

The importance of Armed Violence and Development (AVD) programming

In recent years the links between development and armed violence have been explored actively by national development agencies, the UN Development Programme and NGOs. This interest has been driven, on the one hand, by the need to assure sustainable development programmes in the many places where they are threatened by armed conflict and gun violence, and, on the other hand, by the realization that the effective control of armed violence and small arms proliferation depends, in part, on supportive development programming.

Armed violence has many direct and indirect impacts on development. The long list starts with direct casualties, particularly young men; displacement of populations; macro-economic costs that slow economic growth and deter investment; and reduced social expenditure and service delivery. Together these factors constitute some of the biggest obstacles to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

By the time of the UN Review Conference on small arms in 2006 security specialists were convinced that arms work should be concerned not only with the weapons themselves, but with structural factors, such as the socio-economic root causes of armed violence

and the need for nonviolent alternatives to gun-based livelihoods. This led many of them to welcome the newly initiated Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, which advocates the mainstreaming of small arms work in development programmes.

The innovative Geneva Declaration is a collaborative process. Its participants do not see it as another high-sounding statement of intent, but as a way to create concrete, practical programmes on the ground, where the difference is made in terms of improved lives and livelihoods. To achieve this result both state and civil society involvement is crucial.

The Quaker UN Office, due to its long interest in controlling the demand for small arms, is now working to facilitate civil society participation in the Geneva Declaration process, including in its programme of regional meetings around the world, its ongoing work at the UN and through the coordination of the NGO working Group on Armed Violence and Development.

We hope that the examples of AVD programmes in this magazine will inspire new joint initiatives by governments, international organizations and civil society and thus contribute to the implementation of the Geneva Declaration.

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