

LANCET–SIGHT COMMISSION: ADVANCING EVIDENCE AND ACTION ON THE INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN HEALTH, GENDER EQUALITY, PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

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OVERVIEW

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an ambitious agenda that provides a unique opportunity to take a radically different approach to development. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are interdependent, designed to encourage a holistic approach to promoting health and well-being across many sectors. The linkages between some SDGs have been explored, but evidence is largely lacking.

The Lancet, the world's leading medical journal, has invited the Swedish Institute for Global Health Transformation (SIGHT) to host a new commission on the linkages between the SDGs for good health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16). The Lancet–SIGHT Commission will help identify opportunities to accelerate progress on SDGs 3, 5 and 16 by shedding light on overlooked and important relationships between health, gender equality, peace, justice and the quality of institutions.

The Lancet–SIGHT Commission will take an interdisciplinary approach to generate evidence on opportunities for synergistic work across these SDGs and will raise awareness and mobilize action on the commission's evidence-based policy recommendations. The commission will be composed of an independent, international group of experts representing a diverse set of disciplines and geographies.

FOCUS

The session was an opportunity to learn about and provide inputs on the work of the Lancet–SIGHT Commission.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The new Lancet–SIGHT Commission focuses on the linkages between the SDGs for good health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). These are three fundamental but also challenging goals for Agenda 2030. The commission will generate evidence and recommendations on how health and gender equality can contribute to peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

The SDGs are linked and reinforce each other. For instance, strong and accountable institutions are essential for peaceful societies, as well as for promoting health and gender equality. Healthcare is not only important to meet basic human needs but is also a precondition for gender equality. Weak governance and violence hinder the delivery of health services and impede stabilization, development and peace.

Several topics are related to these linkages: Can meeting basic human needs—such as health, education, and employment—reduce the risk for conflict? Although health is a fundamental pillar of democratic societies, it tends to be overlooked in discussions on peace.

Delivery of basic public goods is part of building trust and the social contract with the government. Health service is one important way that institutions demonstrate what they can deliver, as people commonly perceive health as an important component of their security. There is a concept of health as a bridge to peace. However, evidence for the importance of health services in peace processes is lacking and needs further research.

One challenge is the lack of data, particularly for SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. More data is available for parts of SDG 3 on good health and well-being, as many indicators were also part of the Millennium Development Goals. The lack of data is due to underreporting, lack of capacity, and the sensitivity and political nature of certain topics, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Lack of health provision in post-conflict societies is not solely due to lack of capacity or awareness but is sometimes caused by deliberate and structural issues. A peacebuilding lens can be used to analyse the impact of health services, improve service delivery in fragile environments, and avoid creating or reinforcing injustice and factors that contribute to conflict.

Moreover, the local context and cultural awareness are important features when working across health, gender and peacebuilding issues. For example, cultural awareness is key in mental health and addressing issues related to trauma and fear. Another issue that needs further research is how parental care is affected by conflicts.

A long-term perspective, strengthening transparent and accountable institutions, and identifying and addressing the root causes of conflicts are all important. The challenge is that these are context specific. Furthermore, prevention and early warning systems are of critical importance. A relevant question is whether health can prevent conflict or be part of an early warning tool.

Finally, the changing nature of conflict is a challenge, with increased civilian suffering as well as frequent attacks on aid and health workers.



 **Jocalyn Clark**
@jocalynclark 

Sensational Day 1 of the inaugural mtg of @TheLancet @SIGHT_SWEDEN Commission on #peace, health & #genderequity. Amazing group. Requisite Canadian huddle (I almost wrote cuddle) 🇨🇦

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 5 on gender equality, and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions as key for achieving Agenda 2030.
- Face the challenge of the lack of data, particularly for SDGs 5 and 16, is a challenge—which highlights the need for the Lancet–SIGHT Commission’s work.
- Incorporate local context and cultural awareness as critical elements of effective action.
- Recognize that mental health is an often underestimated and underfinanced area of global health.

RESOURCE LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

SIGHT: Swedish Institute for Global Health Transformation, <<https://sight.nu/>>.



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