well-Being. *Sociological perspectives : SP : official publication of the Pacific Sociological Association, 56*(1), 25–48.
73. James, C. P. (2001). "Race," racism, and the practice of epidemiology. *American Journal of Epidemiology, 154,* 4, 299-304; LaViest, T.A., Gaskin, DJ, Richard, P (2009). *The Economic Burdens of Health Inequalities in the United States.* Washington, D.C.:The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.
74. Vezzali, L., & Stathi, S (2016). The extended intergroup conflict hypothesis: State of the art and future development. In L. Vezzali & S. Stathi (eds.) *Intergroup Contact Theory: Recent Developments and Future Directions.* Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
75. Reynolds, A J., Ou, S-R, Mondi, C F., Giovanelli, A. (2019). Reducing poverty and inequality through preschool-to-third-grade prevention services. *American Psychologist, 74*,6,653-672.
76. Olowolafe, A.S., Olowo, B.F., Ogunsanwo, M.A., & Oladele, O.P. (2020). Assessing impacts of the school clinic on academic performance in selected secondary schools in Oyo state. *International Journal of Innovative Approaches in Education, 4*,3,108-120.
77. Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs (2014). New Study Finds NYC Green Carts Expanding Access to Fresh Produce in Low-Income Neighborhoods and Influencing Customer Behavior. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-study-finds-nyc-green-carts-expanding-access-to-fresh-produce-in-low-income-neighborhoods-and-influencing-customer-behavior-262685021.html.

cial impacts of early education intervention programs increased the earning potential of adults 34 years later, effectively reducing poverty outcomes for more than a quarter of families.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To reduce inequalities, Member States and others in the UN community may:

1. Promote policies that represent a multi-factorial understanding of the inter-relatedness of inequality with other SDGs, and their impact on health and wellbeing.
2. Work across traditional disciplines and sectors of society including business, government, and technology, integrating psychological findings in programs to reduce inequality.
3. Invest in early intervention programs for children, particularly educational programs that prepare students for skills that would reduce the rates of poverty for families.[78]

78. Reynolds, A J., Ou, S-R, Mondi, C F., Giovanelli, A. (2019). Reducing poverty and inequality through preschool-to-third-grade prevention services. *American Psychologist, 74*,6,653-672.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 11

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Psychology helps explain how we should design cities to maximize well-being.

Nelida Quintero, Ph.D.

According to UN data, 68% of the global population will live in cities by 2050,[79] but urban living can bring problems. Given the steadily increasing global migration from rural areas to urban centers, SDG 11 calls for the development of cities and human settlements that are "inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable." And in 2016, as part of Habitat III, the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, The World Health Organization stressed that "the most important asset of any city is the health of its citizens," pointing out that "the success of the New Urban Agenda will hinge on a clear understanding of how urban policies can foster good health, and how a vision for healthy, safe, inclusive, and equitable cities can act as a driver of local sustainable development."[80]

79. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *World Urbanization Prospects 2018: Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/421).
80. World Health Organization. (2016). *Health as the pulse of the new urban agenda: United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development, Quito*, October 2016. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241511445.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment proposed principles to ensure safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environments,[81] and the UN General Assembly has declared that all people have the right to a healthy environment.[82]

PSYCHOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PROMOTING HEALTHY CITIES AND CITIZENS

Psychological science has much to contribute to these issues, especially to our understanding of the interactions among mental health, well-being, and the natural and built environments. Psychology can help inform policies that promote and support sustainable, healthy cities around the globe, while fostering the international commitment to uphold human rights for all.

While cities can provide many resources and opportunities related to employment, education, social services, nutrition, sanitation, and health care,[83] city life can also have detrimental effects. For example, urban living may heighten propensity to mood and anxiety disorders, stress, and chronic mental and medical conditions.[84] Additionally, urban dwellers may have limited access to natural environments and the documented benefits of exposure to greenery, fresh air, and sunlight.[85] Psychological studies have shown that proximity to nature can help the healing process after surgery,[86] reduce aggressive behaviors and crime rates within a community,[87] improve memory and increase positive mood,[88] restore attentional capacity, and lower stress.[89]

Urban public and green spaces can enhance well-being and promote social interaction and cohesion, facilitate physical activity, and strengthen connection to community, place, and nature.[90] These psycho-social benefits underline the importance of protecting the planet's natural resources.

Psychologists have made crucial contributions to our understanding of the relationship between the natural and built environments, human behavior, and mental health and well-being. Psychological science should play an important role in informing and furthering the commitments of SDG 11.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member states and others in the UN community should:

- Provide multiple varied public and green spaces that support positive intergroup interactions, physical activity, and exposure to nature.
- Include psychological insights and tools in the urban design and development processes to best address the needs of city dwellers.
- Apply psychological research findings in the development of urban social policy to encourage community building and social inclusion.

81. United Nations Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. (2018). Framework principles on human rights and the environment. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/FrameworkPrinciplesUserFriendlyVersion.pdf.
82. United Nations General Assembly. (2022). *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3982508?ln=en.
83. Dye, C. (2008). Health and Urban Living. *Science, 319*(5864), 766–769.
84. Krabbendam, L., & Van Os, J. (2005). Schizophrenia and urbanicity: a major environmental influence—conditional on genetic risk. *Schizophrenia bulletin,* 31(4), 795-799; Lederbogen, F., Kirsch, P., Haddad, L., Streit, F., Tost, H., Schuch, P., Wüst, S., Pruessner, J.C., Rietschel, M., Deuschle, M. & Meyer-Lindenberg, A. (2011). City living and urban upbringing affect neural social stress processing in humans. Nature, 474(7352), 498–501.
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86. Ulrich, R. S., & Addoms, D. L. (1981). Psychological and recreational benefits of a residential park. *Journal of Leisure Research,* 13(1), 43-65.
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89. Berto R. (2005). Exposure to restorative environments helps restore attentional capacity. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 25 249–259; Kaplan S. (1995). The restorative benefit of nature: toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology,* 15 169–182.
90. Francis, J., Giles-Corti, B., Wood, L., & Knuiman, M. (2012). Creating sense of community: The role of public space. *Journal of Environmental Psychology,* 32(4), 401-409; Ulrich, R. S., & Addoms, D. L. (1981). Psychological and recreational benefits of a residential park. *Journal of Leisure Research,* 13(1), 43-65.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 13

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Psychological science is essential for the world to adapt to climate change and mitigate its worst consequences.

Irina Feygina, Ph.D.

Climate change is among the great challenges of our era, but the world has been slow to act. Psychological issues underlie much climate inaction and skepticism:

- Climate change is perceived as psychologically distant, uncertain, and complex.[91]
- Climate change is profoundly threatening and requires extensive change to our way of doing things, which activates deeply seated needs to uphold established ways of life.[92]
- Confronting climate change requires taking personal responsibility and prioritizing long-term well-being over short term costs.[93]

91. Ballew, M., Leiserowitz, A., Roser-Renouf, C., Rosenthal, S., Kotcher, J., Marlon, J., Lyon, E., Goldberg, M., & Maibach, E. (2019). Climate change in the American mind: Data, tools, and trends. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development, 61,* 4-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/00139157.2019.1589300.

92. Feygina I., Jost, J.T., & Goldsmith, R. (2010). System justification, the denial of global warming, and the possibility of "system-sanctioned change." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 36,* 326-338.

93. Gifford, R. (2011). The dragons of inaction: Psychological barriers that limit climate change mitigation and adaptation. *American Psychologist, 66,* 290-302.

Psychological science also offers tools to address these challenges.[94] Empirical research suggests that we must shift away from one-directional communication focused on imparting information toward dialogue via local, trusted messengers.[95] Rather than a demoralizing emphasis on an overwhelming problem, we must stress accessible, actionable, relevant solutions that foster efficacy and empowerment.[96] We must draw on people's need to belong[97] to create a shared vision for action and a set of social norms that guide behavior.[98] Moreover, psychology provides approaches to foster collaboration among the diverse stakeholders involved in adapting to and mitigating climate change,[99] including individuals, communities, governmental organizations, NGOs, scientists, and business groups.

Psychology also helps us understand and prepare for two key challenges posed by climate change: the undermining of mental health and the exacerbation of conflict.

MENTAL HEALTH

Extreme weather events can damage health, homes, and communities, resulting in dire mental health implications that last long beyond the events that caused them.[100] Climate change can also contribute to long-term economic stress, social instability, and loss of control, all of which undermine psychological well-being.[101] These impacts and stresses hit disadvantaged communities the hardest,[102] exacerbating societal inequalities and injustice.[103] Climate resilience will require anticipating and preparing for such impacts to prevent mental health deterioration around the globe.

CONFLICT

The social and economic instability brought about by climate change, especially migration,[104] activates people's need to protect their groups and ideologies,[105] contributing to prejudice, discrimination, and violence

94. Swim, J., Clayton, S., Doherty, T., Gifford, R., Howard, G., Reser, J., Stern, P., & Weber, E. (2009). Psychology and global climate change: Addressing a multi-faceted phenomenon and set of challenges. A report by the American Psychological Association's task force on the interface between psychology and global climate change. *American Psychologist, 66,* 241-250.
95. Maibach, E. (2019). Increasing public awareness and facilitating behavior change: Two guiding heuristics. In L. Hannah and T. Lovejoy (Eds.) Climate *Change and Biodiversity, 2nd edition.* Yale University Press.
96. Feldman, L. & Hart, P.S. (2016). Using political efficacy messages to increase climate activism: The mediating role of emotions. *Science Communication, 38,* 99-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547015617941; Hart, P.S., & Feldman, L. (2016). The influence of climate change efficacy messages and efficacy beliefs on intended political participation. *PloS one, 11,* e0157658. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0157658.
97. Fielding, K.S., & Hornsey, M. J. (2016). A social identity analysis of climate change and environmental attitudes and behaviors: Insights and opportunities. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7,* 121. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00121.
98. Santos, J. & Feygina, I. (2017). Responding to climate change skepticism and the ideological divide. *Michigan Journal of Sustainability, Graham Sustainability Institute, Michigan University Publishing.*
99. Nachbaur, J., Feygina, I., Lipkowitz, E., and Karwat, D. (2017). Perspectives on governance for climate change resilience: Status quo and reforms. *Arizona State University Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes.*
100. Clayton, S., Manning, C.M., Krygsman, K., & Speiser, M. (2017). *Mental health and our changing climate: Impacts, implications, and guidance.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica.
101. Berry, H.L., Waite, T.D., Dear, K.B.G., Capon, A.G., & Murray, V. (2018). The case for systems thinking about climate change and mental health. Nature Climate Change, 8, 282–290; Fritze, J., Blashki, G.A., Burke S., & Wiseman, J. (2008). Hope, despair and transformation: Climate change and the promotion of mental health and well-being. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems,* 2, 13.
102. EPA. (2021). *Climate Change and Social Vulnerability in the United States: A Focus on Six Impacts* (Report # EPA 430-R-21-003). U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
103. Chapman, D.A., Trott, C.D., Silka, L., Lickel, B., & Clayton, S. (2018). Psychological perspectives on community resilience and climate change: Insights, examples, and directions for future research. In Clayton, S. and Manning, C., (Eds.) *Psychology and Climate Change: Human Perceptions, Impacts, and Response,* 267-288; Trombley, J., Chalupka, S., & Anderko, L. (2017). Climate change and mental health. American Journal of Nursing, 117, 44–52.
104. Esses, V.M., Hamilton, L.K., & Gaucher, D. (2017). The global refugee crisis: Empirical evidence and policy implications for improving public attitudes and facilitating refugee resettlement. *Social Issues and Policy Review, 11,* 78-123; Green, E.G. (2009). Who can enter? A multilevel analysis on public support for immigration criteria across 20 European countries. Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 12, 41-60.
105. Feygina I., Jost, J.T., & Goldsmith, R. (2010). System justification, the denial of global warming, and the possibility of "system-sanctioned change." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 36,* 326-338; Kahan, D.M., Jenkins-Smith, H., & Braman, D. (2010). Cultural cognition of scientific consensus. Journal of Risk Research, 14, 147-174.

against out-groups,[106] as well as political polarization and radicalization.[107] These effects of climate change have already contributed to wide-scale unrest around the globe. Climate change undermines our ability to create healthy, connected, and secure individuals and communities. Psychological science must be incorporated into strategies aiming to engage the public and leaders in committed, coherent action toward preventing and preparing for the challenge ahead.





RECOMMENDATIONS

Member states and others in the UN community should:

- Use empirically tested behavior change tools to support climate engagement among individuals and groups, including drawing on social norms, shared identities, and empowerment.
- Integrate considerations of mental health into climate planning, including building up community resources for preparedness and providing intervention services to ameliorate distress.
- Anticipate the ways in which climate change leads to societal conflict and unrest, and put in place measures to address this by using psychological tools to ameliorate polarization and reduce prejudice and violence.

106. E.g., Leidner, B., Castano, E., Zaiser, E., & Giner-Sorolla, R. (2010). Ingroup glorification, moral disengagement, and justice in the context of collective violence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 36*, 1115-1129.
107. Dunlap, R.E., McCright, A.M., & Yarosh, J.H. (2016). The political divide on climate change: Partisan polarization widens in the US. E*nvironment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development, 58,* 4-23; Fritsche, I., Cohrs, J.C., Kessler, T., & Bauer, J. (2012). Global warming is breeding social conflict: The subtle impact of climate change threat on authoritarian tendencies. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 32,* 1-10.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16

Promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies

Psychology provides critical information to improve relations between competing groups and build peaceful and inclusive societies.

Lawrence H. Gerstein, Ph.D., Aashna Banerjee, M.A., & Brandon Miller, B.A.

To achieve societal peace, justice, and strong institutions, we must promote peaceful and nonviolent relations. Psychology offers insight into how and why violence and non-constructive conflict occur and suggests solutions to create a more inclusive and peaceful world.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESOLVE CONFLICT

Social Identity Theory[108] proposes that people divide themselves into social groups based on many identities (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, gender, race), leading to the creation of in-groups and out-groups. In-groups act as a source of pride and self-esteem,[109] which can only be maintained when people believe their own group

108. Tajfel, H. (1979). Individuals and groups in social psychology*. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 18*(2), 183-190. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8260.1979.tb00324.x.

109. E.g., Abrams, D., & Hogg, M. A. (2004). Metatheory: Lessons from social identity research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 8*(2), 98 106. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0802_2.

compares favorably to out-groups,[110] which contributes to prejudice and violence. In contrast, Social Dominance Theory[111] assumes there is a hierarchy of groups in society, leading to an inequitable distribution of resources, contributing to conflict.[112] The extensively supported[113] Intergroup Contact Hypothesis[114] states it is beneficial to increase contact among competing groups when that contact is characterized by equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and institutional support. Finally, Realistic Conflict Theory[115] asserts that prejudice and conflict occur when different social groups compete for limited or unequally distributed resources.[116] It also posits that positive intergroup relations can be facilitated by encouraging groups to work on a superordinate goal requiring *all* group members to actively problem-solve.[117]

IMPLEMENTING PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS ABOUT CONFLICT

Social Identity Theory can be used to understand the Israel-Palestine conflict, grounded in disputes stemming from religious identities, ethnicities, and nationalities. Further, drawing from Realistic Conflict Theory, both groups are competing over the same resources—land and territory—leading to protracted conflict.

Social Dominance Theory can shed light on conflict in Myanmar, where 85% of the population identifies as Buddhist, contributing to a power differential and persecution of Rohingya Muslims.

The Intergroup Contact Hypothesis has a long history of guiding programs designed to prevent and resolve intergroup conflict. For example, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has conducted facilitated dialogues between individuals from groups experiencing conflict, such as in Iraq, Kosovo, Columbia, Israel, Palestine, and Nepal. The dialogues are characterized by equal status of participants, common peacebuilding goals, intergroup cooperation, and institutional support provided by USIP. Other successful interventions applying principles of this hypothesis include social change projects to prevent and reduce ethnic and religious conflicts in Tajikistan and Jordan, and to counter and prevent violent extremism and radicalization in India.[118]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member states and others in the UN community should:

1. Ensure that Social Cohesion Programs (SCP) in conflict areas rely on empirically supported psychological principles to increase mutual understanding and reduce prejudice and discrimination, for instance, creating a situation where members of conflicting groups can work collaboratively in a mediated environment to problem-solve towards a common goal. These principles were successfully applied in Malawi in 2011 when UN staff worked with government and civil society leaders to

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reduce tensions.[119] Similar UN peacekeeping programs drawing on the Intergroup Contact Hypothesis and Social Identity Theory have been successful in Guyana between 2002-2006 and Kyrgyzstan in 2010.[120]

2. Implement multipronged programs that incorporate principles of Realistic Conflict Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Social Dominance Theory to improve the status of women, decrease gender-based violence, increase political representation of marginalized groups, and ensure equitable access to resources after societal conflict. Such programs have been successfully conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo[121] and Mali.[122]

3. Prioritize the preservation of access to natural resources in the context of climate change in order to prevent armed conflict and consequent refugee flows, in line with principles of Realistic Conflict Theory.



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