

## **Views of the UK Government on: Promoting development through reducing and preventing armed violence**

### **Executive Summary (max 200 words)**

The UK believes there is a clear two-way relationship between armed violence and development. Armed violence is a common problem as it occurs in every country in the world but has a particularly detrimental impact in many developing countries where it exacerbates poverty and weakens economic growth. Practitioners from disarmament, development and human rights fields have been working on aspects of armed violence for some time but in a silo-bound way. A new approach to Armed Violence Reduction (AVR) would improve governmental, donor and civil society practice through coordinated, multi-sectoral approaches based on good evidence and data.

Key recommendations are:

- Development of clear goals, targets and indicators to help achieve measurable reductions in armed violence;
- Better integration of AVR with development programming to address the causes of armed violence;
- Integration of AVR into UNDAFs and national development and security strategies;
- Development of a coherent UN approach (policy) to addressing armed violence, that cuts across the disarmament, development and human rights silos;
- Support for the holding of a General Assembly Session on Armed Violence and Development

### **Interrelation between armed violence and development**

The UK believes there is a clear relationship between armed violence and development. Statistics from the Global Burden of Armed Violence report show that globally 740,000 people die each year from armed violence. The WHO asserts that violence is a major public health issue and one of its recognised five pandemics in the world. Men are the most common direct victims of armed homicide. However, women, children and other vulnerable groups like the displaced, suffer disproportionate impacts. The global cost of homicidal violence to societies around the world is between USD 95-160 billion a year with as much as USD 400 billion in lost productivity from lives prematurely cut short by violence. It contributes to 'unproductive' expenditures. Research suggests that developing countries may spend between 10-15 per cent of their GDP on law enforcement, as compared to 5 per cent in developed states. Armed violence is often accompanied by gender-based sexual violence, and not only in conditions of war. Rape, domestic violence, murder, and sexual abuse, is a significant cause of female mortality and a leading cause of injury for women aged 15 to 44 years.

The effects of armed violence can be most clearly seen in conflict countries but are also evident in pockets of insecurity that occur in every country. The

UK suffers also from armed violence and has recently produced a new plan called: Saving Lives, Reducing Harm, Protecting the Public: An Action Plan for Tackling Violence 2008-11<sup>1</sup>. However, this response to the UNSG's call for views will focus on developing countries as armed violence has a much more devastating impact on the poorest in the world.

Important risk factors include rapid urbanisation (and the rise of city slums), large youth populations, high levels of exclusion or marginalisation of certain groups, the absence of job opportunities, proliferation and ease of availability of small arms and light weapons, repressive security forces and the increasing political influence of trans-national criminal groups. A recent survey of vulnerable and excluded youth in seven West African countries by King's College London concludes that physical safety and security, and justice connected with youth representation and participation in decision-making, rank alongside educational and employment opportunities as key priorities among poor youth.<sup>2</sup> However, donors have traditionally given these issues little attention in comparison to conflict or war.

However, it is a two-way relationship as not only does armed violence lead to impeded development but poverty and underdevelopment can lead to increased levels of armed violence. Research has clearly shown that lower levels of GDP per capita are associated with a higher risk of violent and more prolonged conflict. Inequality and exclusion exacerbate insecurity. Where ethnic minorities are subject to political discrimination, conflict is ten times more likely to occur. Poverty and lack of access to basic services contribute to perceptions of injustice that can motivate people to violence.

## **International Response**

### Normative / Political response

Until very recently the international community has responded in a piecemeal way to these difficult issues. That is starting to change with international donors working together with partner countries most affected by armed violence.

The Geneva Declaration is providing a strong political impetus to start filling this gap. With 106 countries signed up to the Declaration, the common interest in addressing this issue is becoming clear. Good practice is being instigated by governments in a number of countries with the support of donors. Another important aspect of the Geneva Declaration is the development of targets and indicators on armed violence reduction to measure the success of activities in this field.

A number of the UN agencies (WHO, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Habitat, UNIDIR) have come together to form the Armed Violence Prevention Programme whose aims are:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/violent-crime-action-plan-08/>

<sup>2</sup> CSDG 2009 (forthcoming).

- To contribute to strengthening national capacities to address armed violence from a human security and development perspective.
- To promote institutional synergies and partnerships on armed violence prevention at the international and regional levels, and the development of informed strategies and policy frameworks for assistance.

The World Bank has a new Conflict, Crime and Violence Team in the Social Development Dept and one of their workstreams is on violence prevention including armed violence.

The OECD DAC has an AVR task team of which UK is the co-chair with UNDP. It aims to provide policy as well as practical assistance to programming. A policy paper on “Armed Violence Reduction: enabling development” has recently been published with a UK launch on 13 May 2009. The concept of a lens, as put forward in paper usefully ensures that people (victims and wider community), perpetrators, instruments or weapons, institutions (formal and informal) are examined to find the sources of insecurity as well as security. This lens can then be applied to a wide variety of assessments. Suitably targeted responses can then be developed to tackle these challenges.

#### Programming response

Experience shows that a multi-sectoral approach is the best way to tackle this difficult issue rather than just trying to remove weapons from society. Local municipal authorities, security forces, health and education officials, NGOs, as well as youth and womens’ groups should be involved in making their communities safer. For example, Viva Rio, an NGO active in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, initiated a programme with a fairly narrow focus on raising awareness, public mobilisation, and gun control. This initiative broadened out and by 2005, Viva Rio was active in 82 municipalities, and partnered with educational institutes, community associations, community radio stations, NGOs, churches, police units and penitentiaries. The combination of this work with changes in gun law is considered largely responsible for a 12 per cent drop in the number of gun deaths in Brazil between 2004 and 2006.

Good evidence and data on which to base a programme is essential. Applying the armed violence lens mentioned above to assessments (ranging from strategic conflict assessments to crime and public health assessments) ensures that the causes and sources of security as well as insecurity are taken into account, that the voices of victims and perpetrators are heard and that a solid, evidence-based way forward is developed. This can also be part of a baseline to judge the impact of a future programme.

Armed violence reduction programming can be both direct and indirect. Direct means projects that specifically targets the reduction and prevention of armed violence and its effects, for example, community policing or weapons collection. Indirect projects are those with other primary development objectives but AVR secondary objectives, for example education programmes that include the teaching of non-violent dispute resolution in schools or urban renewal programmes that include community security.

## **UK response**

The UK is working across government to reduce armed violence as we find the integration of development, diplomacy and defence analysis and interventions improves the likelihood of success.

The UK has a number of levels of response:

Policy – we are strongly committed to the aims of an Arms Trade Treaty to ensure a more effective and responsible regulation of arms transfers. The impact on sustainable development and conflict should be part of the criteria on which the transfer is judged.

Programmes – DFID country offices in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean are already programming on human security (freedom from fear aspects), community security, access to justice and armed violence reduction but we intend to increase the number of development programmes which have AVR-related issues as an objective.

Innovation – we are financially supporting the Geneva Declaration and OECD DAC to develop tools to assist in this field; and are also funding specialist NGOs to develop innovative research and pilot new approaches.

## **Recommendations**

- Development of clear goals, targets and indicators to help achieve measurable reductions in armed violence;
- Evidence-based (data, assessments and analysis) policy and programming;
- Better integration of armed violence reduction with development programming to address the causes of armed violence;
- Integration of AVR into UNDAFs and national development and security strategies;
- Development of a coherent UN approach (policy) to addressing armed violence, that cuts across the disarmament, development and human rights silos;
- 'Support for the holding of a General Assembly Session on Armed Violence and Development