

Briefing notes for people considering submissions on armed violence within the MDG Review Process (www.un-ngls.org/mdgconsultation/start.php). Please adapt these to your community context.

The Millennium Development Goals - threatened by armed violence

KEY MESSAGES (No. 7 OF THE CONSULTATION FORM: “What concrete (preferably time-bound) decisions, partnerships and accountability frameworks to decisively accelerate progress in the next five years would you advocate for the MDG Summit?”)

The MDG Review Process, Summit, and Outcome Document should clearly acknowledge the strong negative effect of armed violence on human development and MDG achievement. Concrete steps to measure and reduce armed violence must be committed to as part of international efforts for MDG fulfilment from 2010 to 2015.

Why? (AT No. 4 OF THE CONSULTATION FORM: “What is your perspective on the findings and the factors responsible for, or associated with, the current status of MDG implementation (whether in terms of policy orientation, structural obstacles, governance etc.), focusing on one or more MDGs, at national and/or international levels?)

In his report “Keeping the Promise”, the UN Secretary-General argues that “armed violence [is] a major threat to human security and to hard-won Millennium Development Goal gains.” Armed violence currently kills an estimated 740,000 people each year – millions more are injured, psychologically scarred or impoverished. The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) estimates that armed violence costs as much as USD\$400 billion in lost productivity annually.¹

Irresponsible arms transfers and excessive military spending undermine all MDGs both by fuelling conflict and crime, and by diverting funds from social spending such as education and health care². Resources are wasted by military spending that goes beyond legitimate security needs. Such spending can also contribute to unsustainable debt service payments, which reduce resources for social spending – and it can fuel corruption³. Armed violence also impacts directly on each of the MDGs:⁴

- **MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:** Armed violence undermines growth and poverty reduction. It destroys livelihoods – devastating physical and social capital, wiping out productive assets, shrinking employment and access to productive land, and effecting mass forced displacement – increasing household poverty, often amongst the most vulnerable.
- **MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education:** During periods of armed violence, teachers can be killed or displaced, children displaced or recruited as child soldiers. Schools can be closed and, in some instances, targeted for attack.⁵ Children can lose vital years of education. Even when education services are restored, trauma from exposure to violence can damage children’s capacity to learn.
- **MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women:** Although boys and men are the primary perpetrators and direct victims of armed violence, women and girls are disproportionately exposed to systematic forms of rape and assault that often accompany it. Women and girls also bear a greater burden of longer term adverse effects of armed violence.⁶
- **MDGs 4 & 5: Reduce child mortality & improve maternal health:** Armed violence kills and injures children and their mothers, and displaces families. Armed violence also destroys, closes down or severely restricts vital maternal and child survival health services and facilities, increasing risk for children of infectious diseases such as acute respiratory infection, diarrhoea and malaria.⁷
- **MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases:** Both HIV/AIDS and malaria are estimated to increase during and following periods of sustained armed violence.⁸ Armed violence can destroy water and sanitation systems and health infrastructure, increasing vulnerability to disease.
- **MDG 7: Ensure sustainable development:** Armed violence can be fuelled by competition over natural resources (oil, minerals, timber, diamonds – increasingly water and land).⁹ Such conflicts often promote unsustainable practices in resource extraction and use. Revenue from natural resources during armed conflict is less likely to flow to government for investment in development. Violence can also produce population shifts – such as rural-urban migration, with agricultural desertion and urban overcrowding – that make sustainable development much more difficult.¹⁰ Military activity has contributed to environmental degradation and GHG emissions.¹¹ Similarly, environmental degradation and climate change is a risk-multiplier.¹²

Voices supporting recognition of armed violence as a barrier to MDG achievement:¹³

The MDG Poverty Task Force (2004) identified armed violence as a key factor in MDG progress.¹⁴ At the 2005 World Summit, States Members of the United Nations recognized that ‘development, peace, security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing’ (A/60/1). The UN Secretary-General has called on states to recognise the problem of armed violence within the MDGs in the *2009 UN Secretary General’s Report on Armed Violence and Development*.

-
- ¹ Submission of the United Kingdom to the Secretary-General's report on Armed Violence and Development, A/64/228, 2009.
- ² UN Charter Article 26 calls for the regulation of armaments in order to ensure the least diversion of human and economic resources from global needs. During the financial crisis in 2008, increasing global military expenditures caused the UN Security Council to express concern, and to urge appropriate levels of spending and continued commitment to achieve the MDGs.
www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9501.doc.htm.
- ³ *Shooting Down the MDGs*. Oxfam Briefing Paper, October 2008.
- ⁴ *Guidance on Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention*, The SecDev Group and Small Arms Survey (2008), OECD-DAC.
- ⁵ Attacks on schools are among the grave violations covered in the annual report of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, released on 22 April, 2009.
- ⁶ Li, Q., Wen, M. (2005), The Immediate and Lingering Effects of Armed Conflict on Adult Mortality: A Time-Series Cross-National Analysis, *Journal of Peace Research* 42: 471-492.
- ⁷ Toole & Waldman, *Annual Review of Public Health*, Vol. 18: 283-312, May 1997.
- ⁸ Hoeffler & Reynal-Querol, 2003, "Measuring the Cost of Conflict", Centre for the Study of African Economies, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.
- ⁹ *From Conflict to Peacebuilding. The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment*", UNEP Policy Paper No. 1, 2009:5.
- ¹⁰ Brown & Crawford: "Rising Temperatures, Rising Tensions: Climate Change and the Risk of Violent Conflict in the Middle East." IISS, 2009; "National Security and the threat of Climate Change." The CNA Corporation, 2007.
- ¹¹ Montonen, C. (2009): Environmental impact of military activities.
- ¹² Brown & Crawford: "Rising Temperatures, Rising Tensions: Climate Change and the Risk of Violent Conflict in the Middle East." IISS, 2009; "National Security and the threat of Climate Change." The CNA Corporation, 2007.
- ¹³ Such measures bear out MDG 8 commitment 8 to strengthen international partnership and collaboration.
- ¹⁴ Violent Conflict and the MDGs: Goals, diagnosis and recommendations prepared for the MDG Poverty Task Force 2004.