

Chapter 3

Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention (AVR) and the Armed Violence Lens

This chapter addresses:

- Lessons learned that are shaping AVR
- The armed violence lens: A strategically integrated approach
 - The four core elements: People, perpetrators, instruments and institutions
 - People
 - Perpetrators
 - Instruments
 - Institutions
- The four levels: Local, national, regional, and global

Many development practitioners and their national partners now agree that comprehensive approaches are needed to reduce and prevent armed violence. They have begun to adapt a wide assortment of programmes to meet this objective. Ongoing programming in the field is signposting a number of critical ways forward.¹ This section considers a range of lessons learned and programming experiences that have shaped the AVR approach. It then introduces the armed violence lens, which can help development actors to better identify drivers, risk factors and the effects of armed violence, and identify strategic entry points for intervention.

3.1 Lessons learned that are shaping AVR

A wide assortment of post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding, development and security promotion experiences are generating critical insights that are shaping the AVR approach. Key lessons include the following.

The need to consider demand factors in SALW control – Small arms control programmes were at first primarily technical operations intent on controlling the “supply” of weapons (through production and stockpile controls, export and import regulation, arms destruction). But recent experience demonstrates that to be effective, interventions must consider *why* people acquire and misuse weapons. SALW programmes have evolved accordingly – from weapon buy-back programmes to community-based weapons for development activities (Albania), weapons lotteries (Haiti),² community storage and safekeeping facilities (Somalia) and broader approaches that focus less on gun control and more on reducing the demand for arms.³ *For AVR, the key lesson is that sustainable approaches need to focus on the structural, institutional and socio-cultural factors that fuel the “demand” for small arms as well as protective factors that can guard against their future misuse* (Yeung, 2008; Jackman, 2007; Atwood, Glatz and Muggah, 2006).

¹ However, as noted in the Introduction, there is not yet sufficient evaluative evidence to develop solid operational programmatic guidance. Moreover, there is a significant need to increase technical exchange and knowledge within the development assistance agencies that are working on different aspects of armed violence issues.

² Weapons lotteries offer incentives to individuals to turn in their weapons in exchange for a lottery ticket, with which they can win a number of prizes, from kitchen appliances to motor scooters. Other innovations include lotteries for armed violence reduction wherein local gang leaders are offered “incentives” (motorcycles, education scholarships) in exchange for meaningful reductions of gun violence in areas ostensibly under their control.

³ An example is found in the evolution of UNDP’s programming among pastoralist communities in the Garissa region of Kenya.

The need for comprehensive approaches to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) – DDR efforts have often focused on narrow criteria associated with disarming (male) combatants, cantonment and reinsertion. The result was often “incomplete DDR” with limited meaningful reintegration, and strong prospects for a return to armed violence. Many DDR programmes are shifting away from short-term interventions focused on ex-combatants and decommissioning of arms to more integrated community- and national-based interventions (United Nations, 2006). Some seek to improve the absorptive capacity of communities to receive ex-combatants,⁴ and also target the development of longer-term national strategies for job creation and poverty reduction. In addition, there is growing recognition of the need to adopt preventive action targeting disaffected young men at risk of future recruitment. *For AVR, a key lesson is that DDR should be approached from within a state-building perspective. Sustainable reintegration requires community-based and national development approaches designed to strengthen the resilience and legitimacy of state-society relations.*

Applying developmental and preventive approaches to dealing with crime and youth gangs – Law enforcement needs to be balanced with broader developmental and preventive strategies. Conventional state-led approaches to dealing with crime and youth gangs have preferred heavy-handed “law and order” responses. But these efforts overlook the underlying factors shaping the emergence of urban armed violence and youth gangs. *The important lesson is that AVR interventions should address the specific structural and risk factors that give rise to armed violence, and not just the people brandishing the guns.*⁵ *Strengthened and accountable criminal/restorative justice approaches need to be reinforced and integrated with targeted development assistance, improved governance, community mobilisation and other development approaches.*

Crime and violence prevention can be effective – A range of tools and methods that has proved effective in reducing armed violence in high- and medium-income contexts may be usefully considered in lower-income environments. Especially important are the crime prevention and public health approaches for tracking the geographic and demographic patterns of armed violence, and identifying risk and protective factors, both of which can inform efforts to prevent and reduce armed violence (see Chapter 4).

⁴ This requires attention to issues of transitional justice, as well as the communities’ psychological and socio-economic absorptive capacities. See Colletta *et al.*, 2008 and Colletta and Muggah, forthcoming for a review of interim stabilisation measures and second-generation DDR.

⁵ See Jutersonke, Muggah and Rodgers, 2009 for a review of so-called “mano dura” and “mano amiga” interventions in Central America that emphasise enforcement and voluntary approaches to violence reduction.

For example, comprehensive interventions adopted by municipal authorities in areas of Colombia (e.g. Bogota, Medellín and Cali) were guided fundamentally by solid monitoring and regular mapping of “hot spots”. *An emerging lesson is the utility of mapping actual patterns and relationships shaping armed violence, identifying key risk and protective factors, and adapting and monitoring interventions.*

Multi-sectoral and multi-level efforts led by community groups and governments are yielding promising results – Many AVR initiatives have gradually developed into multi-sector and multi-level programmes. Many started out with a narrow focus on gun control, but later evolved to address other factors identified as essential for reducing armed violence, such as unemployment, gender relations, police reform and community mobilisation. Some have achieved promising outcomes, although few have been systematically evaluated and documented (see Chapter 5). *The emerging lessons are that integrated, multi-sectoral efforts are required to sustainably reduce armed violence, and that successful interventions often combine elements of conflict, crime prevention and public health approaches.*

The need for donors to work at three levels – prevention, law enforcement and diplomacy – and for integrated and synchronised whole-of-government approaches – Related to the previous point, experience in both conflict and crime-affected contexts has underlined the multidimensional complexity of armed violence, and the growing interconnections between local, national, regional and global risk factors.⁶ As already noted, law and order crackdowns and forcible disarmament campaigns are unlikely to generate sustainable reductions in armed violence because they fail to address underlying political and development problems. Likewise, development interventions alone cannot address the range of political and security issues involved (especially when political grievances and/or organised crime is involved). *For AVR this lesson is the need for whole-of-government efforts that synchronise development, political, military/police and diplomatic efforts (ODA and non-ODA). Synchronisation of efforts requires all parties to share a common vision of the interlocking security and development issues and levels that combine to create armed violence.*⁷

Increase the involvement of all actors in assessments, programme design, and evaluation – Although young men are the primary perpetrators and victims of armed violence, the effects of armed violence reach across gender and age and negatively impact the young and old, rich and poor, men and women, and boys and girls. Youth, because they are a high-risk group,

⁶ For example, where local conditions of underdevelopment and poor governance provide fertile entry points for transnational organised crime to take root.

⁷ Further discussion is found in Box 3.5 below.

should play an important role in the design of AVR programming, much of which is likely to target this group. Women, both as perpetrators and victims, offer an alternative perspective on the risk factors associated with violence, as well as on the various manifestations of violence – many of which may not be experienced by men.

In sum, these lessons show that narrow programming responses will not do. It is not sufficient to focus only on controlling the weapons, or on the perpetrators, or on fixing institutional weaknesses. Nor is it enough to pick away at aspects of armed violence through uncoordinated development or law enforcement or diplomatic initiatives. Moreover, programming needs to take account of the risk factors that interact across levels in our globalised world – from the local “hot spots” of armed violence, through to the wider national, regional and global environments that shape and condition the local level. Sustainable AVR requires a comprehensive vision of the problem and a strategically integrated approach. The armed violence lens, to which we now turn, can help.

3.2 The armed violence lens: A strategically integrated approach

Understanding of and programming to combat armed violence is challenging. This is because armed violence has political implications (even when the violence itself may not be politicised), and is seldom random.⁸ This means that the promotion of effective and practical measures to prevent and reduce armed violence depends on the development of reliable information and analysis of its causes and consequences, and its interrelationships at multiple levels.

The armed violence lens captures key features and levels of armed violence. Its various components have been developed in consultation with development practitioners, and are grounded in the AVR programming lessons learned in conflict, post-conflict and crime-/violence-affected contexts (listed above). The lens offers a flexible and unified framework for thinking about the context-specific drivers, risk factors, protective factors and effects. It is also unconstrained by preconceived assumptions regarding donor-imposed categories such as “conflict”, “crime” or “fragile”.

As Figure 3.1 shows, the armed violence lens emphasises:

- The *people* that are affected by armed violence – both the first-order victims and the wider communities and societies that also suffer consequences.
- The *perpetrators* of armed violence (and their motives for armed violence).

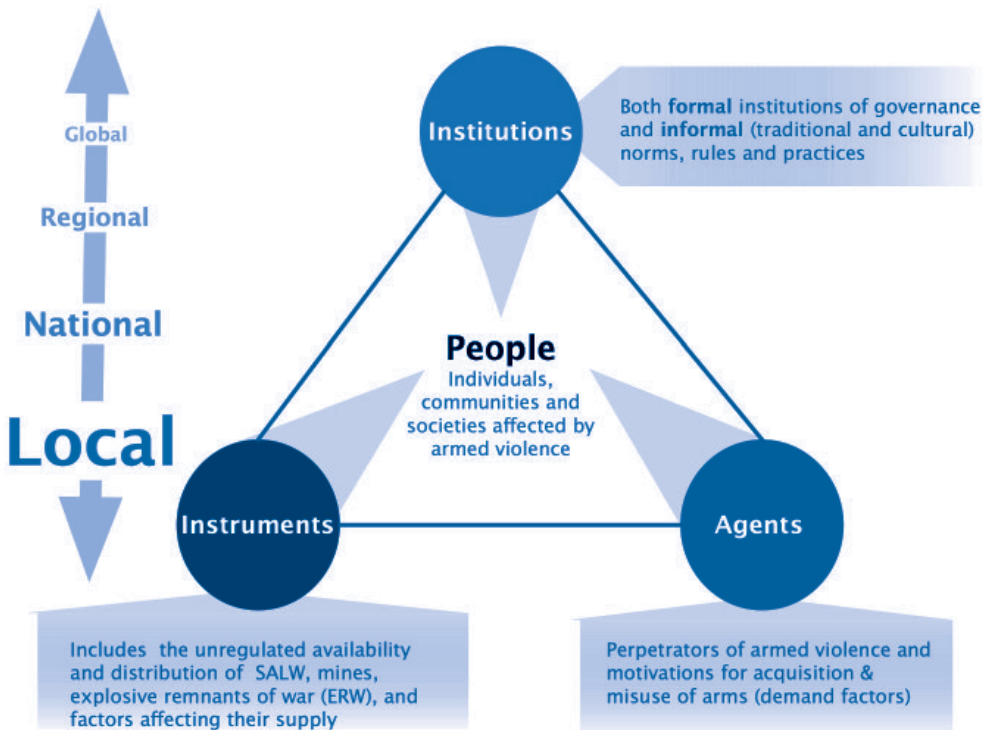
⁸ What is more, different groups often have an interest in understating or concealing the scope of lethal armed violence, making the collection of reliable data and impartial analysis particularly challenging.

- The *instruments* of armed violence (with a focus on their availability and/or supply).
- The wider *institutional/cultural* environment (both *formal* and *informal*) that enables, or protects against, armed violence.

The lens also draws attention to the fact that risk factors exist and interact at different levels, from the local to the global.

The armed violence lens underscores the way violence transcends separate development sectors, and highlights the potential for cross-sector and integrated responses. It also highlights the potential connections between different elements and levels: these are often treated separately due to disconnected sector or thematic programming streams. The lens encourages development practitioners to think outside their particular programming mandates and to consider the entirety of the challenges at hand.

Figure 3.1. The armed violence lens



A unified analysis of armed violence can help bring together a diverse array of actors who are otherwise working on different aspects of the issue. For example, it can assist practitioners working on criminal justice reform to consider how their programming efforts and objectives are potentially connected to interventions focused on community security, crime prevention, restorative justice, SALW control or initiatives targeting at-risk youth. It can also encourage improved whole-of-government responses.

It is important to note that the armed violence lens should not supplant existing assessment and programming tools such as conflict or stability assessments; drivers of change, governance and criminal justice assessments; or a public health approach. Rather, it serves as a complementary framework that can help to identify how different tools and data sources can be combined to enhance existing diagnostics and formulate more strategic or targeted interventions.

3.2.1 The four core elements: People, perpetrators, instruments and institutions

People

The armed violence lens chooses a *people-centred* perspective on security. A bottom-up perspective is central to designing strategies that build or reinforce the legitimacy and resilience of local capacities and, ultimately, state-society relationships. A starting point for any AVR intervention is to understand who is being affected by armed violence, where, when, how, and why.⁹ A critical question to guide interventions is: what is needed to make *individuals and communities feel safe and secure in the particular contexts in which they live?* The emphasis is on understanding how people define their security needs.

Development programming should seek to generate improvements in both the real and perceived senses of security and wellbeing of individuals and communities, while contributing to (or at least not undermining) the effectiveness, legitimacy and resilience of the state. Although bottom-up analytical perspectives on security are the focus, it should be recalled that national and municipal governments play a critical role in creating an enabling environment and providing resources to maintain local-level successes.¹⁰

⁹ This requires mapping the geographic and temporal patterns of armed violence, as well as the demographic characteristics of people, to identify how armed violence impacts specific population groups, such as men, women, girls and boys in different ways.

¹⁰ In terms of programming, building and sustaining these local-national linkages is crucial. Moreover, bottom-up perspectives will likely be

Box 3.1. Preliminary questions for understanding people's security needs

How do men, women, boys and girls define their security needs?

Who is being *directly* affected by armed violence [including explosive remnants of war (ERW)] and in what ways?

Where and when are attacks committed, and by whom?

Who is being *indirectly* affected, and in what ways?

Who is *not* being directly/indirectly affected, and why? What protective factors exist?

Are all incidents of armed violence being captured in existing reporting systems? If not, why not?

How do people perceive/relate to state institutions and actors?

How do people perceive/relate to the perpetrators of armed violence?

Are non-perpetrators investing in personal defence? Why?

To whom do people turn for justice and security services? ¹¹

Are there adequate provisions for victim assistance?

Are data disaggregated by gender, age and other relevant demographic characteristics?

Perpetrators

The *perpetrators* of armed violence are heterogeneous. They consist of state and non-state security actors, groups of mainly predatory young men, and individuals involved in interpersonal and domestic violence. Some perpetrators adopt hierarchical formations such as militia, organised crime and certain types of gangs, while others form looser networks. Perpetrators are highly gendered – most violence is committed by males – though women are also occasionally perpetrators and should not be overlooked.

insufficient for addressing organised crime. In contexts where illicit markets form the backbone of the local economy, many have a vested interest in their perpetuation. Other approaches may be required in order to identify and respond to regional and transnational factors influencing the dynamics of local armed violence.

¹¹ This question helps to identify the existing non-state and/or informal security and justice actors and institutions that can form part of a multi-layered response in fragile states. See OECD-DAC, 2007d.

Understanding the motivations of perpetrators and the ways in which they are organised is essential for designing effective AVR interventions. Motivations often involve issues related to personal and/or community security; socio-economic stability and opportunity; individual/social status, identity and belonging; cultural factors; political identity; and group status. A clear diagnosis of the circumstantial and structural risk factors is critical.¹² At a minimum, disaggregated demographic data (e.g. gender, age, and ethnicity) are required to effectively target initiatives.

Instruments

The *instruments* aspect of the lens focuses on the supply and availability of weapons and ammunition, together with the presence of explosive remnants of war in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The relatively widespread availability of weapons does not *cause* armed violence, but should be considered a risk factor.¹³

Analysis often draws attention to institutional weakness at the national level (for example, inadequate legislation or enforcement capacity, ineffectual stockpile management, weak border controls, corruption, and subversion of governance by illicit power structures and organised crime), localised security problems, and regional and global factors (cross-border and transnational arms flows; linkages with organised crime networks, illicit markets and global supply chains, etc.). It can also reveal potential opportunities for working with motivated local governance institutions (e.g. municipal governments) that are well positioned to invoke policies and other programmes for controlling arms within their jurisdictions.

As already noted, conventional approaches to addressing instruments have tended to limit their scope to technical arms control. Second-generation arms control efforts are adopting more developmental approaches to address the underlying demand factors for small arms and the factors creating an enabling environment for violence. The AVR approach represents a further evolution, by including analysis of how arms are integrated into a community's socio-economic, cultural and political fabric, and how this links up across the local, national, regional and global levels.

¹² These can include: public security and development failures and other failures of governance; political grievances and/or greed, corruption and the protection of state/personal interests; lack of alternative livelihoods; lingering post-conflict inequalities; social or cultural factors tied to patriarchy and masculinity; and other risk factors like prior exposure to violence (including in the home), lack of education opportunities, and the availability of arms, alcohol and drugs.

¹³ See Small Arms Survey, 2008, 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004, 2003, 2002 and 2001. See also SALW guidance chapter in OECD-DAC, 2005a.

Box 3.2. Preliminary questions for understanding the motivations of, and risk factors affecting, perpetrators

- Who is committing armed violence? Where? When? What are their motivations?
- How are the perpetrators related to the people?
- How are they related to state actors and institutions?
- How is demand for arms shaped by the wider formal institutional environment?
- How is demand for arms influenced by the informal institutional environment and norms?¹⁴
- How is access to weapons influenced by other factors at multiple levels – including illicit markets, weapons trafficking, lack of employment opportunities, penetration of organised crime, and proximate risks such as arms supplies, alcohol and drug availability, etc.?
- How is demand for arms influenced by a desire to manage/protect illicit markets?
- To what extent is alcohol or substance abuse a factor?
- What factors lead people in the same community (and same demographics) to not possess or misuse a weapon? Are these entry points for AVR?

Institutions

The *institutional* dimension focuses on the rules of the game that emerge from formal laws, informal norms and practices, means of enforcement and organisational structures in a particular context.¹⁵ Institutions that enable or restrain armed violence range from formal prescriptions and rules of governance at the national, municipal or local level to those within the private sector, the media, community-based institutions and traditional or cultural practices. Both formal and informal institutions can make certain populations more vulnerable to armed violence, or function to reduce and prevent it. For instance, unequal norms in marriage laws, asset ownership and inheritance can expose women and children to increased victimisation. Alternatively, local authorities responsible for alcohol sales, gun legislation, policing and urban development, for example, can play an important role in exacerbating or reducing the likelihood of armed violence.

¹⁴ For example, cultures of masculinity, guns as a currency to acquire a wife, land or goods, and cultural/traditional control or regulation norms.

¹⁵ See OECD-DAC's module on *Institutional Change and Violent Conflict* in OECD-DAC, 2005a.

Box 3.3. Preliminary questions about the supply and demand of instruments

- Where are weapons concentrated (geographically and demographically)? When are they used?
- How are weapons sourced? Who is supplying them?
- What types of arms are in circulation and what do they cost? What assets are used to acquire them?
- What economic, social, political and cultural factors shape demand for weapons?
- How are small arms perceived by the public?
- What international and regional systems (formal and informal) are in place to regulate arms? Are they enforced? What factors limit their effectiveness?
- What national and local systems (formal/informal) are in place to regulate arms? Can they be supported? What factors limit their effectiveness?
- Have efforts been made to regulate arms in the past? Were they effective?
- Are there penalties for illegal arms?

Assessments of formal institutions often focus on capacities and deficits in the public security and justice sectors (*e.g.* within ministries of the interior, defence, police, social affairs, justice, customs and immigration) and related issues such as inadequate legislation, regulation and enforcement, corruption, and security system abuse. They should also consider broader problems of governance and social protection that compromise equitable service delivery, and/or feed systematic social exclusion or collective grievances. Formal institutional assessments should also consider the capacity and credibility of relevant data reporting systems in both the health and criminal justice sectors.

Analysis of *informal institutions* typically focuses on social and cultural factors, including culturally accepted norms that support the use of violence to resolve conflicts, enable impunity and encourage arms holding. It should also consider potential protective factors that can be strengthened to reduce the risk of violence, such as social norms and community associations, traditions and practices, as well as notable leaders and individual efforts. NGOs that support groups of elders to reassert control over armed youth and promote sustainable resource management practices in South Sudan and Kenya are an example of this.¹⁶ Context-specific cultural knowledge is essential. Municipal-level institutions, as well as traditional, customary and community-based organisations/institutions, are a special focus for AVR attention, given their frontline capacity to reduce insecurity and enhance the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

¹⁶ See, for example the work of PACT Sudan, at <http://www.pactsudan.org/>.

3.2.2 The four levels: Local, national, regional, and global

Analysis based on the armed violence lens spans four levels of engagement.

It begins with the *national level*, as this provides the overall backdrop indicating *where* armed violence problems are likely concentrated, and can help to identify “hot spots” where programming should be focused. Analysis also considers national-level factors that shape armed violence patterns and their historical trends, and factors shaping a programmatic response: the willingness of national authorities to address armed violence, the capacities of state institutions, and the practicality of engagement by development actors, based on the (political) orientation of national authorities, with the underlying causes of armed violence.

The armed violence lens can facilitate this common analysis and development of a shared strategy. It can harness the valuable insights of development actors, who are well placed to understand how regional and global factors are connected to local- and national-level dynamics of armed violence and development, and the potential repercussions of whole-of-government interventions. Whole-of-government efforts to reduce armed violence are often led by departments of defence and/or foreign affairs. The AVR perspective suggests that development actors also have an important seat at the table. Equally critical, however, is analysis of (and programming at) the *local level*. The armed violence lens encourages an in-depth analysis of the specific causal, risk and protective factors, their interrelationships, and opportunities for intervention that can enhance Armed violence reduction and prevention. Depending on the context, *local* can refer to a district, municipality, city, village, community, neighbourhood or street. At both the national and local levels, the connections outwards to the regional and global levels should be incorporated.¹⁷

Factors at the regional and global levels can be directly implicated in shaping violence at the local level. They also present entry points for AVR. External factors such as international demand for narcotics and other illegal or illicit commodities, as well as regional and global arms flows, may be significant factors behind localised armed violence. Local communities and economies, as well as local and national governments, may be penetrated and shaped by transnational criminal syndicates. In addition, armed violence systems may expand across borders (for example, maras in Latin America, pastoralist conflicts in Africa), requiring programming with a regional orientation.

¹⁷ This includes assessment of the local vulnerabilities (such as unemployment, insecurity and corruption) that provide entry points for external influences and illicit power structures.

Box 3.4. Preliminary questions for understanding the institutional environment

- How do *formal institutions of governance* contribute to: i) peoples’ sense of security; ii) perpetrators’ demand for weapons; iii) proliferation of arms; and iv) the incidence of armed violence?
- What factors reduce the state’s ability and willingness to address armed violence problems?
- In what ways do state representatives and public authorities contribute to armed violence?
- What is the public authorities’ relationship to the perpetrators of armed violence?
- In what ways does the formal economy intersect with armed-violence-enabled illicit economies? Who are the key players?
- How can ministries of the interior, defence, social affairs, and customs and borders and the criminal justice system¹⁸ support AVR priorities? What are the capacities? What are the challenges?
- Is the legal framework dealing with armed violence issues adequate? Is it accepted and respected? Does capacity exist to enforce it?
- Is the country party to relevant international or regional conventions and treaties? If so, are these adequately respected by, and reflected in, domestic law and practice?
- What are the capacity, role and accountability of the police and criminal justice/prison systems? Do the police and justice system and personnel have sufficient capacity and *security* to investigate serious crimes?
- Are formal institutional reporting systems in the criminal justice and public health sectors accurately capturing data on all victims of armed violence? What are the barriers and capacity problems? Are certain types of victims (or certain areas) being systematically excluded from assistance?
- What is the (real/potential) capacity of local-level formal governance structures, including municipal governments, to act on AVR concerns?
- How do *informal institutions or practices* contribute to: i) peoples’ sense of security; ii) perpetrators’ demand for weapons; iii) proliferation of arms; and iv) the incidence of armed violence?
- What factors enhance or reduce the ability of traditional or community institutions and leaders to address armed violence problems? What are the capacities? What are the challenges? Are there actual or potential AVR champions? Do they enjoy popular legitimacy? What types of support do they need?
- What are the prospects or entry points for reinforcing a *culture of peace*? (United Nations General Assembly, 1999, 2001a)
- To which institutions do men, women, youth turn for justice and security provision?

¹⁸ See also the criminal justice assessment guidance in Rausch, 2006 and the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (n.d.).

Alternatively, international action at the transnational level – including counter-narcotics and anti-trafficking and anti-money laundering efforts – can generate negative impacts on the political economy of local communities dependent on the related resource flows. Likewise, deportations of convicted felons (from developed countries such as the United States or Canada to Haiti or Guatemala) can introduce risk factors at the community level, with harmful effects on community insecurity. Intervention efforts must take account of the relevant linkages, as well as the potential unintended consequences of interventions at different levels (Box 3.5).

Box 3.5. Synchronising whole-of-government efforts

The armed violence lens highlights the multiple causes and drivers of armed violence, and the interplay of local, national, regional and global factors. These factors require a complex response. In certain cases, diplomatic initiatives may be an effective way of countering the trans-boundary effects of arms, narcotic or human trafficking. In others, military or law enforcement interventions may be more appropriate. In still other situations, development-oriented actions focused on enhancing community security and alternative livelihoods may be key.

A comprehensive approach is required if AVR is to be effective. This often translates into a combination of enforcement- and development-led interventions, otherwise known as “whole of government” efforts (diplomacy, defence and development). Donor whole-of-government efforts have improved significantly over the past few years, with important mechanisms like pooled funding, joint assessments and inter-sector task forces. But achieving genuinely comprehensive approaches remains challenging.

Consequently, a “synchronised” effort may be more practical to achieve a unified objective. Unlike “co-ordination”, which implies a process of active engagement at the operational level, synchronised approaches enable partners to act autonomously within their own mandates to address common challenges. Effectively synchronised approaches require a common understanding of the problem and of the ultimate longer-term objectives.

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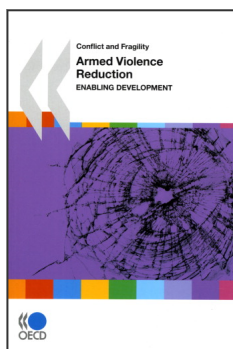
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From:
Armed Violence Reduction
Enabling Development

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264060173-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2009), "Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention (AVR) and the Armed Violence Lens", in *Armed Violence Reduction: Enabling Development*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264060173-6-en>

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