



The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

An International Newsletter on integrating armed violence prevention and reduction into development strategies

Issue 5, February 2009

Introduction: This e-publication is designed to support the *Geneva Declaration* (GD) process and to encourage activities by governments, international organizations and civil society to link development programming with armed violence prevention and reduction strategies. The GD, which is now endorsed by 105 states worldwide, is committed to translate its objectives into concrete steps based on “**Advocacy**”, “**Measurability and Research**” and “**Programming**” as its three programmatic pillars. (For more information on the *Geneva Declaration* and its activities see the web site: www.genevadeclaration.org)

Opening Words:

“Ahmed Hamid Maiga, head of the arms commission in Timbuktu, said deepening poverty, a declining agricultural sector, and rampant population growth explains increasing domestic demand for weapons. ‘People have got to eat and drink,’ he said. ‘People think if they get a gun they will get something to eat. There are many cases of fights between pastoralists and cultivators. Other people fight over access to water sources.’”
<http://allafrica.com/stories/200806120691.html>

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***Campaigning:** To date the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development has been adopted formally by 105 states, Lithuania being the latest country to sign up. Over 100 countries now support the efforts by the promoters of the Geneva Declaration to link violence reduction and development efforts.*

1. The UN General Assembly Resolution on armed violence and development, which was adopted by consensus in November 2008 as part of the Geneva Declaration’s implementation efforts, is now available in its final form as UN document A/RES/63/23. All UN language versions are available through a document search on the UN web site (<http://documents.un.org/simple.asp>) by inserting the specific document code above. As mentioned in the last issue of this newsletter, the resolution asks the UN Secretary-General

(SG) to collect views from member states on the relationship between armed violence and development. This also opens up an informal role for civil society to collect relevant information and to encourage states to provide views and other relevant information to the SG. The Quaker UN Office will be working along with other NGOs to make sure there is active support from civil society for the SG's report.

2. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: high-level meeting on violence. On 15-17 December 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) hosted a high-level meeting on violence aimed at elaborating a Federation-wide strategy for addressing the social culture of violence. Anchored in a public health approach, discussions focused on how global, regional and local IFRC members can contribute to preventing interpersonal and self-directed violence by addressing the underlying causes. IFRC participants expressed strong support for the principals and goals of the WHO Global Campaign for Violence Prevention, and it was agreed that the two organizations should strengthen their partnership around violence prevention. For more information contact Dr Alexander Butchart (butchart@who.int).

3. Programming on the Ground. *The implementation of the Geneva Declaration focuses increasingly on concrete projects that link the reduction/prevention of armed violence with development. It is hoped that ongoing and future successful project activities can provide best practice approaches that inspire governments, civil society and the international donor community to address this complex interrelationship. Civil society plays a key role in the realization of these projects thereby contributing significantly to one of the key aims of the Geneva Declaration, namely “to strive to achieve, by 2015, measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence and tangible improvements in human security worldwide”.*

Haitian slum inspiration for Canadian cities. Michaëlle Jean, the Governor-General of Canada toured Bel Air, a Haitian slum that she called an inspiration for Canada's own struggling communities, from remote aboriginal villages to big cities grappling with gang violence. “Life has changed from a security standpoint. Security is better,” said a young man who lives in the area. Much of the rehabilitation work in the neighbourhood is being done by the Brazilian non-governmental organization, Viva Rio, funded with over \$5-million in Canadian money. In addition to police training, Canadian cash is paying for things like school scholarships, water distribution, and cultural programs that include lessons in *capoeira* – a Brazilian form of martial-arts dancing. Ms. Jean says there is a lesson here for Canadians, who are struggling with criminal violence in their own cities and rural areas. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20090117.whaiti0117/EmailBNStory/International/home>

Libraries sow urban peace in Colombia. The cities of Bogota and Medellin have invested in strengthening their public library system, creating libraries that become veritable civic centers to combat social exclusion and lower levels of violence. According to Jorge Melguizo, Medellin Secretary of Culture, the fact the city has currently a mere 9% of the violent deaths it had five years ago is certainly associated with the library-parks. “I am not saying that the libraries single-handedly lowered levels of violence, since there are a series of factors in the city that have generated a new climate, but these spaces for social inclusion, for gathering, and for opportunities have made a contribution.” See the Comunidad Segura web site: <http://www.comunidadessegura.org/?q=en/node/41565>

Argentina: Soccer and learning about conflict. In the capital of Argentina, a league of 20 teams created out of grassroots organizations. Run by volunteer activists, it offers children and teens a chance to play, and by making up their own rules, a chance to learn about settling differences constructively through the ideas of Paulo Freire. The news is that it works. During a day that begins at 10 am and ends at 5 pm sharp, activities include citizenship, radio, dance, painting and *capoeira* workshops. The kids also get a few hours of free time, when they can do whatever they like in the soccer fields (grass and sand) that stretch out along the throughway that leads to the Ezeiza International Airport. More at <http://www.comunidadessegura.org/?q=en/STORY-Soccer-S-A>

Former child soldiers around the world are doing better than expected. Recent studies show that former child soldiers are actually more likely to participate politically and socially than their peers who experienced violence, albeit not as soldiers. It is a striking discovery. These young people come home from the war, often after having served in roles of authority, and look for ways in peacetime to be politically active and help their local community. <http://www.radionetherlands.nl/thestatewerein/otherstates/tswi-080725-child-soldiers>

Liberia – Trading weapons for makeup brushes but still no jobs. “Tony Clarke traded two grenades for a set of combs, makeup brushes, nail varnish and a short course in cosmetology. He is also one of 101,000 former fighters to take part in a UN-led disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) process following the end of the war six years ago....Clarke, who fought in the country’s civil war, is set to graduate from his training in March. But given skyrocketing unemployment and poorly developed private industry in Liberia, he might end up like many other trained ex-combatants — unable to find a job.” www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=82705

Philippines – Bill seeks rehab, scholarship program for child soldiers. December 2008 – Children involved in armed conflicts as "child soldiers" will be entitled to rehabilitation and scholarship programs, if a bill in the House of Representatives is passed into law. House Bill 5544 seeks comprehensive rehabilitation and scholarship for child combatants and those working as spies, guards, guides, lookouts, porters, garden workers, or messengers. The bill also provides for the creation of a special task force on child soldiers to oversee implementation of the proposal once it becomes a law. The military estimates that there are about 2,000 such children currently fighting in the country. Full article at <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/138551/Bill-seeks-rehab-scholarship-program-for-child-soldiers>

Gun Buybacks can affect levels of violence. Brazil's national gun buyback campaign from July 2004 to October 2005 had a significant impact on firearm violence in the state and city of Rio de Janeiro, according to new a study from the Small Arms Survey, Viva Rio and ISER. The campaign particularly affected interpersonal conflicts and firearm homicides caused by trivial reasons, such as alcohol or traffic-related incidents. The study concludes that buybacks are only effective as part of a broader small arms control strategy; in this case the implementation of the comprehensive Disarmament Statute www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/sas/publications/spe_reports_pdf/2008_sr9_RIO_SR9.pdf

Guatemala: Gangs conquer the abused with abuse. Girls in the midst of the deeply *machista* gang culture thriving in Central America often find themselves straddling the line between victims and victimizers. It is abuse in their home lives that often propel them into the gangs in the first place, and those gangs often continue the abuse under the veil of protection.

The gang is their adopted family, they say, offering what proves to be an unpredictable mix of affection and aggression.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/04/09/america/guatemala.php>

4. Publication Notes: *The following are recent publications selected from a variety of sources that describe various aspects of work on armed violence and development issues:*

HANDBOOK ON PLANNING AND ACTION FOR CRIME PREVENTION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN REGIONS. This new publication from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) draws on lessons from 40 crime prevention programmes and its conclusions parallel many themes in AVD work. The handbook explores the extent to which lessons can be drawn, and where evidence is lacking, this handbook seeks to identify suggestions for further action, either for research or experimentation. The principal aim of the publication is to serve as a reference tool to policymakers and practitioners engaged in actions to reduce the burden of crime on the poor. Moreover, the handbook intends to increase knowledge about levels of crime, successful practices in reducing crime rates in developing countries, and multi-actor crime prevention initiatives. Available at: <http://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/CPhandbook-120109.pdf>

Daring To Care: Community-Based Responses to Youth Gang Violence in Central America and Central American Immigrant Communities in the United States. Youth gang violence is only one part of the spectrum of violent and criminal behavior that people in poor communities in the Americas experience – a spectrum that runs from intra-familial violence to the coercion of organized crime syndicates and to the rivalries of drug traffickers. Gangs are a highly visible part of the spectrum and one that receives significant attention from the media. However, gangs bear only part of the blame for the problems of crime and violence in poor communities. An informed understanding of the nature of youth gangs, what they are and why they form, is necessary to formulate effective responses. This report identifies elements to successful anti-gang strategies and programs by highlighting the work of six gang prevention and intervention programs in the United States and the Central American region. Washington Office on Latin America, <http://www.wola.org/media/Gangs/WOLA%20US%20CA%20Gangs%20fnl.pdf>

“Security Sector Reform in Liberia: Mixed Results from Humble Beginnings” (Malan, M, 2008, *Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Pennsylvania*). How much progress has been made with security sector reform (SSR) in Liberia? This paper examines SSR in Liberia and argues that while the United Nations (UN) and the United States (US) have made a start with police and military reform, they have not done nearly enough. The UN, US, as well as other significant donor partners, need to stay the course with Liberia. SSR is a long-term process, not an ephemeral happening. See more details in the January 2009 issue of *ssrbulletin*; you can subscribe at: www.ssrnetwork.net/ssrbulletin/subscripti.php

Small Arms Proliferation and Misuse: Toward a Caribbean Plan of Action. Caribbean societies are receiving illegal small arms at a rate that has consistently increased over the last decade, despite numerous interventions by governments. The uniqueness of the Caribbean situation is linked to the twinning of narcotics and illegal guns. This report examines the proliferation of small arms in the Caribbean Community and the instruments of small arms control being produced in the region. The summary notes that “youth are disproportionately represented in the incidence and severity of gun violence...” and that a “wide variety of risk factors contribute to the prevalence of youth violence, including poverty, youth

unemployment, large-scale migration to urban areas, drug trafficking, a weak education system, ineffective policing, the widespread availability of weapons, drug and alcohol use, and the presence of organized gangs.” Project Ploughshares: <http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/WorkingPapers/wp081.pdf>

The Economics of Peace and Security Journal raises and debates all issues related to the political economy of personal, communal, national, international, and global peace and security. The scope includes implications and ramifications of conventional and nonconventional conflict for all human and non-human life and for our common habitat. Special attention is paid to constructive proposals for conflict transformation and peacemaking. While open to noneconomic approaches, most contributions emphasize economic analysis of causes, consequences, and possible solutions to mitigate conflict. The journal is aimed at specialist and non-specialist readers alike. Contributions are scholarly or practitioner-based, but written in a general-interest style. The journal is internet-based and subscription rates are inexpensive. <http://www.epsjournal.org.uk/subscriptions.php>.

Also consult www.genevadeclaration.org/resources.html

5. Need for More information: *Do you want to share information about activities that are ongoing in your country and publications that show the interface between armed violence prevention and reduction with development?* If you have some information about successful projects—previous or ongoing—that you think would be relevant, please share them with our readers. Send suggestions and any relevant web addresses to QUNO at quno1@quno.ch

Please visit <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/context.html> for more information.

To contact the editor regarding the content of this newsletter, send an email message to newsletter@genevadeclaration.org

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