

Violence Reduction



Evidence from Around the World

The peacebuilding, development, and human rights fields have engineered powerful, effective tools to reduce violence, spanning the full conflict spectrum from prevention through reconstruction.¹

Violent conflict is an increasingly urgent concern. The economic impact of violence on the global economy was estimated at **\$14.3 trillion** in 2015.² Over the past 15 years, political, criminal, interpersonal, and social violence have increased dramatically, with terrorism and violent extremism burgeoning, as well. As of 2014, the epidemic of violence directly claimed the lives of 1.3 million people annually, equaling 2.5% of global mortality.³ Violence also results in millions of deaths indirectly through conflict-related issues such as disease and food insecurity. Violence leads to more violence; exposure to violence is the single-largest driver to violence, including violent extremism.⁴

Reducing global violence is a national security imperative. Investing in violence reduction is a cost-effective way to ensure the safety of the US and its allies. Peacebuilding practitioners have developed a wide range of successful programs that reduce violence by addressing the multiple root causes of conflict. The results are increasingly measurable, with peacebuilding experts working constantly to delineate the roots of violence and to quantify the impact of our tools. AfP, in partnership with Mercy Corps, Search for Common Ground and CDA implement the Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium, a field-wide effort to facilitate measurement and learning across the peacebuilding field. Following are concrete examples of effective violence reduction programs, in contexts ranging from the Central African Republic to Chicago, with verifiable evidence supporting the role of development and peacebuilding in violence reduction. With expanded research and resources, peacebuilding and development experts will be able to build upon this success and create a safer, more stable world.

Cases of Violence Reduction Worldwide



¹ The Next PEPFAR: The U.S. Government Initiative to Reduce Global Violence. Mercy Corps. 2016.

² Institute for Economics and Peace. Global Peace Index. 2015

³ <http://www.oecd.org/development/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/figure-ten.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/why-youth-fight>

Case One: Peace Direct in Burundi

Burundi was at risk of replicating the 1994 Rwandan genocide when it erupted into violence yet again in 2015. Longstanding tensions reached a breaking point when the president announced his intention to run for an unconstitutional third term in April 2015. Over 200,000 people fled the country as nearly 1,000 were killed in political violence. Peace Direct, which focuses on supporting local grassroots peacebuilders, worked with a local civil society network to respond to the violence and human rights violations in Burundi during this volatile period.



The ruling party has a disastrous human rights record, which worsens during conflict. The president shut down radio and TV communications, making it extremely difficult for outsiders to assess the situation on the ground. By using local volunteers, Peace Direct and their local partner reached national coverage with their 198 **Citizen Reporters** responding to human rights violations across Burundi. Their reports are sent to UN agencies, governments, and INGOs, at least 40% of which use them in their decision making. Of a sample of reports on human rights interventions, **90% of violations were resolved or in progress of resolution.**

This project has contributed to a greater sense of security across Burundi. To respond to reported human rights violations, there have been five Peace and Security Meetings with CSOs, police, and others, and 40 community dialogues. **80% of community members claim project meetings contributed to a significant reduction in ethnic conflicts, and 75% believe the meetings improved relations among the political parties. 69% cited reduced intimidation and torture by the Imbonerakure youth wing.**

The citizen reporter model is optimal to scale up elsewhere, because the volunteer reporters work autonomously once they are trained. Local citizens are able to protect human rights in their own communities, despite the autocratic actions of their leaders.

Case Two: Mercy Corps in CAR

In January 2014, Mercy Corps launched its **Stabilizing Vulnerable Communities** (SVC) program in the Central African Republic. During this time CAR was suffering from brutal civil war. Conditions on the ground were quickly worsening, and widespread violence was forging deep cleavages between Christian and Muslim inhabitants of local communities. Mercy Corps' SVC program intended to curtail inter-communal violence and rebuild social cohesion. At the time of the project's launch, nearly 2.5 million civilians were in dire need of humanitarian assistance and more than one million were displaced. Over 80% of survey respondents cited lack of security as the cause of their displacement.

Centered in the cities of Bangui and Bouar, the program set out to create conditions in which Muslim and Christian communities could work to manage tensions peacefully and rebuild community cohesion. Mercy Corps developed a set of strategies to strengthen the capacity of local Christian and Muslim religious leaders to resolve communal conflicts and address the legacy of violence in an open, inclusive, and sustainable manner; reinforce peaceful dispute resolution methods to generate greater trust through joint social and economic initiatives; and to support nonviolence through inter-faith peace messaging.



By August 2015, program data from over 600 randomly selected households across multiple communities showcased remarkable changes in community perceptions of security and communal relations. End-line results showed a **532% increase in community perceptions** that conflicts were now being resolved peacefully. **There was an 86% increase in the number of people who trusted the 'other' within their community.** **Around 96% reported feeling hopeful about peace** in their community, and **68.8% of displaced peoples had returned home or were willing to return home.**

Moreover, 220 anti-Balaka fighters and 10 commanders voluntarily disarmed, subsequently joining local religious leaders and Peace Committees to support non-violent resolutions. A reconciliation pact was signed between community leaders in Bouar, which centered on protecting minorities and reintegrating Muslim traders back into the local economy.

Case Three: International Alert in Syria, Turkey, and Lebanon

Violence reduction is effective in even the most complex and extreme contexts. International Alert has developed **Peace Education** programs for children in Syria to combat their dismal situation. Syrian children are at high risk of being forced into child labor, early marriage, capture, abuse, sexual violence, and even recruitment into armed groups. In addition to extreme violence, they are exposed to illness, trauma, and malnutrition. Children within Syria and Syrian refugees in neighboring states often lack access to formal education. Peace education should be complementary to formal education, but in some areas may be the only option available to young Syrians.

Peace education teaches peacebuilding knowledge and skills in culturally-appropriate contexts. The curricula address relevant vulnerability and resilience factors according to each specific program community, in Aleppo as well as Beirut and Damascus. The different curricula engage the arts, formal education, interfaith dialogue, and social work as appropriate. International Alert engages its evidence-based research on the root causes of vulnerability in Syria in its programming.



The program is supporting children and their families through extreme trauma. In just six months, the program reached over 7,700 young Syrians. Peace Education has **directly influenced participants to resist recruitment into ISIS.** It has increased acceptance among diverse political parties, religions, backgrounds, and genders in deeply fractured communities. As a result of the program, **the desire for revenge and violent behavior has significantly decreased** among participants. **Local traders in Beirut reported reduced aggression and vandalism among street children.** This program is the only one of its kind at the heart of this brutal conflict, and International Alert aims to develop more and longer-lasting peace education programs in the region.

Case Four: Mercy Corps in Guatemala

Across the mountainous regions of rural Guatemala, hostilities exist between wealthy landowners and indigenous farming communities, many of whom depend on the land for their livelihoods. The risk of violent confrontations is rising. Many of the indigenous communities remain vulnerable to displacement when their sacred land is acquired by wealthy outsiders. Land registry title errors, competing ownership claims, and border disputes only further destabilize the subsistence of indigenous communities.

To address the issue of land disputes in the regions of Alta Verapaz and El Quiché, Mercy Corps partnered with local organizations to implement **Tierras**, a land conflict mediation program directed at bringing disputants together in a voluntary and impartial setting to engage in dialogue and resolve issues undermining agricultural productivity and economic development. End-line data demonstrate a significant shift in perceptions as a result of Mercy Corps' land mediation in Alta Verapaz and El Quiché. Evidence shows that **97% of those surveyed have experienced less violence as a result of mediation; 88% cited greater trust between communities; and over 52% cited as the greatest impact of the mediation the ability to live peacefully without fear of confrontation.**

Increased trust and decreased violence also led to the cultivation of new varieties of crops that had not been planted previously because of insecurity over land rights. Additionally, participants of the mediation process viewed it in an increasingly positive light. End-line survey results showed that 86% of respondents were 'very satisfied' with the mediation process and 95% would recommend the mediation process to others. Data also demonstrated that 92% of parties complied with the terms of their agreement.

Case Five: Cure Violence in USA

The Cure Violence Model is a public health approach to violence prevention that understands violence as a learned behavior that can be prevented using disease control methods. Cure Violence aims to stem violence in vulnerable communities by detecting and interrupting conflicts, identifying and treating the most at-risk individuals in those communities, and changing societal norms and group patterns. Evidence shows that **the Cure Violence model has resulted in a 41% to 73% decrease in violence as a result of intervention.**

KEY COMPONENTS OF CURE VIOLENCE

1

DETECT AND INTERRUPT violent conflicts and violent retaliations (analogous to stopping epidemics).

2

IDENTIFY AND TREAT the people most at risk of violence by helping them to change behavior, leave gangs, learn conflict resolution skills, and get assistance with employment, etc.

3

MOBILIZE community to shift social norms to non-violence and support the individual-level changes made by Cure Violence participants.

The Cure Violence program **CeaseFire** led to a substantial decline in the median density of shootings in every program area of Chicago. **Evaluation results showed reductions in shootings and killings of 41% to 73%, reductions in shooting hot spots of up to 40%, and the elimination of retaliation killings in 5 of 8 communities.**

In Baltimore, an evaluation by John Hopkins University showed statistically significant reductions in violence across four program sites. Results displayed **a 56% reduction in the number of killings and a 44% reduction in the number of shootings.** The acceptance of using guns to resolve disputes in each community dropped nearly four-fold.

In New York City, a comparison between treatment and control areas showed that the former had a 20% lower level of shootings. **Average monthly shooting rates decreased by 6%, while increasing in the three comparison areas between 18% and 28%.** Gun violence in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn was 20% lower than it would have been had gun violence trends mirrored those of the controls.

Case Six: National Democratic Institute in Kenya

In Kenya, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) administered large surveys in the lead-up to the March 2013 general elections to identify likely hot spots for election-related conflict. As Kenya's first general elections since the country's December 2007 presidential election degenerated into violence - largely along ethnic lines - amid controversy over the results, many Kenya watchers feared that the 2013 elections would catalyze a similar resurgence of ethnic tensions and conflict.

To help stakeholders identify priority areas for peace and security programming around the elections, NDI distributed surveys in each of Kenya's 47 counties using a random sampling methodology. Respondents answered questions about their experience with violence in 2007, pre-existing sources of conflict in their communities (cattle rustling, land disputes, criminal activity, etc.) and perceptions of security that, when aggregated, served as proxies for likelihood of violence in each community. NDI then circulated follow-on surveys and organized focus groups in 10 counties identified as particularly high-risk to gather additional information about likely drivers of electoral violence. This data enabled stakeholders to develop **targeted peace messages** tailored to the concerns of each community. According to USAID's 2013 Kenya Rapid Assessment Review, NDI's peace messages and messengers were highly effective. These messages contributed to **significantly less violent elections** than in previous years.

Case Seven: National Democratic Institute in Nigeria

In the months leading up to the March 2015 presidential poll, **Nigeria** was widely believed to be on the brink of disaster. In a context of deep political and regional polarization combined with ongoing attacks by Boko Haram insurgents, Africa observers predicted a high likelihood of election-related violence. Instead, political power was transferred peacefully from one party to another for the first time since independence. A series of US-funded interventions to reduce the prospects for violence contributed to this historical election.

The Independent National Election Commission's efforts at curbing electoral fraud were augmented by a well-publicized **parallel vote tabulation (PVT)** or Quick Count conducted by a nationwide coalition of 400 civic groups -- the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) -- with technical assistance from the National Democratic Institute (NDI). TMG's PVT provided the most timely and accurate information on the quality of Election Day processes at polling units. TMG's PVT provided **real-time independent confirmation** of the outcome of the presidential poll.

NDI also partnered with popular Nigerian musical icon "2face Idibia" and the Nigerian Youngstars Development Initiative to organize a nation-wide youth nonviolence get-out-the-vote campaign that reached an estimated 6 million on Twitter and over 62,000 individuals through radio. NDI, in collaboration with Search for Common Ground and BBC Media Action, also facilitated the organization of Nigeria's first National Media Peace Day. A total of 172 participating radio and 95 participating television stations dedicated their programming throughout the day to peace messaging with the goal of promoting violence-free elections. This initiative marked the first time that a coordinated message was so widely distributed on the African continent, and the first time that Nigeria's broadcasters united behind a common theme.

Case Eight: IFES in Bangladesh



Violence has become an entrenched and expected method for dealing with political and electoral disagreement in Bangladesh. Political party members and their supporters often resort to violence to communicate, address political grievances, and sway public opinion, rather than using democratic structures and channels. Furthermore, the state's denial of basic political rights and weak governance systems alienate people from the state and create a vacuum that is being exploited by extremist groups. Social unrest stemming from a lack of confidence in the political process and institutions of governance poses a great threat to the nation's fragile democracy.

Recognizing the importance of supporting political and social pluralism and non-violent means of political expression in Bangladesh and the region, IFES developed and piloted the **People Against Violence in Elections (PAVE)** in Bangladesh. IFES has been working with local partners from 2013 to help local leaders and influencers better understand the root causes of electoral and political violence, and what individuals and organizations can do to help reduce violence and promote peaceful political engagement, pluralism, and social harmony. PAVE builds on IFES' flagship Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) project which uses violence monitoring as a tool to end electoral violence.

To date, IFES PAVE, in partnership with The Hunger Project Bangladesh and other local partners, has trained nearly 2,700 people – including emerging political party leaders, leading female and youth advocate and activists, and community leaders from marginalized groups – across seven of the eight regional divisions of Bangladesh, including the Chittagong Hill Tract. Participants have reported conducting over 600 peace-building initiatives, including peace rallies, distribution of public awareness materials, and roundtables involving members and supporters of competing political parties. After the training, 97% of PAVE Peace Ambassadors and Peace Pressure Group Coordinators had taken part in initiatives to promote peaceful political engagement with friends, family members, and other members of their communities, while 89% say that as a result of involvement in PAVE, they have played a role in other forms of dispute resolution in their communities, in both formal and informal roles.

PAVE alumni have formed Peace Pressure Groups, and selected Peace Ambassadors among themselves. Peace Ambassadors promote peaceful electoral and political processes in their communities and have also reported that, **as a result of PAVE, they are better equipped to prevent radicalization and build resilience in their communities.**

Violence Reduction Works

There are numerous other examples of successful violence reduction programs across a range of locations. Violence reduction works to address all types of violence: land disputes, religious conflict, ethnic conflict, gang violence, gender-based violence, and violent extremism. Peacebuilders are addressing all of these in creative and impactful ways.

A systems approach guided **CDA Collaborative Learning Projects** in addressing reconciliation in **Northern Ireland**. A surprising haven for change appeared within prisons. Prisoners engaged in dialogue across opposing armed groups, leading them to work together on common needs and to accept their differences. Having built cross-community relationships while in prison, they continued and expanded these relationships when released, and made it permissible for their own wider communities to engage with 'the other.' **A few of the released prisoners are now politicians and community workers**, while others work toward peace and reconciliation, within their own community or between the opposing groups.

In **Pakistan**, **Inclusive Security** uses their expertise in women, peace, and security to counter violent extremism and reduce terror-related violence. In 2014, they created a Pakistani women's coalition of equal parts police, civil society, and parliament. These women can influence how policy is created and implemented, including CVE policy. Only female police officers are allowed to care for female victims of terror, and are more likely to receive reports of gender-based violence. **Policewomen deescalate violence more effectively** because they are able to build trust with the local community and collect intelligence men cannot.



Catholic Relief Services created people-to-people mechanisms for reconciliation and conflict resolution in Central **Mindanao**, where land conflicts among identity groups are common. In 2015, they used a three-step reconciliation process of: 1. Binding: trauma healing and self-transformation on an individual level, 2. Bonding: training of traditional and religious leaders and group conflict analysis on a group level, and 3. Bridging: joint leader training as well as community projects that engage critical stakeholders at the municipal and barangay level. **This approach solved 90% of high-priority land conflicts.**



The Plateau State of **Nigeria** has been prone to serious outbreaks of violence in recent decades, arising from various root causes, including ethnic, religious, and land conflicts. **Search for Common Ground** introduced a peace architecture framework to the Plateau State in 2013. SfCG is a leader in using media for peace; project activities included radio drama programs and establishing an Early Warning System. The locally-owned program improved the capacity of civil society and its engagement with government and security forces. **Over 70% of participants believed intergroup relations improved over the project period, and 76% believed the security situation improved.**