

Regional Seminar on Good and Promising Practices in the Reduction of Armed Violence in Europe (Zagreb, Croatia, 13–14 September 2011)

Organized jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Secretariat of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AVRP	armed-violence reduction and prevention
AVR	armed-violence reduction
CARE	CARE International is a grouping of non-government organizations which aim primarily to reduce poverty
CSO	civil-society organization
EFUS	European Forum for Urban Security
EU	European Union
GD	The Geneva Declaration
JHR	Journalists for Human Rights (NGO, Macedonia)
NGO	non-government organization
RAVCIAC	Centre for Security Cooperation, a non-government organization aiming to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in South-Eastern Europe
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
SALW	small arms and light weapons
SEE	South-Eastern Europe
SEESAC	South-Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNTAES	United Nations Transitional Administration

Introduction

The main aim of this report is to document some of the promising projects in the field of armed-violence reduction and prevention (AVRP) that were presented in September 2011 during the regional seminar¹ with states and civil-society organizations (CSOs), as well as during two regional CSOs meetings² held in Zagreb before and after the main seminar. The examples identified during the even may also provide working material and case studies for publications or larger events (for example the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference of the Geneva Declaration held on 31 October and 1 November 2011 in Geneva, Switzerland).

Reflecting the content of the Zagreb seminar, this report is not limited to projects that aim to reduce armed violence, but also offers a view on some successful projects aiming to reduce domestic violence, whether armed or not.

The material cited in this report was gathered during the presentations made during the Zagreb regional seminar, and in individual interviews with participants, representing both government agencies and CSOs.

Examples of good practice have been selected on the basis of several diverse guidelines: the wish to reflect a certain diversity in the field of violence reduction (domestic violence, arms collection and destruction, inter-community post-war reconciliation, work with the victims of violence); the availability of tools for results measurement and programme assessment; and a balance between the programmes of governments and CSOs. Data was gathered during the presentations made at the Zagreb seminar, as well as during personal interviews with the participants.

1. The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

Initiated in 2006, the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (GD)³ is a diplomatic initiative aiming to achieve 'measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence and tangible improvements in human security by 2015'. As of today, 112 states have endorsed the Geneva Declaration (including 22 of the 27 European Union members). On 31 October and 1 November 2011, the Geneva Declaration held its 2nd Ministerial Review Conference⁴ with the aim of assessing progress in and expressing commitment to the AVR agenda, and establishing priorities for the future, especially in terms of the implementation of its goals.

¹ The seminar was hosted by the Government of Croatia and organised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Secretariat of the Geneva Declaration of Armed Violence. The event was co-funded by UNDP and the Swiss Government. The seminar was the last in a series of regional events aimed at preparing the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference of the Geneva Declaration.

² The CSO seminars have been organised by the Quaker UN Office (QUNO) in Geneva.

³ For more information, see www.genevadeclaration.org.

⁴ The final outcome document of the Conference and the documents presented on that occasion are available online on the GD website.

The Geneva Declaration is based on the following assumptions:

- that to live free of the threat of armed violence is a basic human need;
- that security is a precondition for human development;
- that providing for the human security of their citizens is a core responsibility of governments.

Implementing GD commitments entails the following measures:

- dealing effectively with the supply of and demand for small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition;
- monitoring, measuring, and analysing the scope, scale, and distribution of armed violence, and establishing national armed-violence monitoring and reporting mechanisms;
- fostering effective and accountable public security institutions;
- integrating AVR into international and national development frameworks;
- promoting a comprehensive approach to AVR issues, recognizing the different situations, needs, and resources of men and women;
- targeting specific risk factors and groups, providing non-violent alternative livelihoods for individuals and communities;
- working in partnership with civil society and different communities (such as development, peace building, crime prevention, public health);
- sharing knowledge, experiences, and good practices on armed-violence reduction and prevention.

The GD includes three main pillars:

- advocacy, in order to bring the AVR agenda into relevant international processes;
- measuring and monitoring the scope of the problem and the efficiency of AVRP projects (by supporting the development of monitoring tools and the capacities for monitoring);
- programming: the GD supports organizations and AVRP initiatives by collecting experiences and lessons learned, by sharing and disseminating good or promising practices in AVRP and—in the future—assessing the results of AVRP programmes.

2. Armed violence, intervention, and ‘good practice’

What is ‘armed violence’? In his report on the links between armed violence and development, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) defines armed violence as the ‘intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, with arms, against oneself, another person, group, community or State that results in loss, injury, death and/or psychosocial harm to an individual or individuals and that can undermine a community’s, country’s or region’s security and development achievements and prospects’ (UNSG, 2009⁵).

⁵ ‘Promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence’, Report of the Secretary General, 5th August 2009 (A/64/228)/

Underlining the fact that, despite the UNSG definition of the problem, there is no commonly accepted definition of the concept of 'armed violence', one of the participants in the regional Zagreb seminar stressed that 'armed violence is sometimes hard to define, but easy to recognize'. Terminology and conceptualization are important elements of efforts to achieve concrete results in AVRP, but, 'as long as we understand what we talk about', terminology should not be an obstacle to developing programmatic interventions.

In terms of intervention, a recently published study⁶ entitled *Investment in Security: A Global Assessment of Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention Initiatives* helps to shed light on the key trends in programming and conducting AVRP and helps to identify promising interventions. The study includes a survey of some 570 programmes conducted by the Small Arms Survey in six countries.⁷ The survey was initiated because 'to this point there was little systematically collected information on armed violence reduction and prevention interventions, much less their effectiveness'.⁸

The study marks an important distinction between direct and indirect programming and broader development programming in the field of AVRP. Direct programming seeks to address instruments and actors of violence (for example, arms-destruction programmes, or programmes addressing victims and/or perpetrators of violence); indirect programming tackles structural risks (for example, working with at-risk groups, or strengthening access to justice).

Broader development programming, even though not primarily aiming at AVRP, might nevertheless have positive benefits in that respect (such as development of social services, and management of natural resources which might ease tension within or between communities or States). The study offers evidence that, even if indirect programming is more frequent than direct, the two approaches often overlap, for example when 'focusing simultaneously on reducing firearms availability and working with "at risk" male youth, while seeking to mitigate the likelihood of misuse of firearms through targeted employment schemes'.

The need for examples or case studies of 'good practice' in AVRP underlines the importance of one of the main pillars of the GD: 'measuring and monitoring'. To be effective, any programme in the field of AVRP needs to be evidence-based, and the source and nature of the problem need to be clearly identified, through baseline assessments and monitoring. Monitoring also plays an essential role in the implementation of any AVRP programme. It provides a regular assessment of the adequacy of the actions undertaken, and enables possible reorientations during the programme's implementation. In the end, measuring the impact of the programme with appropriate tools allows the impact of the approach adopted to be assessed.

Programmes that include clearly measurable goals and objectives, and results based on regular monitoring, are therefore worth studying. However, 'successful AVRP

⁶ 'Investing in Security: A Global Assessment of Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention Initiatives', Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development–Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), 2011.

⁷ Brazil, Burundi, Colombia, Liberia, South Africa, Timor Leste.

⁸ A presentation of the study was made at the Zagreb conference by David Atwood, consultant, Small Arms Survey.

interventions are not only those that have a results-based framework or clearly articulated theory of change. Relying exclusively on proof of “good practice” may unintentionally result in selection bias and the exclusion of a wide range of innovative, ongoing activities. It could result in only counting those interventions already supported by donors, who themselves structure assistance according to the presence of a theory of change or result-based framework.⁹

3. Addressing armed violence in South-Eastern Europe

South-Eastern Europe is still heavily marked by the consequences of the wars of the 1990s that accompanied the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. After a ten-day conflict in Slovenia that provoked thousands of casualties in June–July 1991, Croatia (1991–1995) and then Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–1995) experienced larger-scale wars between different communities living in these territories (Croats and Serbs in Croatia, and Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina). The war in Croatia, which was home in 1991 to a population of around 4,700,000 in a territory of 54,600 km², provoked some 20,000 deaths, and around 500,000 persons were forced to leave their homes. In Bosnia, in a territory no bigger than 52,000 km², and with a pre-war population not exceeding 4,500,000, the war provoked at least 100,000 deaths, while two million people had to flee their homes.

In Kosovo, in 1998, after decades of tensions between the mainly Albanian population of the region and the authorities in Belgrade, armed conflict broke out between the Yugoslav Army and an armed militia, the Kosovo Liberation Army. On 24 March 1999, NATO forces launched an air intervention against the Yugoslav Army which ended in June 1999. According to various sources, more than 10,000 people might have died as a result of these conflicts, and some 500,000 might have been displaced during the fighting (out of a population of around two million, in a territory of 10,900 km²).

In 2001 Macedonia, another former Yugoslavian Republic, also experienced an armed conflict, which opposed the national security forces against the Albanian National Liberation Army, a militia claiming equal rights for the Albanians living in Macedonia. The conflict, which caused thousands of deaths, ended in June 2001 with the signing of an agreement guaranteeing more rights for the Albanian population. Macedonia hosts a total population of around 2,000,000 in a territory of around 25,000 km².

The numbers of people disabled (whether physically or psychologically) by these conflicts are extremely difficult to estimate, but the consequences of those wars are still very significant for the populations of South-Eastern Europe (SEE). Only days before the regional meeting in Zagreb, the Croatian press published a substantial report concerning the mass rapes of women during the war in Croatia, under a revealing headline: ‘The State has forgotten them, and the murders and rapists walk freely’.¹⁰ The story included testimonies of women who now have to live in constant fear in the same neighbourhood as their rapists.

⁹ From ‘Investing in Security: A Global Assessment of Armed Violence Reduction’ (OECD–DAC), 2011.

¹⁰ ‘*Draza ih je zaboravila, a slocinci i silovatelju slobodno secu*’, Globus, Zagreb, 9 September 2011.

The general instability of the region makes it all too prone to various forms of violence, whether provoked by economic hardship, by the degradation of the school systems, by the absence of employment, by the prevalence of organized crime,¹¹ or by the lack of political agreement on essential issues. At the time of the Zagreb seminar, Bosnia-Herzegovina, one year after the general elections, still had no central government. Sixteen years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the war in 1995, the country remains a striking example of the long-lasting damage that inter-community armed violence can provoke (see Box 1: 'Never-Ending War in Bosnia-Herzegovina'). In Kosovo, at the time of the Zagreb seminar, after a new eruption of violence in the north of the country (which caused the death of at least one policeman), barricades had been erected on the main crossing points between Kosovo and Serbia, and the talks between Pristina and Belgrade had been interrupted.

Box 1: Never-ending war in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Sixteen years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement that officially ended the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the country 'faces its worst crisis since the war. State institutions are under attack by all sides.'¹² In September 2010, almost one year after the general election, the country still had no central government: the main parties, representing the three 'constitutive peoples' of Bosnia-Herzegovina, were unable to find a compromise.

As observers put it: 'Since Yugoslavia broke up, Bosniaks¹³, Croats and Serbs have had three conflicting views on what kind of a state they can share'¹⁴. Former Slovenian president Milan Kucan considers that 'these three concepts were turned into war aims, but the war itself never really ended; it was only interrupted by the Dayton peace agreement'.

The situation in a town like Srebrenica reveals that the different communities have conflicting views about the past that make genuine reconciliation appear still impossible. Bosniaks, like the international community, claim that genocide was committed there in July 2005 with the killing of 8,000 unarmed Bosniaks by Serb forces. The Serb leadership in Bosnia rejects the concept of 'genocide', speaking only about 'murders'.

In September 2010, the media in Bosnia provided a bleak picture of the country: organized crime, corruption, disillusioned public workers in hospitals, schools, and the police force, and rumours of separatism. Sixteen years after the signing of the Peace Agreement, 'violence is probably not imminent but is a near prospect if this continues' (International Crisis Group, May 2010).

¹¹ 'The issue that makes headlines in South-East Europe is not conventional crime (as manifest in the common law crimes of murder, rape, robbery, burglary, theft, and so forth) but *organised crime*, and in particular the role that groups from South East Europe have played in organized crime in West Europe' (in 'Crime and Its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries', United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, March 2008).

¹² 'Bosnia: State Institutions under Attack', International Crisis Group, 6 May 2011.

¹³ In 1974, the term "Muslim" was adopted as a national category by Yugoslavian authorities. In 1993, during the war, in Sarajevo, a 'Bosniak' council decided to replace the term 'Muslim' by 'Bosniak'. The present constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina lists three 'constitutive peoples' for the country, the 'Bosniaks', the 'Croats', and the 'Serbs'.

¹⁴ International Crisis Group, 6 May 2011/

Sources: International Crisis Group (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en.aspx>), field trip, regional media.

Against this background, state representatives from SEE, the diplomatic community present in Zagreb, and several regional CSOs met between 12 and 15 September 2011 to discuss progress in AVRП in the region.

Two meetings were held for the CSO representatives, before and after the regional seminar. The goals of those meetings were to encourage an exchange of views and experience between CSOs from the region, and to discuss possible further cooperation. During the first regional CSOs meeting on 12 September, a UNDP representative underlined the similarities between the forms of violence prevalent in the countries of SEE and the most frequent solutions applied to the problem. SEE countries are confronted, according to UNDP assessment, with the following similar problems:

- a relatively high rate of possession of arms by civilians;
- the presence of improperly stored arms and ammunitions;
- the question of (surplus) arms destruction;
- violence against women;
- the question of national minorities, as a possible trigger for armed violence;
- the presence of organized crime and violence;
- the legacy of the armed conflicts of the 1990s.

Participants at the seminar stated that SEE countries seek to address armed violence by using the following instruments in particular:

- awareness campaigns;
- improving legislation on arms and ammunition;
- support for victims and work with the perpetrators of violence and 'at-risk' groups;
- support for safer communities;
- weapons collection and destruction;
- strengthening the rule of law;
- addressing gender-based violence;
- tackling organised crime.

In terms of methodology, practitioners from SEE consistently underlined, particularly during the second CSOs meeting on 15 September, the need for regular monitoring of violence in their countries and in the region as a whole, and the need to *define common indicators* to measure the achievements of the various AVRП programmes in the region. As announced during the second CSOs meeting on 15 September, following the example of Norway and its national annual report on violence, the Zagreb-based Centre for Peace Studies might well initiate such a national report for Croatia, starting in 2012.

The usefulness of such regional meetings was also stressed by the participants, who decided to *create a contact group* for permanent exchange of information in the future. Some also mentioned that significant AVRП initiatives had not been included in the programme of the Zagreb seminar, underlying the need for a more thorough investigation in this very varied field. AVRП work conducted with media and journalists in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to help to prevent new inter-ethnic conflicts in both

countries was mentioned as an initiative worthy of attention, as well as small-scale regional economic rehabilitation projects through micro-credit.

On the second day of the main seminar (14 September), working groups, including representatives of government and non-government organizations and agencies in SEE, worked on and provided answers to three main questions: (a) the challenges confronting their organisations; (b) what their governments and their organizations were doing to address the challenges; and (c) the indicators of success on which they could rely.

a) Workshop participants identified the following *challenges* in terms of AVRP in the region:

- the presence of land mines, unexploded devices, and arms stocks;
- the illegal trafficking of arms in the region;
- the 'culture of arms', illustrated by the traditional shooting in the air during social events such as weddings and funerals;
- the social norms and behaviour defining 'manhood' (colloquially referred to as 'macho' attitudes during the regional seminar) and encouraging gender-based violence;
- a generally unstable political situation in several countries of the region;
- a lack of coordination mechanisms to tackle armed violence;
- the relative weakness of the principle of rule of law in the region;
- a lack of data, notably on arms possession.

The initiatives undertaken by government, non-government, and international agencies and organizations to address those challenges include the following:

- sensitization activities for young people, with the aim of reducing the social importance of guns and arms;
- campaigns to prevent domestic violence;
- work on community policing for preventing crime and violence;
- programmes for the collection and destruction of arms;
- adoption of legislation on arms possession, plus amnesties to promote the surrender of weapons.

As for the tools for measuring the success of the activities mentioned, the participants identified the following:

- surveys on the number of victims of land mines;
- surveys on domestic violence;
- data and statistics on arms and weapons collection and destruction;
- analysis of the content of awareness campaigns.

The presentations made during the two days of the Zagreb seminar focused on four main issues:

- the issue of small arms and light weapons in the region;
- the work with victims and perpetrators of violence;

- the challenge posed by gender-based violence;
- ways to improve security at the local level, through safer-community programmes.

4. Addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons in South-Eastern Europe

High rates of individual arms possession; the presence of unexploded mines and explosives in the field; the existence of stockpiles of arms as a consequence of recent wars; the presence of organized crime; illegal arms trafficking: all these factors combine to make the question of SALW a very important topic in SEE.

The SEESAC (South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons) is a joint initiative of UNDP and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), which is the successor of the Stability Pact initiative for South-Eastern Europe. It aims to support 'all international and national stakeholders by strengthening national and regional capacity to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of SALW'. In 2010 and 2011, at the regional level, SEESAC provided courses on stockpile management, and provided regional arms-exports reports and a database on SALW. At the national level, it has notably contributed to SALW collection and destruction in Serbia and Croatia (see Box 2: 'Reducing SALW in Serbia'), to registration and record keeping in Montenegro and Macedonia, and to storage upgrade in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia.

As illustrated by the example of Serbia (see Box 2), communication proved essential in reaching concrete results. 'Fewer weapons, fewer tragedies' had been the motto of the campaign initiated in the Republic of Croatia in 2007 by the Ministry of Interior of Croatia, together with UNDP. The aims of this prevention campaign were to reach people in all age groups who illegally possessed arms or planned to purchase weapons illegally, to raise social consciousness on issues of security and firearms and explosives, and to reduce armed violence in society.

The campaign used local communications media that were judged to have the potential to reach the largest audience within local communities, and it was conducted in all regions of Croatia. Information Points were created where citizens could obtain the necessary information on the new law on weapons adopted in 2007. A free telephone line was also established, giving citizens access to information 24 hours a day on the voluntary surrender of weapons.

Video advertisements were produced, featuring the personal testimony of firearms victims about their broken lives. The information campaign was designed to convey positive messages, underlining the social and economic benefits of arms reduction, as well as improved safety for families.

During the period from 1 September 2007 until 1 September 2011, the following quantities of arms were collected in Croatia: 55,251 explosive objects, 5,967 small and light weapons, 2,083 kilograms of explosives, and more than 20,683 rounds of ammunition.¹⁵

¹⁵ Data provided by the Ministry of Interior, Republic of Croatia.

Box 2: Reducing SALW in Serbia

The media played an important part in the campaign to control SALW that began in 1992 in the Republic of Serbia, by helping people to understand the domestic danger represented by weapons. The general amnesty, which offered citizens an opportunity to render or register weapons without any penalty, was also central to the programme's success. As a result, the Serbian Ministry of Interior would register a total of 1,200,000 weapons.

Key elements for the success of the Serbian initiative to control SALW were the adoption of an *ad hoc* law on weapons in 1992, the existence of an institutional framework, providing precise information on rules and procedures for registering SALW, and the establishment, within the Ministry of Interior, of a special unit for addressing the issue at the regional level, as well as a substantial media campaign.

The law adopted in 1992 included the following elements: definition of all sorts of weapons and their different legal status (weapons for personal defence, for sport, hunting, etc.); definition of the conditions of legal possession; and purchase and registration of SALW. The programme included a first registration phase, which was then followed by an arms-collection process.

Source: interview with Natasa Markovic, Chief Police Inspector in Serbia.

5. Coping with victims and perpetrators of violence

From a judicial and social point of view, violence reduction can be effectively supported by a comprehensive approach providing support to all social actors of violence: the victims, the perpetrators, and the witnesses. During recent years, basing its approach on international standards notably provided by resolutions from the Council of Europe,¹⁶ the Republic of Croatia has introduced into its legal system *provision to protect victims and witnesses*, as well as a probation system aiming to reduce the prison population, thus encouraging the social rehabilitation of former perpetrators of violence. In parallel, the country is working, with the support of Great Britain, on the introduction of a probation system. In Bosnia, the work of a CSO shows how victims can be usefully integrated into projects providing support to their peers (see Box 3: 'Using peer experience to support landmine survivors in Bosnia-Herzegovina').

The goals of the project to support victims and witnesses that was implemented by the Croatian Ministry of Justice, with the collaboration of UNDP from 2007 to 2011, aimed, at the same time, to increase the efficiency of the judicial system by reducing the number of unresolved cases, by increasing the efficiency of criminal procedures, by streamlining tribunals, and by improving the public perception of the institutions.

Victims have been granted rights according to the Standards of the European Union and the Council of Europe. Among others, victims have the right to psychological support and other specialized support. Victims of sexual abuse or offence have the right to consult a counsellor or other source of support before being interrogated.

¹⁶ 'Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Probation Rules', CM/Rec(2010)1.

Concrete measures undertaken within the framework of this project included the following:

- the training of more than 300 professionals from the Judicial, collaborators of justice, of different specializations;
- the use of targeted publications to raise public consciousness about victims' rights;
- a media campaign in 2009, through print media, radio, and television;
- the production of a web page dedicated to the support of victims and witnesses.¹⁷

As a result:

- during the period from May until September 2011, more than 7,500 people have received support;
- 6,201 persons have sought information or support by telephone.
- 217 well-trained volunteers have provided counselling support for a total of 4,098 hours;
- special departments have been created at the District Court level in the cities of Zagreb, Osijek, Vukovar, Zadar, Split, Rijeka, and Sisak.

Parallel to its policy in favour of supporting victims and witnesses, Croatia is working, with the support of Great Britain, on the introduction of a probation system for perpetrators of criminal offences.¹⁸ The reasons for developing such an approach were the following:

- a large prison population;
- a high percentage of non-judged cases;
- controversy within the country about summary justice;
- the absence of adequate systems for post-prison reintegration into society;
- shortcomings in the follow-up of probationers.

A law on probation and other legal acts have been adopted in Croatia, and a Directorate for probation and support to victims and witnesses has been established within the Ministry of Justice. The expected results¹⁹ of this approach are:

- to increase the efficiency of the penal system;
- to raise public awareness of and sensitivity to human rights;
- to increase the number of perpetrators of criminal acts included in the probation system;
- to reduce the prison population.

¹⁷ www.pravosudje.hr

¹⁸ The probation system offers an offender the possibility of remaining at liberty under certain conditions, imposed for a certain period of time, dependent on the nature of the offence committed; for example, the offender might be required to stay in the same jurisdiction, or avoid contact with an ex-partner in the case of domestic violence.

¹⁹ The recently adopted programme has not yet been assessed in terms of its impact and results.

Box 3: Work with the victims: using peer experience to support landmine survivors in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Engaging the empathy, support, and experience of people who have encountered similar difficulties is at the core of the work of the Landmines Survivors Initiative organization (LSI) in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Almost 3 per cent of the territory of the country is considered to be still contaminated by landmines, potentially threatening the safety of around one million people.

Peer-support services are at the core of LSI's model of recovery. LSI extensively incorporates and uses a group-support approach. Compared with individual medical consultations, groups prove a more cost-effective way to support victims and help them to recover from their trauma. Adopting a comprehensive approach, including health support, support for economic recovery (sometimes through the creation of small businesses for the victims), and psychological support, LSI also places an emphasis on networking. It helps survivors to connect to other agencies, institutions, and service providers.

All beneficiaries of the LSI programmes are expected to engage in community support for other victims of landmines, offering their experience and knowledge. By helping others, victims of mines are given an opportunity to re-integrate into their community with a new status, recognized and praised by others. Since its creation in 1997, the LSI has reached more than 2,700 landmine survivors in 85 of the most mine-affected municipalities of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

LSI aims to enlarge its peer-support approach, by convincing official institutions to integrate it into their own programmes. That has been already the case with the integration of the peer-support methodology into the National Disability Strategy in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Source: interview with Amir Mujanovic, Executive Director of the Landmine Survivors Initiatives, (LSI), Tuzla, Bosnia

6. Coping with gender-based violence

Apart from the risks of armed violence linked to the recent conflicts in the region, South-Eastern Europe, like all regions in the world, is also confronted with domestic, gender-based violence. A presentation made during the Zagreb conference on how Spain successfully tackled this issue might provide some incentives and ideas for other regions of the world (see Box 4). The sensitization campaign initiated in the Balkans within the framework of the 'Young Men Initiative' in South-Eastern Europe, notably by CARE International, focuses on the perpetrators and 'at-risk' groups, using humour as a way to reach young audiences (see below).

In Macedonia, the organization Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) has for ten years been conducting annual research on the issue of armed violence against women. Its findings reveal, among other facts, that one in three women in the country is a victim of domestic violence; that the presence of a gun in a home increases by 11 times the probability of death in case of violence; and that armed domestic violence is recently on the rise. The 2011 survey, consisting of anonymous research conducted by telephone

with 1000 women, shows that husbands are the main perpetrators of domestic violence, followed by stepfathers, partners, fathers, and brothers.

In Macedonia, in collaboration with women's NGOs, JHR has developed a comprehensive strategy to address domestic violence which comprises three pillars:

- direct work with the victims and perpetrators (awareness raising and training for men);
- advocacy work for the adoption of new legislation on arms and regional and international agreements on arms possession;
- work with media and journalists on the development and implementation of 'peace journalism' programmes.

As reported by CARE, in the western Balkans as a whole, the media have been reporting increasing incidents of youth gender-based violence in recent years: 'Increasingly, boys and girls are facing bullying in schools, and in settings of youth culture, such as music clubs, sports facilities and cafés'.²⁰ According to CARE, research conducted in 2009 with more than 2,000 young men found 'important relationships between non equitable gender norms, high levels of alcohol consumption and perpetration and/or involvement in violent acts. Close to 50% of young men in the targeted secondary schools reported being involved in some type of violent act or perpetration of violence.'

The 'Young Men Initiative' stems from the necessity to 'work with young men in deconstructing the challenges they face, particularly around certain social and cultural norms around masculinity. Addressing gender norms both in terms of promoting gender equality and addressing some behavior risks young men face around health and violence requires engaging with boys and young men (men throughout society) to address attitudes, beliefs and actions that impact boys and men's (and girls and women) choices.'

Aiming to change attitudes, the CARE project includes a 'Be a Man' and Healthy Lifestyles campaign that will address 10,000 youth in at least 13 schools in the targeted countries (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo). As part of the campaign, a series of 'Be a Man' short video spots was presented at the Zagreb conference. Using a humorous approach, these low-cost productions present, with the help of puppets, a range of daily situations that typically confront young men, showing that they have a choice to respond either violently or non-violently, displaying either respect or contempt for women; audiences are encouraged to 'Be a Man' by respecting gender equality and escaping violence.

Box 4: When media, civil society, and State collaborate to reduce domestic violence: the example of Spain
The campaign against gender-based domestic violence conducted in Spain during recent years shows the importance of gathering precise data and establishing a clear methodology, and the role that the media can play in putting the issue on the public

²⁰ 'Young Men as Allies in Preventing Violence and Conflict in the Western Balkans', <http://www.carenwb.org/index.php?sadrzaj=1&task=viewsingle&nid=107&catid=0>

agenda. Creating public awareness of the problem was in fact the ‘first best practice’ in a country where it was practically ignored by the State, and where it was generally believed that domestic violence was a private and not a public issue.

The turning point came in 1997, with women’s groups leading protests against fatal attacks on women, and, at the same time, the media embarking, on their own initiative, on a campaign against domestic violence. Endorsed then by politicians, this consciousness-raising process produced concrete results: in 2004, Spain adopted an Organic Act on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence, and in 2007 the Law on Guaranteeing Equality between Women and Men was adopted.

One of the first tasks, after the new legislation was adopted, was to provide a complete set of statistics. The National Observatory on Violence against Women now publishes an annual report on gender-based violence, with 14 sections and 186 data charts, which help to counter stereotypes about gender-based violence and to establish a methodology. This overall sensitization brought concrete changes in the judiciary and the police, where units specializing in responses to gender violence were created, in order to minimize the psychological trauma of having to denounce an abuser in a court of law, ensuring that the victim feels respected and protected.

Close monitoring of the situation made it possible to address the problem in all its specificities. Taking into consideration the over-representation of migrants in domestic-violence cases, Spain has adopted a law to protect the victims of gender-based violence who do not have legal residency in Spain. They and their children—if minors—will not be submitted to expulsion proceedings and may even be granted temporary residency.

Source: interview with Jose Pedro Torrubia, First Secretary, Embassy of Kingdom of Spain to the Republic of Croatia

7. Community policing and safer-community plans

Reaction and repression are not the only tools available to law-enforcement agencies in the fight against violence and crime, and, over the years, police forces have in many countries gradually integrated prevention strategies into their daily work. At a local, community, level, the police can play a key role in this process, and the adoption of a wider and more participatory approach, including representatives of local administrations, civil society, and possibly private business, can ensure a long-lasting effect. In SEE, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia, have all embarked on various programmes of *community policing initiatives or programmes aiming to increase community safety*.

Prevention strategies are also used by CSOs, as has been the case in Eastern Slavonia, in Croatia, where local activists efficiently worked on preventing new tensions and violence between Croats and Serbs after the end of the war (see Box 5). A good knowledge of the context of implementation and a participatory approach are central to ensuring concrete and measurable results in safer-community programmes.

The participatory approach to community safety or community policing includes sometimes the creation of a council of crime prevention, including representatives of the local administration, the local police, and the local population. A total of 160 such

councils have been created during recent years in Croatia, as well as four ‘informal information points’ to provide information about security and crime prevention. Enhancing popular trust in the police and ensuring equal access to justice for all are common features of the various programmes implemented in SEE during recent years. (An opinion poll conducted in 2010 in Croatia revealed that 80 per cent of the respondents wished to have better communication with the police, indicating to the authorities a clear direction of work, and existing room for improvement.)

This approach also tackles the question of *professionalization of the police*, aiming to introduce internationally recognized procedures and standards. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, improving police work also meant renovating police stations and setting up special premises for victims of sexual violence.

The UNDP presented an example of building safer communities in the Croatian town of Vukovar which illustrates how private business can be co-opted as an actor in the process. In this town, an area located on the bank of the River Danube had been neglected for years and became notorious for high numbers of criminal offences and urgent medical interventions. The installation in this troubled area of a fitness centre, open to all and free of charge, helped to attract a new population and create a new atmosphere and spirit, contributing in the short term to a significant decrease in criminal offences committed there. The owner of a restaurant located near the area was easily convinced that financial support for this project on his part could be only beneficial, not only for the success of the project in terms of security, but also commercially by attracting new clients to his restaurant, now located in a secure area.

Box 5 ‘Emphatic listening’ in post-war Croatia to help inter-community reconciliation

Baseline needs assessment and constant monitoring and thorough assessment of the results of the activities are crucial to the success of AVR. Both elements were present, from the beginning, in the programme entitled ‘I Choose Life’, conceived and implemented by the Center for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights in Osijek in Eastern Slavonia after the war.

Eastern Slavonia had been at the centre of the conflict that began in ex-Yugoslavia in 1991 and it hosted a multi-ethnic population, Croats and Serbs having been living together there for centuries. Cut off from the rest of Croatia during the war (1991–1995), it returned to the administration of Zagreb in 1995. It had the highest concentration of mass graves and missing persons in the country and had been the site of Arkan’s training camp.²¹

The work in multi-ethnic communities with a high risk of conflicts started in 1999, with the long-term objectives of transforming ‘war-torn post-socialist society in Eastern Croatia towards sustainable peace, common security and democracy’.

Peace Teams (PT), composed of members who lived in the region (both Croats and Serbs), initiated a phase of ‘listening programmes’. Discussion sessions took place with inhabitants, with open-ended questions ‘designed to build mutual trust and provide space for people to openly express their feelings and concerns, fear and

²¹ ‘Arkan’ was the nickname of a well-known Serbian war criminal called Zeljko Raznatovic, who became famous for the atrocities committed by his militias during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was killed in 2000 in Belgrade.

anger', to 'encourage people to define the problems of their communities'. In all, 1,800 such interviews were conducted.

At first, it was not possible to get the Croat and Serb population groups to face each other: they needed a mediator; but a year after the start of the project, peace workers started to include members of the communities into the listening programme. A big step was then undertaken towards the realization of one of the goals of the project: having 'residents listening to each other'.

An assessment of the work of the PTs was then conducted by the Society for Psychological Help from Zagreb, through interviews with 22 focus groups. The opinions expressed about the work were 'generally positive', the participants emphasizing that this work had gone 'beyond the idea of reconciliation' by dealing with the concept of 'human respect of a person'.

The evaluation component of the project also included impact research conducted among the target population by a professor of the Osijek Faculty of Education 6 months and 18 months after the initiation of the project, and interviews with public-office representatives, representatives of international organizations, local and national NGOs, conducted by the Association for Psychological Help from Zagreb. Regular monitoring of the project's activities proved crucial: it was the 'first step in an intervention impact assessment. It is very important for peace interventions to use the impact assessment in order not to deviate from the goals. It also gives the donors an insight into achieved results and thus creates permanent interest in investing in peace projects.'

Sources: interview with Igor Djordjevic (Center for Peace, Non Violence and Human Rights, Osijek, Croatia); "I Choose Life, Building a Democratic Society Based on the Culture of Non-Violence. Post-War Peace Building in Eastern Slavonia", Report on the first phase of the project, Center for Peace, Non Violence and Human Rights, Osijek, Croatia.

8. Conclusion

Understanding the problems of armed violence and identifying what can be done to tackle them effectively and durably is one of the main activities of the Secretariat of the Geneva Declaration. The regional seminar held in Zagreb with governments and CSOs from South-Eastern Europe was one in a series of events aimed at collecting examples of promising AVRPs practices, experiences, and lessons learned.

The Zagreb seminar showed—like those held in other regions of the world—that AVRPs interventions cover a wide spectrum of disciplines, such as crime prevention, public health, urban development, peace building, and education.

In the absence of thorough evaluations, the interventions presented at the seminar and in this report can only be considered as 'promising practices'. There is a great need for governments and donors to provide resources for analysing the effectiveness of AVRPs policies and programmes in the region.

The seminar underscored the fact that despite the many differences among the countries of the region, the question of armed violence prevention and reduction remains an issue of concern. Participants identified topics like community security, policing and crime prevention, the inheritances of the past armed conflicts, the connection between local and transnational crime networks, governance and the gendered base of violence as issues that need attention by states and societies in the coming years.

The presentations and debates during the four days of meetings and seminars in Zagreb once more underlined the following factors that characterize successful AVRP interventions:

- A *solid base of evidence* and developing tools that enable the collection of such evidence. It is fundamental to be able to measure and monitor the armed violence as a problem, but also to assess the quality and the effectiveness of developed interventions aimed at reducing or preventing armed violence.
- A *multi-sector, multi-stakeholder, and inclusive approach* to armed violence that can effectively link security and development efforts, addressing both the manifestations and the causes of violence.
- A *strong partnership with civil society* at all levels.
- The ability to *link AVRP interventions at different levels*, from the international, to the local.
- Adequate resources for the development and implementation of effective AVRP policies and programmes.
- The capacity to *document and share experiences* and lessons learned to improve the effectiveness of AVRP interventions.