Violence Prevention in all Policies:
Creating Systemic Support for Violence Prevention Programmes

Manuel Eisner
Violence Research Centre
Institute of Criminology
University of Cambridge

The Biggest Question of All
The Biggest Question of All

Assume you could spend $1 per person in the world (i.e. $8 Billion) per year on measures to achieve the SDG goals related to violence against children, human trafficking, violence against women, violence against men, violence against the elderly, etc. by 2030.....

Where would your money go?

Where would you expect the biggest return?

Why?
The Progress Made

1. Huge Growth in Available Data
   - E.g. Violence Against Children Surveys, IPV meta-analyses, Homicide Monitor

2. More evaluation studies outside Europe and USA
   - E.g. Children and Violence Challenge Fund

3. Development of Global Information Systems

4. Diffusion of Public Health Approach
   - What’s the problem – What’s the cause – What Works – How do you do it?

   -> A growing toolbox of prevention programmes
What do we have in our toolbox?

Home Visiting Programmes
Parenting Programmes
Life Skills Development Programmes
Academic Enrichment Programmes
Anti-Bullying Programmes
Educational Sports Programmes
Offender rehabilitation Programmes
Dating Violence Prevent programmes
Victim Protection programmes
Microcredit programmes
Hotspots Policing Programmes
Urban Upgrading Programmes
Antigang programmes
Awareness Building Programmes

Do We need Wider System Change?
Do we know what works?
The Knowledge Gap

We know increasingly what kinds of programmes have desirable effects in trials

We are beginning to learn how to scale them up

We are beginning to have relevant evidence in LMIC countries

The SDGs expect us to achieve population-level sustainable declines in violence

We know close to nothing about how to achieve population level change

We know very little about the system changes that support macro-level declines in violence
Some population level success stories in cities and countries

Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Recife

Bogotá and Medellín

Southern Italy

United States

Singapore and Hong Kong

Cardiff and United Kingdom

Estonia

What Brings Levels of Violence Down?
Example 1 Violence Trends in the United States

- Intimate Partner Violence
- Homicide Rates
- Child abuse
Example 1 Violence Trends in the United States

- Intimate Partner Violence
- Homicide Rates
- Child abuse
Example 1 Violence Trends in the United States

![Graph showing trends in violence types]

- Intimate Partner Violence
- Homicide Rates
- Child abuse

Years: 1990 to 2012
Why

- Demographics
- Imprisonment and net widening
- More effective policing & more police officers
- Change in attitudes and norms to violence incl. feminization
- Medication for mental health problems
- Abortion and Lead
- End of Crack epidemic/ street drug markets

There is continued disagreement about the relative weight of each of these factors.
Example 2  Singapore

Homicides  Singapore  12 cases
Caracas  3500 cases (approx. same pop.)

Robberies  Decline by 90% since 1990s
50x lower than London

IPV  Lowest in IVAWS Survey (9% v. 52% in USA, UN Women, 2013)
Why?

- High economic growth, poverty declined (but Inequality went up)
- Demographic change, fewer young people
- Harsh punishment and imprisonment ("Disneyland with the death Penalty" William Gibson)
- Improved policing based on Kobane system
- Meritocratic public administration based on rule of law.
- National Crime Prevention Council since 1981
- Housing Policy
- Effective public health system
Population-Level Violence Declines

- There exist examples in all parts of the world of successful violence reductions.

- Understanding why they happen would be highly relevant for achieving the SDG goals, but our understanding is currently very limited.

- Individual programmes rarely seem to be involved.

- Genuine policy effects are likely, but usually systemic and multifaceted.

- Five proposals for strategies that can generate systemic support.
Proposal 1

Address Cross-Cutting Mechanisms that Affect Multiple SDG Outcomes
What mechanism affects all these outcomes?

- Teenage Pregnancy
- Crime
- Violence
- Truancy
- Bullying
- School Exclusion
- Low Income
- Unsafe sex
- Alcohol
- Nicotine
- Obesity
- Divorce
- Unstable work

Self-control as a cross-cutting mechanism

• Self-control is a cross-cutting psychological mechanism that has positive effects on health, wealth, and crime.

• It is malleable and can be promoted across settings and systems in families, schools, leisure time, work places etc.

• Focusing efforts on a small number of general mechanisms that affect many outcomes may be a promising systemic strategy.
Proposal 2

Bridge the Gap between Criminal Justice and Public Health Systems
Why is the CJ system important for a public health approach?

1. It is often the first point of contact for victims.
   In the US, law enforcement agencies are by far the most important source of substantiated child maltreatment cases (32%), NCANDS (2013).

2. Where the state fails to provide protection, others will step in.
   In Honduras and El Salvador only 2-3% of all homicide cases result in a conviction. Eisner (2015) How to reduce Homicide, http://homicide.igarape.org.br/

3. The CJ system is the most likely access for interventions for serious and repeat offenders
   Most serious violent adult offenders had contact with the CJ system as adolescents.

4. Violence prevention requires that people see a good reason to comply with the law.
   Fair and effective enforcement of existing laws is the basis for any sustainable delivery of violence prevention.
Inter-systemic integration

• Across all systems, but CJ --- public health possibly most difficult and most important.
• CJ system support essential for effective prevention.
• Convincing national advocacy coalitions need a strong anchor in public health, education, and criminal justice.
• Capacity building (e.g. training of professionals) needs to promote mutual understanding and support.
• Interagency cooperation needs strengthening.
Proposal 3

Build Violence Prevention into Modern Technologies, Infrastructures, and Behavior Systems
Why?

• Changing people is often more difficult and more costly than changing situations.

• There is substantial evidence suggesting that change in daily routines affects crime and violence.

• Simple design changes can have considerable effects—E.g. toughened glass, Jonathan Shepherd.

• Partnerships with private sector are important.

• Build systemic violence prevention into nutrition (SDG 2), Health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SSG 5), Infrastructure (SDG 9), urban planning (SDG 11) etc.
Proposal 4

Build cutting-edge research into national decision-making processes
Why?

- Because while we have learnt a lot, we don’t know the answers to some very fundamental questions relevant for achieving the SD-Goals related to violence.
Why?

- Because while we have learnt a lot, we don’t know the answers to some very fundamental questions relevant for achieving the SD-Goals related to violence.

Here is one:

- If Caracas has 200 times more homicides than Singapore, in what period of human development do the causally relevant risk factors emerge? Infancy, childhood, adolescence?
Conclusions

Assume you could spend $1 per person in the world (i.e. $8 Billion) per year on measures to achieve the SDG goals related to violence against children, human trafficking, violence against women, violence against men, violence against the elderly, etc. by 2030 ....

Where would your money go?

Where would you expect the biggest return?

Why?
Conclusions

• Invest into inserting violence-prevention into other systems
• Foster broad coalitions across systems
• Invest into general and well-researched mechanisms with multiple outcomes
• Use the opportunity for advancing cutting-edge basic research that can support the SD-Goals.
Public Health
- Child development
- Early prevention
- Social skills

Justice and Governance
- Better policing
- Fight corruption
- Better justice
- Offender treatment

Civil Society
- Sectarian violence
- Minorities, ethnic tensions
- Transitional justice
- Political violence
Public Health
• Child development
• Early Prevention
• Social Skills

Justice and Governance
• Better policing
• Fight corruption
• Better justice
• Offender treatment

Civil Society
• Sectarian violence
• Minorities, ethnic tensions
• Transitional justice
• Political violence
• End

(UN Women, 2013).