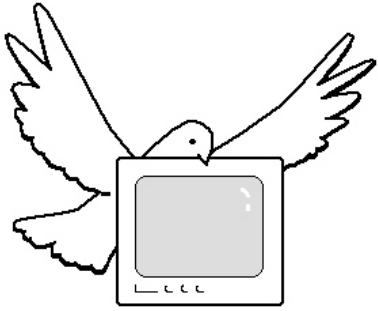


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Selon un rapport de l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé

“La criminalité violente coûte des milliards”

Violent crime costs billions: WHO report

BY WILLIAM J. KOLE, The Toronto Star, Jun. 9, 2004. 12:24 PM

VIENNA (AP-CP) - Violence in homes and on the streets worldwide devastates economies as well as lives, the UN health agency warned today in a report detailing how countries are spending billions a year dealing with the consequences. Some countries are devoting more than four per cent of their gross domestic product to arresting, trying and imprisoning violent offenders and providing medical and psychiatric care to victims of rape, child abuse and domestic violence, the World Health Organization said. The report, released at a global conference in Vienna on injury prevention and safety promotion, said the economic impact of violence was inflicting a staggering cost to society.

"Beyond the very personal human tragedies associated with each and every case of violence, its consequences are extremely costly to society in economic terms," said Dr. Catherine Le Gales-Camus, a WHO assistant director general.

"Responding to violence diverts billions of dollars away from education, social security, housing and recreation, into the essential but seemingly never-ending tasks of providing care for victims and criminal justice interventions for perpetrators," she said. Worldwide, 1.6 million people die from violence each year, and millions of others suffer injuries, lingering physical, mental, sexual or reproductive problems, and lost wages and productivity, WHO said. It said violence remains a leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 44. The study, which examined the cost of violence-related health expenditures as a percentage of gross domestic product, or GDP, in select countries, said violent crime was most costly in Colombia and El Salvador, both of which were spending 4.3 per cent of GDP on the aftermath. It excluded the costs of war, focusing instead on "interpersonal violence" - street crime, violence in the workplace and domestic violence, including child, spouse and elder abuse.

Among the reports cited in the WHO study was one published in 1995 by the University of Western Ontario in London, Ont., which calculated the costs of violence against women in Canada. Including health-care costs, policing, legal fees, incarceration, lost earnings and psychological costs, violence against women annually costs an estimated \$1.2 billion (U.S.).

A 2002 Health Canada study cited by WHO calculated a cost of \$1.1 billion just for the direct medical costs of violence against women in Canada. Although the economic impact of violence tends to be most acute in poorer countries, homicide is most costly to highly developed countries because of the victims' lost future income, WHO said.

A single murder costs, on average, \$15,319 (all figures U.S.) in South Africa, \$602,000

in Australia, \$829,000 in New Zealand and more than \$2 million in the United States, it said.

Violent crime costs England and Wales nearly \$64 billion (U.S.) a year, the report said. Homicide alone costs Australia an estimated \$194 million a year, and violence annually drains \$837 million from the Australian economy, it said.

In the U.S., violence costs up to \$300 billion a year, WHO said, citing one study that estimates that child abuse alone costs the U.S. economy \$94 billion every year, or one per cent of GDP. Overall, the United States spends 3.3 per cent of GDP on violence-related issues. Violent crime committed by a minor in America typically costs the victim \$16,600 to \$17,700 and another \$44,000 in expenses to the criminal justice system, the report said.

"Evidence abounds that the public sector, and thus society in general - bears much of the economic burden of interpersonal violence," said WHO, which reviewed 119 studies on the economic fallout of violence worldwide for its report.

Only a few studies have examined the benefits of violence prevention programs, but they appear to help cut such costs, at least in industrialized nations, said Dr. Alexander Butchart, WHO's co-ordinator for violence prevention.

"While it would still need to be established if the same results will be obtained in developing countries, these findings suggest that violence prevention is not only good for health and safety, but also sound economics," he said. The costs of the benefits of Canada's gun-registry law were examined in a 1996 study that appeared in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. The cost to implement the system was estimated to be \$70 million - most of which

accrues on a one-time basis - compared to annual direct costs of gun-related violence of \$50 million to Canada's health-care system. In fact, the federal gun registry has already cost much more. In 2002 Canada's auditor general stated that the program would cost taxpayers

about \$1 billion by 2005 rather than the projected \$2 million.

WHO said, citing a 1995 report, that when the indirect costs of gun violence were included, the economic benefits of the law were much clearer. The total costs of firearm-related injuries in Canada were calculated to be \$5.6 billion, including lost productivity and psychological costs.