



Working to prevent
violent conflict

Saferworld issue paper 1

Addressing conflict and violence from 2015

Issue Paper 1: The impact of conflict and violence on achieving development

In this series of three issue papers, Saferworld examines existing evidence and arguments - and poses key questions - to help inform a productive global conversation about the place of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the post-2015 development framework.

With discussions on the post-2015 development framework underway, Issue Paper 1 looks at the impact of conflict and violence on development – in particular efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Issue Paper 2 follows on to ask ‘what are the key challenges to peacebuilding and development in conflict-affected and fragile contexts?’ and ‘what works in addressing them?’ Issue Paper 3 then broadens the scope of the debate by considering the perspectives of new global actors on issues of conflict and peacebuilding.

The papers are working drafts prepared for the ‘Conflict and Fragility and the Post-2015 Development Agenda’ Global Thematic Consultation, 28-30 November 2012, Monrovia, Liberia. They are not intended to be comprehensive, nor do they put forward a particular Saferworld agenda. Issue Papers 1 and 2 summarise the findings and conclusions of studies that identify lessons from multiple countries and contexts, together with policy positions that are significant due to their wide circulation, endorsement or innovation. Issue Paper 3 represents a summary of original research by Saferworld and leading experts on rising powers.

All comments are welcome and should be sent to lattice@saferworld.org.uk

Introduction

‘Violence and fragility are not an isolated or small issue: 1.5 billion people living countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence. 526,000 are killed each year by lethal violence.’¹

The UN Task Team on the Post- 2015 UN Development Agenda reports that fragile and conflict-affected countries account for more than 60 percent of the people living in severe underdevelopment.² This means that while many developing countries are experiencing progress, those worst off risk being left further behind. According to the Overseas Development Institute:

‘By 2025 the locus of global poverty will overwhelmingly be in fragile, mainly low-income and African, states.’³

Countries affected by violence account for:

- 60 percent of the world’s undernourished
- 61 percent of the world’s impoverished
- 77 percent of children not in primary school
- 59 percent of children not in secondary school
- 70 percent of infant deaths
- 64 percent of unattended births
- 71 percent of child under 5 deaths
- 43 percent of persons living with HIV/AIDS
- 65 percent of people without access to improved sanitation

Source: World Development Report 2011, p 62

Conflict and violence as a driver of underdevelopment

Aside from claiming lives, causing tremendous physical pain and emotional suffering, conflict and armed violence disrupts markets, displaces populations, destroys schools, clinics and roads, and scars families, communities and societies.⁴ While the MDGs largely focus on tangible and measurable aspects of human welfare, aspects that are less easily measured such as the psychological

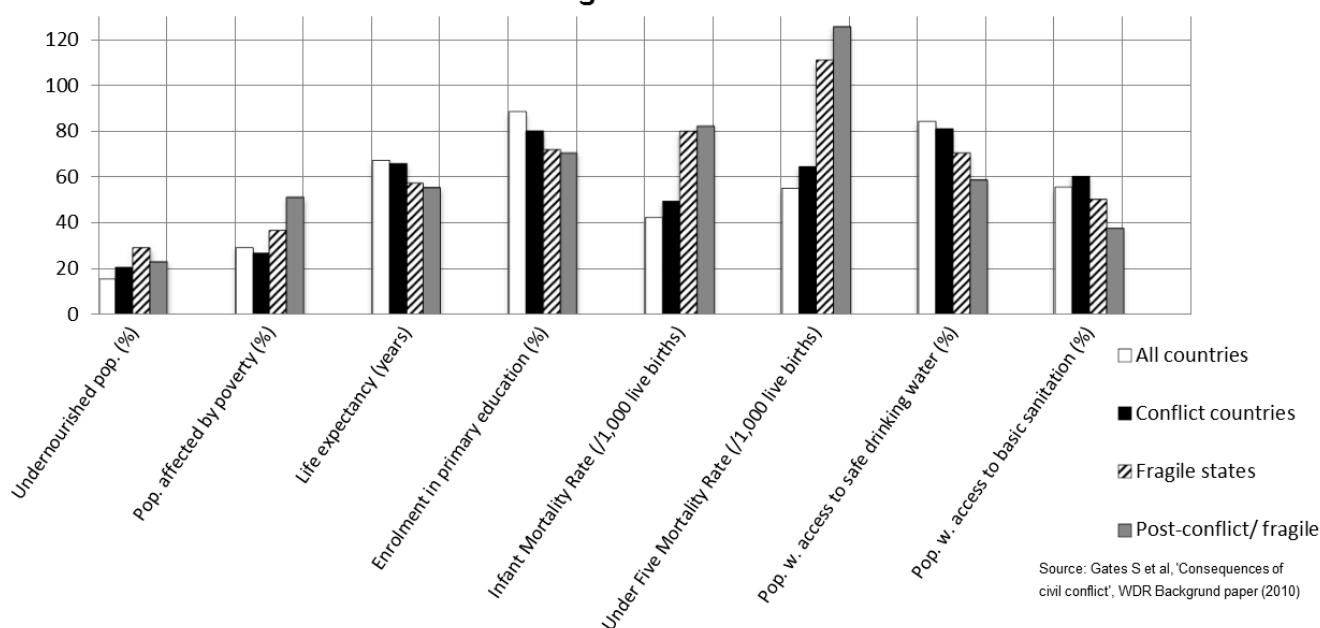
effect of conflict and armed violence are no less important.

Although the causal relations between conflict, violence and different aspects of development are hard to pin down, violence is directly and indirectly hampering the achievement of all the MDGs, not least because protracted conflicts take the focus and resources away from the MDGs, and also diminish the human resource capacity of a state for planning policy, making decisions and designing programmes.⁵

Developing countries that are not overtly conflict-affected have had some success with the MDGs. In many, the targets of reducing extreme poverty, halving the proportion of people without access to improved drinking water, improving lives for people living in slums, and equality of access for primary education have been met.

The impact that conflict and violence have on progress towards the MDGs that deal with human welfare (MDGs 1-7) are explored below. The information provided under each heading is not comprehensive, but rather gives an overview of what has been reported.

Comparing MDG indicators: all countries vs conflict, fragile & post-conflict/fragile countries



Evidence of the impact of conflict and armed violence on the MDGs



1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – In the World Development Report 2011, the World Bank reported that 60 percent of the world's undernourished and 61 percent of the world's impoverished live in countries affected by violence.⁶ The Geneva Declaration argued that armed violence and conflict disrupts the functioning of society, can lead to a loss of livelihoods, unemployment, displacement, result in the change of household composition, disruptions in service provision, disruptions of internal trade and markets, all of which undermine efforts to alleviate extreme poverty and hunger.⁷ In a further study, the Geneva Declaration completed a statistical analysis on the impact of conflict and armed violence on the MDGs, finding that there is a direct relationship between homicide and poverty levels, asserting that higher poverty levels tend to go hand-in-hand with higher levels of violence.⁸ A correlation between countries with low youth unemployment and lower levels of armed violence was also noted, while countries demonstrating improvements on this indicator tended to be low violence countries.⁹

Illustrating the impacts of violence in a specific country case, the Overseas Development Institute reported that during the conflict in Liberia, the spread of assault and rape in rural areas forced women to flee to the relative safety of town centres. Because women are the backbone of agriculture, accounting for more than half of the agricultural labor force and for more than 60 percent of the country's agricultural production, the direct effects of such violence was a decline in agricultural production and increasing poverty among women.¹⁰ The Center for International Cooperation and Security (CICS) noted that violence and conflict often lead to displacement, which leads in turn to a loss of livelihoods and therefore impoverishment.¹¹ **At the end of 2009 some 42 million people around the world had been forced to leave or flee their homes due to conflict, violence, and human rights violations.**¹²

Relationship between Conflict and Poverty

Conflict and violence put a substantial strain on a country's economy, while at the same time weak economic performance is a predetermining factor for violence. The World Bank notes that, 'lower GDP per capita is robustly associated with both large-scale political conflict and high rates of homicide'.¹³ Further, the World Bank demonstrated the relationship between conflict and poverty when it wrote that 'a country that experienced major violence over the period from 1981 to 2005 has a poverty rate 21 percentage points higher than a country that saw no violence'.¹⁴ Conversely, research by the Institute for Economics and Peace shows that per capita income increases as peacefulness increases.¹⁵

The Geneva Declaration estimates that the cost of armed conflict varies from US\$62 to US\$250 billion per year.¹⁶ The economic impact is not only for countries that experience an intra- or inter-state conflict: the Geneva Declaration suggests that if homicide rates in Jamaica (49/100,000) were reduced to the levels of Costa Rica (8/100,000)¹⁷ that its growth rates could rise by about 5.4 percent per year.¹⁸ The Institute for Economics and Peace has projected that a 25 percent reduction in violence across the globe would create an additional US\$2 trillion in economic activity.¹⁹

Case studies of Cambodia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua each revealed cumulative GDP losses up until the end of the conflict and then register moderate GDP gains in post-conflict years. In some cases such as Guatemala, the costs extend well after the war comes to an end. The violence in the aftermath of the civil war cost approximately US\$2.4 billion or 7.3 percent of GDP in 2005, more than 10 years after the war's end.²⁰ According to the World Bank trade levels after major episodes of violence could take 20 years to recover, and the higher chance there is of conflict, the lower the opportunities for investment a country will have.²¹ Countries not directly affected by conflict may also suffer economically due to regional conflict. For example, a country making development advances, such as Tanzania, loses an estimated 0.7 percent of GDP every year for each neighbour in conflict.²²

It is clear that conflict has a negative impact on the economy, and the converse is also true, as there is evidence that peace reinforces the resilience of countries' economies. As the Institute for Economics and Peace has documented not only is peace good for economic development, environmental health, and social cohesion, but also 'countries with higher levels of peacefulness tend to be more resilient to external shocks, whether economic, geopolitical or natural disasters'.²³



2 Achieve universal primary education – The World Bank estimated that countries affected by violence account for 77 percent of children not in primary school and 59 percent of children not in secondary school worldwide.²⁴ The Geneva Declaration asserts that conflict leads to the destruction of schools and education infrastructure and at the same time state revenues are diverted from social expenditures to military or public security because in situations of long-term chronic conflict and insecurity, consistent investment in schools is not a priority.²⁵ They also noted a correlation between higher homicide and low enrollment ratios.²⁶ The dislocation of families as a result of conflict creates a lasting barrier to achieving the goal of universal primary education, leaving already fragile and conflict affected countries without an educated class to help rebuild society.²⁷ CICS reported that this reality is being experienced in Somalia where the loss of a generation of anyone with a higher education has been described as a national disaster.²⁸ They cited other examples: in eastern DRC, as many as 70 percent of children do not have access to a school; in 1999, during the conflict in Timor Leste, 90 percent of schools were destroyed or badly damaged; it is estimated that during the conflict in South Sudan and Sudan there was a school enrollment rate of only 20 percent.²⁹ According to Save the Children, global education aid does not recognise the prevalence of children in conflict-affected countries missing out on education opportunities, as less than a fifth of global education aid goes to conflict-affected countries, despite being home to more than half the world's children missing out on education.³⁰



3 Promote gender equality and empower women – The Institute for Economics and Peace finds that countries that are less peaceful also have lower levels of gender equality.³¹ Armed violence leads to more women-headed households, expands workloads for women, increases the occurrence and likelihood of gender-based violence particularly in the aftermath of war, leads to the recruitment of women and girls into militias and gangs, and poses distinct challenges in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and security sector reform.³² CICS case studies confirm that in South Sudan, Chechnya, Algeria, Northeast India, and Sierra Leone systemic use of sexual violence was a way to dishonor and humiliate not just women, but the entire enemy group.³³ Violence against women in the aftermath of conflict was seen in El Salvador where an estimated 57 percent of women suffered physical violence at the hands of their partner³⁴, and UN Women reported that in the aftermath of the war in Cambodia an estimated 75 percent of women experienced

domestic violence.³⁵ While women are undoubtedly negatively-affected by violence, research indicates that at the global level, male homicide rates are roughly double female rates. At the national level in poor settings, the ratio can be even more extreme.³⁶ Conflict and violence also impact boys and men in numerous detrimental ways including early forced military recruitment, reinforcing violent concepts of masculinity and the dominance of such views within society. Often, sexual violence against men and boys in conflict situations may be overlooked.



4 Reduce child mortality – Countries affected by violence account for 71 percent of deaths among children under five and 70 percent of infant deaths.³⁷ The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reports that about 29,000 children under the age of five – equal to 21 each minute – die every year. Two thirds of the deaths occur in just ten countries,³⁸ eight of which are in conflict or in fragile situations.³⁹ The Geneva Declaration reports that conflict impacts the reduction of child mortality through the destruction and closure of medical facilities, and that malnutrition and lack of protection hamper any efforts to reduce child mortality.⁴⁰ Further, it has found a statistical correlation between low infant mortality and countries with low violence levels.⁴¹



5 Improve maternal health – The Economic Commission on Africa reports that all eight countries with the highest maternal mortality ratio in 2008 were in conflict or were post-conflict.⁴² The Geneva Declaration writes that conflict and violence can result in the diversion of state revenues from health care, destruction of infrastructure, and the displacement of women – all factors that prevent improvements to the conditions of maternal health care.⁴³ In addition it finds that high adolescent birth rates are directly correlated with higher homicide levels and that countries with low levels of homicide show progress in reducing adolescent birth rates. Conversely, countries with higher adolescent birth rates experience more violence.⁴⁴ The Economic Commission on Africa reports that maternal health is a great concern for most of Africa. The continent’s average maternal mortality ratio was 590 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008. After spending four of the last five decades in civil war, preliminary estimates of maternal mortality in South Sudan in 2011 were reported to be 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births, the highest in the world.⁴⁵



6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases – The World Bank reports that countries affected by violence are home to 43 percent of persons living with HIV/ AIDS.⁴⁶ The Geneva Declaration reports that poor living conditions, increase in sexual violence and prostitution and introduction of infected combatants back into society are some ways in which diseases flourish in conflict-affected and fragile environments.⁴⁷ In addition, they found a correlation between countries with a high percentage of people living with HIV and high homicide rates.⁴⁸ A background paper for the WDR 2011, however, disputes this, finding ‘in contrast to the other MDG goals, some of the otherwise detrimental effects of conflict may possibly prevent the spread of this disease, which is the counter-intuitive finding of several medical studies’.⁴⁹ The report goes on to note that conflict and HIV/AIDS prevalence relate to each other in a complicated fashion, noting that violence often causes large-scale migration and refugees and refugee camps can greatly facilitate the transmission of HIV/AIDS, as well as other infectious diseases.⁵⁰



7 Ensure environmental sustainability – MDG 7 includes targets on access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The WDR 2011 asserts that 65 percent of people without access to improved sanitation are from countries affected by violence.⁵¹ Conflict and armed violence lead to the acceleration of rural to urban migration contributing to the growth of slums. They can also lead to the destruction of infrastructure for safe water, and unregulated resource exploitation contributing to environmental degradation, according to the Geneva Declaration.⁵² Its analysis suggests that countries with lower levels of armed violence experienced improved access to drinking water and sanitation facilities, and downwards or upwards changes in the proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities are significantly correlated (inversely) with a country’s levels of violence.⁵³

Questions for the global thematic consultation

- Will this evidence be enough to convince decision-makers that conflict and violence need to be addressed in the post-2015 framework?
- What further research on impacts of conflict should be undertaken?
- What further evidence should be taken into account?

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We work in over 20 countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. We have staff based in Bangladesh, Georgia, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and Uganda, as well as in London, Beijing, Brussels and Vienna.

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¹ UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, *Peace and security thematic think piece* (2012), p 5.

² *Op Cit* UN System Task Team on the Post- 2015 UN Development Agenda, p 5.

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⁶ *Op cit* World Bank, p 62.

⁷ *Op cit* Geneva Declaration, p 18.

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¹⁴ World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (2011), p 60.

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²² *Op cit* World Bank, p 6.

²³ Institute for Economics and Peace, *Structures for Peace*, (2011), p 2.

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²⁵ *Op cit* Geneva Declaration, p 18.

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²⁹ *Op cit* Center For International Cooperation And Security, p 19.

³⁰ Save the Children, *Last in Line, Last in School: How donors are failing children in conflict-affected fragile states* (2007), p 11.

³¹ Institute for Economics and Peace, 'Structures of peace: identifying what leads to peaceful societies' (2011), pp 16-18.

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³³ *Op cit* Center For International Cooperation And Security, p 20.

³⁴ *Op cit* Center For International Cooperation And Security, p 20.

³⁵ *Op cit* Center For International Cooperation And Security, p 21.

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⁴³ *Op cit* Geneva Declaration, p 18.

⁴⁴ *Op cit* Geneva Declaration 2010, p 47.

⁴⁵ *Op cit* Economic Commission for Africa, p 68.

⁴⁶ *Op cit* World Bank, p 62.

⁴⁷ *Op cit* Geneva Declaration, p 18.

⁴⁸ *Op cit* Geneva Declaration 2010, p 47.

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⁵⁰ *Op cit* World Bank, p 55.

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⁵³ *Op cit* Geneva Declaration 2010, p 48.