

Crisis prevention

Preventing violence before it happens

Crises, wars and crime cause suffering and impede development. The aim of crisis prevention is to recognise and remove the causes of conflict before violence erupts. KfW Development Bank's focus in this area is on violence prevention in cities.

Context

The world is not a peaceful place: the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, a database of the University of Uppsala, counted 32 armed conflicts and wars in 2012 alone. These violent conflicts not only cause enormous human suffering, they also impede development, setting back regions or countries by many decades. Social structures are destroyed.

Society pays dearly for crime as well as war. In 2012, half a million people were murdered worldwide. Crime rates are particularly high in the slums of rapidly growing conurbations. Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, although these urban areas cover only 2 % of the earth's surface. It is precisely in cities subjected to chaotic and unstoppable growth that many people live in informal settlements and are out of work. Low levels of education, as well as alcohol and drug abuse create the ideal breeding ground for gang crime, violence and insecurity. Some of the world's highest murder rates are found in the cities of Central America, the slums of Lagos and Nairobi, or South African townships.

If the causes of war and crime can be recognised and removed at an early stage, suffering such as this can be prevented. The active participation of all those involved is needed to identify the causes. The goal of crisis prevention is to prevent violence before it occurs.

The KfW development approach

On behalf of the German government KfW Development Bank promotes a range of differing measures in the area of crisis prevention. KfW's measures include projects that improve the situation of disadvantaged groups in a targeted way, i.e. by promoting employment and income for young people. The potential for conflict can be reduced if previously disadvantaged ethnic groups are provided with better economic and social infrastructure.

An increasingly dangerous structural cause of violence is scarcity of natural resources, which is exacerbated by climate change. An unequal distribution of water or land harbours potential for conflict. KfW Development Bank's environmental and climate protection projects help remove the root causes of these conflicts on a sustainable basis.

The main focus of KfW Development Bank is, however, on violence prevention in cities. KfW supports municipalities in developing town planning aimed at preventing violence. Improved infrastructure, social programmes and capacity building with town municipalities help to increase security in poverty-stricken areas.

In this respect, the concept of integrative town planning is particularly successful. The goal is sustainable social urban renewal. Public space should be developed so that it is used and taken care of by the whole population.

The concept is based on three pillars:

1. Urban renewal
Building schools, community centres, pavements and shopping centres improves quality of life. Legalising house and property rights creates legal certainty.
2. Active involvement of population
Residents participate in planning. They learn tech-

niques for mediation and non-violent conflict resolution.

3. Anchoring of the concept in the administration
Municipality staff learns to think out of the box, beyond their own institution and to work together.

The sum of these measures helps residents to identify more closely with their locality and broach problems on their own. The residents participate in decision-making regarding town planning.

The provision of services such as electricity, refuse collection and sports facilities create decent living conditions in previously disadvantaged quarters. These areas become sought-after places to live. A wide range of measures such as awareness-raising campaigns, advisory services and sport or cultural events support the upgrading of previous slum areas.

Success is visible – children now play football where drugs were previously bought and sold. For residents, security has increased significantly. Murder rates have fallen in many cities which apply this concept.



Khayelitsha – home for almost one million people.
Source: KfW / Jens Steingässer

South Africa – Community centres against violence

Previously, when darkness fell, no one walked alone through the township of Khayelitsha, a district of Cape Town. Women and children were at great risk if they were alone, with attacks and rapes occurring on a daily basis. In the township, 700,000 people live in cramped conditions in a small area. Crime, poverty and mass unemployment were the township's defining features.

Today, many parts of the township have become safer. The city of Cape Town set up small community centres, called "Active Boxes", supported by KfW Development Bank and financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). These facilities are manned by volunteers around the clock. They serve as nursery schools, meeting points and places to relax.

The township residents had identified the places where violence occurred particularly frequently, and it was exactly there that Active Boxes, playgrounds and football pitches were set up. These facilities helped to win back public space using non-violent methods for the people of the township. Today the women feel safer, even when they walk home in the dark from the bus stop. They know that there is always someone at hand in the community centres.

The province of Western Cape now aims to apply this successful model to other towns.



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