

# VIOLENCE PREVENTION: A CRITICAL DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT

## Summary of the Event

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On April 6-7, 2009, in Washington, DC, the World Bank hosted a two-day event entitled, “Violence Prevention: A Critical Dimension of Development.” The event brought practitioners and academics from around the world and World Bank staff to discuss the impact of violence on social and economic development and strategies for addressing violence within the development agenda.

2008 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari, and former Mayor of Bogotá, Enrique Peñalosa, opened the conference with presentations on the importance of violence prevention for development and a vision for how to transform violence at both the international and local level. Juan Jose Daboub, World Bank Managing Director chaired the opening session and Katherine Sierra, Vice President for Sustainable Development at the World Bank welcomed the participants. A lunch session on children and war featured discussions with former child soldiers and current peace advocates Grace Akallo and Dominic Akena from Uganda, John Kon Kelei from Sudan and Zlata Filipovic, a survivor of wartime Sarajevo.

Throughout the two days, the sessions covered a variety of themes relevant to the World Bank and violence prevention, including an assessment of the impact of violence on countries and people, violence prevention strategies as part of urban development, the impact of violence on youth and women, the relationship between violence and poor governance, and violence prevention in the context of fragile countries. Mr. Daboub chaired the closing session with remarks by Pamela Cox, Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean, World Bank, on the violence prevention strategy for Latin America, and Alfred Nickesen, Acting Vice President for East Asia and the Pacific, World Bank, on the role of the World Bank in countries with political conflicts in that region.

Three key messages emerged throughout the conference.

**First, effective and sustainable development requires active attention to conflict and violence as well as informed actions to prevent it and mitigate its impacts.** There was general agreement that the most effective way to reduce violence is through an enhanced development agenda supporting prevention policies and programs that integrate reform of the security and justice sectors.

President Ahtisaari stressed in his opening remarks the importance of international community engagement in the resolution of inter- and intra-national conflicts. The

testimonies of child war survivors was a powerful call for active engagement in supporting the victims of conflict and recognizing the lifelong scars children carry with them after violent conflict. They each stressed the importance of rehabilitation and the need to focus on the victims of violent conflict to achieve sustainable peace. Rachel Mayanja, United Nations Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, called upon development organizations and especially the World Bank to do more to prevent violence against women. She emphasized the terrible impacts that violence against women has on society as a whole and the unacceptable situations that women face in many countries. Joy Phumaphi, Vice President of the World Bank's Human Development Network who chaired the session on youth and gender echoed her views and urged the World Bank to increase its efforts to identify concrete actions in this area.

A session on the costs and impacts of violence addressed the economic, social as well as psychological impacts of violence on many levels – from the global to the personal. Michael Wessells of Columbia University and Gary Milante of the World Bank cited studies finding that criminal violence drains 2.1 percent from the world's GDP, that civil wars cost an average of \$123 billion annually, and that violence causes significant psychosocial problems such as depression and trauma that are too often overlooked. For at least one third of World Bank client countries, violence is a major obstacle to equitable growth and to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Shantayanan Devarajan, Chief Economist for Africa and chair of the session, suggested that it would be important to carry out conflict and violence risk analysis for all countries in Africa because violence has such a strong negative impact on the region's development. In a session dedicated to the relationship between governance and violence, Michael Woolcock of the University of Manchester discussed the inherent connections between development and conflict. He argued that because development is change and because change brings conflict, the development community is inescapably in the conflict business; what remains is whether these conflicts give rise to positive change or destructive violence.

**The second theme arising through the conference was the need to build stronger connections between various ideas, people, institutions, and disciplines in order to improve approaches for violence reduction.** Conceptually, violence is often divided into types or forms of various kinds. Political violence is often considered distinctly from criminal violence and violence against women, gang violence, civil war, are also generally considered and addressed with distinct approaches. A holistic approach to violence is urgently needed as these different manifestations are not unrelated. Addressing violence within a development agenda requires breaking down the silos that have created artificial barriers in studies and policy design between political conflict, common violence and domestic violence in particular. Many participants stressed that addressing violence requires broad approaches to violence prevention that focus on human security, using interdisciplinary methods for analysis, and multi-sectoral interventions.

Several presenters, including Andrew Mack of the Human Security Research Project, Keith Krause of the Geneva Declaration and the Small Arms Survey, and Alexandre Marc of the Conflict, Crime and Violence team at the World Bank stressed the need to

understand the changing circumstances of violent deaths in the world. As the number of civil wars decreases, other forms of violence seem to be rising. A new conceptualization of violence that transcends the dichotomy of peace and war and that transcends existing silos emerged as an important step forward towards finding effective and sustainable strategies to support violence prevention.

A clear example of an innovative interdisciplinary approach to violence prevention was presented by Gary Slutkin, Executive Director of CeaseFire, whose organization has successfully implemented an epidemiologic approach to violence prevention in a number of cities in the US. Former Bogotá Mayor, Enrique Peñalosa, eloquently demonstrated how innovative approaches to slum upgrading and urban investments, designed to empower urban dwellers and give them a sense of citizenship had been central to the decrease of crime in Bogotá and other Colombian cities. Gary Barker, Senior Advisor at the International Center for Research on Women, discussed the importance of outreach to young men as changing norms and the changing role of masculinity can pose distinct challenges for both males and females. John Marks, President and Founder of Search for Common Ground, discussed the role of media in community and national reconciliation. He presented excerpts from some of his organization's productions that strive to build social cohesion and mutual understanding in the wake of violent conflict.

**The third key message that emerged in the conference was that violence prevention is an important area for World Bank engagement and needs to be integrated in sectors where the World Bank has experience and knowledge,** notably, urban development, education and health reforms, labor market, social protection, youth inclusion, inclusion of women and children, post-conflict reconstruction, improvement of governance, rule of law, and more. Mr. Kelei, of War Child Netherlands, noted the importance of education for rehabilitation and reinsertion of war victims but also as a means of prevention. Throughout the conference, presenters and discussants stressed the importance of education for violence prevention. Health was also noted as a very important sector as it allows outreach to perpetrators through drug and alcohol abuse prevention programs. Preventive health programs are also highly relevant to reducing domestic violence and its impacts. Abha Joshi-Ghani, Sector Manager for Urban Development at the World Bank, described how violence prevention is being integrated in the World Bank's approach to urban development. William Byrd, Advisor in the Fragile and Conflict-affected Countries Group at the World Bank, explained some of the links between conflict, violence and fragility and suggested that much more needs to be understood on the chronic nature of some countries' fragile situations. Wendy Cunningham, coordinator of the World Bank's Program on Child and Youth Development, and Mayra Buvinic, Director of the Gender and Development Department, World Bank, described many areas for World Bank involvement in violence prevention among youth as well as strategies to reduce gender-based violence. In his closing remarks, Mr. Daboub encouraged the World Bank to build on both its analytical and operational work in violence prevention and to move ahead with a much more ambitious agenda to respond to the World Bank client needs.