

Impact of Peacebuilding on the Cost of Violence

Peacebuilding is a practice aiming at reducing both direct and structural violence through inclusive activities. Although inter-state conflicts are declining in number, countries are experiencing growing societal polarization.ⁱ It is therefore crucial to develop effective peacebuilding strategies and implement programs aimed at reducing conflict among both states and communities.

(Definitions sorted by alphabetical order)

Peacebuilding: the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. It aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate deadly conflict. Peacebuilding can include conflict prevention; conflict management; conflict resolution and transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation.ⁱⁱ

Peacemaking: a non-restrictive list of peaceful, diplomatic, and judicial means of resolving disputes.ⁱⁱⁱ

Peacekeeping:

Purchasing Power Parity: PPP is a popular metric used by macroeconomic analysis that compares different countries' currencies through a "basket of goods" approach. Purchasing power parity (PPP) allows for economists to compare economic productivity and standards of living between countries.



Statistics on Peacebuilding and the Cost of Armed Conflict



- ❖ The global economic impact of violence was \$14.96 trillion PPP (purchasing power parity) in 2019, **equivalent to 11.6% of global GDP or \$1,942 per person.**^{iv}
- ❖ While the global economic losses from conflict in 2016 reached a staggering \$1.04 trillion, **just \$21.8 billion was spent on peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities combined during that year.** This means that the financial resources devoted to averting violence and consolidate peace constituted **a mere 2% of the total cost of conflict.**^v
- ❖ A study estimated a benefit-cost ratio as follows:^{vi}
 - a. Prevention: 11.2 to 17.3
 - b. Intervention: 4.8 to 7.2
 - c. Reconstruction: 2.9 to 4.9.

- ❖ If all countries improved their peacefulness to the average of the 40 most peaceful countries, **the reduction in violence would accrue to \$3.6 trillion in savings over the next decade.**^{vii}
- ❖ Preventative action is more cost-effective than actions taken to end conflicts that have already broken out. Studies indicate that **preventing violence could have an average net savings of up to \$70 billion per year.**^{viii}
- ❖ **Every \$1 invested in peacebuilding carries a potential \$16 reduction in the cost of armed conflict.**^{ix}
- ❖ There has been an increase in military expenditure as a percentage of GDP, in 2020.^x

Mediation Practice Statistics

- ❖ A CDC/Johns Hopkins evaluation of a Baltimore Cure Violence/Ceasefire programs showed statistically significant reductions in all four program sites with **reductions in killings of up to 56% and in shootings of up to 44%**, as well as strong evidence of norm change – rejecting the use of violence – in the program community.^{xi}
- ❖ Meditation practices in schools have noticeable benefits. In a San Francisco School implementing transcendental mediation practices called “Quiet Time” saw **suspensions decrease by 79 percent and attendance increase by over 98%** as well as academic performance noticeably increased.^{xii}
- ❖ Restorative Justice programs in a West Oakland Middle School pilot project **eliminated violent fights and expulsions**, and reduced suspension rates by more than 75%.
- ❖ Kenya’s leading business association assessed **economic losses from post-election violence in 2008 as US \$ 3.6 billion**. In contrast, the 2010 constitutional referendum, plagued by similar inter-ethnic tensions, did not see any violence. A violence prevention effort identified and pre-empted nearly 150 incidents of violence. **This effort cost only \$ 5 million in comparison.**^{xiii}

Visualizing the Data: Peacebuilding Cost / Armed Conflict Cost



TABLE 1: compiled by author with data accessed at: <https://www.dmeformpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Cost-Effectiveness-of-Peacebuilding-IEP-Sept-2017.pdf>



TABLE 2: compiled by author with data accessed at: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/07/peacebuilding-expenditure-united-nations-sustaining-peace/>

Endnotes

- ⁱ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sgsm18113.doc.htm>
- ⁱⁱ <https://kroc.nd.edu/about-us/what-is-peace-studies/what-is-strategic-peacebuilding/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/peacemaking-peacekeeping-peacebuilding-peace-enforcement-21st-century/?location=&theme=>
- ^{iv} <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GPI-2021-web.pdf>
- ^v <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/07/peacebuilding-expenditure-united-nations-sustaining-peace/>
- ^{vi} https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25508?seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents
- ^{vii} *ibid.*
- ^{viii} <https://www.generationsforpeace.org/en/the-effects-and-cost-effectiveness-of-peacebuilding/> / <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>
- ^{ix} <https://www.dmeformpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Cost-Effectiveness-of-Peacebuilding-IEP-Sept-2017.pdf>
- ^x <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GPI-2021-web.pdf>
- ^{xi} <http://cureviolence.org/results/scientific-evaluations/>
- ^{xii} NBC Nightly News, January 2015
- ^{xiii} Infrastructure for Peace: A way forward to peaceful elections by Kai Frithjof Brand-Jacobsen and Paul van Tongeren; The Life & Peace Institute; 2012