

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**

There can be no sustainable development in an insecure environment. Interstate conflict and internal insurgencies—fueled by the spread of small arms—destroy the physical infrastructure needed for an economy to grow. Rebel groups often block or damage transit routes, disrupt natural resource exploitation, and attack key national industries as part of their insurgency strategy. Long-standing conflicts also divert human and economic resources away from 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 was actually higher after the fighting ended due to the extensive use of weapons in criminal activities.

A climate of fear due to increased crime, especially when combined with a damaged public infrastructure, can deter badly needed foreign investment. Donor-supported development projects are particularly sensi-

tive 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 states.

Organized 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. 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 help create jobs and provide a better standard of living for its residents adds to individuals' incentives to obtain and use small arms for malicious purposes.