

Armed Violence and Small Arms & Light Weapons (SALW)

Key statistics:

Casualties

It is estimated that more than 740,000 people die each year as a result of the violence associated with armed conflicts and large- and small-scale criminal violence. The majority of these deaths – 490,000 – occur in non-conflict settings.

Armed violence is the fourth leading cause of death for persons between the ages of 15 and 44 worldwide.

Small Arms and Light Weapons in circulation

It is estimated that at least 875 million small arms and light weapons in circulation today, three quarters of them being in the hands of civilians. As much as 60 percent of all homicides are committed with firearms.



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Impact on development:

Across the globe, armed violence destroys lives and livelihoods, breeds insecurity, and hampers prospects for human development.

According to the most recent estimates, the cost of armed violence in non-conflict countries reaches up to 163 billion USD annually worldwide which is more than the total annual spending on official development assistance.

War related violence decreases the annual growth of conflict-affected countries by, on average, 2 percent per year for the duration of the conflict.

Gender:

Young men are the main perpetrators and victims of armed violence. In some countries at peace, but with high rates of armed violence, such as Brazil, more young men are killed through armed violence than in ongoing armed conflicts.

According to WHO, a 15-year-old boy in Nyanga, South Africa, has a 1 in 20 chance of being shot dead before turning 35.

But the impact of armed violence on women should not be underestimated—women are often targets of certain types of violence involving small arms, particularly domestic violence and rape. Involving women in armed violence reduction efforts is therefore key for the success of any intervention.

UNDP in Action:

UNDP supports more than 20 countries worldwide to address the uncontrolled proliferation of weapons and the armed violence which often results from it.

To achieve this, UNDP promotes an integrated, evidence-based approach involving a wide variety of activities which include:

- Base-line assessments which identify the nature, scale, frequency and dynamics of armed violence in a particular country, province or community;
- Development of livelihood opportunities through micro grants and training, and other income-generation activities;
- Awareness raising on the impact and cost of armed violence through information and advocacy campaigns;
- Strengthening of national and local capacities for armed violence prevention and mediation;
- Strengthening of national and local capacities to collect, store and if necessary destroy illicit small arms, and to limit the circulation of firearms.

Recognizing that armed violence can only be addressed through collective efforts, UNDP has developed a partnership with a number of UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF, UN-Habitat and UNODC) through a global Armed Violence Prevention Programme.

Global efforts:

In June 2006, UNDP and the Government of Switzerland co-hosted a summit that resulted in 42 states endorsing the **Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development**, an initiative designed to “promote sustainable security and a culture of peace by taking action to reduce armed violence and its negative impact on socio-economic and human development.” As of September 2008, more than 90 states have signed the Declaration.

Also, UNDP co-chairs the **OECD/DAC Task Team on Security and Development**, which is in the process of developing operational guidance for donors on armed violence reduction.



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Call to Action:

Governments, donors and development actors must:

- Promote a comprehensive approach to armed violence reduction issues, recognizing the different situations, needs and resources of men and women as well as boys and girls;
- Take action to deal effectively both with the supply of, and the demand for small arms and light weapons;
- Stem the proliferation, illegal trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, and support the implementation of effective weapons reduction and small arms control initiatives; and
- Enhance the financial, technical and human resources devoted to addressing armed violence and small arms and light weapons related issues.

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