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*Benefits and Costs of the Conflict and Violence
Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*

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Post-2015 Consensus

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Introduction

This paper estimates the cost of collective and interpersonal violence to low and middle income countries. The authors seek to establish that interpersonal violence is considerably more costly on a global scale (four times so) than collective violence. Aid expenditure on programs targeting both categories of violence is contrasted in order to make a case that more international development assistance should be directed towards reducing rates of interpersonal violence.

The paper lays out its argument clearly and follows an orderly structure. The authors paint a robust picture of the scale for both interpersonal violence and collective violence. They make a strong case for why the international community should widen their focus beyond civil war to include targets for reduced homicide, domestic violence, and other forms of societal violence in the post-2015 development agenda. While highlighting the grave costs of these forms of societal violence, the paper also points to important neglected types of violence such as elder abuse that, as the authors note, will become increasingly relevant in the future. The authors also acknowledge many of the shortcomings and limitations of the data they employ. In the review process, we explored some of these limitations and identified a number of ways that the core argument of the paper—that societal violence requires a set of standalone targets in the post-2015 agenda—could be made into a more compelling case. Our comments are organized into three main thematic areas.

Defining Societal and Communal Violence

The paper would benefit from clear definitions and consistent usage of terminology with respect to the types of violence. This would be particularly useful for the reader to connect the discussion directly to the datasets being used. For example, the paper does not provide a clear set of definitions of societal and communal violence discussed and how they may overlap or relate. Instead, in some areas, such as in the Abstract, “violence” is used in several ways. Civil war is also not well defined beyond its measure of battlefield death counts. It is unclear if the definition of civil war used in the paper includes acts of violence against civilians by one armed group, and/or acts of terrorism.

Furthermore, the connection between interpersonal and collective violence is not discussed in depth. There are many examples from around the world where these kinds of violence interact in complex ways complicating efforts to collect data on homicides and related violence¹ with serious implications for intervention. A

¹The UNODC International Homicide Statistics (IHS) methodology text elaborates this with respect to the specific data: “The term ‘intentional homicide’ captures a wide range of acts, including domestic disputes that end in a killing, interpersonal violence, violent conflicts over land resources, inter-gang violence over turf or control, and predatory violence and killing by armed groups. Whilst the term is broad, however, it does not capture all intentional killing. In particular, deaths arising from armed conflict are usually considered separately.

discussion of how domestic violence can be impacted by civil war would strengthen the argument.² Consider, for example, how levels of sexual and gender based violence rose dramatically in Sierra Leone following the civil war.³

In addition to the *link* between societal and communal violence, the *overlap* between these two categories of violence should be discussed in more detail. As the discussion is couched in terms of crime versus conflict, the authors should consider including a discussion of the changing nature of conflict. Today's wars are increasingly characterized by a "blurring of war and crime."⁴ Acknowledging the debate about so-called "new wars" as a backdrop for this discussion would add context. Similarly, where interpersonal violence (IPV) is conceived as separate from the kind of crime that "new wars" discourse deals with, this should perhaps be elaborated.

In sum, a modest discussion of types of violence could provide the readers with a greater understanding of where the authors see the lines between civil war/collective violence and societal violence begin and end, particularly in country cases with high instances of societal violence, IPV, and histories of civil conflict.

The Costs of Violence

The authors use a number of data sets to provide a depiction of the global costs of societal violence as compared to civil war violence, to recommend how to put targets on the violence, and to make recommendations for how to tackle them. We identified several underlying assumptions that we believe could benefit from further explanation/elaboration.

For instance, the assumption that costs for a child homicide and female homicide are the same as male homicide, could perhaps be examined or substantiated further. Where the cost of homicide includes future loss of productivity, it may be conceivable that for children this would be notably higher and societal costs based on the different gender roles could be factored in.

The authors break down the costs of collective violence and IPV (p.9). For collective violence the costs include spending on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. The authors note that these cost estimates are based on UNHCR budget

The difference is often described by the organization of the killing. Individuals or small groups usually commit homicide, whereas the killing in armed conflict is usually committed by more or less cohesive groups of up to several hundred members. Despite the conceptual distinction, there is often little difference in intensity between large-scale criminal violence and low-level armed conflict, and the line between the two is often blurred." International Homicide Statistics (IHS), METADATA and METHODOLOGICAL TEXT for Intentional homicide, rate per 100,000. Available at: <http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/IHS%20methodology.pdf>

² See Gallegos, José V. and Gutierrez, Italo A., The Effect of Civil Conflict on Domestic Violence: The Case of Peru (August 3, 2011). Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1904417>

³ See Denney, L and Fofana Ibrahim, A 2012, Violence against Women in Sierra Leone: How Women Seek Redress, ODI Country Evidence Paper <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/523ac7a94.pdf>

⁴ Kaldor, M 2013. In Defence of New Wars. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2(1):4, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.at>

allocations. While the source of the data is not questioned, it is unclear if the authors have considered the costs incurred by host countries which are not covered by this UNHCR data, including infrastructure investments, job market stress, price increases due to population influx, increased security spending. Furthermore, it would be useful to see that the estimated costs of collective violence include infrastructure damage and loss of food production costs particularly (ex. impact of recent fighting in South Sudan on planting season).

Funding for Judicial and Legal Sectors

The authors make reference in the introduction and throughout the paper to “enhancing the capacity, professionalism and accountability for the security forces, police and judiciary” (p.3) and highlight that “Virtually zero aid flows to programs intended to improve police competence and integrity,” (p. 4). The data presented on the allocation of international foreign aid by sector (p.33) shows that funding for legal/judicial programming is comparatively lower than other sectors such as health or education.

However, it is not clear if the data used to support this argument (AidData) includes funding for legal and judicial programs that flows through UN peacekeeping and/or special political missions, through which most international aid supporting legal/judicial systems is administrated in many middle and low-income countries. In fact, all peacekeeping operations in countries where the UN has had an in-country presence since 1999 have included mandates to support the “rule of law”— security sector reform, judicial reform and capacity building, and police force training.⁵ A discussion of the impact of these programs in countries with high rates of societal violence would add to the discussion on UN programs on pages 36 and 37.

The authors argue that post-conflict countries are the chief recipients of legal/judicial aid (p.33) to the detriment of non-conflict-affected countries. As discussed earlier, this pits civil war against societal violence without discussing their overlap. We suggest that the authors consider providing a chart and/or graph that shows which countries with high rates of societal violence are post-conflict and which are not and how foreign aid spending differs. Going back to an earlier point, without discussing the parameters of societal violence, it is difficult to objectively analyze the role of the international community, and in this instance the UN, in measures to address it.

Additionally, the authors noted that the most relevant category for aid directed at reducing societal violence is that which AidData referred to as “legal and judicial development,” a sub-category of “Government and civil society.” The authors highlight how aid to the former has increased only marginally from .06% in the early 1990s to just 1.04% in 2009. Overall, only .27% of total aid spending is designated as aiming to prevent crime. In analyzing AidData’s breakdown, it seems

⁵ See the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations’ division of the Rule of Law here: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/ruleoflaw/index.shtml>

that there is an assumption built in that only projects aiming to “Improve the capacity and sustainability of civil and criminal justice sector actors and institutions, enhance coordination amongst them, develop citizen demand for an effective and accountable justice system, and develop associations to advocate for all citizens,” (p.32) can be considered as aimed at crime prevention. Arguably, early childhood and female education have significant effects on crime as do health programs aimed at substance abuse (which is mentioned in the paper as a significant contributing factor to IPV (p.38)).

The paper details how it would create targets for the reduction of the cost of war, intimate partner violence, and FGM for example, but it does not provide a recommendation for how it would tackle the issues to do with judicial capacity, nor does it give a critique of existing programs used to achieve this goal. For instance, what would the authors recommend for setting international goals for strengthening rule of law? For example, SIDA’s support to judicial reform/legal training in East Timor.⁶

In the discussion on aid to combat domestic violence on page 37, the authors could acknowledge that most aid packages with the aim of empowering women include a focus on reducing domestic violence, or if not directly domestic violence, call for the economic empowerment of women in the home to tackle gender disparity. The authors could consider discussing the effect of aid packages distributed by the UN and donor countries to high-violence low and middle-income countries with the aim of reducing domestic violence by approaching it as an “empowerment issue” rather than purely of violence.⁷

Police, Corruption, and Violence

In many low and middle income countries, police are perpetrators of violence themselves and a discussion or mention of extrajudicial killings in terms of where they fit into the larger violence estimates would be useful. This might actually strengthen the argument as in some cases police are responsible for a high number of deaths. For example, in 2012 in Sao Paulo 1 in 5 intentional homicides was committed by a police officer.⁸

There is some discussion of police corruption (p. 38) with mention that:

The rarity of aid and other interventions to try to improve police performance and criminal justice institutions in low-income countries makes it especially difficult to estimate benefit-cost ratios in this area. It also

⁶ See <http://www.sida.se/English/Countries-and-regions/Terminated-development-cooperation/East-Timor-/Programmes-and-projects1/Judicial-system-improving-/>

⁷ For example, see DFID’s multisectoral aid package administered to a number of post-conflict and non-post-conflict countries in Sub Saharan Africa targeting women’s economic empowerment: <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/Project/61059/Default.aspx>

⁸ Risso, M I 2014 Intentional Homicides in São Paulo City: A New Perspective. Stability: International Journal of Security and Development 3(1): 19, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.do>

suggests, however, that this is a very important and fertile area for research and experimentation with different types of programs.

This point is well taken and we agree the authors have identified a fertile area for research and experimentation. It is worth noting that recent interventions employed at the state level in Brazil may offer significant lessons to be learned in this area. Efforts to reduce crime and homicide in Brazil have produced a proliferation of “citizen security” initiatives with mixed, though potentially instructive results:

Since the late 1990s, a different approach to promote public safety has emerged across Latin America, the Caribbean (UNDP 2013) and even some cities in South Africa. The concept of ‘citizen security’ prioritizes responsible statehood and proactive citizenship (Muggah and Szabo 2014)... As a set of discourses and practices, citizen security emphasizes preventive approaches, risk reduction, and enhancing protective factors in crime-affected areas. It promotes community-oriented models, citizen participation, and data-driven interventions. Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and South Africa are all veritable laboratories of experimentation, with both successes and failures.⁹

A notable example is the Pacifying Police Units (UPPs) in Brazil, which employ community policy.

A recent assessment by the Igarapé Institute counted no less than 1,350 citizen security programs and projects across Latin America and the Caribbean since 1998.¹⁰ There are a number underway in South Africa as well. Perhaps some of these programs could provide interesting examples for consideration in the policy section of this paper. Additionally, the concept and practice of citizen security shifts the focus on police intervention to reduce crime, to citizens taking ownership over their own security – citizens as the interveners and beneficiaries. If these initiatives are deemed successful, this has implications for the kind of programs that should be funded.

Conclusion

The overall approach of the paper provides a rational way to analyze the global toll of violence in middle and low income countries. There are, however, a number of challenges associated with estimating the costs of something as rich and complex as violence. The approach employed in this paper risks being overly economic, placing too much emphasis on the need to reduce the scale of societal violence through programs designed specifically to address it, rather than tackling the roots of both societal and collective violence—poverty, inequality, gender disparity, etc.

⁹ Muggah, R and Wenmann, A 2011 Investing in Security: A Global Assessment of Armed Violence Reduction Initiatives. Paris: OECD. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/48927716.pdf>.

¹⁰ Muggah, R and Wenmann, A 2011 Investing in Security: A Global Assessment of Armed Violence Reduction Initiatives. Paris: OECD. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/48927716.pdf>.

Overall, we believe with slight revisions, the authors can strengthen their case for societal violence to be adequately addressed in the post-2015 agenda.

This paper was written by Ciara Aucoin, former Program Associate at Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, Social Science Research Council and Olivia Russell, Editorial Coordinator at Stability: International Journal of Security and Development. The project brings together more than 50 top economists, NGOs, international agencies and businesses to identify the goals with the greatest benefit-to-cost ratio for the next set of UN development goals.

C O P E N H A G E N C O N S E N S U S C E N T E R

Copenhagen Consensus Center is a think tank that investigates and publishes the best policies and investment opportunities based on how much social good (measured in dollars, but also incorporating e.g. welfare, health and environmental protection) for every dollar spent. The Copenhagen Consensus was conceived to address a fundamental, but overlooked topic in international development: In a world with limited budgets and attention spans, we need to find effective ways to do the most good for the most people. The Copenhagen Consensus works with 100+ of the world's top economists including 7 Nobel Laureates to prioritize solutions to the world's biggest problems, on the basis of data and cost-benefit analysis.

