Halving Global Violence Starts in Our Homes and Streets

Recommendations for the Summit of the Future and Beyond
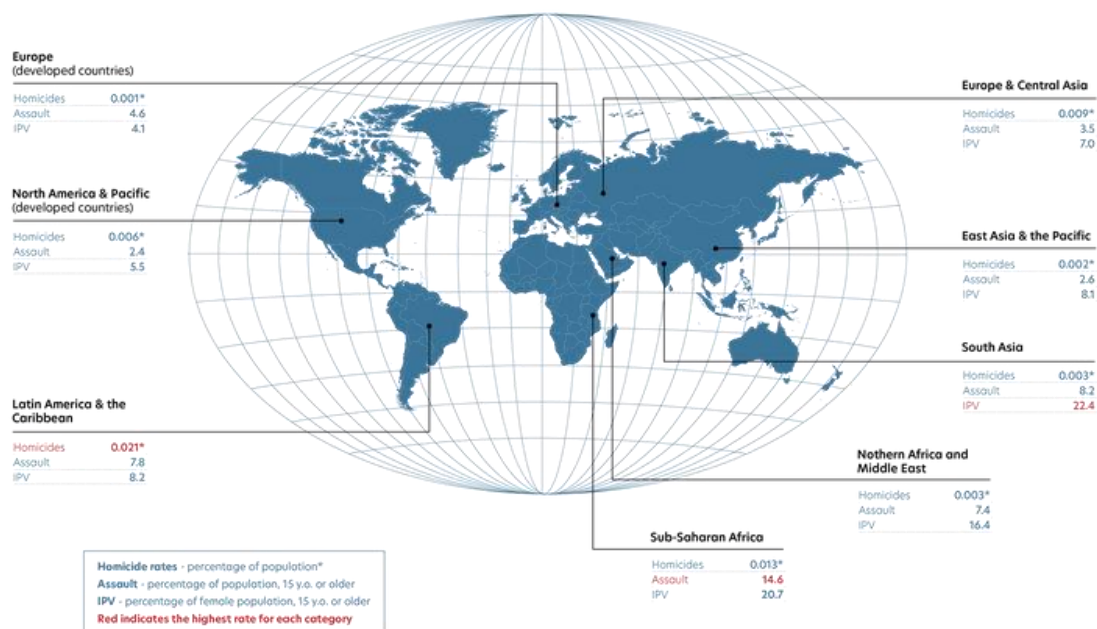
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In recent years, the world has seen a sharp increase in the number and intensity of armed conflicts globally. From 2020 to 2022, conflict deaths increased nearly fourfold, reaching numbers unseen since the end of the Cold War. The impacts of these wars do not stop at the battlefield; they undermine and destroy social contracts between people and states, slow and even reverse economic participation, and shatter communal bonds—leading to further injuries and deaths. Despite their impact, the multilateral ecosystem faces significant challenges and barriers in offering solutions or relief to these conflicts. Adding to the damage caused by armed conflicts is the widespread and devastating cost of criminal and interpersonal violence.

There are the highly publicized incidents, such as the mass shooting that took place in a high school in Georgia, United States, and the Ugandan Olympic marathoner who was burned to death by her partner last month. These publicized instances are an exception: the vast majority of violence that happens in our homes, streets, and communities goes unreported and unacknowledged. Intentional homicides alone are responsible for 3.7 more deaths than conflict and terrorism combined. On average, a woman or girl is a victim of violence by an intimate partner every 12 minutes, and one billion children will experience some form of violence—physical, sexual, or emotional—every year.

"Beyond the Battlefields: Practical Strategies to Halving Global Violence in Our Homes, Streets, and Communities"—the flagship report of the Halving Global Violence (HGV) Task Force (which will be showcased in a launch event during the

Summit of the Future Action Days later this month)—highlights that violence, and particularly interpersonal violence, is everywhere. Countries that score high in the Human Development Index (HDI) still have homicide rates equivalent to nearly two-thirds of that of the least developed countries, and intimate partner violence (IPV) affects almost 10 percent of their female population. Even in Switzerland, which is widely acknowledged as a bastion of peace, the tangible and intangible costs related to violence reach 8.3 percent of the country s gross domestic product (GDP).

Figure 1: Global Violence Map

Europe
(developed countries)

Homicides	0.001*
Assault	4.6
IPV	4.1

North America & Pacific
(developed countries)

Homicides	0.006*
Assault	2.4
IPV	5.5

Latin America & the Caribbean

Homicides	0.021*
Assault	7.8
IPV	8.2

Europe & Central Asia

Homicides	0.009*
Assault	3.5
IPV	7.0

East Asia & the Pacific

Homicides	0.002*
Assault	2.6
IPV	8.1

South Asia

Homicides	0.003*
Assault	8.2
IPV	22.4

Nothern Africa and Middle East

Homicides	0.003*
Assault	7.4
IPV	16.4

Sub-Saharan Africa

Homicides	0.013*
Assault	14.6
IPV	20.7

Homicide rates · percentage of population*
Assault · percentage of population, 15 y.o. or older
IPV · percentage of female population, 15 y.o. or older
Red indicates the highest rate for each category

Having said that, it needs to be highlighted that, albeit universal, **violence is unevenly distributed within countries and regions, frequently affecting the most marginalized communities at the highest rates**, and the toll of violence goes much further than its economic impacts. It shortens lives, leaves people injured, disabled, traumatized, and unable to fully rejoin life in society. There is a 14-year life expectancy gap between the most and least violent countries, meaning that at 10 years old, a child from a violent country is expected to die more than a decade sooner than a child from a less violent country. Given the profound impacts of violence on education, the economy, gender equality, and many other development factors, investments in violence reduction should not be seen as a zero-sum choice, but rather something that will enhance the efficacy of overall development efforts.

Against this backdrop, **it is crucial to shift the conversation on violence reduction and prevention into the development space**. As Secretary-General António Guterres puts in his [New Agenda for Peace](#) policy brief, "Not all forms of violence are linked to peace and security dynamics, and eradicating violence in all its forms should not be misunderstood for a call to internationalize domestic issues." As member states decide this **September 2024** what the Pact for the Future will look like, they should heed this call and focus on finding practical solutions for the violence that most often impacts people's daily lives—which happens in our homes and streets.

1. A Development Approach to Reducing Violence

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The first step in taking a development approach to violence reduction is to clearly define the issue and establish how violence manifests in specific national, local, and even sub-local contexts. This means understanding its distribution, who is being affected, and how its effects change based on demographics. For that, stakeholders need to have access to updated, accurate, and disaggregated data. Data let us know that although universal, violence can be highly concentrated, even at the subnational level. For example, in Latin America, 50 percent of crimes are concentrated in 3 to 8 percent of street segments, while 2 percent of municipalities in Brazil accounted for over half of all homicides in 2016.

More than that, a close examination of the available data reveals that while violence is usually perceived as an issue of men killing men, the real picture is more nuanced than that. First, incidences of non-lethal violence are much more prevalent than homicides. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, almost 15 of the population reports having experienced some form of assault in the past year, while over 20 percent of the female population of the region reports experiencing some form of intimate partner violence. For comparison, the rates of intentional homicides in the region are around 0.01 percent. Secondly, while men are undoubtedly the most common victims of homicide, women represent a large share of the victims of non-lethal violence, and, around the world, are by far the most common victims of IPV, with over half of all femicides being perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member.[1]

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[1] Since violence affects women in markedly different ways than men, it is critical to ensure that women have an active role in discussions related to violence reduction. At the Center on International Cooperation (CIC), we manage the [Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC)](#), which seeks to elevate the voices of

Figure 2: Femicide by Perpetrator

At this point, however, it is important to note that this data-informed understanding of the manifestation of violence should not be used as an instrument to repress and stigmatize certain demographics or regions. As we have seen before, approaches that rely solely on repressive measures wrongly characterize groups as inherently violent and lean heavily on the use of police forces might look promising to some in the short-term, but tend to have a ricochet effect that leads to even worse violence in the long-term. In El Salvador, for example, the Mano Dura plan was followed by a 50 percent increase in homicide rates.

Instead, this **data needs to be combined with research on risk and protective factors for violence in these specific national and local contexts**. Only through this knowledge can decision-makers and practitioners take action to address the root causes of violence and obtain long-lasting change. A theoretical analysis of these risks, combined with real-world analysis on disaggregated data for violence, can aid in the effective allocation of resources and maximize the impact of actions towards violence prevention and reduction.[2]

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women working at the local, national, and international level to prevent armed violence in all its forms, with special consideration to its gendered effects.

[2] CIC is currently undertaking a systematic review of literature to identify risk and protective factors for violence (intra-state conflict and violent extremism), to inform practitioners and decision-makers, and to contribute to improving diagnostics, programming, and evaluation.

Therein lies the last step in a development approach to reduce violence: utilizing this nuanced understanding of violence to formulate policies and interventions that address its root causes and offer effective and enduring solutions. Moreover, these interventions need to be conceived, from the outset, with the direct participation and input of impacted communities and with robust mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation, so that their results can be measured, analyzed and, if successful, expanded and replicated. In the section below, we will explore some of these interventions.

2. What Works to Prevent and Reduce Violence

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In Beyond the Battlefields," we have compiled over three years of meticulously gathered research and knowledge from the HGV Task Force to identify interventions that are already producing measurable results toward violence reduction. We found successful interventions across four levels—**individual and family-based, community and local, state and national, and international**—and we have identified three critical, interrelated themes in the most successful interventions:

1. They work to engage specific at-risk places, people, and behaviors.
2. They seek to change norms and behaviors surrounding violence.
3. They often adopt multi-sectoral approaches.

More specifically, we have found several effective **individual and family-level** interventions that work by engaging individuals to rethink social norms and perceptions regarding gender to obtain significant reduction in levels of IPV. For example, SASA!, implemented in Kampala, Uganda, aims to change community attitudes, opinions, and beliefs that perpetuate violence against women by using local activism, media and advocacy, communication materials, and training sessions to spread awareness about gender equality, strengthen skills and communication among community members, and encourage new behaviors. After three years of implementation, women in participating communities were 52 percent less likely to report physical IPV in the past year, compared with women in control communities.

At the **community and local level**, we have seen success in interventions that focus on hot spots, work alongside communities, and are part of larger comprehensive holistic strategies that seek to address structural issues that lead to violence and other development issues. Violence interrupters and street outreach programs, such as the Cure Violence Model, have shown promising results in certain contexts. Similarly, focused deterrence interventions, which work by focusing on small, specific groups or gangs that are most involved in violence, offering a blend of social services and strategic use of law enforcement action if violence continues, have produced impressive results.

One of the most famous and successful cases of local-level intervention took place in Medellín, Colombia, and can be described as a place-based intervention—meaning that it relies on redesigning environmental elements to reduce violence and crime. This project connected isolated low-income neighborhoods to the city s urban center through a gondola lift system that served as public transportation and accompanied by municipal investment in neighborhood infrastructure. Studies found a 66 percent greater decline in homicide rates in intervention neighborhoods when compared to neighborhoods that were not included in the program. Medellín is a member of the Peace in Our Cities (PiOC) network, an urban network co-facilitated by the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) at New York University, and brings together city leaders and local partners committed to eradicating the most insidious forms of violence in their communities. Through PiOC, we have seen many other examples of successful interventions at the local level.

At the **state and national level**, we have found that many of the most successful or promising initiatives are legislative or policy-focused interventions that work to change behaviors, norms, and perceptions that have been proven to exacerbate violence. For example, legislation and regulations that seek to regulate harmful alcohol use along with the access and use of firearms, have produced very successful results. A study across states in the United States to identify the most effective legislation to reduce homicide rates through arms control found that laws that regulate who can access firearms, such as laws demanding background checks, are the most effective. For laws and regulations related to alcohol use, New York City, United States, saw a reduction of alcohol-related homicides from 3.2 to 2.4 per 100,000 people following increased alcohol taxation. In South Africa, restrictions imposed on the sale and consumption of alcohol during the COVID-19 lockdown were also associated with a decline in injuries, deaths, and hospitalizations.

At the **international level**, successful actions have largely happened through the creation of normative frameworks and the guidance and support given to national and local actors. Financing interventions that follow the parameters for effective action, as outlined above, is another way in which the international community can play a significant role in violence reduction efforts. One example of such collaboration is the Violence Prevention and Social Inclusion Promotion Program, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and implemented by the government of Costa Rica. The program aimed to reduce violent crime in the country through three pillars: institutional strengthening, establishment of activity and social skills development centers targeting at-risk youth, and establishment of rehabilitation units. The program surpassed its goals for a reduction in robbery rates by more than six times its target, and it also exceeded its target for improvement in citizens' feeling of security.

3. Takeaways for the Summit of the Future

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As we approach the Summit of the Future, we encourage member states to remember that they have both the ability and the obligation to minimize the scourge of violence affecting their citizens. While negotiating the Pact for the Future and grappling with the complex ongoing threats to international peace and security, they should recognize that there is robust evidence showing that they can still take meaningful steps to protect individuals at risk of interpersonal violence. The following four takeaways can inspire action that saves lives:

- **Interventions and programs to reduce interpersonal violence are most effective when they engage specific at-risk places, people, and behaviors-and with the participation of those communities**. To do so, it is crucial that interventions are designed based on accurate, up-to-date, and disaggregated data that allows stakeholders to paint a clear and nuanced picture of the type of violence that is being targeted. Including provisions in the Pact that hold national governments accountable to that, and create mechanisms for multilateral institutions to assist countries in these efforts would be extremely beneficial.

- **Prevention is more efficient than reduction**. By acting upstream and addressing the structural risk factors for violence, national, and local actors can concentrate efforts to effect long-term change instead of putting out fires." This can only be done, however, with a thorough understanding of the

risk and protective factors for violence in each national and local context—meaning that it needs to be both context-specific and evidence-based. CIC is continuing to build tools for prevention that will enable states to systematically and operationally implement measures that have a high likelihood of success. One of these tools is a matrix of risk and protective factors for violence to inform practitioners and decision-makers and contribute to improving diagnostics, programming, and evaluation in prevention.

- **Investments in interpersonal violence reduction should be considered a crucial part of the development agenda**. As mentioned in the New Agenda for Peace, calls to reduce violence should not be misconstrued as attempts to intervene in domestic issues or interfere with security dynamics. These efforts are inherently nationally and locally led. This is simply an acknowledgment that interpersonal violence is a critical issue in matters of development, and therefore efforts to reduce it should be seen as a core component of the 2030 Agenda and any development framework that may succeed it.

- **The international community has an important role to play in supporting local and national actors**. Interpersonal violence and its solutions are highly localized, making national and local governments and leaders best positioned to address these issues. That is why CIC believes in the transformative power of networks like PiOC and GENSAC, which are working to amplify the reach of those closest to the issues at hand. Nonetheless, the support of the multilateral system and other international actors can be a key catalyst for achieving significant reductions in rates of violence. This support can occur through assistance in drafting prevention plans, creating frameworks for managing the small arms and ammunition that drive so much of the world s violence, supporting mechanisms and standards for data collection, or providing direct financial support for program implementation.

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