

ARMED VIOLENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

While it is widely recognized that security is necessary for development, that underdevelopment can lead to insecurity and that freedom from violence is fundamental to effective development, still there is little analysis on how security can enhance human development. Although initiatives such as the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (2006) and the Oslo Commitments on Armed Violence and Development (2010) show that increased attention is being given to this issue, the international community needs to do more in order to effectively understand and address the issue of insecurity and armed violence and its linkages to development.

We have seen in the last decades that the number of large global conflicts is decreasing constantly. Yet, violence and insecurity are growing at worrying pace around the world becoming a primary development challenge and many thriving economies remain plagued by epidemic levels of armed violence. Evidence shows that insecurity and violence are not confined to conflict zones, nor to countries defined as fragile or failing. In fact, two out of every three people killed by armed violence die in countries which are considered at peace.

Armed violence, understood as ‘the use or threat of use of weapons to cause lesions, death or psychological damages, which harm development’,¹ generates insecurity and more violence. It affects unconditionally every state in the world and its complex expressions need to be addressed through coordinated and concerted international, regional and local reduction policies and programs.

What does the evidence tell us?

Armed violence kills over 740,000 people each year⁷; this is roughly the same as the number of people who die from malaria in the world’s poorest countries. At a conservative estimate, for every person killed another 10 are injured – many surviving with lifelong disability.

Armed violence constitutes an ongoing humanitarian disaster, with major negative impacts on long-term development. It is estimated that armed violence costs up to \$400 billion in lost productivity, with most perpetrators and victims being boys and men of school and working age⁸.

Evidence tells us that reducing and preventing armed violence needs to be an essential element of any development plan.

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95-163 billion USD: amount of resources that could be used for vital development investments that are instead diverted into addressing armed violence²

1.5 billion: people living in areas affected by fragility, conflict or large-scale organized crime³

160%: proportion of Jamaica’s total health expenditure forfeited in lost productivity as a result of violence-related injuries⁴

2 million: children of primary school age who do not attend school largely due to the insecurity in Iraq⁵

0: number of low-income fragile or conflict-affected countries that have achieved at least one Millennium Development Goal⁶

¹ *Armed violence reduction: enabling development*, OECD DAC, 2009.

² *The global burden of armed violence*, Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2009.

³ World Development Report 2011, *Conflict, Security and Development*, World Bank, 2011.

⁴ E. Ward, and A. Grant, *Estimating the economic costs of injuries due to interpersonal violence in Jamaica*, in “Manual for estimating the economic costs of injuries due to interpersonal and self-directed violence”, World Health Organization, Geneva 2008, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20441064.

⁵ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Developments in Iraq*, 2009, www.un.org/children/conflict/english/iraq, visited on 16/09/10.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *The global burden of armed violence*, Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2009.

⁸ Ibid.

What can be done?

Shared commitment to reduce the impact and incidence of armed violence is a foundation of the United Nations that aim *‘to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace [...]’*.⁹ Although the Charter aims particularly at conflict situations between countries, evidence shows that in many regions today conflict is not the only threat to international peace and security. Countries around the world have a chance to re-establish that commitment to reflect the problems of violence in the 21st century.

The international community, supported by many states at all levels of development, have recognised that armed violence – both within and beyond conflict – must be addressed as a humanitarian and development priority.

Action on Armed Violence believes that there are a number of concrete steps that countries can take in order to strengthen their commitment and take practical steps towards effective armed violence reduction. Countries can reduce armed violence to enhance development by strengthening their understanding of the linkages between armed violence and development, by acknowledging the human consequences of armed violence in the form of victims and survivors and by effectively targeting armed violence by including armed violence prevention and reduction policies and programs in their development plans.

In order to do so, countries should:

- Adhere to existing international and regional instruments that address this issue, such as the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence (2006) and the Oslo Commitments on Armed Violence (2010).
- Participate in the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development in October 2011.¹⁰ The review conference offers countries an opportunity to present their action plans towards armed violence reduction and prevention as well as to call to other countries to strengthen their engagement.
- Work with all relevant stakeholders to include armed violence reduction as a priority in their national development plans, supported where relevant by adequate aid. This can provide countries with sufficient resources to tackle the problem and ensures that the development community is included in the planning and programming.
- Reach out to key stakeholders at national and local level, including civil society and affected communities, to build inclusive working groups on armed violence and development that consider the problem in all its aspects and ensure that the issue is understood and tackled effectively.
- Commit to regular measuring and monitoring of armed violence to understand the problem and to build a culture of annual reporting on rates of armed violence through comprehensive national reports.
- Work in partnership with civil society and representative groups for a clear articulation of the actions required to ensure victims and survivors of armed violence are able to fully realise their rights.

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⁹ UN Charter, *Purposes and Principles*, Chapter 1, UN, 1945.

¹⁰ The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development is a high-level diplomatic initiative designed to support states and civil society actors to achieve measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence in conflict and non-conflict settings by 2015 and beyond. For more information on the review conference please visit: www.genevadeclaration.org/gdrevcon2011/gdrevcon2011.