



Small Arms and Development

Small arms hinder development because:

- **Small arms-related conflict and crime damage fragile economies**
- **Small arms violence deters foreign investment**
- **Domestic economic resources are diverted to expenditures on public security**

Unsafe and insecure environments make sustainable development impossible. Interstate conflict and internal insurgencies – fueled by the spread of small arms – destroy the physical and human resources needed for an economy to grow. Armed groups systematically block or damage transit routes, disrupt natural resource development or divert it for their own use, and attack key national industries as part of their combat strategy. Long-standing conflicts also divert human and economic resources away from agriculture, education, industry, and other constructive activities.

In post-conflict societies, large numbers of former combatants flood the job market only to discover a lack of economic opportunities. Ex-soldiers, typically still armed, often turn to crime as the only means of survival. In El Salvador, the number of gun-related deaths actually rose after the civil war ended, due to the widespread use of weapons in criminal activities. In post-war Iraq, the U.S. order disbanding Saddam Hussein's army has left as many as 400,000 soldiers without any income – but still in possession of their weapons.

Small arms violence deters investment. A high crime rate, especially when combined with a damaged public infrastructure, creates a climate of fear that can prevent public and private foreign investors from proceeding with essential projects. Donor-supported development projects are particularly sensitive to incidents of violence, and can be frozen or canceled entirely when conflicts rage. For example, development projects were halted in Liberia, Niger and Sierra Leone after conflicts broke out in those countries. Promised international development aid to post-war Afghanistan has largely failed to materialise because of continued insecurity.

Organised crime and a thriving black market also hinder new economic activities. Profitable companies may become targets of banditry or other attacks. As a result, businesses and successful individuals must invest more in their own protection to avoid kidnapping or other extortion. Colombia's government estimated that the major guerrilla groups inside its borders 'earned' an average of \$140 million annually between 1986-2000 from ransoms and other extortion activities. European companies reportedly paid \$1.2 billion to insurgent extortionists during the 1990s, more than official European aid to the countries involved. These extra costs can drive businesses out of a region or prevent them from settling in that area in the first place.

The widespread use of small arms in crime or conflict also raises the cost of maintaining public order for the governments of developing nations. Such extra expenses on internal security divert scarce resources away from investment in the economy. In a vicious circle, the state's resulting inability to create jobs and provide a better standard of living for its residents increase the incentive for individuals to obtain and use guns for malicious purposes.

** Small arms are weapons that can be carried and used by one or two people, including handguns, assault rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, anti-tank or anti-aircraft guns and light mortars. Light weapons, ammunition, grenades, landmines, and explosives are also part of this category.*