POLICY*dialogue* BRIEF

Taking Stock of the Evidence
What Works to Reduce Violence and Prevent Atrocities?

Recommendations for Atrocity Prevention and Peacebuilding Actors

These recommendations are described in greater detail at the end of the policy dialogue brief.

Build a greater shared knowledge base across the prevention and peacebuilding fields.

- Curate and ensure that already existing evidence on what works in mass violence and atrocity prevention and reduction is shared within the peacebuilding and prevention fields and communicated to policymakers.

- Fill knowledge gaps by developing a shared research agenda and/ or research platform and consider who could hold responsibility for managing and communicating knowledge curation.

- Invest in evidence generation on what works, connecting field experience with research, and avoid extrapolating findings beyond their validity and reliability.

- Promote findings to generate confidence among policymakers in creating policy impact in mass violence and atrocity prevention.

Consider strategies and tactics for the prevention field.

- Continue the conversation among peacebuilding and atrocity prevention researchers and advocates to take stock of effective prevention strategies.

- Build allies in the prevention space to create opportunities for learning and convergence on shared approaches by connecting prevention policy priorities with international efforts and expanding stakeholders to include the security sector.

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- Set more-clearly defined global policy goals, with greater coalescence of the prevention and peacebuilding communities and objectives, to help guide politically relevant research agendas, including strategies to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16 targets.

- Foster healthy expectations for prevention results by acknowledging the field is complex and progress takes time.

- Promote longer-term commitments in-country and in bilateral investment relationships, which can be leveraged when needed to support and enforce prevention efforts.

Craft informed, effective, and targeted messaging for policy advocacy.

- Advocate thoughtfully and in a timely manner in policy spaces to seize this unique moment of opportunity for the peacebuilding and atrocity prevention communities given current political contexts.

- Share research findings and impact-evaluation results with policy actors to describe what does and does not work.

- Design messaging to target specific actors at many levels, considering the best ways to engage and reach particular policymakers as well as their supporting staff.

- Engage local publics to build support and demand for prevention efforts, thereby impacting policy at a decision-making level by way of constituent influence.

Introduction

Violence and violent conflict are increasing worldwide for the first time since the Cold War,[1] and today we face the largest displacement crisis ever seen, predominantly as a result of violent conflict. A new report from the Institute for Economics and Peace found that violence containment costs the global economy $14.3 trillion per year. Yet a 2016 analysis by Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground of annual official development assistance (ODA) spending, as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), found that governments spend just 1 percent of ODA on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding and only 8 percent of ODA on politics, security, justice, and rule of law. This means that less than 10 percent of global ODA is spent on the very things we know can counter humanitarian suffering, mass violence and atrocities, and chronic underdevelopment. When asked why a higher proportion of ODA is not going toward violence reduction and conflict or atrocity prevention, policymakers routinely cite a lack of sound evidence for solutions that work.

To address this, participants at the Stanley Foundation's 58th annual Strategy for Peace Conference last October gathered for a roundtable, "Taking Stock of the Evidence: What Works to Reduce Violence and Prevent Atrocities?" to discuss the current status of research efforts and evidence in prevention. Participants also considered effective strategies to guide successful policy and programmatic investments and to help communities and whole societies find ways to break the cycle of violence, build resilience, and promote sustainable peaceful change. The resulting conversation addressed the status of current evidence in prevention, identified current policy and evidence gaps, and considered what strategies can be evoked to insert evidence into field activities and policy-level discussions and advocacy.

Participants shared perspectives and ideas for how to generate greater impact from investments and considered how multistakeholder strategies can be evoked in policymaking spheres to promote existing data and analysis of evidence for what works. Participants grappled with questions such as: When considering the threat of violence in peacebuilding and prevention work, what tools can be used to increase the safety and protection of civilians while simultaneously responding to policy problems? What are the best methods for convincing policymakers that it is in their fiduciary and political interests to prevent violent conflict when it is often so easy to turn a blind eye to such conflict? This report captures the discussion regarding these questions and more, and details the recommendations identified by participants for building an evidence base, developing a strategy for peacebuilders and prevention actors, and designing and performing effective messaging with policy actors.

Compiling Effective Prevention Strategies

Strategies for Reducing Political Violence, Mitigating or Managing Violent Conflict, and Preventing Mass Violence and Atrocities

Reducing support for armed groups

Since 2010, there have been several research efforts to understand and test why people join armed groups, including violent extremist organizations such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, and Boko Haram. Participants emphasized how important it is to avoid drawing micro-level assumptions

from macro-level data—and vice versa. In many cases, the macroeconomic indicators of motivations for joining violent groups do not hold true at the country or community level.

Experts have found that dense social networks and high levels of trust are key factors within communities that generate more resistance to violent threats of all kinds. That is, the structural conditions of a resilient society are not by themselves enough to dissuade youth from supporting armed groups. Often a combination of tools, designed specifically for the community in question, is necessary in order to see change in beliefs and actions regarding support for armed actors among young people. Counternarrative projects are also being tested as a means of dissuading individuals from joining armed groups.[2]

Understanding young people's motivations for joining extremist groups

Numerous research projects have sought to identify the reasons young people join armed groups and the societal factors that may or may not influence such association. Research projects since 2010 have explored the assumptions behind explanations for why individuals join armed or extremist groups, with a particular focus since 2015 on what works to counter recruitment. One such study, a 2014 survey of youth in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Somalia, indicated that the principle drivers of political violence are not based in poverty but rather experiences of injustice, including corruption, discrimination, and abuse from security forces.[3]

Another survey of youth in Somalia in 2012 identified discrimination and a belief in greater economic opportunity as factors associated with a propensity toward political violence. Interestingly, and counterintuitively, the actual employment status of youth did not play a role, but rather when young people felt they had greater economic opportunities, or were better off than their peers, they were more likely to express support for or engage in political violence.[4] Regarding how to dissuade youth from supporting armed groups or engaging in political violence, a subsequent study in Somalia indicated that a combination of programs to support secondary education and civic opportunities resulted in a significant drop in support for and participation in violence.[5] At the end-line of this study, those who received education and opportunities for civic engagement—community service in particular—reduced their engagement in violence and support for violence. For those who received education alone there were mixed effects, including decreased engagement in violence but increased support for it. A potential explanation of these results is that education kept young people busy but could have also fueled frustrations about inadequate employment opportunities after education.[6]

When considering such studies, it is important to not extrapolate or generalize assumptions but to instead keep in mind the situation and community-specific conditions within which the assessments took place. Additionally, individual motivations and experiences are not necessarily captured in generalizations that hold true from a communitywide collection of indicators, even though they may reflect more specificity than macro-level studies.

Current research continues to explore these individual motivations and question some of the macro-level correlations and assumptions related to armed group recruitment and association, specifically those regarding employment levels or economic motivations for individuals. It is possible to understand complexities of individual choice by incorporating psychological motivations into research. This framework creates an opportunity to expand analysis beyond the limiting assumption that individuals always perform a cost-benefit analysis in decision making. Experiences can play a significant role in an individual's motivation for joining armed groups. A recent report from the United Nations Development Programme, for example, identifies human rights abuses as the most common trigger for an individual's personal motivations for joining extremist groups. The report also considers economic factors as possible drivers of recruitment, which is often a contested indicator in other research projects.[7]

Security sector assistance for stability in conflict

Military efforts, such as stability operations, security sector assistance (SSA), and support for military reform, can be an important part of the solution in conflict-affected or at-risk areas when done correctly and used thoughtfully. Such efforts can help prevent large-scale violence and can significantly help deter groups from picking up arms.

Quantitative studies of the effects of SSA from the United States in partner countries in Africa have been generally positive. Yet these positive effects are conditional on the type of assistance offered and the characteristics of the partner country. SSA in weak and autocratic states can have destabilizing effects, and arms transfers in particular have been more problematic than SSA programs that support training and education. Furthermore, SSA can have potentially destabilizing effects on fragile states, for example by undermining legitimate government or exacerbating intercommunal tensions. It is important to consider the conditions and complexities of a potential partner nation and relevant studies of the effects of SSA before determining whether it is appropriate in a certain conflict scenario.[8]

Improving peacebuilding efforts

While it is generally accepted in the peacebuilding field that engaging local perspectives on prevention efforts is essential, roundtable participants emphasized the importance of working with local communities to merge evidence-based practices and peacebuilding analyses with local perspectives in order to build contextually relevant strategies for conflict reduction. Often in conflict

situations, a major challenge is keeping people safe while simultaneously grappling with policy problems. Integrating local civil society actors and indigenous approaches already present in communities for safety and protection can help advance prevention and protection efforts—including nonviolent approaches—to create or maintain a level of safety for all people in conflict or potential conflict areas.

Progress toward peace is not linear and is often fragile. Progress in one area can prompt gains in another, but so, too, can lags in one area cause resistance elsewhere. By accessing the linkages across sectors and targets that allow for progress, there is a greater opportunity for peacebuilding efforts to be successful. It can be very difficult to compile and account for every peacebuilding activity in a given area; however, there is much to be learned from the impact of cumulative (multiple efforts in the same conflict zone) and collective (more cooperative, simultaneous efforts

by multiple actors) peacebuilding efforts. Through efforts to understand what is gained or lost when multiple actors engage over time in a conflict-affected or at-risk area, peacebuilding and prevention actors can create more-effective and synthesized programming.[9]

An ongoing research study on the cumulative impacts of peacebuilding identifies six domains of progress: (1) security and a sense of security, (2) acknowledgment of and commitment to address key conflict drivers, (3) durable political arrangement for power, (4) "good enough" governance, including a resilient relationship between government and society, (5) economic fairness and opportunity, and (6) social cohesion. It is important to make progress in all areas in the pursuit of peacebuilding efforts, recognizing the potential overlapping impact of gains across domains.[10]

Lessons From Case Studies: Colombia and the Central African Republic

Colombia

In November 2016, after 52 years of war, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) successfully signed a peace agreement, and from June to September 2017, FARC fighters handed over their weapons and joined reintegration efforts, bringing 11,200 ex-combatants back into civilian life. While peace remains uneven in Colombia, the peace process has been largely deemed a successful example of how policies can decrease kidnappings, reinstate territorial control, and demilitarize armed groups.

While progress toward peace and stability still faces many hurdles in Colombia, lessons can be drawn from efforts to create peace in the region and the successful demilitarization of the FARC. Long-term political and assistance commitments from the United States (through Plan Colombia)[11] and the international community, and the susceptibility of Colombian government officials to international pressure, were two major factors in the steady reductions of violence from 2002 to 2015 and the peace agreement in 2017. Death squads stopped their massacres largely because of pressure from the international community, including governments and nongovernmental organizations, and the resulting increased political costs of continued violence. Notably, the comprehensive demobilization program and reintegration package enabled rebels to disarm and integrate themselves back into communities, providing an exit strategy from violence. Policies that supported the recapture of roads and

key infrastructure by legitimate authorities were also important to decreasing violence.

These achievements are significant; however, it is important to note that the levels of peace and security are not equal across the regions of Colombia, and fragility remains an active threat, with the safety of civilians a continued concern. For the most part, there is state security presence across the country; however, presence does not mean control. In the last 15 years, the space where armed groups in Colombia can exist has been pushed farther into the periphery. Security has improved overall, but the absence of FARC presence has allowed other armed groups to fill the void left in its departure in some areas. This poses a challenge for implementing the peace accords, as their success depends on sustainable improvements in security, which armed groups seeking illicit revenues and local political authority continue to threaten.

For a more detailed analysis of the journey to a peace agreement in Colombia and the current and anticipated challenges, see International Crisis Group, "Colombia's Armed Groups Battle for the Spoils of Peace," Crisis Group Latin America Report No. 63, October 19, 2017, https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/63-colombias-armed-groups-battle-spoils-peace.

Central African Republic

In late 2012, after decades of violence and instability in the Central African Republic (CAR) following independence, a coalition of armed and predominantly Muslim rebels calling themselves the Séléka seized the capital city of Bangui.[12] After the Séléka staged a coup in March 2013, coalitions of Christian fighters—the antibalaka—formed in response to the brutality of the Séléka's offensive. In September that year, the antibalaka began committing widespread revenge attacks, primarily against Muslim civilians, inciting the mass displacement of tens of thousands of people fleeing to Séléka-controlled areas.[13] CAR has experienced widespread violence, political upheaval, and a humanitarian crisis in the years since.[14]

The international community was initially caught off-guard by the rapid deterioration of stability and escalation of the crisis in CAR. Initial efforts to intervene were impeded by the minimal international presence in the country, and this lack of preparedness for the ensuing crisis prohibited any immediate efforts to protect civilians from the unfolding atrocities.[15] However, leadership at the United Nations, particularly by US Ambassador Samantha Powers, exposed the ongoing atrocities in CAR, garnering international attention and support for establishing a rapid response.[16] Roughly one year after the coup, in April 2014, the UN Security Council established the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR with a mandate to protect civilians.[17]

Today, after four years of violence, the conflict in CAR has left one in every two Central Africans in need of protection or humanitarian assistance to survive.[18] The international community has learned from the crisis that the cost of response is immensely higher than the cost of prevention. For instance, the United States alone has spent $1 billion in support of humanitarian and peacekeeping operations after the conflict began in CAR, yet the crisis today is almost as bad as that which prompted US action when the violence started.[19] Swift, early prevention and protection efforts, with a commitment from the international community to solve the problem through sustained resources and support, can not only be more cost effective but also save lives.

One of the most significant lessons from CAR is that international and local agencies on the ground in at-risk countries or regions must have the resources and ability to take action early and often over a sustained period. Early action is imperative and can be more cost effective if done well and before the onset of violence; conversely, late action is more costly and can sometimes make the situation worse. Finding leverage with actors who may perpetrate or enable violence is crucial to preventing and reducing violence and supporting more peaceful societies. Such leverage often requires a commitment to large investments over extended years—before the risk of violence is obvious.

Further analysis of the Central African Republic can be found in Charles Brown, "The Obama Administration and the Struggle to Prevent Atrocities in the Central African Republic: December 2012–September 2014, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 2016, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20161116-Charlie-Brown-CAR-Report.pdf; *and Louisa Lombard,* State of Rebellion: Violence and Intervention in the Central African Republic. *Zed Books, 2016.*

Evidence Gaps and Research Needs

Additional research is required to build evidence-based approaches to prevent and reduce violence

In 2016, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned a Rapid Evidence Assessment study to determine which interventions had been effective in "preventing or mitigating armed violence in developing or middle-income countries."[20] To conduct the study, DFID assessed thousands of articles and other academic research published between 2010 and 2015 on preventing and mitigating armed violence, and found only 149 that met geographical, topical, and language criteria to be included in the study.[21] Overall, just 29 of those 149 articles were considered high quality, and only three of the 29 demonstrated effective interventions.[22] This indicates that more-rigorous investment in program-level evaluations are needed to continue to make policymakers comfortable and confident with the idea of investing more resources in conflict prevention.

During the Stanley roundtable, participants emphasized this gap and the need to generate and compile evidence of what works in atrocity prevention and other violence-reduction efforts. To draw out examples that would be particularly effective in influencing policymakers, it is critical that practitioners and advocates gather evidence that covers all levels of analysis, assesses various forms of interventions, and considers different types of violence. This information can also be very useful to donor organizations, which also look for metrics on the impact/success of prevention efforts when determining how to allocate their funding.

A shift in the dynamic from responding to crises to investing in prevention is key

Efforts are under way globally, including within the United States and the United Nations, to place greater emphasis on prevention. This can ultimately be more cost effective than crisis response by both reducing violence and preventing deaths. Furthermore, data exists to support an economic rationale for prevention, which includes not just an incentive for governments to protect foreign investments but also conclusive data that acting early in vulnerable areas is more cost effective than responding too late, when violent conflict is already occurring.[23] Yet the question remains of how best to use such data when engaging stakeholders in the public and private sectors.

Translating Evidence to Policy: Challenges for the Prevention Field

Greater cohesion within the prevention and peacebuilding fields is needed

Actors in the conflict prevention, atrocity prevention, peacebuilding, and related fields need to become more coherently aligned and organized to develop a collective message, but it remains unclear how to do so. Often, actors working to address state fragility, prevent atrocities, build peace, and prevent violence against women and children overlap in common goals and advocacy efforts for violence reduction broadly but do not always agree on the same policy asks or have the same message. This limits the collective impact potential of the broad sector working to prevent and reduce mass violence.

Roundtable participants expressed the need for relevant actors to coalesce and create a stronger evidence-based messaging framework. Much can be learned from the climate change policy advocacy community and the Human Rights Up Front Initiative at the United Nations regarding how to unite various sectors and stakeholders around research, information sharing, and messaging. A possible first step is to take stock of current evidence and field experience, and from this determine division of action for next steps based on strengths among partners.

Building networks across sectors can result in influential gains

Partnerships and collaboration across sectors can support a coalescing of evidence and the generation of broader lessons learned in strategies for policy change. Developing a coherent strategy for coordinated efforts, involving diplomatic, military, and peacebuilding elements, can reap a value added in the nexus between actors. New partnerships, outside a typical sector or network, help generate new ideas and creative tactics. In addition to seeking new allies, increasing collaboration and coordination between offices within complex organizations can be very influential in sharing lessons learned in prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Such processes can help close gaps in research and field activities. Furthermore, by expanding the constituency of stakeholders to more meaningfully include the security establishment, it is possible to explore points of convergence and opportunities for collective action.

Effective prevention emphasizes the quality of policy actions in addition to the quantity of funds

Regarding funds available for addressing conflict, such as ODA, more funding alone will not be sufficient. Rather, the quality of efforts is critical; more can be done with current commitments through reallocation toward prevention and the development of specific measures for in-country efforts. While tools in development and prevention are modernizing, ODA still has an important, if nuanced, role. Particularly in the context of least-developed countries, where ODA makes up more than two-thirds of external financing, there is opportunity to leverage such funding to generate private investment in support of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.[24]

National strategic issues of donor countries are highly influential in shaping policy debates and subsequent funding for prevention. One example of national interests shaping prevention is Canada's new International Assistance Policy, which includes a requirement that all foreign aid projects, regardless of sector, integrate a component in gender equality and women's empowerment.[25] Additionally, Canada's implementing partners must consult local women and include them in the decision-making process for new programs.[26] Alternatively, the current refugee crisis in Europe has prompted several European Union governments to consider diverting aid expenditures from programs in developing countries in order to fund the cost of supporting refugees at home. Understanding the context of national issues in donor countries and appealing to or anticipating potential barriers stemming from such issues can be a useful tool for prevention advocates.

Crafting messaging for policy impact

There is a unique moment of opportunity in the current political context for the peacebuilding and atrocity prevention communities to play an important role in shaping the next steps in policy development for reducing and preventing mass violence. Communicating concrete instances of effective investments in prevention can help to shift funding toward such efforts. Additionally, politically compelling talking points can be an effective tool in messaging with policymakers. As the message shifts within a government agenda, so, too, should the messaging strategy for advocating with policy actors.

Language, specificity, and definitions are all factors to consider in messaging. Sustainable Development Goal 16 to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development,

provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"[27] is potentially a great anchor for those within the prevention community but is not yet translating well when working with policymakers or local peacebuilding groups. It is important to develop messaging and language that is digestible, quickly understandable, and effective for shaping policy debates around large-scale violence prevention and reduction, in politically relevant ways, for those who currently control policy setting and resources. Specificity is important in the design and implementation of efforts (the "how") but not always helpful when messaging with governments and other actors.

Understanding the kind of messaging that is most effective with individual policymakers and offices is perhaps the most important first step when engaging with government actors. With policymakers, a compelling narrative can be more influential than sharing evidence alone. Participants agreed there are various effective messaging techniques that can be used, such as sharing strong business and economic justifications alongside humanitarian and security arguments. When giving specific recommendations, it is important to consider what policymakers need in order to put into effect any recommendations. It is also useful to think about the policy or financial constraints policymakers may face that could prevent them from acting, as well as ways to address or work around such limitations.

Approaching policy actors at many levels is important for creating a desired policy change. Advocates should think creatively about who else, in addition to high-level officials in legislative or executive offices, can be engaged in discussion and advocacy. It is important to break down the target audience to specific levels of policy activity, including logistical operations, programs, and the policy level that informs these divisions; access to and awareness of evidence can be particularly influential when targeting the final category. Prevention advocates should continue to engage directly with senior leaders at the executive and legislative levels. Feeding information through back channels and across agencies is another way to increase the influence and reach of policy proposals.

Strategies for Engaging Policymakers and Government Officials

1. Design talking points and strategies targeted for each particular policy actor.

2. Engage at multiple levels vertically within departments and horizontally across agencies.

3. Provide analyses in one-to-two-page documents and keep language clear, relatable, and concise.

4. Don't be shy. Policymakers often welcome evidence and research, especially impact evaluations and comparative studies.

Injecting research into the policy process can be challenging, particularly when government offices working on international policy development tend to focus on bilateral relationships as opposed to cross-country comparative engagement. Nongovernmental organizations have an important role to play in disseminating information with government officials, across agencies and offices. Those outside of government can help recognize where local programs in a given country overlap unnecessarily, bring policy-friendly impact evaluations into policy discussions, and share best practices from relevant contexts.

Educating local publics about violence prevention and reduction can help generate support for the peacebuilding and violence prevention fields and can result in political pressure on government representatives. Thus, heightening public awareness of international prevention efforts and making the connection to local issues and concerns can have an impact on prevention policy at the decision-making level.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended for government, nongovernment, and philanthropic entities working to prevent and reduce violence and build peaceful, resilient societies.

Knowledge Building

Curate and share existing evidence within the peacebuilding and prevention fields, and consider developing a shared research agenda and/or research platform across prevention-related fields.

- Stakeholders should leverage any ongoing curation efforts and more effectively communicate with policymakers.

- Consider who could hold responsibility for managing knowledge curation, including gathering evidence and communicating it to necessary actors in the field. Informally and internally developed curation is not enough, and an intentional effort within academic and policy communities to develop a method for gathering and consolidating evidence is necessary, as is communicating this research to policymakers.

Invest in evidence generation on what works and promote findings.

- More-rigorous investment in program-level evaluations and comparative studies is needed to continue to make policymakers confident in investing more resources in conflict prevention.

- Create policy impact by including various stakeholders, and promote the evidence of what works among policymakers. Connect field experience with research, using caution to not extrapolate too much from

micro- and macro-level data of what works for conflict prevention and reducing support for armed groups, but instead considering context-specific analysis.

Strategy and Tactics

Continue the conversation between peacebuilding and atrocity prevention researchers and advocates.

- More efforts are needed to take stock of what we know now and to assess how to further translate this into policy-relevant messaging and content. Work across sectors and push to think outside the box about who can be partners in combating mass violence and atrocities.

- A subsequent gathering with greater representation of peacebuilding and atrocity prevention researchers and advocates could be extremely useful in continuing these efforts.

Set more-clearly defined global policy goals to help guide politically relevant research agendas.

- Learn from how the climate change policy advocacy community coalesced around a common goal, and determine how the violence prevention and peacebuilding sectors can similarly work toward a common goal. If not possible, consider how to start organizing research agendas and advocacy strategies around the Sustainable Development Goal 16 targets and indicators, for example.

Acknowledge that the field is complex and progress takes time.

- Development and prevention actors are often nervous about discussing how difficult this work is, often for fear of diminished funding should they waver. Prevention actors should instead be more confident in stating the realities and complexities of this work.

Promote longer-term commitments in-country and in bilateral investment relationships.

- In the case of Colombia, these ties with the United States provided leverage for enforcing the peace agreement.

Where relevant, connect prevention policy priorities with international efforts in order to build allies in the prevention space and create opportunities for shared approaches and learning.

- Expand the constituency of stakeholders to include the security establishment in a more meaningful way to explore points of convergence and how all groups can collectively act for prevention.

Messaging

Advocate thoughtfully and in a timely manner in policy spaces.

- Injecting research into the policy process can be difficult but very important. Holistic, cross-collaborative approaches can be very fruitful in foreign policy.

- There is a unique moment of opportunity in the current political context for the peacebuilding and atrocity prevention communities to play an important role in shaping the next steps in policy development for reducing and preventing mass violence.

Design messaging to target specific actors at many levels.

- Consider the best ways to present research findings to policymakers; this may mean messaging at different levels of government staff in order to disseminate the information to support policy change.

- To shift funding toward prevention, communicate concrete, program-specific instances where investments have worked.

- Politically compelling talking points can be an effective tool in messaging with policymakers.[28]

Share impact-evaluation results with policy actors to describe what does and does not work.

- Information sharing in a policy-friendly language can be highly valued and influential.

Engage local publics to build support and demand for prevention efforts.

- Specifically in the United States, educating the public on conflict and atrocity prevention can be very worthwhile. Heightening public awareness of international prevention efforts and making the connection to local issues and concerns can have an impact on prevention policy at the decision-making level.

Conclusion

Actors in the conflict prevention, atrocity prevention, and peacebuilding fields must commit to continuing to build the evidence base and increasing research-to-policy translation efforts in ways that most effectively promote lessons learned and best practices to key audiences, including policymakers, government officials, and those in the public who have influence on these individuals. In most countries, officials have a keen interest in improving their efforts to reduce and prevent violence and violent conflict. The peacebuilding and atrocity prevention advocacy communities have an important window of opportunity

to respond to this interest, but it will require work and investment to translate existing research into politically relevant messaging and policy reform proposals.

Endnotes

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[21] To be included in this study, research articles must have been published between 2010 and 2015 in English, Spanish, or Portuguese, and with a focus on low- or middle-income countries or a regional location. Research could be in the form of a journal article, working paper, other academic research, evaluation, or discussion paper. The research must have investigated the impact of an intervention on armed violence, with primary empirical research (qualitative or quantitative) or systematic reviews. Of over 20,000 research articles in English, Spanish, and Portuguese generated by a systematic search, just 125 met this inclusion criteria, and an additional 24 articles were generated from expert consultation and snowballing, or finding research sources within collected research papers.

[22] Cramer, et al., "Evidence Synthesis."

[23] According to the Institute for Economics and Peace in the *Global Peace Index 2017: Measuring Peace in a Complex World,* "every dollar invested in peacebuilding…lead[s] to a $16 reduction in the cost of conflict," p. 73, http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/06/GPI17-Report.pdf.

[24] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Development Aid Rises Again in 2016 but Flows to Poorest Countries Dip," October 4, 2017, http://www.oecd.org/dac/development-aid-rises-again-in-2016-but-flows-to-poorest-countries-dip.htm.

[25] Government of Canada, "Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy," accessed November 15, 2017, http://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/campaign-campagne/iap-pai/index.aspx?lang=eng&utm_campaign=iap-pai-2017&utm_source=sm&utm_medium=facebook-en.

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[27] United Nations, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, "Sustainable Development Goal 16," accessed December 20, 2017, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16.

[28] An example of such a talking point is, "Peacebuilding activities can be highly cost-effective, providing cost savings 16 times the cost of the intervention, highlighting a major opportunity for future investment." This example and others can be found in the *Global Peace Index 2017*, p. 4-5, from the Institute for Economics and Peace.

Resources for Further Reading

The following resources are not directly referred to or cited in the text. They have been compiled as useful additional sources relevant to the roundtable discussion.

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