

MEETING SUMMARY

Third Meeting of the Halving Global Violence Task Force

1. Main Takeaways

In the third meeting of the Halving Global Violence Task Force, members agreed on the following key messages for the Flagship Report:

Interpersonal violence is universal and costly

- 80-90 percent of violence happens outside of conflict zones. Every region suffers the effects of violence, but its profile varies from region to region. Research indicates that for each homicide there are around 13,000 assaults, and in some places the share of women that are victims of intimate partner violence may be higher than the share of the total population that suffers assault or homicide.
- Global analyses place the economic impact of interpersonal violence (IPV) at USD 2.6 trillion a year. Even in countries that are considered peaceful, interpersonal violence can cost the equivalent of a significant share of its gross domestic product (GDP) and may be multiple times over the GDP when accounting for costs over the human lifecycle.

Violence is preventable and success is possible

- A range of interventions at the individual/family, community, and state/national level have proven that it is possible to obtain significant reduction in levels of violence. Furthermore, it is possible to obtain quick wins with targeted interventions without losing sight of the needed structural changes. Examples include regulations on alcohol and restrictions on gun ownership.
- Initiatives are successful when they reflect an understanding of the violence that takes place in the community, country, or region they are targeting. Initiatives at the city-level that obtained over 60 percent of reduction in violence by targeting specific neighborhoods and sectors of the population.



There is a strong business case for investment in violence prevention

- Interventions at the individual/family, community, and state/national levels are not only effective in reducing violence but are also cost effective and produce a return on investment.
- Findings show the crucial role that stakeholders at national and local governments, private sector, civil society, and bilateral and multilateral donors all have in conceptualizing, supporting, and implementing these investments.

The Task Force also agreed on the following timeline for the launch and rollout of the report:

Date	Activity
January-March 2024	Finalize Flagship Report
April 2024	Global Launch of the Flagship Report in Geneva, Switzerland
2024 Q3	African Union Launch in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
2025 Q1	Regional Launch in West Africa, with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Regional Launch in Latin America
TBD (late 2024-early 2025)	Regional Launch in Central America Regional Launch in Europe International Financial Institutions Launch in Washington D.C., United States UN and Multilateral event in New York, United States City-focused rollout (potentially attached to Strong Cities Summit in September 2024)

2. Context

On November 6-7, 2023, the Halving Global Violence Task Force met in Durban, South Africa, to reach consensus on the main messages and recommendations of the upcoming Flagship Report, and define a strategy to launch the report and accelerate implementation of the recommendations.

The Halving Global Violence Task Force is a group of world leaders and experts committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets for peace and achieving a significant reduction in global violence by 2030. To that end, the Task Force has met annually since 2021 to discuss findings and define a strategy to meet its ambitions. In 2024, the Task





Force will launch its flagship report, consolidating over three years of work and proposing concrete recommendations to stakeholders at multiple levels that are invested in the goal of halving global violence.

3. Introduction

In the opening session of the meeting, participants noted that it comes at an apt time, considering the violence and conflict occurring at alarming rates around the world. In these times, it is important to not lose focus of the personal impact of violence, and its devastating effects on the lives of people, particularly considering that around 80 to 90 percent of all violent deaths occur outside of conflict. The SDGs targets for peace aim to end all violence and conflict around the world, and amidst tragic and high-profile developments in Ukraine and the Middle East, it is crucial to not lose track of the violence that affects people's everyday lives, but often does not make headlines.

4. Presentation of Findings, Messages, and Recommendations

Ahead of the meeting, the Task Force secretariat presented a draft document to the Task Force summarizing the main messages and recommendations that will be featured in the final report, in order to sharpen the text and build consensus. The secretariat spoke to studies showing that violence is a universal issue and most violent deaths happen outside of active conflict zones. To truly halve global violence, it must be addressed in all its forms. The secretariat highlighted the high costs of violence ascertained through its global and country-specific costing studies, noting that there are economic incentives to reduce violence in addition to a moral imperative. The studies also highlighted that accurate, disaggregated, and up-to-date data on violence is crucial. To address violence, leaders need to understand how it manifests within their own communities.

Another key message is that violence is preventable. The secretariat spoke to numerous policies and programs that have proven effective at reducing interpersonal violence and how there is a wide range of actors that can play an important role in these efforts. These include mental health counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy at the individual-level and the models of "Cure Violence," focused deterrence, service-based programs, mobilization, and place-based approaches at the community level. At the state and national levels, promising approaches include:

- Restrictions on gun ownership and legal reforms to reduce alcohol consumption,
- Laws against IPV
- Police reform



- Access to justice, and
- Efforts to constructively reduce the influence of gangs and organized crime.

Finally, these key recommendations were presented to stakeholders at multiple-levels. These included some recommendations geared towards actors at every level, including the importance of targeting investments and programs to specific at-risk places and people, investing in changing norms and behaviors, and involving local actors and working across sectors. There was discussion on the need to address gender-based violence as a specific form of violence, seizing opportunities to obtain quick wins, and resisting the temptation to take an approach exclusively focused on law-enforcement.

Sector-specific recommendations included those geared towards **local leaders**, such as the creation of localized violence reduction strategies and the establishment of offices of violence prevention. **National government-focused** recommendations included the importance of improving data collection and accessibility, conducting costing studies to build a strong business case for violence reduction, investing in people-centered justice, addressing legislative gaps, and implementing nationally-led prevention strategies. Addressing inequality and division is also seen as a crucial measure to prevent violence in the long run.

Recommendations to **ministries of foreign affairs, development agencies, and governmental representation at multilateral institutions** included the possibility of updating normative instruments on effective violence prevention, helping to limit the proliferation of weapons, especially small arms used in the commission of violence, and including subnational leaders, women, and youth in the crafting of international policies and frameworks impacting interpersonal violence.

Finally, recommendations were presented to **multilateral institutions and bilateral development cooperation agencies**, including provision of support to local and national actors to the assessments that inform country strategies, assisting countries that wish to do so to gather data on the prevalence of violence and its costs, helping states address potential gaps in legislation, and the development of an international data hub.

Participants noted that the report could draw lessons from previous initiatives, such as the HIV/AIDS movement, which highlighted the importance of national plans and coordination between stakeholders at different levels.

Participants agreed that it is important to build the business case for violence prevention, and that the argument about cost will resonate with decision makers at multiple levels. They also pointed to the need of highlighting the structural conditions that lead to violence,



such as inequality, corruption, and lack of access to social services.

5. The Cost of Violence

In 2022, the Task Force agreed that assessing the cost of interpersonal violence in different national contexts could be a powerful tool to build a business case for violence reduction and motivate stakeholders, particularly those in national governments to act. Accordingly, the Task Force has conducted two costing studies, in Switzerland and South Africa, with a third one in Costa Rica currently in development.

The South Africa report concluded that the cost of violence in the country corresponds to around three times its gross domestic product (GDP). This number was achieved by not only looking at the immediate and tangible costs of violence, but also its lifetime impact, which is particularly onerous when the victims of violence are children. The study found that initiatives that restrict use of firearms and regulate alcohol consumption are efficient and cost-effective measures to reduce interpersonal violence, especially when paired with integrated violence reduction efforts that seek to implement longer term interventions to end the cycle of violence in South Africa.

In Switzerland, the study took a more restrictive methodological approach, and concluded that the cost of violence corresponds to around 8 percent of the country's GDP. Most of the costs are associated with intimate partner violence. Half of all homicides in the country are domestic homicides, followed by homicides related to organized crime. Since 1990, Switzerland has successfully halved the numbers of homicides, mostly by clamping down on organized crime. They have also been praised for their actions to reduce domestic violence, including by successfully implementing the Istanbul Convention.

While the Costa Rica study is not yet finalized, initial findings show a different profile of violence there as well, with the majority of violence linked to organized crime and narcotics trafficking. This highlights the impact that international trends and dynamics can have on specific countries and communities. Collectively, the country case studies show how differently violence can manifest in different contexts and the importance of understanding these dynamics.

The Task Force discussed some of the challenges associated with producing these studies, such as the lack of accurate and disaggregated data in many countries, particularly with data on sexual violence and violence that happens in the domestic helm. The specificities of different national contexts also create challenges to develop a unified methodology that could enable easy comparisons between countries. Nonetheless, these studies show



that it is possible to assess the cost of violence in countries and to highlight cost-effective solutions to address said violence, and that the Task Force should aim to enable more countries to conduct similar exercises.

6. Taking Recommendations to the Next Level: Global and Regional Approaches

Participants discussed how to leverage global and regional institutions and mechanisms to implement and amplify the reach of the Task Force's recommendations. 2024 will be a pivotal moment for the United Nations (UN), with the Summit of the Future and the subsequent adoption of the Pact for the Future—which will take forward the New Agenda for Peace. It is important that the Task Force ensures that the UN's vision of the future of peace aligns with the recommendations of the Flagship Report.

The Task Force also discussed the importance of engaging IFIs and regional banks in these efforts. It was mentioned that the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence strategy often focuses disproportionately on conflict and that this Task Force is in prime position to engage the World Bank on efforts to prevent all forms of violence and ensure interpersonal violence is not overlooked.

Participants also discussed how to create and operationalize a data hub for interpersonal violence and violence prevention, with one suggestion to map already existing data hubs at the UN to anchor it to existing efforts.

7. The Role of Local and Emerging Stakeholders in Violence Reduction

The Task Force discussed the role of the private sector, civil society, and local authorities can have in efforts to reduce violence.

Through its engagement with the [Peace in Our Cities](#) network, the Task Force has already seen the impact that mayors, community groups, and other local authorities can have in bringing peace to their communities. As the world becomes progressively more urbanized, cities emerge as the main hubs for violence, and addressing urban violence becomes essential. Members of the network such as the city of Palmira, Colombia have implemented successful strategies that have significantly reduced violence in short periods of times by investing in "at risk" people and implementing violence interrupters. Another example mentioned was Nairobi, Kenya—which has obtained great results by implementing informal



programs in collaboration with law enforcement to assist in building trust within the communities.

The role of civil society was highlighted through the [Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control](#) (GENSAC), which is a network of mostly women working in grassroots and community-based organizations across Western Balkans, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa, The GENSAC network is committed to mainstreaming gender-sensitive small arms control. One of the most effective initiatives from members of the network are regional dialogues organized annually between parliamentarians and civil society activities in Latin America, creating a space for dialogue to assist with the creation and implementation of gender-responsive legislation for arms control across the region. This also highlighted the importance of working across levels, as these dialogues bring together grassroots civil society, elected national leaders, and officials advancing international instruments.

The Task Force also discussed the potential role that the private sector can have in violence reduction efforts. Some of the recommendations that were made on how to leverage the power of the private sector included **creating public-private partnerships; providing employment opportunities for at-risk populations; and helping change norms and behaviors in the communities where they operate**. It was advised that the Task Force look to develop a set of recommendations and best practices on how to engage the private sector, and how to play to its advantages more efficiently.

8. Linkages with the other Pathfinders Grand Challenges: Access to Justice and Inequality and Exclusion

In collaboration with the other two Pathfinders Grand Challenges, the Task Force had sessions to explore the linkages between issues related to access to justice and violence, and inequality and exclusion and violence.

The session on justice explored the role that formal and informal justice systems can have in solving peoples' problems and preventing violence. At the same time, the lack of access to appropriate justice mechanisms can exacerbate tensions, feelings of exclusion—and thus, could lead to an increase of violent disputes, especially around land ownership. The session also highlighted the work that Statistics South Africa is doing to collect data related to crime and the justice system, and how this data is used to support the implementation of projects and initiatives that aim to provide access to justice and better justice outcomes to people.

The session on inequality and exclusion focused on divisive narratives and how they can



generate polarization and increase tensions in society, fostering conditions for violence, particularly violent extremism and terrorism. Some of the discussion topics included religious divides and the use of religious sentiment to create divisions in society, racial segregation; how both state and non-state actors use racism and hate speech to undermine democracy and destabilize societies; and how authorities make use of these moments of segregation and destabilization to enact securitization strategies that justify anti-democratic narratives.

9. Conclusion and Plans for 2024

With the closing of the third annual meeting of the Halving Global Violence Task Force, the group has agreed on the main structure, messaging, and recommendations that will be featured in the Flagship Report. Of the key findings discussed, there was enthusiasm to ensure that the report includes:

- The universality of violence and its prevalence of violence outside of conflict zones;
- That success is possible; and
- The business case for violence prevention.

In terms of specific principles and recommendations, participants further stressed the need to delineate recommendations for actors at specific levels—as well as the importance of multisectoral partnerships.

For national and local actors, the priorities agreed upon by the Task Force include:

- Open data;
- Collaboration and coordination at multiple levels, across agencies and sectors;
- Quick interventions using the experiences of alcohol and gun control programs; violence interrupter programs; and
- Longer-term efforts needed for lasting change to address structural inequalities and social cohesion and behavioral change programs.

For regional and international actors, the priorities agreed upon by the Task Force include:

- Protecting, updating, and enhancing normative violence reduction instruments and targets;
- Investing in and providing guidance on social protection and care programs;
- Addressing transnational organized crime; and
- Providing recommendations and guidance delineated between donors and other international actors.

It was also decided that the report will have a global launch event in Geneva in April



2024 and that the launch would serve as a gateway to accelerate the Task Force's goals and recommendations. The Task Force agreed to set an exact date by the end of 2023. Following this event, the Task Force intends to produce another event launching the report to the African Union, in Addis Ababa, during the third quarter of 2024, followed by a potential event in West Africa to introduce the report to ECOWAS. Finally, a potential event in Latin America was also discussed.

Once the report is launched, the Task Force will transition to a new phase, focusing on action-oriented advocacy and building awareness of the findings and recommendations of the report. To that end, the Task Force will leverage global moments such as the Summit of the Future in 2024 and other key international and regional fora—engaging stakeholders at multiple levels to accelerate uptake and implementation of the report recommendations.

