



Issue Brief

Throughout the developing world, poor people suffer familiar deprivations, including malnutrition, illness, lack of access to education or clean water; however, they are also – on a massive scale – victimized by violence. While there are many reasons the poorest are vulnerable to being abused, assaulted and enslaved, a primary contributor to their vulnerability is the fact that their public justice systems do not deter violence against them, and do not provide justice when they are harmed.

Through our collaboration with local governments in Southeast and South Asia, Africa, and Latin America, International Justice Mission (IJM) has found that even broken public justice systems can provide protection to women, children and men from slavery, sexual assault, and property expropriation on a case by case basis. But the thousands of cases we have successfully resolved are but a small fraction of the crimes against the poorest that are ignored in many developing countries.

This violence has obvious detrimental results in the lives of its victims. However, the impact is broader than this: We have also found that failure by the police, prosecutors, and courts to enforce national laws prohibiting violent crime undermines crucial development objectives. For example, unchecked violence against women and girls increases their vulnerability to HIV; property expropriation from millions of widows in sub-Saharan undermines agricultural productivity; illegal, trumped-up charges and detention of poor people by police destroys communities and diverts attention and resources from real perpetrators of crime. It is imperative that the violence against the poor be addressed as the impediment to development that it is.

Supporting Data

Gary Haugen and Victor Boutros, authors of *The Locust Effect, Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence*, mine a rich field of data from international development experts who reveal that violence against the poor undermines the Millennium Goals relating to health, women's empowerment, education, and economic development. For example, one out of three women around the world has been beaten, forced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.ⁱ The rates of violence against women and girls are even higher among poor women.ⁱⁱ Studies suggest that 49% of Ethiopian women will be



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assaulted, 48% of Ugandan women, 62% of Peruvian women, 35% of Indian women, and 34% of Brazilian women.ⁱⁱⁱ According to World Bank data, the epidemic of gender violence puts more women and girls between the age of 15 and 44 at risk of death or disability than cancer, traffic accidents, malaria, and war *combined*.^{iv} Efforts to address women's health needs are substantially undermined by failure to develop government capacity to protect them from violence and deter it through effective law enforcement.

Another area of vulnerability for the poor, especially women, is lack of access to land title and inheritance. As IJM has seen in our programs in sub-Saharan Africa to restore property that has been violently expropriated from widows and orphans, the lack of functioning justice systems to assure access to land substantially undermines economic development for the poor. Global studies show that 90% of rural sub-Saharan Africans (of whom 370 million are considered poor) live and work on land that has no formal or secure title. The same is true for 40 million Indonesians, 40 million South Americans, 40 million Indians, and about 350 million impoverished indigenous people around the globe. Indeed, around 1.5 billion of the globe's urban poor live in informal settlements and slums without any secure right to their property.^v

One of the most pernicious sources of violence against the poorest is the police themselves. The UN Study "Making the Law Work for Everyone" reports:

Perhaps one of the most striking revelations of the study is the extent to which the police and official justice systems side with the rich, persecute poor people and make poor people more insecure, fearful and poorer. Particularly in urban areas, poor people perceive the police not as upholding justice, peace and fairness, but as threats and sources of insecurity.^{vi}

Development institutions are recognizing the impact of this violence on their objectives. The World Bank affirms that "crime and violence have emerged in recent years as major obstacles to the realization of development objectives."^{vii} Further, the bank has stated, "In many developing countries, high levels of crime and violence not only undermine people's safety on an everyday level they also undermine broader development efforts to improve governance and reduce poverty."^{viii} Multiple studies by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have concluded that restraining violence is a precondition to poverty alleviation and economic development, plainly stating that "a foundational level of order must be established before development objectives can be realized."^{ix} Leaders of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development



(DFID) have concluded that, “Poor people want to feel safe and secure just as much as they need food to eat, clean water to drink and a job to give them an income. Without security there cannot be development.”^{xi}

A number of international agencies have reported on the staggering economic cost of lawlessness and violence. For example, in studying the impact of violence on economic development in Africa and Latin America, UNODC researchers found that even the *fear* of violence had the capacity to “paralyze development at the grassroots. If development is the process of building societies that work,” they concluded, then “crime acts as a kind of ‘anti-development’, destroying the trust relations on which society is based.”^{xii} There is evidence that people living in fear of violence unproductively divert resources to security measures, and the payment bribes and protection money; are risk-averse, less entrepreneurial and prone to short-term economic decision-making; and are discouraged from accumulating assets or opening a business.^{xiii}

Lack of Investment in Justice Systems

Building functioning criminal justice system in the developing world has received inadequate attention, investment or assistance from the movements and institutions dedicated to addressing poverty. When international donors and agencies *have* made investments in rule of law or law enforcement systems, such efforts and investments have typically been devoted to three agendas that have little to do with ensuring that the common poor person is protected from violence: rebuilding a small handful of conflicted or post-conflict countries (like Iraq and Afghanistan); addressing transnational crimes of terrorism, narcotics and arms trafficking; and building attractive and stable conditions for business, commercial activity and capital investment. Only about 1% of aid from institutions like USAID or the World Bank can even be plausibly described as targeting improvements in justice systems in the developing world so that they better protect the poor from violence.^{xiv}

Conclusion

It is imperative that the international community address this omission in development priorities. A prime opportunity to do so comes in the context of the MDG-2015 Review. An Eminent Persons panel named by the Secretary General has issued a report, “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable



Development,” which includes twelve revised MDG goals.^{xv} Two of them relate to good governance and rule of law. One of them (#11) explicitly addresses violence and the need for professional judicial institutions, including the police. International Justice Mission strongly supports the inclusion of these provisions (or versions of them) in the final document that will come before the General Assembly for action in September, 2015.

ⁱ “Fact Sheet: Violence against Women Worldwide.” United Nations Development Fund for Women. 2009. Web. Available online at:

http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/sayno/docs/SayNOunite_FactSheet_VAWworldwide.pdf

ⁱⁱ “World Report on Violence and Health: Summary”. Geneva: World Health Organization. 2002. 57-60. Web. Available online at:

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/summary_en.pdf

(WHO 2002b; KfW and City of Cape Town 2002; Bid, Nanavaty, and Patel 2002; Omorodion and Olusanya 1998), as are adolescent girls

UN Millennium Project. *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*. Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. 2005. Web. Available online at:

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Gender-complete.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ García-Moreno, Claudia, Henrica A.F.M. Jansen, Mary Ellsberg, Lori Heise, and Charlotte Watts. *WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women*. 2005. Web. Available online at: http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/

Petrini, Benjamin. “Domestic Violence Dataset: 1982-2007.” 2010. Web. Available online at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTCPR/Resources/407739-1267651559887/Domestic_Violence_Dataset_combined.pdf

^{iv} “Fact Sheet: Violence against Women Worldwide.” United Nations Development Fund for Women. 2009. Web. Available online at:

http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/sayno/docs/SayNOunite_FactSheet_VAWworldwide.pdf

^v UN-HABITAT. *Secure Land Rights for All*. HS/978/08E. 2008. Web. Available online at:

<http://www.responsibleagroinvestment.org/rai/sites/responsibleagroinvestment.org/files/Secure%20land%20rights%20for%20all-UN%20HABITAT.pdf>

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<http://southasia.oneworld.net/weekend/to-fight-poverty-give-secure-and-long-term-land-rights-to-the-poor>

^{vi} Narayan, Chambers, Shah, and Petesch. (emphasis added)

^{vii} Fajnzylber, Pablo, Daniel Lederman, and Norman Loayza. *Determinants of Crime Rates in Latin America and the World: An Empirical Assessment*. Washington: World Bank. 1998. 1. Web. Available online at

http://www.wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2000/02/23/000094946_99030406230127/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf

^{viii} The World Bank. *The World Bank Legal Review: Law, Equity, and Development*. Vol. 2. Ed. A. Palacio. Washington: The World Bank. 2006. 18. Print.

^{ix} United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Crime and Development in Central America: Caught in the Crossfire*. Vienna: UNODC. 2007. 15. Web. Available online at

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Central-america-study-en.pdf>



^x Costa, Antonio Maria, *Localizing the Millennium Development Goals*. New York: The United Nations. 2008. 2. Print.

^{xi} Department for International Development. *Eliminating World Poverty*. London: DFID. 2006. 37. Print.

^{xii} *Crime and Development in Africa*. 67.

Crime and Development in Central America. 73. Web.

^{xiii} World Bank. *Crime and Violence in Central America: A Development Challenge* .

Washington: The World Bank. 2011. Web. Available online at [http://siteresources.](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/FINAL_VOLUME_I_ENGLISH_CrimeAndViolence.pdf)

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^{xiv} The World Bank. *Annual Report 2013*. Washington: The World Bank. 2013. 55. Web.

Available at

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16091/9780821399378.pdf?sequence=1>

^{xv} The United Nations. *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development*. New York: The United Nations. 2013. Web. Available online at <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf>