

Statement of the conference

In January 2011, 34 representatives of civil society organizations and independent experts met in Amsterdam to share experiences on how to address the problem of armed violence. Recognising that armed violence has gained significant international attention since 2006, and agreeing that efforts to achieve concrete reduction in armed violence should focus on practical actions that are evidence-led, guided by humanitarian imperatives, responsive to the needs and rights of victims and survivors, and sustainable in terms of both armed violence reduction and prevention, two groups (respectively) addressed the following questions:

- How governments, in collaboration with other actors, can strengthen national systems to measure and monitor armed violence; and
- How understanding the rights and needs of armed violence victims and survivors can support more effective assistance.

In order to facilitate discussions on methodologies, and to support development of working practices in both armed violence monitoring, and victim assistance/survivor rights – building on the ongoing efforts to reduce armed violence as stated in the Geneva Declaration on armed violence and development, in the Secretary-General's report (A/64/228) "Promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence", and in the Oslo Commitments on Armed Violence – the conference established two separate sets of principles, one on measurement and monitoring and one on victim assistance.

These principles should support fellow civil society organizations, international organizations and states in their efforts to effectively tackle armed violence. They provide a basis on which to build ongoing collaborative work both within and between the two thematic working groups and they facilitate the development of common language on armed violence, which can more effectively be raised in key international disarmament frameworks throughout 2011. The principles also provide an opportunity for further outreach to key actors active in armed violence reduction programming to strengthen practical responses of civil society and governments – both in monitoring armed violence, and in recognising and supporting its victims and survivors.

Because armed violence occurs in a wide range of types in different regions, countries and communities, effective responses need to be specific to context. At the same time, the statements of principles set out below emphasise the need for stronger common understanding and standards among all actors interested in reduction and prevention of armed violence, in the way data on the problem are gathered, analysed and used, and how support for victims and survivors of armed violence is structured.

Just as in all efforts at armed violence reduction, placing the victims and survivors at the centre of measuring and monitoring efforts is key to ensuring that the data collected is relevant – reflecting and recognising the realities of the lives of affected people and communities – and that monitoring systems are, thus, effective. Collecting comprehensive data on the impact of victimization by armed violence is essential to identifying the barriers that victims and survivors face to fulfilment of their rights and in turn, for developing appropriate policies and programmes for assistance in this endeavour.

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Measuring and monitoring armed violence
Victim assistance and survivor rights

Principles for measuring and monitoring armed violence

Principle 1: *National armed violence monitoring represents a concrete response to government accountability and governance, and existing international obligations.*

- States are ultimately responsible for the safety and security of their populations. Armed violence, in its various forms, significantly compromises civilian protection and public security.
- Although there are many good initiatives in data-gathering, monitoring for armed violence at the national level is frequently incomplete or unintegrated, and in many cases non-existent.
- National armed violence monitoring is a vital measure of good governance, ensuring accountability and evidence-led policy and practice. It reflects a commitment to the values of transparency, openness, justice and truth.
- National armed violence monitoring is critical to successful prevention of armed violence, and will help strengthen international security and human rights norms.
- National monitoring supports a comprehensive approach to localised issues of weapons-related death and injury. As such, it is a shared benefit from responsible government to affected communities.
- National armed violence monitoring responds to existing obligations under international law, and can build on positive examples of collaboration between states – including the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, and the Oslo Commitments on Armed Violence – and with civil society.

Principle 2: *Armed violence monitoring should be people-centred, focusing on data showing scale and types of death and injury occurring among affected populations.*

- A national armed violence monitoring system should include information on the rates and types of violence occurring, and the types of policies and programmes responding. In this way, the national system would monitor actors (including victims and perpetrators), instruments (that is, weapon type and background history), and institutional responses (that is, policies and programmes instituted and operationalised to reduce and prevent armed violence).
- A national armed violence monitoring system would require, at a minimum, core data, including:
 - Weapon-related violent death
 - Injury (including type of trauma/psychosocial impact)
 - Type and history/provenance of weapon
 - Time and place of death/injury
 - Basic demographics of victims/perpetrators (sex, age, ethnicity or other relevant identifier, e.g. religion, political faction, location; where possible name)
- Wider information should be built into, or used in collaborative analysis with, a national system, including:
 - Other violent incidents (e.g. sexual violence, assault/theft with violence)
 - Public perception of security
 - Laws, policies, capacities, programmes in place to address armed violence
- Information on the utility of the national monitoring system itself should be maintained, including:
 - Metrics showing accessibility of and access to the system

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Principle 3: *Armed violence monitoring can be built progressively, integrating existing data sources, and augmenting with additional data-gathering, to provide a clear and credible picture of the problem nationally.*

- National armed violence monitoring systems should integrate existing data sources using transparent methods (existing sources usually, where available, include: criminal justice data; health sector data (vital registration, injury surveillance inc. health centre, clinic and hospital data); morgue/mortuary data).
- Where gaps in information can be identified, alternate data approaches such as inclusion of key questions in existing surveys, or commissioning of new surveys, should be encouraged and incorporated.
- National armed violence monitoring systems should incorporate qualitative information (e.g. community/case studies) to complement quantitative data.
- Monitoring systems should adopt, as feasible and relevant, technologies that support data-gathering and submission of information.
- International data-sets can be useful as background information.
- A usable national monitoring system does not have to be complex or costly.

Principle 4: *A national armed violence monitoring system should be nationally 'owned', with multiple relevant arms of government and civil society participation (including media and academic actors as well as armed violence reduction and prevention practitioners).*

- National armed violence monitoring should be more inclusive, balancing government and civil society participation, strengthening engagement with armed violence-affected communities, victims and survivors.
- Collaboration to improve recognition and understanding of armed violence can build trust between social actors, in particular between affected communities, civil society organizations, and government institutions; trust is also the basis for the building of good armed violence monitoring collaboration.
- National armed violence monitoring systems should be coordinated by government where possible, enabled by government or alternate authority where official capacity is limited, or led collaboratively among civil society actors where state capacity/commitment is absent.
- A national monitoring system should combine different available data sources, working with or through a quasi-autonomous or neutral body (candidate locations for a monitoring system can be agreed between government and civil society collaborators, but could include, for example, a national university department, a civil society network hub, or national statistical or audit office) with provision for the inclusion of all relevant actors and owners of information with respect to access to data, visibility of data and methods verification, and analysis.
- National armed violence monitoring system should actively support and incorporate sub-national information systems and data.

Principle 5: *A national armed violence monitoring system should actively promote public awareness of armed violence, as well as public policy discussion, debate and advocacy.*

- A national armed violence monitoring system should be capable of detecting, analyzing and supporting response to specific armed violence problems rapidly, including strengthening early warning systems and prevention capacities.
- Monitoring should reflect and make available for public access the human consequences of armed violence among victims and survivors.
- Systems should be subject to periodic evaluation of performance.

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Civil society organizations attending the meeting on measurement and monitoring of armed violence

Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) – UK

Asociación para Políticas Publicas (APP) – Argentina

B' Tselem – Israel

Conflict Analysis Resource Centre (CERAC) – Colombia

Danish Demining Group (DDG) – Denmark

Fafo Research Foundation (Fafo) – Norway

Gun Free South Africa (GFSA) – South Africa

Handicap-International (HI) – France

IKV – Pax Christi – Netherlands

Latin American regional working group on human security (SEHLAC) – Latin America

Mozambican Force for Crime Investigation and Social Reinsertion (Fomicres) – Mozambique

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) – Norway

Oxford Research Group/Iraq Body Count (ORG/IBC) – UK

Research and Documentation Center (RDC) – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Save the Children (SFC) –UK

Small Arms Survey (SAS) – Switzerland

Please send comments and input on this agenda to Serena Olgiati at: solgiati@aoav.org.uk.