



PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND REDUCING ITS IMPACT: HOW DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES CAN HELP

This new World Health Organization document calls for increased attention to, and greater investment in, violence prevention by development agencies.

VIOLENCE

- Is a leading cause of death and disability worldwide
- Impedes the social and economic development of low- and middle-income countries
- Is responsible for 1.6 million deaths every year. Of these deaths
 - 54% are due to suicide, 35% to homicide, and 11% to collective violence
 - Over 90% occur in low- and middle-income countries
- Mostly occurs in countries which are at peace

VIOLENCE CAN BE PREVENTED

The 2002 *World report on violence and health* makes a strong case that violence can be prevented and its impact reduced by adopting an evidence-based public health approach. Such an approach seeks to prevent violence before it occurs by reducing the factors that place people at risk and reinforcing those which protect them.

VIOLENCE HINDERS ALL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Violence has rarely been considered a development issue. Yet it seriously hampers the development of low- and middle-income countries through its health, psycho-social, and economic consequences:

- Violence has major and immediate health impacts such as death and injury, but it also has other serious consequences such as mental illness, chronic disease, poor school performance, and relationship and employment difficulties.
- Meeting the direct costs of the health, criminal justice, and social welfare responses to violence and the much greater indirect costs due to lost productivity, lost investment opportunities, and security services diverts billions of dollars from more constructive societal spending.
- Violence poses an obstacle to the achievement of all 8 of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

MDG	Example of how violence poses an obstacle
MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	High levels of violence exacerbate poverty.
MDG2: Achieve universal primary education	Violence in the home is linked with non-completion of schooling.
MDG3: Promote gender equality	Violence against women perpetuates gender inequality.
MDG4: Reduce child mortality	Girls exposed to violence tend to engage in sex and get pregnant younger, increasing the risk of neonatal mortality.
MDG5: Improve maternal health	Unintended pregnancy due to sexual assault is a risk factor for maternal mortality.
MDG6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases	Sexual coercion and violence increases risk for HIV infection.
MDG7: Ensure environmental sustainability	Vast tracts of land strewn with landmines due to war-related violence cannot be cultivated.
MDG8: Develop a global partnership for development	Collective and interpersonal violence can undermine development programmes.



World Health
Organization



GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION
CAMPAGNE MONDIALE POUR LA PREVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE
VIOLENCE PREVENTION ALLIANCE / ALLIANCE POUR LA PREVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE

GAPS IN THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

A review of development agency web sites and documents from 22 countries shows that:

- Interpersonal violence is on the agenda, but has a low priority.
- The focus is not on the forms of violence that put the most people at risk:
 - Suicide is largely absent, despite the almost 1 million deaths it causes annually;
 - Interpersonal violence among males, also a major contributor to the burden of violence, receives limited attention;
 - Collective violence (war-related), which makes up the smallest proportion of the overall global death toll due to violence, features most prominently.

A STRENGTHENED AGENDA TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

The heart of the document recommends a strengthened agenda for development agencies for effective violence prevention:

10 scientifically credible violence prevention strategies

1. Increase safe, stable, and nurturing relationships between children and their parents and caregivers through, for instance, the provision of parent training and support.
2. Reduce availability and misuse of alcohol through, for example, higher taxes, minimum price policies, or prohibitions at certain times or places or for youth.
3. Reduce access to lethal means.
4. Improve life skills and enhance opportunities for children and youth through, for instance, social development programmes that teach conflict resolution and social skills.
5. Promote gender equality and empower women; gender inequality is strongly related with interpersonal and self-directed violence.
6. Change cultural norms that support violence through, for instance, mass media public awareness campaigns that reduce the acceptability of, and break the silence surrounding, violence between intimate partners.
7. Improve criminal justice systems; cross-nationally, efficient and reliable criminal justice systems are associated with lower rates of homicide.
8. Improve social welfare systems; providing support to families in need - especially single-parent families - may reduce child abuse and neglect.
9. Reduce social distance between conflicting groups by, for instance, promoting integrated business organizations and political parties.
10. Reduce economic inequality and concentrated poverty.

4 scientifically credible strategies for reducing the consequences of violence once it has occurred:

1. Improve emergency response to injuries from violence
2. Provide mental health and social services for victims of violence
3. Reduce recidivism among perpetrators
4. Engage the health sector in advocacy for violence prevention

ACTION POINTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

- Increase investment in violence prevention
- Integrate the above strategies into development programming, addressing currently neglected risk groups and types of violence
- Increase support for data collection and research on violence prevention, particularly evaluations of prevention interventions
- Involve sectors currently neglected such as education, housing, and welfare



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