

Reducing criminal violence through public sector-led multisectoral approaches

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Question

What are the lessons learned from interventions focusing on supporting and strengthening of government architecture to deliver reductions in criminal violence?

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1. Overview

This rapid literature review explores illustrative lessons from interventions focusing on supporting and strengthening of government architecture to deliver reductions in criminal violence through multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches. It focuses on lessons and principles about *how* to enact reforms, and not *what* reforms to enact.

Key points

Approaches to violence prevention

The last decades have seen increased consensus for the need to understand and address violence through a public health approach, and a preventative approach, as embodied by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16. This necessitates a multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approach, yet poor governance continues to threaten progress on this agenda.

Interventions – Policy approaches to urban violence tend to take an approach that is either place-based; people-based; or behaviour-based and include a range of initiatives e.g. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED); early childhood interventions; and alcohol access restrictions; etc (Carbonari, et al., 2020). The INSPIRE initiative is a key global response to tackling violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC), e.g. including through community mobilisation; training; and livelihood support; etc (Carbonari, et al., 2020).

Lessons from multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches to violence prevention

A multisector approach is needed to address the complexity and multifactorial origins of violence. Yet multisector engagement can complicate institutional responses due to different goals, concepts, instruments, etc. Increased collaboration and joined-up approaches across government departments have led to changes in institutions and approaches.

Strategic cooperation - Violence prevention programmes should be linked to, and integrated within, broader policy frameworks. At the normative level, there are discussions about the need to frame all forms of violence in an integrated way as ‘global violence’. The SDGs provide a useful platform for this agenda.

Cooperation between agencies, actors, and levels - A multisector approach means engaging actors across state, public, and private spheres. The literature most commonly focusses on the need to engage local communities in people-centred approaches to violence prevention. Under cross-sector violence prevention approaches, the lead agency often acts like an umbrella, playing a coordinating and convening role.

Joint analysis and programming is critical to supporting a cross-sectoral approach, however, it can be challenging to incorporate the diverse needs, skills, expertise, and assets of the different actors. One practical tool to assist this is the “Collaboration Multiplier tool”.

Programme design - Robust understanding and analysis of the context is essential to designing and applying appropriate interventions. Comprehensive approaches combine longer-term prevention measures and shorter-term measures to interrupt violence dynamics. The INSPIRE initiative provides many practical tools to assist in programme design. Taking an adaptive

management approach is important to ensure interventions adapt to programme results and the changing context.

Leadership - The importance of improving leadership, governance and policies for violence prevention is reiterated throughout the literature. Good leaders are critical to the political culture that enables the development and functioning of institutions, particularly in pre-institutional settings (Krisch, et al., 2015). Illustrative lessons include the need for reforms to be locally designed, lead, and relevant; the value of identifying political champions who can scale the message and ensure leadership and vision; and the role countries in the Global North have in destigmatising violence prevention through recognising its universality.

Capacity development and resources – Key areas of focus include: human resources; institutional and infrastructural capacity; and networks and partnerships. Limited financial resources are a core challenge, particularly as prevention activities are often not seen as a priority. Yet limited resources can also prompt engagement of diverse stakeholders through budgetary discussions (Harborne, Dorotinsky, & Bisca, 2017).

Literature base

The literature base on violence prevention initiatives is varied and uneven across the different types of violence, e.g. with more literature available on interventions focussed on interpersonal and urban violence compared to organised crime-related violence. Evaluations are limited and face many methodological challenges (Cuesta & Alda, 2021) – e.g. the scale and complexity of violence limits the extent to which interventions can be rigorously evaluated or comparable, and most focus on interventions in the Global North. Most importantly, the literature base for this specific question – focussed on the wider institutional context and lessons for a multisectoral approach – is very limited, as most of the available literature focusses on lessons relating to the outcomes of the interventions. In line with the operational focus of this paper, this review draws mainly on practitioner and policy publications. The approaches, interventions, and lessons detailed below are illustrative and are not comprehensive of the many complex lessons relating to this broad area of programming.

2. Approaches to violence prevention

SDG16 identifies the need to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere” (UN, 2021; Pathfinders, 2019). There is increasing recognition that due to the complexity of understanding and addressing violence, and due to the interconnected nature of the different forms of violence, a multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach is required that uses a public health lens (Carbonari, et al., 2020). Yet poor governance continues to threaten the delivery of SDG16 (Steven, 2019; Krisch, Eisner, Mikton & Butchart, 2015).

There are a range of approaches to address both collective and interpersonal violence, including (Harborne, Dorotinsky, & Bisca, 2017; Farrington & Welsh, 2012; Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.58):

- Suppression – e.g. using of force/coercion, or non-violent means to discourage violence (through military, paramilitary, police, or peacekeeping forces);
- Deterrence – e.g. using military, paramilitary, or police to intimidate/discourage violence;

- Incapacitation - e.g. through judicial (imprisonment) or administrative means (internment during rebellion);
- Rehabilitation – e.g. through prisons or drug rehabilitation schemes; and
- Prevention – e.g. using a wider range of interventions to address the causes and risks of violence (from the systemic – like addressing inequality - to the specific – like job creation).

Historically, security and justice institutions have received the most funding and attention related to violence containment, yet the last decades have seen increased impetus for public health, and preventative, approaches to violence (Cuesta & Alda, 2021), particularly since the WHO’s seminal 2002 paper framed violence as a public health issue (Harborne, et al., 2017, p.31-2; Farrington & Welsh, 2012). A ‘public health approach’ – as pursued by the UK government since 2019 – “treats violence like an infectious disease. It suggests that policy makers should search for a ‘cure’ by using scientific evidence to identify what causes violence and find interventions that work to prevent it spreading. A ‘public health’ approach involves multiple public and social services working together to implement early interventions to prevent people from becoming involved in violent crime” (Brown, 2019).

The UN and World Bank (2018, p.xxv) identify three broad principles for prevention:

- Prevention must be sustained over time to address structural issues comprehensively, strengthen institutions, and adapt incentives for actors to manage conflict without violence. It should not be seen as a trade-off between the short and long term. This requires sustained investment in all risk environments, the integration of development investments into overarching strategies with politically viable short-and medium-term actions, and balancing resources so that action does not reward only crisis management
- Prevention must be inclusive and build broad partnerships across groups to identify and address grievances that fuel violence, while not focusing just on those that control the means of violence and positions of power. This highlights the importance of understanding people, their experiences, their communities, and the local context.
- Prevention must proactively and directly target patterns of exclusion and institutional weaknesses that increase risk. Successful prevention depends on pro-active and targeted action before, during, and after violence.

This move towards a holistic, multisectoral, and integrated approach is one that is mirrored across other public sector reform agendas (Shepherd, 2007), e.g. in the increasing impetus on integrating development, humanitarianism, conflict, and security (Herbert, 2019).

Interventions

Urban violence - the world’s primary driver of violent deaths – tends to concentrate in specific micro-environments, leading to the rise of three main policy approaches: place-based; people-based; and behaviour-based (Carbonari, et al., 2020). Place-based approaches focus on shaping the built and social environments’ impact on violence – e.g. the widely used and popularised Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approach. People-based approaches include diverse programmes such as: early childhood interventions (which hold particular promise when they engage families), parent training for developing positive child-caregiver relationships, employment programmes, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for youth at risk,

and community mobilisation programmes that train members to work as ‘Violence Interrupters’ (Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.57). Behaviour-based approaches include: measures to limit risky behaviours associated with violence e.g. alcohol access and price restrictions; improving safety of bars and clubs; improving services for substance abusers associated with violence; etc (Carbonari, et al., 2020). Carbonari et al. (2020) summarises the theories of change for programmes within each of the three main approaches in Figure 1:

Figure 1: theories of change for place-based; people-based; and behaviour-based approaches to prevent urban violence and organised crime

This figure has not been included due to copyright reasons. The full figure can be viewed at https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2020-10/6c192f_f6036b2b1ecf4fd1a3d7687ff7098a46.pdf p.61-2

Source: Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.61-2.

In terms of interpersonal violence, VAW and VAC are deeply interrelated, sharing common locations, risk factors, and impacts over generations (Carbonari, et al., 2020). Exposure to violence is linked to involvement in violence later in life, either as a victim, witness or perpetrator (Carbonari, et al., 2020). The INSPIRE initiative is a key global response to tackling VAW and VAC, and decades of research has generated a solid consensus on their risk factors, with policy responses often including: addressing social norms through community mobilisation; training with target groups to improve communication and relationships; livelihood support to address underlying stressors; addressing and healing trauma toward behavioural change; strengthening legal protections and their enforcement; and home-based caregiver support (Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.60-65). Carbonari et al. (2020) summarise theories of change for VAW and VAC programmes Figure 2:

Figure 2: theories of change for place-based; people-based; and behaviour-based approaches to prevent urban violence and organised crime

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Source: Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.67.

3. Lessons from multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches to violence prevention

Multisector approaches

It is universally acknowledged that addressing violence through a public health approach requires engaging and getting buy-in from stakeholders at all levels and sectors, and from across

society, due to the complexity and multifactorial origins of violence (VPA, 2020; Cohen & Davis, 2016; UNDP & WHO, 2005; Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.9-10). Sectors that particularly influence the likelihood of violence include: health; justice; education; social services; economic development; youth services; victim services; housing; business; civil society organisations; and executive and legislative branches of government (VPA, 2020, p.3).

Multisector engagement strengthens violence prevention as it can help: address the underlying risk and protective factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of violence (e.g. poverty, access to drugs and alcohol, early child development, etc); ensure that violence prevention strategies are active in sites that can support violence prevention (e.g. schools, homes, public spaces); address the interrelated nature of differing forms of violence and can foster collaboration across these forms to improve outcomes (e.g. child welfare, sex trafficking); and as multisector collaboration supports outcomes that no one sector can achieve alone (VPA, 2020, p.3).

Yet multisector engagement can also slow down institutional responses as more actors are involved, and as cooperation is complicated by the different goals, languages, concepts, and instruments of the different agencies/actors. Indeed, Shiffman (2017 in Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.12) explains how global public health networks face challenges in: the degree to which there can be a consensus on problem definition and solutions; positioning and how to make a case to the public; coalition-building beyond particular sectors; and strengthening institutions to facilitate collective action.

Increased collaboration and joined-up approaches across government departments have led to changes in institutions and approaches – e.g. with the creation of new cross-departmental or cross-agency departments and processes (e.g. the Wales Violence Prevention Unit), changes in the overall strategic priority setting, in the creation and sharing of analysis, in the designing of operational plans and programming, in funding agreements, and in implementation. Indeed, “more integrated government in the UK is exemplified by many new national and local partnerships” which have brought “together for the first time agencies between which there has been little or no formal collaboration, and provide new opportunities for cross-public service comparisons not only by policy makers but also by practitioners, front-line managers and academics” (Shepherd, 2007).

Strategic cooperation and integration

Violence prevention programmes should be linked to, and where possible integrated within, broader policy frameworks, strategies and programmes (UNDP & WHO, 2005; Krisch, Eisner, Mikton & Butchart, 2015), and within evidence management bodies to monitor programme impacts and guide evidence-based policy (Shepherd, 2007). The high-level political imperative for an integrated approach to urban crime was consolidated in 2008 with the UN’s Economic and Social Council, Resolution 2008/24 which called for the integration of “crime prevention considerations into all relevant social and economic policies and programmes in order to effectively address the conditions in which crime and violence can emerge” (UNDOC, 2008). In order to address these system-level needs, a one-year evaluation of the Wales Violence Prevention Unit highlighted the need to ensure violence prevention is reflected in the Welsh government and local government’s priorities and policies, and to ensure the Unit is strategically

positioned to influence decisions made by other funding bodies and organisations (Timpson, et al., 2020).

At the normative level, Carbonari, et al. (2020, p.10) identify what seems to be an emerging “consensus among a large part of the international community about the need to start talking about violence in an integrated manner, to move the conversation towards ‘global violence’.” This recognises the “convergence in principles and approaches at a broader policy level” which come from the commonalities among the drivers of violence, and justify the promotion of more dialogue and integrated action (Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.10). The SDG’s is identified as a useful agenda and platform to drive forward this integration (Carbonari, et al., 2020).

Cooperation between agencies, actors, and levels

A multisector approach means engaging actors across state, quasi-state, non-governmental, community, individual, and private sector institutions; and sometimes also across international and regional actors. The literature most commonly focusses on the critical role of engaging and supporting local communities in violence prevention interventions, especially the role of engaging young people and young adults in positive activities (HMG, 2018). This highlights the importance of bottom-up, people-centred approaches to violence prevention, and means working closely with community stakeholders to design, implement, and monitor programmes based on local understandings of violence and its drivers (Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.9-10). Timpson, et al. (2020) highlights the value of working with practitioners who can develop trust with people who are normally hard to engage.

Under cross-sector violence prevention approaches, the lead agency often acts like an umbrella, playing a coordinating and convening role. For example, the Wales Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) saw the VPU as an umbrella organisation with an operating model based on the four A’s approach – “aware, advocate, assist and adopt to ensure a comprehensive approach to the delivery of interventions” (Timpson, et al., 2020, p.iii). Meanwhile, at the national level in the UK, an inter-ministerial group oversees the UK’s violence prevention work, which is chaired by the Home Office and meets on a quarterly basis with Ministers from the Department for Education, Department of Health and Social Care, Department for Work and Pensions, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Ministry of Justice, the Wales Office, and the Attorney General’s Office, as well as the relevant The National Police Chiefs Council and representation from the National Crime Agency (HMG, 2018). This inter-ministerial body is supported by a cross-sector Serious Violence Taskforce, which reports to the inter-ministerial group and includes key representatives from national and local government, police and crime commissioners and key delivery partners including representatives from health, education and industry (HMG, 2018).

At the programme level, the Cardiff Model for violence prevention “relies on sustained partnerships between healthcare, law enforcement, public health agencies, other government agencies, and community organisations. The partnership uses local data to create effective injury and violence prevention policy, educate community leaders about the need for changes in the places people work and live, and encourage business owners and residents to prevent violence by using evidence-based solutions” (CDC, 2019).

Joint analysis and programming¹

Joint analysis and programming is critical to supporting a cross-sectoral approach, however, it can be challenging to incorporate the diverse needs, skills, expertise, and assets of the different actors (Arthur, 2020, p.2; Cohen & Davis, 2016). One practical tool to assist this is the “Collaboration Multiplier tool”, which aims to bridge the various sectors that traditionally work in silos (Cohen & Davis, 2016).

The Collaboration Multiplier Tool provides a process to support different sectors to understand each other’s perspectives and potential contributions to a partnership and coordinated action. It (Violence Prevention Alliance, 2020, p.4):

- “Helps people understand the similarities and differences across sectors
- Supports trust building between diverse partners by promoting understanding
- Fosters a shared vision, goals and language across different sectors
- Identifies strengths among participating sectors that contribute to violence prevention
- Establishes shared outcomes and strategies
- Clarifies the contributions of each partner to violence prevention
- Supports the identification of an ongoing mechanism for cross-sectoral collaboration”

Collaboration Multiplier process is divided into two phases (Violence Prevention Alliance, 2020, p.4-14): (1) the information gathering phase seeks to understand the individual sectors (e.g.: what’s important to this sector? (e.g. mandate, goals); why would this sector care about violence prevention?); and (2) the analysis phase seeks to identify how multiple sectors can come together to: develop understanding across sectors; identify shared outcomes; identify collective strengths and assets; and identify joint, multisector strategies. Figure 3 explores the challenges and opportunities of multisector collaboration, while Figure 4 provides a worked example across two sectors – the ministry of health and the police.

Figure 3: Challenges and opportunities to multisector collaboration

This figure has not been included due to copyright reasons. The full figure can be viewed at https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/child-maltreatment/collaboration-multiplier-tool.pdf?sfvrsn=83d5a006_1

Source: Violence Prevention Alliance, 2020, p.4-14).

¹ See INSPIRE Working Group (2021) for lots of practical tools for analysis and programming

Figure 4: Collaboration Multiplier analysis example across two sectors – the Ministry of Health and the Police

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Source: Violence Prevention Alliance, 2020, p.15

Example - A key approach mentioned in much of the literature is the Cardiff Model which locates crime and violence hot spots through combining anonymous data from hospital emergency departments with police reports of violent incidents (VPA, 2020, p.16). The combined data are reported to a multisector “task group” or “community safety partnership” that then uses the insights to inform violence prevention activities. These activities can include: targeted policing; adjustment alcohol licensing and control; education and skill building for youth and families; etc (VPA, 2020, p.16).

Programme design

The Local Government Association (2018, p.8) provides a guide for what to consider when developing interventions to prevent violence, from a public health perspective:

1. Surveillance. What is the problem?

Define the issue by conducting a robust needs assessment including types of violence, risks, and protective factors for individuals, families, communities and populations.

2. Identify risk and protective factors. What are the causes?

Understand the causes of violence by taking an evidence-led approach to understanding which risk and/or protective factors cause the violence issue and how they interplay. Through achieving this understanding, local areas are more likely to be successful in implementing public health interventions that effectively moderate and address risk factors and strengthen protective factors.

3. Develop and identify interventions. What works for whom?

Develop an anti-violence or reducing violence strategy by responding to the identified needs in the population under consideration and by focussing on addressing the causes of violence. The strategy should: be developed and agreed between stakeholders; be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound; link to the wider strategic and policy context; and include collaborative and co-productive development with local partners and communities to ensure local ownership and help it be implemented as intended

Commission and fund evidence-based interventions that have been shown to reduce violence. If there are no suitable evidence based interventions, don't be afraid to innovate on the basis of existing evidence.

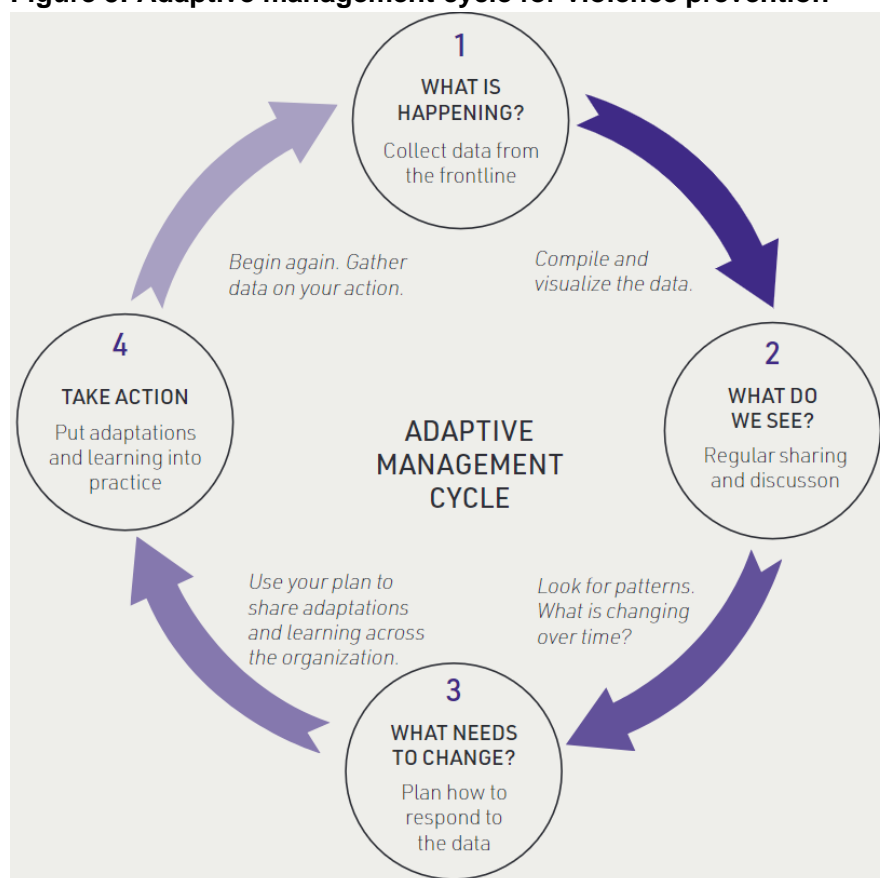
4. Implementation. Scaling up effective programmes and interventions

Implement interventions ensuring that fidelity is maintained in line with what has been demonstrated to work, and in line with the local context in which the intervention is being applied. “Not ensuring model fidelity is one of the key reasons why the implementation of interventions that have been evidenced to work in one area do not work in another”. The implementation of interventions takes time to embed in practice and to achieve outcomes. Evaluate and monitor the success of public health interventions.

The INSPIRE Working Group (2021) highlight the importance of context specificity in programme design, as each country’s approach to violence against children is unique to its needs, priorities, and capacities. “The design of appropriate interventions is heavily influenced by factors specific to different types of violence, such as the scale of people involved (individuals to large groups); the impacts they generate; the role played by state institutions in perpetrating and/or responding to violence and its impacts; the length and complexity; and the existence of facilitating factors, such as weapons and a history of violence/conflict. Preventing all forms of violence is not as simple as addressing common risk factors” (Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.9-10). Another factor to bear in mind is the increasing view that comprehensive approaches combine and integrate interventions that are longer-term prevention measures (e.g. education, urban housing and access to justice) and shorter-term measures to interrupt violence dynamics (UNDP & WHO, 2005, p.11; Carbonari, et al., 2020). The latter tend to be smaller-scale, more focused and punctual interventions which can create an enabling environment and traction for longer-term prevention measures (UNDP & WHO, 2005, p.11). The INSPIRE initiative provides many practical tools and guidance documents to assist in programme design, these aim to highlight the decisions that need to be made in the adaptation and scaling up of programmes (INSPIRE Working Group, 2021).

To support a coherent and integrated approach, processes should be established to update the context analysis and to incorporate programme-related monitoring and evaluation results. This should be structured according to an adaptive management cycle (Rogers & Macfarlan, 2020; INSPIRE Working Group, 2021) (see Figure 5):

Figure 5: Adaptive management cycle for violence prevention



Source: INSPIRE Working Group, 2021, p.35. reproduced under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Leadership

The importance of improving leadership, governance and policies for violence prevention is reiterated throughout the literature, e.g. being highlighted as one of six key policy recommendations at the global violence reduction conference in 2014 (Krisch, et al., 2015). Indeed, “good leaders” are critical to “the ‘political culture’ that enables the development of rules needed for institutional functioning... institutions are not only dependent on leadership but leaders are necessary preconditions for institutional functioning. Good leadership is therefore particularly important for violence reduction in pre-institutional settings that are common in low- and middle-income countries” (Krisch, et al., 2015, p.56). A large number of lessons emerge in this area, e.g. the need for reforms to be locally designed, lead, and relevant, rather than imposed by external actors (Krisch, et al., 2015). Also, the value of “identifying champions” in the political sphere – such as governments, politicians, and legislators, who are “able to scale the message, ensure leadership and vision, and promote more policy actions at the national and local levels” (Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.12). There is also an important role for countries in the Global North through the SDGs to create a stronger narrative on the universality of violence prevention for all countries to help reduce some of the stigma around it (Arthur, 2020, p.2).

Some key challenges in this area include: the need to overcome short-term political imperatives; ensuring policy is led by evidence not ideology (especially relating to crime prevention and crime

control); fatalism blocking ambitious action; closing political space relating to peace, justice, and inclusion; and corruption of security forces related to organised crime (Welsh & Farrington, 2012; Steven, 2019; Carbonari, et al., 2020). Steven (2019) argues that “a political strategy is needed that encourages and rewards leadership —whether this comes from politicians or other changemakers, or from activists, businesses or foundations. A broader mobilisation is urgently needed that draws on existing public demand for greater peace, justice, and inclusion”.

Capacity development and resources

In its strategic plan for capacity development for the violence prevention agenda 2009-2013, the WHO (n.d., p.2) identifies three focal areas for capacity building activities :

1. Human resources: people and the knowledge and skills they require.
2. Institutional and infrastructural capacity: the systems and structures necessary to allow the people referred to above to be effective.
3. Networks and partnerships: a means by which capacities can be strengthened within and across settings and important for using resources effectively and priority setting.

Limited financial resources are identified as a key issue throughout the literature, particularly as prevention activities are often not seen as a priority (Arthur, 2020, p.2; Pathfinders, 2019, p.41), despite widespread evidence that “prevention works and can be more cost effective than dealing with violence once it has taken root” (Carbonari, et al., 2020, p.10).

However, conversely, limited financial resources can provide an impetus to engage stakeholders in discussions about violence prevention as security sector public expenditure reviews provide “entry points for integrating expenditure analysis into security sector and broader governance reform processes” (Harborne, Dorotinsky, & Bisca, 2017, p.xvi). The World Bank’s Security Sector Public Expenditure Review (PER) tool provides a step-by-step guide to carrying out this process (Harborne, et al., 2017, p.14).

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