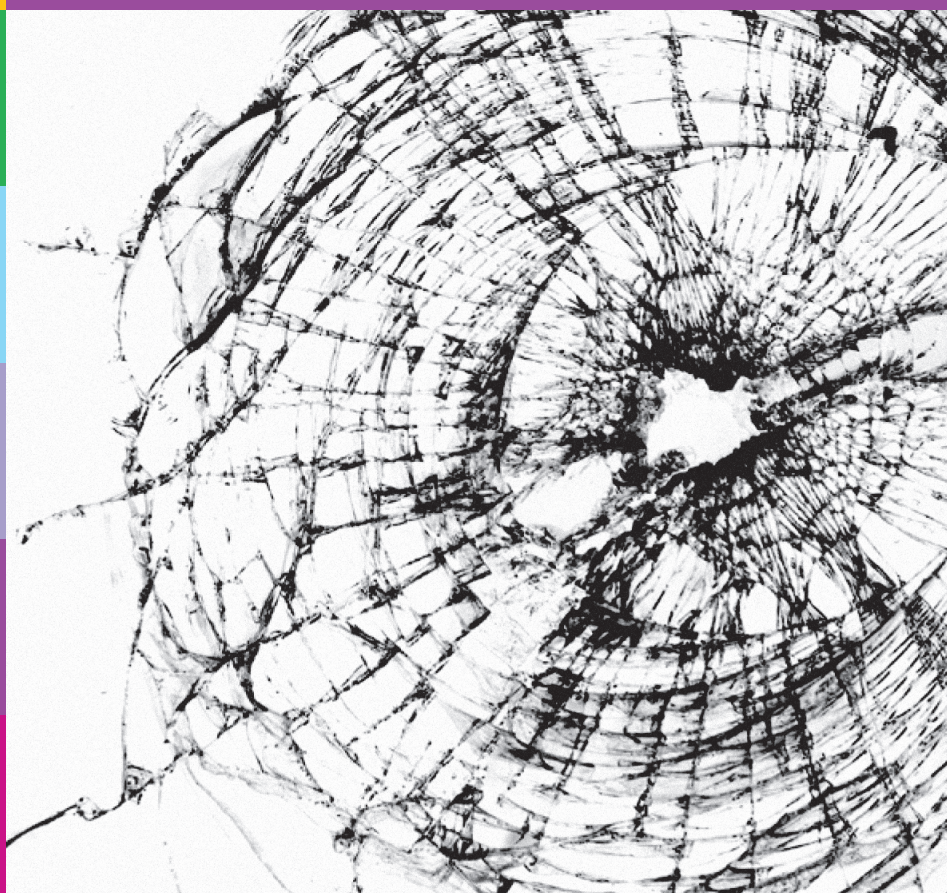


BREAKING CYCLES OF VIOLENCE:
KEY ISSUES IN ARMED VIOLENCE REDUCTION



WHAT IS ARMED VIOLENCE?

Armed violence is the use or threatened use of weapons to inflict injury, death or psychosocial harm. It is especially virulent in situations of conflict, crime and fragility. The damages arising from armed violence can disable and even reverse development progress

Policymakers and practioners need to be concerned about armed violence because it reduces the value and effectiveness of development investments, because it often links local with global violence, and because cycles of violence and conflict have lasting negative effects on societies. Actors involved in armed violence often combine political, criminal and commercial purposes. Criminal groups in Jamaica and Nairobi, for instance, are easily hired to engage in political violence during electoral periods. Conflict is often perpetuated by the revenue of drugs trade and other illicit commercial activities.

Armed violence highlights new cycles of violence and forms of insecurity, such as the fusion of conflict and criminal violence, the growing challenges of urban violence and the disproportionate involvement of youth. **Armed violence reduction (AVR)** interventions aim to reduce the risk and impact of armed violence.

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidence suggests that armed violence can be successfully addressed, which reduces human suffering, psychological trauma and negative regional/global spill-over effects. Interventions require:

A GOOD EVIDENCE BASE

A nuanced understanding of the context in which interventions take place is critical to avoid doing harm. This means engagements should be based on detailed and participatory assessments of key drivers of armed violence. **Donors need to make more time and resources available to do so.**

ENGAGING MUNICIPALITIES AND NON-STATE GROUPS

Because municipalities and non-state groups deliver many security and justice services, they are often well-placed to influence armed violence. **Donors can engage with such actors by working through NGOs and decentralised development agencies.**

FLEXIBLY MIXING PERSPECTIVES AND METHODS

The nature of public health, law enforcement, urban planning, economic opportunities and community services all play their part in explaining and addressing armed violence. **Donors can use their development experience to lead mixed teams and to ensure that mixed approaches translate into a coherent effort.**

COMBINING LOCAL WITH GLOBAL ACTION

Armed violence is often driven by a combination of local, national, regional and global factors. **Donors must be able to combine action at different levels to ensure their interventions are sustainable.**

ADEQUATE INTEGRATION IN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Armed violence reduction efforts are under-prioritised and under-resourced. **Donors need to integrate AVR efforts better in their development strategies to increase focus and available resources.**

SUFFICIENT TIME

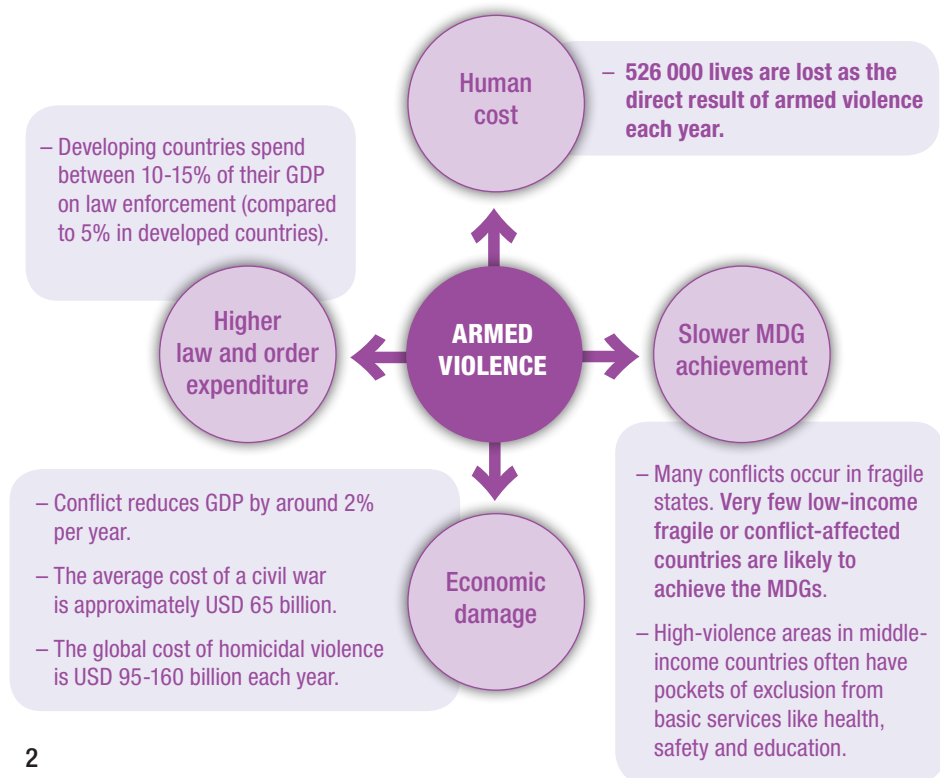
Successful interventions take time. It may take a year alone to build a good understanding of a particular context. Hence, **donors need to simultaneously focus on realising short-term results and on engaging in a longer-term effort.**

WHY IS ARMED VIOLENCE A PROBLEM?

Armed violence stops or reverses development progress in a wide range of mainly low- and middle income countries. It directly kills 526 000 people per year on average. Hundreds of thousands additional fatalities can be added to this as the indirect result of armed violence. It is growing due to, for instance, increasing youth populations without prospects, expanding ungoverned urban spaces and transnational criminal networks.

Beyond this, armed violence creates a climate of impunity, mistrust and corruption. It undermines vital public institutions. Armed violence is also closely tied to transnational crime and the misery and abuse associated with the illegal trafficking of arms, drugs and people. In addition, it has important youth and gender dimensions: the majority of perpetrators and victims are men, while women and girls are at greater risk of violence that is less visible and committed in the private sphere.

At the personal level, measures to reduce armed violence are measures to reduce human suffering. At the policy level, realising development outcomes – including the Millennium Development Goals – requires dealing with armed violence first. The figure below quantifies some of the costs associated with armed violence:



ISSUE #1: ARMED VIOLENCE IN URBAN AREAS

Economic transformations accelerate rural-urban migration that converts the rural poor into urban poor who populate mega-slums. Most of the world's population now lives in urban centres. Many of these centres feature high levels of violence because:

What is at stake?

- Structural inequalities and social exclusion are more visible and prominent. This is an important trigger of violence. It also simplifies the mobilisation of violence.
- Where government capacity is weak, power vacuums easily come into being. These vacuums are likely to be filled by non-state actors, as cities are conducive to criminal rent-seeking and political competition.
- Rapid urbanisation inevitably disrupts social networks.
- Markets for firearms and illicit drugs are more prominent in urban areas.

Entry points for AVR programming

- **Work with communities and neighbourhoods to design violence prevention interventions.** For instance, help urban residents revitalise existing resources such as space. Focused projects at the neighbourhood level can be scaled up once support is established for longer-term interventions.
- **Build on existing coping mechanisms.** The challenge is to identify those elements that contribute to security and prevention.
- **Support labour-intensive infrastructure projects.** These can be successful in mobilising communities and establishing “peace dividends”.
- **Assist municipal governments to enforce local laws** to address drivers of violence, especially restrictions on the sale of alcohol and firearms.
- Help communities and municipalities **improve basic service delivery**. Their (perceived) unequal coverage often is a major cause of grievances.

ISSUE #2: YOUTH AND ARMED VIOLENCE

The largest-ever generation of youth is now entering adulthood. Almost half of the world's population is under the age of 24 and the vast majority of 10-24-year-olds live in less-developed countries. Youth are particularly at risk of being exposed to, and engaging in, armed violence and crime.

What is at stake?

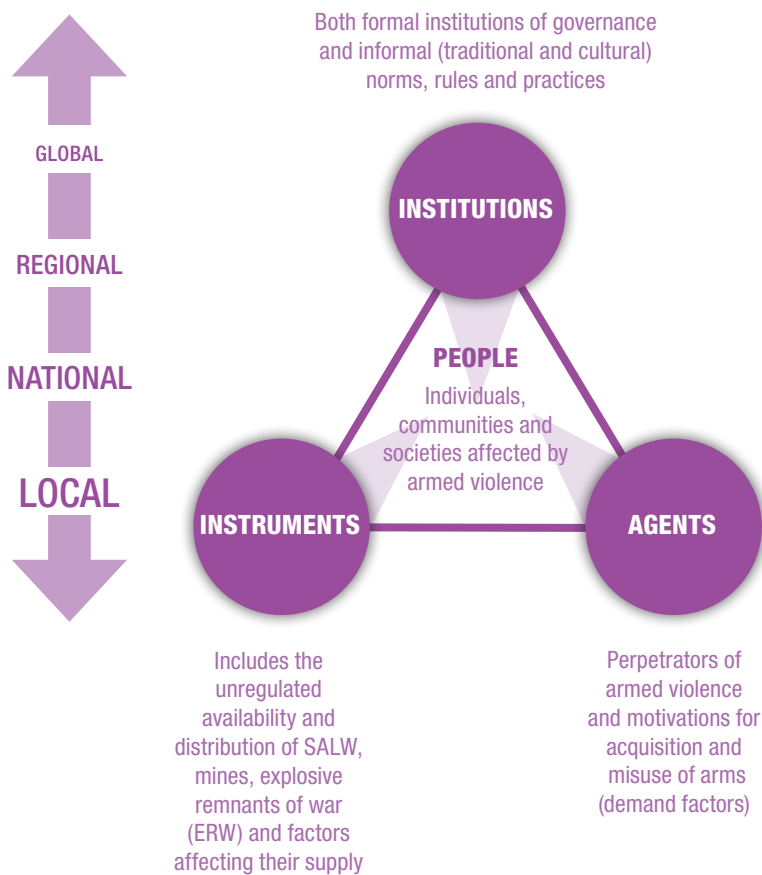
- Children and youth are increasingly growing up in cultures where armed violence is too often the norm. For example, today's armed groups frequently adopt strategies that bring battle more immediately to the civilian population and into the lives of youth.
- Young people in the developing world are living in environments in which firearms are cheap, poorly regulated, widely circulated and often traded illicitly. They are easy for youth to learn to use and to carry.
- Young people are often simultaneously involved in armed violence as perpetrators, victims and witnesses.

Entry points for AVR programming

- **Stimulate preschool enrichment programmes**, which provide children with academic and social skills at an early age. Evidence from developed countries shows that the life skills acquired in social development programmes aimed at building social, emotional and behavioural competencies can prevent youth violence.
- **Reduce the availability of, exposure to and social tolerance for alcohol consumption and abuse.** For instance, by legislating a minimum age for purchasing alcohol and by restricting the hours and days when alcohol can be sold.
- **Promote youth development, political involvement and leadership** to stimulate a sense of belonging, participation and inclusion of young people in their societies as a way to meet their needs.
- **Work towards more equal access to education**, but also ensure that education matches the (life) skills young people need in the job market.

EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS: THE “ARMED VIOLENCE LENS”

To support effective responses to armed violence, the OECD developed the armed violence “lens” (below). This is an evidence-based tool that helps practitioners think through the five key elements that shape armed violence patterns. These are: **1) the people** affected by armed violence, **2) the perpetrators** and their motivations, **3) the availability of instruments** (arms), **4) the institutional/cultural environment** that enables and/or protects against armed violence and **5) the vertical linkages** between 1-4 from the local to the global level. Integrated and evidence-based programming is essential for effective intervention. This lens helps practitioners do so.



A GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF AVR INITIATIVES

A recent large-scale study of 570 different armed violence reduction activities around the world (Brazil, Burundi, Colombia, Liberia, South Africa and Timor-Leste) — representing a range of AVR programming contexts, from high rates of urban criminal violence to protracted post-conflict insecurity — suggests that:

- **To design, implement and monitor AVR interventions, clear and achievable goals must be established, as well as methodologies for quantifying results and appropriate indicators.** The ministerial review conference on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, as well as the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, are addressing these issues and will benefit from strong international support.
- **Effective AVR interventions are multi-sector, operate at multiple levels, and rely on partnerships among many actors.** Actors involved in AVR programmes must work on the basis of integrated and evidence-based approaches.
- **Good or promising practice needs to be better documented with reliable evaluations.** Effective interventions are overwhelmingly based on high-quality evidence and routine baseline assessments.
- **AVR initiatives should be linked much more strongly to the promotion of peacebuilding and statebuilding.** Evidence has shown that promoting the capacity of public and civil society to document, prevent and reduce armed violence strengthens state authority and legitimacy.

FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR AVR

- **Link the Geneva Declaration with the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding** to ensure that AVR insights contribute to the realisation of the key peacebuilding and statebuilding goals of establishing basic safety and justice for all. Increased collaboration would also create opportunities for South-South learning and dialogue because the Geneva Declaration signatories feature a number of middle-income countries that can bring worthwhile experience, knowledge and resources to assist conflict-affected and fragile countries.
- Ensure that the second ministerial review conference on the Geneva Declaration stimulates **deeper AVR engagement with municipal authorities and promotes better monitoring and evaluation** of AVR efforts.
- Push for having the relation between violence and development reflected more strongly in the post-2015 MDG discourse and work to **integrate AVR efforts better in development strategies**.
- **Obtain a better understanding of the perspectives and needs of the insecure**, in particular of how they experience the consequences of armed violence and which solutions they consider to be effective.

WHAT AGENDAS DRIVE ARMED VIOLENCE REDUCTION?

The **International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (ID)** has advanced five key peacebuilding and statebuilding goals on the basis of international experience and lessons learned: legitimate politics; security; justice; economic foundations; and revenues and services. AVR programmes and methods can help deliver on the goals of security and justice for all.

➡ www.pbsbdialogue.org

The **Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (GD)** is the key international agenda to move AVR forward and sets the global framework for AVR thinking and practice.

➡ www.genevadeclaration.org

The **2011 World Development Report (WDR)** highlights the need of legitimate institutions and governance to provide citizen security, justice and jobs to break cycles of violence. AVR programmes and methods can be effective tools to break such cycles.

➡ <http://wdr2011.worldbank.org>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

INCAF work on armed violence reduction: www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/sps

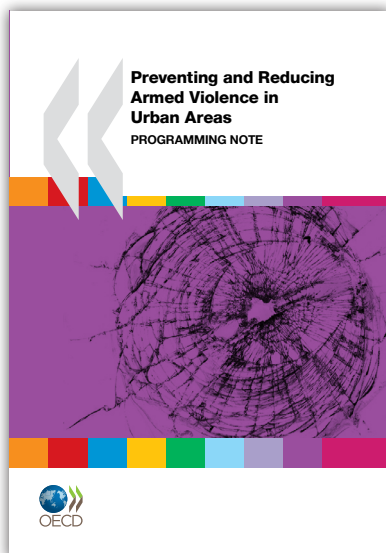
Small Arms Survey: www.smallarmssurvey.org

UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery: www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/focus_areas/conflictprevention.html

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The contents of this brochure highlight several of the key messages covered in greater depth in the following OECD DAC publications:

- *Investing in Security: A Global Assessment of Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention Initiatives* (2011).
- *Preventing and Reducing Armed Violence in Urban Areas* (2011).^{1,2}
- *Linking Security System Reform and Armed Violence Reduction* (2011).^{1,2}
- *Reducing the Involvement of Youth in Armed Violence: (2011).*^{1,2}
- *Armed Violence Reduction: Enabling Development* (2009).²



¹ Also available in French

² Also available in Spanish

Consult INCAF's publications through the OECD iLibrary:
www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/conflict-and-fragility_20743637

For more information, write dac.contact@oecd.org.



www.oecd.org/dac/incaf

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