



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



Policy Brief

The role of parliamentarians and health professionals in connecting the dots between the PoA and SDG 16: Reducing armed violence for sustainable development

“The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects sustains conflicts, exacerbates violence, contributes to the displacement of civilians, undermines respect for international humanitarian law, impedes the provision of humanitarian assistance to victims of armed conflict and fuels crime and terrorism”

- The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

“We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”

- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Background

Armed violence results in more than half a million deaths every year, and over 40 per cent are estimated to be caused by Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).¹ Today, 875 million SALW are estimated to circulate worldwide, and 75 per cent of these are in civilian hands.² Apart from causing injury and loss of life, armed violence has severe effects on development. It threatens human security, good governance and contributes to the persistence of armed conflict. Further, it facilitates violations of human rights and impedes economic investment, having a negative impact on public health systems and productivity levels by draining public resources away from education and socio-economic

¹ Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts, Executive Summary, <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/measurability/global-burden-of-armed-violence/gbav-2015/executive-summary.html>

² Small Arms Survey 2015, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/stockpiles.html>

development. For example, a civil war costs the average developing country roughly 30 years of GDP growth.³ Even countries in the global North are adversely affected. For instance, in the United States firearm injuries result in over \$48 billion in medical and work loss costs annually.⁴ The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons can also have a direct or indirect effect on women as victims of gender-based or domestic violence.

The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN PoA) and Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) are coherent and synergistic regarding armed violence prevention, especially in SDG 16 targets 16.1, 16.2, 16.4, 16.a (see Annex 1). The key documents emphasize the need to address the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in order to increase human security and contribute to sustainable development. SDG 16 provides a unique universal goal and point of departure on the issue of armed violence and SALW proliferation. It also offers an opportunity to address these issues in a wider context where security, health and development intersect. In order to maximize the political potential of the UN PoA and the 2030 Agenda, synergies between the agendas should be identified and utilized in all efforts to reduce and prevent armed violence.

Both parliamentarians and health professionals have crucial roles to play in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in specific SDG 16. Parliamentarians affect implementation through their legislative, over-sight and awareness raising roles. Health professionals advance the goals by employing public health approaches to preventing injuries and death from armed violence, highlighting evidence about the humanitarian aspects of conflict, improving care and rehabilitation for survivors of armed violence, and advocating for health-related societal interventions. Working together, parliamentarians and health care professionals can be powerful allies for violence prevention worldwide.

Over-all Policy recommendations:

- Recognition of armed violence prevention and reduction as key to achieving the broader agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Recognition that health and human security are central to achieving the armed violence prevention goals of the PoA and SDG 16;
- Identification of synergies that link the UN PoA and the 2030 Agenda regarding implementation and follow-up;

³ World Development Report 2011, World Bank,
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf

⁴ Fowler KA et al. Firearm injuries in the United States. *Prev Med.* 2015 Oct;79:5-14.
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26116133>.

- Integration of UN PoA goals into SDG 16 and discussions held during the SDG Multi-stakeholder consultations and workshops;
- Increased long-term international and national financial and political support for armed violence prevention and intervention programs, as well as ongoing evaluations of the success of such programs;
- Emphasizing the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men in policymaking, planning and implementation processes related to Small Arms and Light Weapons relevant to UN General Assembly and UN Security Council Resolutions.

Recommendations related to the roles of parliamentarians and health professionals:

- Parliamentarians and health professionals should collaborate in key partnerships to help bring implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the local level;
- Parliamentarians and health professionals should participate in the UN PoA related processes, as to ensure an adequate level of ownership and understanding in the further implementation of the UN PoA;
- Cooperative parliamentary and health community actions should be developed to help states integrate public health approaches and strategies regarding armed violence prevention into UN PoA National Action Plans;
- Parliamentarians and health professionals should collaborate with members of the Violence Prevention Alliance to forward the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Plan of Action on Violence Prevention resolution to strengthen the role of health systems to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women, girls, and children, consistent with SDG and UN PoA goals;
- Parliamentary Committees on Health and Welfare should include the issue of armed violence prevention in their agendas, especially in countries affected by SALW proliferation;
- Parliamentarians should encourage governments to include health professional representation on National Commissions on Small Arms, and collaboration with the World Health Organization's focal points on violence prevention at Ministries of Health that exist in more than 100 countries.

Recommendations related to reporting & monitoring:

- The UN PoA State reporting template should include requests for national progress on programs and policies on SDG 16, including the four targets 16.1, 16.2, 16.4, 16.a;
- States should promote and implement systematized national data collection on firearm-related deaths and injuries to help inform armed violence prevention policies;
- States should increase support for survivor assistance programs that include comprehensive follow-up to ensure productive reintegration of individuals into society.

Annex 1. Extract from ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime

16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels

16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development