



Concept Note:
**Accelerating Sustainable
Development Goals through
Peace Literacy**



In 2015, all countries of the United Nations agreed to a set of 17 global sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be reached by 2030. This was a remarkable achievement as it represents the first time in history that all nations have agreed to a shared vision of the future for people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. Peace Literacy offers a new way of thinking about peace that can help bring this shared vision into clearer focus and accelerate progress toward all SDGs.

1. WHAT IS PEACE LITERACY?

Peace Literacy is a new way of viewing peace that emphasizes the importance of non-physical human needs such as belonging, purpose, and self-worth, and organizes these needs into an explanatory **framework**. It views peace both as a set of **skills** we can use to meet these non-physical needs in healthy ways, and as a set of **capacities** that must be developed for those skills to be realized (peaceliteracy.org). When effectively understood and implemented, Peace Literacy can help accelerate progress toward all SDGs.

FRAMEWORK

The Peace Literacy **Framework of Human Needs** upends Maslow’s hierarchy and shows how non-physical needs such as belonging, purpose, and self-worth are shared human needs that empower us to meet our basic physical needs. The Peace Literacy framework offers an account of the trauma that results when these non-physical needs aren’t recognized or met in healthy ways. The framework reminds us how racism, sexism, and other oppressive systems and attitudes prevent us from perceiving each other’s common humanity, serve as blocks to empathy, and keep us from seeing that we share basic human needs.

CAPACITIES

Peace Literacy **Capacities** naturally arise in children but must be developed and practiced for mastery. Language, reason, and discipline are three of these capacities that get attention in public education, but these need to be accompanied by training and exercise in other capacities, such as hope, appreciation, curiosity, empathy, conscience, and imagination. Without mastery of these other capacities, our strength in language, reason, and discipline can become unbalanced. Even though all of these capacities arise naturally, without training they become weaker through lack of use. These capacities are the muscles of our humanity.

SKILLS

Peace Literacy **Skills** are critical, now, more than ever. Some are familiar (listening with empathy, keeping calm during conflict), some astonishingly new (recognizing aggression as a distress response); all are under-appreciated, with devastatingly predictable results. Peace Literacy Skills need to be taught across the curriculum from pre-kindergarten through to adult and higher education, and prioritized along with reading, writing, and math. Learning these skills requires the coordinated development of the muscles of our humanity.



Peace Literacy was developed by West Point graduate and former US

Army Captain Paul K. Chappell, who serves as the Executive Director of the Peace Literacy Institute. Chappell is an internationally-acclaimed speaker and author of the seven book *Road to Peace* series. Over the past decade he has offered workshops for educators, activists, and faith-based organizations. He has taught courses on Peace Literacy and Leadership in colleges across the US and Canada. Chappell and a team of educational

experts, coordinated by Sharyn Clough PhD, Director of Phronesis Lab and Professor of Philosophy at Oregon State University, have been designing and teaching Peace Literacy curriculum and assessment for use in public school through adult and higher education. We argue that **Peace Literacy is of critical importance for meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals**, especially **Goal 16 focused on Peace**, and **Goal 4 focused on Education**, but all of the Goals become more achievable when viewed through the lens of Peace Literacy.

Building on models of reading and writing literacy, as well as the nonviolent strategies of global leaders like MLK Jr. and Gandhi, Peace Literacy teaches a strategic approach to peacemaking, focusing on and integrating well-being at the personal, social, and political levels. Broadening and deepening the scope of educational models in Social Emotional Learning, Peace Literacy addresses trauma, including childhood trauma, war trauma, and racial trauma, and the links between these and the social barriers that prevent inclusive and equitable quality education. Anticipating the disruptive effects that emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and Artificial Intelligence will have on societies around the world, Peace Literacy also provides a framework for understanding the psychological needs these technologies are often used to meet, so that we can design and use these technologies more responsibly.

Education in reading and writing literacy is properly recognized as a universal human right. Our goal is the recognition of education in Peace Literacy as a universal human right. Education in Peace Literacy is the human right that empowers us to protect all our other human rights.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu made this clear when he endorsed our work:



“Peace Literacy has the capacity to repair our broken parts and create a nonviolent world anchored in dignity, meaning, purpose, and compassion for all. Given the crucial role that Peace Literacy can play, I support the recognition of education in Peace Literacy as a universal human right.”

2. HOW CAN PEACE LITERACY TRANSFORM OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SDG TARGETS?



“We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.” (p.2, Preamble, *2030 Agenda*)

One premise of Peace Literacy is that peace is a skill set, hence *literacy*, and these skills need to be taught and practiced in our school systems and beyond. Chappell has designed an explanatory **framework of human needs** toward which Peace Literacy skills are directed, and it is this framework that help transform our understanding of and progress toward **the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs**.

As a survivor of childhood trauma, racial trauma, and war trauma, Chappell became obsessed with understanding the human condition and the possibility of transformation from rage and violence into radical empathy and peace. In searching for a new way forward, he sought to answer a fundamental question: *What do humans need?* His research led him to formulate a new framework of human needs that upends Maslow’s hierarchy. This new human needs framework is articulated in Chappell’s forthcoming book *The Transcendent Mystery: A New Paradigm for Understanding Peace, Trauma, Technology, and the Human Condition*. An excerpt, “A New Peace Paradigm: Our Human Needs and the Tangles of Trauma,” is available for free download at <http://www.peaceliteracy.org>.

The Peace Literacy Framework identifies **nine non-physical human needs** around which society’s understanding of the human condition must be prioritized. These non-physical needs are: Purpose and Meaning, Nurturing Relationships, Explanations (and the Formation of a Worldview), Expression, Inspiration, Belonging, Self-Worth, Challenge, and Transcendence.

The 2030 Agenda is essentially a social contract among the citizens of all Member States of the United Nations. As a global social contract and viewed through a Peace Literacy lens, the 2030 Agenda serves to provide **purpose and meaning** to international and domestic development efforts of governments, businesses, and civil society. In doing so the 2030 Agenda helps to create a sense of **belonging** and community around a shared **worldview** or set of **explanations** regarding how best to go about enhancing and sustaining quality of life. Making tangible progress together on the SDGs contributes to our collective and individual sense of **self-worth**. Thus, there is an intimate, high-level connection between the 2030 Agenda and at least four of the non-physical human needs as outlined by Peace Literacy.

We analysed the extent to which the 17 SDGs and the 169 targets are aligned with these four non-physical human needs. The results are listed below.

How the Peace Literacy Framework of Human Needs aligns with SDGs and their targets:

PURPOSE AND MEANING

SDG 4: Quality Education (4.3 - 4.5)
SDG 5: Gender Equality (5.4 - 5.5)
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation (6.B)
SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth (8.8)
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (10.2, 10.7)
SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions (16.9)

SELF-WORTH

SDG 1: No Poverty (1.1 -1.4)
SDG 2: End Hunger (2.1 -2.2)
SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing (3.8)
SDG 4: Quality Education (4.1-4.7, and 4.A)
SDG 5: Gender Equality (all targets)
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation (6.B)
SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth (8.7- 8.8)
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (10.2-10.4, and 10.7)
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (11.1-11.2 & 11.4-11.5)
SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (16.1-16.3 & 16.7-16.10)

BELONGING

SDG 4: Quality Education (4.1-4.5 & 4.A)
SDG 5: Gender Equality (5.1 , 5.4, 5.5, & 5.A-C)
SDG 6: Clean Water & Sanitation (6.B)
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation & Infrastruct. (9.1 & 9.C)
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (10.2, 10.3 & 10.7)

WORLDVIEW

SDG 4: Quality Education (4.1, 4.3, 4.4 , 4.7 & 4.A)
SDG 5: Gender Equality (5.2, 5.5, & 5.A – C)
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation (6.B)
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (8.8)

Self-Worth is the non-physical human need that appears best supported by the SDGs, based on direct alignment with ten different SDGs. **Worldview** appears the least supported with only four SDGs contributing to this non-physical need. Among the SDGs and targets supporting all four of these non-physical human needs were the following:

SDG 4: Quality Education

- 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

SDG 5: Gender Equality

- 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- 5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

- 6.B Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

It is perhaps no coincidence that two of the three SDGs noted above deal with aspects of participation. This may imply that notions of participation and the social capital that can be generated in the very process of participation is an important aspect that cuts across both the SDGs and the fulfillment of the non-physical human needs as articulated in the Peace Literacy Framework.

3. HOW CAN PEACE LITERACY ACCELERATE PROGRESS TOWARDS THE 2030 AGENDA?



A critical gap in the framing of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs is the near-exclusive focus on physical and tangible priorities, rather than simultaneously focusing on non-physical human needs that often transcend physical needs.

This gap in SDG planning is consistent with government priorities more generally: a lot of time and resources (though often not enough of either) are spent planning for the provision of people's physical needs, but comparatively little time is spent thinking about how to provide for people's non-physical needs. Failure to provide for these non-physical needs in healthy ways creates a vacuum that allows extremist organizations and polarizing leaders to feed these needs in harmful ways, increasing instability and violence in our communities, nations, and around the globe, and decreasing the chances that the SDGs can be met.

Without minimizing the importance of our physical needs, it is crucial to bear in mind that people who can't find a healthy way to meet their need for purpose, self-worth, worldview, and belonging can be more dangerous to global peace than people who can't find a healthy way to meet their need for food and water. Terrorists, however defined, are seldom motivated by hunger or thirst, but they are often motivated by unhealthy sources of purpose, self-worth, worldview, and belonging.

In 2) above, we enumerated a number of connections between the SDGs and the shared human needs identified by Peace Literacy. However, these connections are not yet explicit in the Agenda, so strategies for meeting these basic needs are not yet in place.

Once stakeholders begin to think about these connections more explicitly and through the lens of Peace Literacy and its attention to an individual's non-physical needs, progress toward the SDGs is more likely to accelerate and the 2030 Agenda more likely to be realized.

We believe that Peace Literacy and its attention to non-physical human needs provides a key missing ingredient in the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, and building Peace Literacy capacities and skills at the individual and societal level can help realize a transformation towards sustainable, resilient and just societies, both globally and locally.

For more info contact Paul K. Chappell at paulkchappell@peaceliteracy.org and visit peaceliteracy.org.

Thank you!

Paul K. Chappell (Executive Director, Peace Literacy Institute, Rotarian, District 5240), Sharyn Clough (Professor, Oregon State University), Darren Swanson (Director, Novel Futures Corporation, Rotarian, District 5550).

4. BUILDING PEACE LITERACY SKILLS AND CAPACITIES ON THE GROUND

To help students build their Peace Literacy skills and capacities, we have been establishing curricular hubs, linking centers of higher education, local school districts, and community partners across the US and Canada. Rotary International has been a key partner, for example, in our work building a curricular hub in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. For the past two years, Chappell has partnered with **Rotary District 5550**, and the Phronesis Lab at Oregon State University, to offer Peace Literacy training through the **Manitoba Department of Education and Training**, the **Manitoba Teachers' Society**, the **Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace & Justice at the University of Manitoba**, and **UNESCO Associated Schools**, reaching hundreds of students, as well as over 500 teachers and administrators, aligning our mission with the 94 Calls to Action of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Report. The following comments from stakeholders across Manitoba speak to the success and impact of Peace Literacy programming:

Estelle Lamoureux, Vice President, Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, and retired Principal, Collège Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau: “The current and subsequent generation of students are waiting for us. There is simply too much at stake if we, as educators, do not meet our responsibilities as global citizens in providing them an authentic education embedded with the values of Peace Literacy, not only in our curricula but in our relationship-building practices within our school communities.” ... [My goal] is to envision a school community where Peace Literacy is the fabric of what we do.”

Kevin Lopuck, Social Studies Department Head, Lord Selkirk, Regional Comprehensive Secondary School: “Paul K. Chappell ...delivered a passionate plea for the development of a “Peace Literacy”. Essentially, his message was that human beings are trained extremely well in making war, but rarely are taught the skills of making peace. To do so, we must reconsider our thinking around human needs and the impact that the introduction of trauma can have on them... Chappell’s inspirational message provided us with education on how we can go about building this Peace Literacy in our classrooms and in our own personal lives. For two and a half hours, he had us captivated and motivated to work towards the goal of Peace Literacy, it is now up to us to continue the journey.”

David Newman, Director/At-Large, Rotary Club of Winnipeg, District 5550, Director, Rotarian Action Group for Peace: "We just had Paul K. Chappell ... spend 9 days and nights in Winnipeg engaging with our Winnipeg Police Service Community Police Unit and new recruits and trainers about peace literacy and dealing with trauma. We met with many other diverse engaged interactive audiences. We spent a morning with the Department of Education and Training and a Director and 12 of his senior staff...Over 30 Immigrant and Refugee youth ages 16 to 27 and women and men from South Sudan were enthusiastic about what they learned in engaging dialogues with Paul. Kindergarten to 12th grade UNESCO Schools teachers and students gave rave reviews of his keynote presentation to the Manitoba Annual UNESCO Schools conference.... Chappell met with rich and poor; powerful and oppressed; young and old, and all welcomed and were moved by and engaged with his teachings... The goal is to integrate peace literacy education... worldwide.”

Brahim Ould Baba, Manitoba Teachers' Society: “In a room full of students, teachers and school leaders, Paul K. Chappell inspired all of us with his passionate message about Peace Literacy. I believe everyone should hear this message. It is really a new frame for teaching about educating people to be good citizens and live together in a peaceful manner.”