

Total time

50-60  
minutes

Age group

12-18  
years



# SDG 16 in Action: How Peace, Justice, and Institutions Shape Our World

Lesson Plan

# STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## In this session, learners will:

- Explore the concepts of peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16) and their connections to democracy.
- Recognise the importance of justice and fairness in the school, community, and global settings.
- Build an understanding of trust and its role in maintaining peace and justice.

# CONTENTS

Part 1, 2 and 3 are designed to be delivered in one session.

Part 4 is an extension activity, but can be given as homework (simply replace the discussion prompts with reflection and writing instructions).

## Part 1: Introduction and Set-up (10 minutes)

- What is SDG 16?
- Breaking down SDG 16

## Part 2: Scenario Planning and Role-Playing Exercise (25 minutes)

- SDG 16 in context: what does it look like in
  - our school environment
  - our local community
  - a global setting

## Part 3: Reflective Discussion (15 minutes)

- What role can we play in building trust and peace in our communities?
- How do empathy, understanding and compassion contribute to building trust?

## Part 4: Focus on Peace (45 mins)

- Diving deeper into the theme of ‘peace’
- How does creativity contribute to peaceful societies?
- Become a peacemaker with a “Creative Peace Project”

## Supporting Resource & Glossary



# PART 1: INTRODUCTION & SET-UP

## Begin with the UN definition of SDG 16:

- “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

## Break it down to the three main components of SDG 16:

- Peace
- Justice
- Strong Institutions

Ask students to share what peace, justice, and strong institutions mean to them. Capture their responses.

## Explain what they mean:

- Peace is the absence of conflict, the presence of harmony and safety
- Justice is fairness, respect for the rule of law, and equity for all
- Strong Institutions are organisations, systems, and structures that enforce laws, ensure fairness, and uphold human rights

For the last one (strong institutions), here is an opportunity for teachers to understand directly from their students what they view as strong institutions.

Ask them if they can think of any examples (e.g. schools, the United Nations, sports leagues, the International Criminal Court, etc) and encourage a conversation around how they demonstrate strength (or weakness).

Then, show images representing the three key concepts: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

## Ask the students to consider the following questions:

1. How do the three elements support and enable each other?
2. What would happen if one of them was missing?

## Example discussion prompt:

- What if we removed **Strong Institutions**? How would that affect the other two?

Encourage students to share their ideas. For instance, they might discuss how without institutions that enforce laws, there could be corruption, inequality, or chaos, leading to a breakdown in peace and justice.

## Repeat this process for each of the three concepts:

- If we removed **Peace**?
  - What would society look like without peace?
  - How does conflict or unrest disrupt justice and strong institutions?
- If we removed **Justice**?
  - What would happen in a society without fairness or the rule of law?
  - How would this impact trust in institutions and the overall peace?

Through this exercise, students will see that each element - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions - is equally important. **In democratic societies, democracy cannot function without fairness and the rule of law, which are upheld by strong institutions and justice.** By understanding the interdependence of these elements, we can better appreciate the role they each play in maintaining a stable and fair society.

## PART 2: SCENARIO PLANNING & ROLE-PLAYING

**Explain to students that while peace, justice and strong institutions are key for the global community, they also apply to our local context. For example:**

- Schools represent institutions, where rules and policies create structure.
- Peace in schools manifests as conflict resolution and respectful relationships between students.
- Justice appears through fair discipline practices and equal opportunities for all students.

**Divide students into small groups of 3-4 explaining the role-playing task:**

- You are a news team covering a situation where the rule of law has completely collapsed. Your job is to report on the situation, describing:
  - What you see around you
  - What life looks like in this situation
  - How did we get here / what factors led to this situation
  - What's next? What can we do to restore the rule of law? To re-establish peace, justice and strong institutions?

**Assign one of the following scenario to each group:**

***"Imagine the rule of law has broken down completely in..."***

- **1) In a school setting**

*(thinking prompts: What happens if the school doesn't enforce rules or has unfair disciplinary actions? How does this affect students' peace and trust?)*

- **2) In a community setting**

*(thinking prompt: What happens when the local government is corrupt, and justice is not served? How does this impact the community's sense of peace and trust?)*

- **3) In a global setting**

*(thinking prompts: What happens if a country lacks strong institutions and justice (e.g., corruption, human rights violations)? How does this affect international peace and stability?)*

**Allow time for students to briefly report back to the rest of the class, asking to them to summarise their key observations from the given questions.**

## PART 3: REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE

At this stage, the role of trust in maintaining peace and justice should start becoming clear to students. Deepen this understanding by discussing - as a class - the role of trust in maintaining peace and justice. *Why do people need to trust institutions (e.g., the school, the government)?*

Now ask students to reflect on their own communities and personal experiences:

- How trust is built in our school and community?
- What happens when trust is broken?
- How can trust be restored?
- What role does technology and AI play in building trust?

After discussing trust in institutions, transition to the emotional foundations that support trust: *"Trust doesn't appear from nowhere. Let's explore what helps create it."*

Facilitate a guided discussion on how empathy, understanding, and compassion contribute to building trust:

- Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
- Understanding is seeking to comprehend different perspectives, even when we disagree.
- Compassion is acting with kindness toward others, especially during conflicts.

Ask students to consider these questions in small groups before sharing with the class:

- How does showing empathy help prevent conflicts from escalating?
- Why is understanding different perspectives important for fair decision-making?
- How does compassion create space for healing after trust has been broken?

After a short classroom discussion, close with this key message:

*"Strong institutions rely on rules and structures, but they're brought to life by people who practice empathy, seek understanding, and act with compassion. When we develop these qualities in ourselves, we become active builders of peace and justice in our communities."*



## PART 4: FOCUS ON PEACE

This activity will allow students to dive deeper into the theme of ‘peace’.

### What is Peace?

- We describe peace as the “absence of conflict, and presence of harmony and safety”.

Share this quote with your students:

*“Peace equals an ability to handle conflict with empathy, non-violence and creativity.”*  
- Johan Galtung

Ask them: What does this mean to you? What do you interpret from this quote?

### Prompt them by asking:

- How is peace about understanding and listening?
- How is peace about collaboration?
- How can creativity and hope lead to peace?

Explain that against the current world backdrop of fragile states and fragmented societies, there is a growing need for innovation, creativity and interdisciplinarity when it comes to understanding and resolving conflict.

Interdisciplinarity means combining ideas, methods, or knowledge from different areas to understand something better or solve a problem.

To help students understand how creativity leads to peace, facilitate a class discussion using the following:

- How does creativity encourage new solutions?
- Creative thinking helps find non-traditional ways to resolve conflicts.
- How does creativity build empathy?
- Art and storytelling help people understand others’ feelings.
- How does creativity promote dialogue?
- Collaborative creative projects bring people together.
- How does creativity change perspectives?
- Creative storytelling reframes conflicts as opportunities for growth.
- How does creativity provide nonviolent expression?
- Art and music channel emotions without violence.
- How does creativity inspire hope?
- By helping to imagine a peaceful future



The main takeaway from this activity is that by integrating diverse skills and perspectives, we can develop more holistic and sustainable approaches to conflict resolution.

## PART 4: FOCUS ON PEACE

So, to start nurturing peacemakers, task your students with creating a **'Creative Peace Project'**! For this, students will create a project that shows how creativity can inspire hope and lead to peace.

They can choose from the following options:

- **Art/Poster:** create a drawing, painting, or poster that visually represents how creativity can help solve conflicts peacefully. Add a short description (2-3 sentences) explaining your artwork.
- **Poem/Song:** Write a poem or song about how peace can be achieved through empathy and creativity.
- **Collage/Visual Board:** Make a collage of images and words that represent peace, empathy, and creativity.

If possible, find a place in the classroom to display your students' creations, so they are always reminded of the importance of creativity, collaboration, and hope for a more peaceful future.

## RECOMMENDED SUPPORTING RESOURCE

[Peace Heroes Mini-Magazines](#): Free interactive online publications that students can engage with independently or cooperatively with your class. The mini-magazines feature interactive storytelling scripts and meaningful activities designed to guide and engage your group in learning and discussion about the featured Peace Hero.

[About Peace Heroes](#): "Our goal is to provide communities across the globe – classrooms, refugee camps, after school programs and more! – with the resources they need to empower their young people to respond to our world's brokenness with courage, creativity, compassion, and hope. We want to give the next generation new heroes and help them internalize that each one of them can be a peace hero."

**Congratulations you have completed the SDG 16 in Action lesson plan!**

If you take any photos or videos, please share them with us at [lesson@project-everyone.org](mailto:lesson@project-everyone.org)  
If you post on social media, tag us and use the #SDG16inAction



# GLOSSARY

- **Democracy:** a system of government in which power is held by elected representatives who are freely voted for by the people.
- **Fairness:** the quality of treating people equally or in a way that is right or reasonable.
- **Rule of Law:** a set of laws that people in a society must obey.
- **Equity:** the situation in which everyone is treated fairly according to their needs and no group of people is given special treatment.
- **Corruption:** illegal, bad, or dishonest behaviour, especially by people in positions of power.
- **Interdisciplinarity:** Interdisciplinarity means combining ideas, methods, or knowledge from different areas to understand something better or solve a problem.
- **Empathy:** the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
- **Understanding:** seeking to comprehend different perspectives, even when we disagree.
- **Compassion:** acting with kindness toward others, especially during conflicts.

