Workshop: Agenda for Future Research

Chair: Etienne Krug  
Rapporteur: Philip Alpers

Rapporteur: “We did not come up with a neat and tidy agenda to give you. And in fact…what the working group emphasized most was that this is merely the first sentence in a lengthy volume, possibly a volume without end – in our lifetimes at least.”

Session reinforced the importance of research to inform policy making, advocacy and evaluation. The UN 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects explicitly referred to the health effects of small arms and directed public health agencies to implement 4-5 year research agenda on small arms. The purpose of the session was to highlight potential areas of research and priorities. The question was of whether or not the 2001 Conference Agenda was synonymous with the global public health agenda given its focus on the illicit trade when legal small arms and particularly civilian firearms from a health perspective, are also a problem. Others emphasized the importance of the Conference and the subsequent review conference in providing a platform for the health oriented research agenda.

Discussion included 3 basic issues:
1 – research on effects
2 – research on contributing factors and causes, including behavioral issues
3 – research on impacts and evaluations of interventions to ensure resources are focused appropriately.

1. research on effects – first we need to define the scope of the problem – is it all violence or just small arms, Is it only violence or are other effects, e.g. suicide and unintentional injury included.

Key issues:

a. the importance of expanding data sets and establishing:
• re definition of small arms: as with UN Conference, agreed that not possible at this time to arrive at agreed, precise definition of small arms. Allow for “constructive ambiguity.”
• establishing a uniform research instrument for global information, uniform reporting methods. Challenging at present time given different definitions in use, terms vary by language.
• establish common nomenclature
• Development of guidelines for research and measurement.
• Using a range of measures including PYLL
• data should be current and updateable
• More data on numbers of deaths and injuries
• economic costs and methods for assessing
• breakdown of type of violent event, e.g. intentional vs. unintentional
• analysis needs to distinguish contexts, e.g. high versus low income countries.
• Research should include a range of approaches including behavioral issues (e.g. motivations);
• Research should include health, crime and victimization data
• non-quantifiable or more difficult to quantify issues: social, climate of fear, culture of violence
• information is needed on effects on particular populations, types of victims

2. Causes
• understanding socio-economic factors including economic disparity
• Understanding issues related to political factors – e.g. impact of failed states
• understanding values e.g. “culture of violence” including new techniques of measurement.
• analyzing behavioral issues (e.g. choices)
• Exploring motivations for small arms possession such as surveys of weapons possession.
• Understanding other factors which contribute to violence (age, gender, risk taking behaviors, substance abuse)
• Victimization and safety: Understand context – e.g. docket analysis of armed versus unarmed victims

3. Intervention and Evaluations
We must know where money has been spent badly. One example: many gun buyback programs ineffective.
• Assessing and measuring effects of interventions
• Establishing and evaluating pilot projects in regions or cities
• Understanding international dimensions of tracking firearms
• Understanding international dimensions of marketing of firearms
• Understanding role of educational efforts
• Importance of contextual information critical to assessing effectiveness as well as appropriateness.

Follow-up:

Critical issue is sharing and access to information:
• need for common nomenclature, research manual, with guidelines. “A document which tells you how to do some of these things, and tells you how other countries have successfully done it, so that you can possibly do the same.”
• allow participants to continue to share information (e.g. list serve of participants)
• develop a network of networks building on existing initiatives (e.g. Small Arms Survey, work done by IPPNW, SAFER-Net, HELP, US physicians, regional research centers, WHO etc.)
• Absolutely essential that we set up a research network. “A quick response e-mail network of people who are going to help each other to bring all this material together, and get it published as quickly and as accurately as possible.”
• important to link global, regional and national research initiatives
• share and transfer data but also methods which can be applied
• easy to access links with click-throughs rather than just centralized collection (IPPNW could be front end)
• build capacity for research and access to research infrastructure in regions
• Montreal Injury Prevention Conference 2002 is an opportunity to revisit the issue

www.trauma2002.com/abstracts.htm