Medical Peace Work
Online Course 4

Structural violence & root causes of violent conflict
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Objectives

• Understand how poverty, development and violent conflict are linked.

• Know the terminology of development and its core issues of poverty, inequality & health.

• Consider the underlying causes of structural violence.

• Understand the relationship between direct violence and key economic, social and political issues.

• Apply what you learn to actual case studies of violent conflict.

• Analyse possible solutions to the problems of structural and direct violence.
Structural violence: ‘socioeconomic or political structures’ violating basic needs (Galtung 1996)

Development is affected by both direct and structural violence

Health is closely linked to development

Health is also influenced by social and economic conditions

Structural violence, health & development
Development & violence

Social, economic and political change brought about by development can lead to structural violence.

The changes can also lead to violent conflict.

Violent conflict has been justified in the name of development.
How do we measure & define poverty?

- By those who live on less than an amount that will meet physical needs— a poverty line
- By the percentage of the total population in this group – a headcount index
- Using a combination of measures – for example the capability approach using the Human Development Index
Inequality

• Avoidable (also called an inequity) or unavoidable

• With and between societies and countries

Trends: increasing or decreasing?
The Gini coefficient - measuring inequality within societies
Measuring inequalities – globally

• The distribution of everybody’s income in the world’s income, adjusted for purchasing power parity: **global inequality**

• Every person is given the mean income for their country and the inequality between countries calculated: **international inequality**

• Each country is given its own mean income regardless of population size: **inter-country inequality**
What is health & how do we measure it?

Remembering that perceptions are influenced by time, place and culture

Some measurements of health are:
• life expectancy
• healthy life expectancy (HLE)
• health-adjusted life expectancy (HALE) (WHO 2007)
• child mortality
• maternal mortality rate and ratio
Poverty, inequality & violence

The underlying causes of structural violence

- Local forces – poverty
- Global forces – colonialism & globalisation

The underlying causes of civil war

- Ethnicity
- Poverty, inequality & economic development
- Political factors – social contracts & democracy
- The international dimension
Poverty & structural violence

“The factors underlying poverty:

- Lack of income & assets
- Powerlessness
- Vulnerability

“Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease. It attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away one’s dignity and drives one into total despair”

(Narayan et al 1999)
## Economic globalisation: good or bad? - the trade debate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOR</th>
<th>AGAINST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased employment</td>
<td>Dependency on volatile prices; more unfair competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduction in % population in poverty</td>
<td>Less control over prices of essential items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved health indicators</td>
<td>Improvement in health indicators slowing down</td>
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<td>Priorities switch away from investment in the social fabric</td>
<td>Depends how funds gained are used</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Priorities switch to attracting investment &amp; trade; increases inequalities</td>
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Ethnicity - ancient hatreds or fluid identities?

- The primordial view
  - clearly defined, race & religion very important
- The constructivist view
  - identities are fluid and adjust over time

Ethnicity can be used to divide and as a propaganda tool.

Ethnicity can divert attention from all the other causes of conflict.
Poverty, inequality & economic development

Possible links between underdevelopment, poverty & violent conflict:

- Collective grievance & a desire for change
- Long term deprivation & lack of growth
- Extraction economies & the natural resource curse
Theories of what happens with increasing inequality

- Linear relationship
- Risk of conflict first decreases & then increases
- Risk of conflict first increases & then decreases
Political factors & the causes of civil war

✓ State strength

✓ The social contract

and democracy??

“The most reliable path to stable domestic peace in the long-term is to democratize as much as possible”

(Hegre 2001:44)
The international dimension

- Effects of colonialism
- The Cold War
- The ‘war on terror’
- International economic factors
- Foreign investment & trade
- International aid
Responding to structural violence at the national level

Increasing people’s incomes & capabilities:

- Investing in public administration, human capital & key infrastructure

  by

- cutting waste, redistribution, stimulating growth

  but

richer countries need to provide more resources
Income to improve health – what’s the evidence?

\[ y = 7.9853 \ln(x) + 53.221 \]

\[ R^2 = 0.6409 \]
Improving the health sector - one of the key actions to improve life expectancy

- Comprehensive primary health services, publicly funded through increased allocations
- An emphasis on mother and child health, and immunisation
- Well trained health workers, adequately paid and rewarded particularly for unpopular work
- Regulation of the private sector

Other key measures include education, ensuring minimum nutritional levels are met, water & sanitation and reducing inequities.
## Interventions reducing structural violence

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Negative effects</th>
<th>Possible Remedies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Trade-poverty trap</td>
<td>More pressure on WTO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barriers to medicines</td>
<td>Campaign on TRIPS+ &amp; for new R&amp;D regime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arms trade</td>
<td>Stop profiting from arms trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade directly supports war</td>
<td>Regulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vulnerability to international financial flows &amp; debt</td>
<td>Financial regulation</td>
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<td>Aid given for donor interests</td>
<td>Better managed aid</td>
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Addressing structural violence through health systems

Health systems: ‘all activities whose primary purpose is to promote, restore or maintain health’

(WHO 2000)
Priorities for action on health systems

- More funding for developing countries
- No user charges – public funding
- Better pay, working conditions and prospects for health workers
References


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