CHAPTER FIVE
More armed violence, less development

The 2011 *Global Burden of Armed Violence* explores the complex relationships between armed violence and development. Aid agencies and governments now widely accept that there is a link between higher levels of armed violence and fragile institutional capacities, and that there is a strong association between insecurity and underdevelopment. By unpacking the correlates between lethal violence and development progress as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicators, this chapter intends to assist policymakers and practitioners in better understanding the reasons for investing in violence prevention and reduction.

The chapter reveals that:

- Lethal violence is strongly associated with negative development outcomes and is accompanied by low levels of overall MDG achievement.

- The higher the level of lethal violence recorded in a country, the larger its gap with respect to other countries in terms of development.

- A reduction in a country's incidence of lethal violence corresponds with improved MDG performance across most indicators.

- High rates of intentional homicide are accompanied by significantly higher levels of extreme poverty and hunger (MDG 1), lower primary education enrolment (MDG 2), and higher infant mortality and adolescent birth rates (MDGs 4 and 5).

- Countries that report proportionately lower levels of income inequality and unemployment exhibit comparatively lower levels of homicide.

- States that feature lower levels of human development and income almost always report high and very high levels of lethal violence.

- Monitoring of armed violence should be integrated into routine MDG progress assessments and there is a need for more investments in national data gathering capacities and observatories.

Research conducted for this chapter suggests that countries that register an improvement in their HDI are also most likely to exhibit a decrease in levels of lethal violence. In other words, homicide rates are negatively and significantly linked to improvements in a country's HDI rating (see Figure 5.2). Yet whether levels of violence *cause* lower scores is difficult to determine. Country data for 2000 to 2009 indicates that the greater the income disparity, the higher the homicide rates. The inverse is also true: societies reporting less severe income inequality report much lower levels of homicidal violence. The findings confirm the body of research that identifies a robust relationship between income inequality and violent criminality.
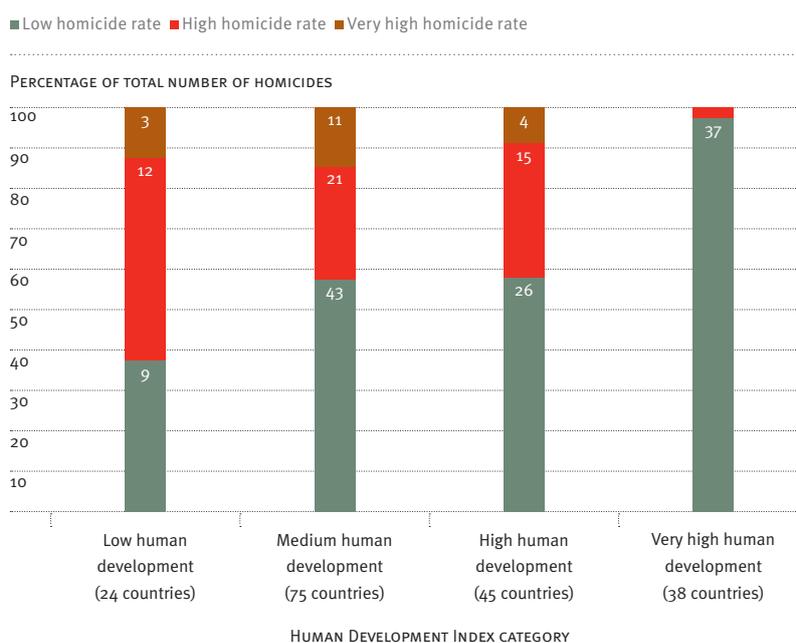

PHOTO Following a fire, informal settlers of the Laperal compound in Manila throw stones and bottles as they clash with police and members of a demolition team who are taking part in an effort to relocate them, April 2011. © Cheryl Ravelo/Reuters

Table 5.1 reviews correlations of key development indicators and lethal violence. The signs located in the right-hand column—positive and negative—indicate the direction and intensity of each association. The larger the sign, the closer the association between the two variables. The shades reveal the statistical significance of the association, from the 1 per cent (dark, most significant) to the 5 per cent significance level (light, less significant). High rates of intentional homicide are accompanied by significantly higher levels of extreme poverty and hunger (MDG 1), lower primary school enrolment (MDG 2), higher infant mortality and adolescent birth rates (MDGs 4 and 5), and higher youth unemployment. Yet the chapter finds that a reduction in a country's incidence of armed violence corresponds with improved MDG performance. Similar relationships are also found between direct conflict deaths and MDG progress. Higher rates of direct conflict deaths are correlated with higher rates of poverty (measured as the population living below USD 1 per day); a lower share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; lower enrolment in primary education and a lower ratio of girls to boys in primary education; and a lower HDI rank.

The ability of the international community as well as national and local governments to design appropriate policies and programmes for armed violence prevention and reduction depends on an integrated and comprehensive understanding of the distribution and dynamics of lethal (and non-lethal) violence worldwide. Many governments affected by high levels of armed violence—and many others that are not affected—have initiated comprehensive armed violence monitoring systems. Such observatories, especially when administered in partnership with civil society and reliable research institutions, can provide crucial context-specific information on armed violence. This data is indispensable to unpacking the complex relationships between armed violence and factors such as unemployment, inequality, the presence of illicit markets, corruption, weak rule of law, and impunity. ⟲

Figure 5.2 Disaggregated homicidal violence for 182 countries by HDI, 1986–2009

■ Low homicide rate ■ High homicide rate ■ Very high homicide rate

Percentage of total number of homicides

Note: Numbers in the bars indicate how many countries fall into each of the three homicide rate categories (low, high, or very high). The figure for the top segment in the right-hand bar is '1'.

Source: GBAV 2011 database and selected development and violence indicators

Table 5.1 The relationship between development indicators and lethal violence

Development indicator	Relationship to armed violence
Adolescent birth rate (per 1,000 women)	+
Births attended by skilled health personnel (percentage)	−
Children under five severely underweight (percentage)	-
Children under five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	+
Employment-to-population ratio, both sexes (percentage)	+
Infant mortality rate (0–1 year, per 1,000 live births)	+
People living with HIV, 15–49 years old (percentage)	+
Poorest quintile's share in national income or consumption (percentage)	−
Population below USD 1 per day (PPP, percentage)	+
Poverty gap ratio at USD 1 per day (PPP, percentage)	+
Proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources (total)	−
Proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities (total)	−
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	+
Slum population as percentage of urban population (percentage)	-
Total net enrolment ratio in primary education (both sexes)	−
Youth unemployment rate, aged 15–24 (both sexes)	+
Youth unemployment rate, aged 15–24 (men)	+
Youth unemployment rate, aged 15–24 (women)	+
Human Development Index	−