

From VOA Learning English, this is As It Is.

Welcome back. I'm Caty Weaver. Today, we tell about a report that shows how people view corruption in their countries. The report suggests many feel it is increasingly common.

But, we start the show with another report about light weapons and violence around the world.

A new report finds that only a small percentage of violent deaths are a direct result of war. The report is called the Small Arms Survey 2013. It says hundreds of thousands of people die every year because of armed violence in places other than conflict areas. Christopher Cruise has the story.

News media report daily on people killed by machine gun fire, shelling or other weapons in conflicts such as Syria, Mali and Afghanistan.

But the new report says these deaths represent only 10 percent of a yearly average of 526,000 violent deaths between 2004 and 2009. Ninety percent of those killed are dying because of everyday dangers far from battlefields.

The Small Arms Survey is an independent research project at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. Its report explores many sides of armed violence, including organized crime activity, land disputes and conflict and community violence.

The report notes civilians hold about 75 percent of the estimated 875 million guns and other firearms owned worldwide. It says firearms are responsible for 42 to 62 percent of all deadly violence. And it says for each person killed this way, three others survive with gunshot injuries.

Anna Alvazzi del Frate is research director for the Small Arms Survey. She says guns and violent households are a deadly combination.

“Our findings highlight that the risk of intimate partner violence with firearms is higher in countries with high levels of firearm violence in general, highlighting a culture of violence that spreads across different types of violence. And the risk is increased by the presence of guns in the home, including work-related guns. Although most gun owners are men, the majority of victims of domestic violence are females.”

Studies in several countries have shown that between 40 and 70 percent of female murder victims are killed by a sexual partner. The report finds organized crime murders decreased by about 45 percent from 2007 to 2010. It suggests the rate may be dropping because organized crime is moving increasingly into legal markets.

The Small Arms Survey finds that land disputes lead to much of the violence in Africa. It says deaths from these conflicts stretch from tens to thousands of people, sometimes over long periods.

The report says the United States was the leading exporter of small arms and light weapons in 2010. That year, the country was also at the top of the list of arms importers. The report says there was about 4.4 billion dollars worth of legal trade in small arms in 2010. However, unofficial estimates are double that amount.

A non-profit group says corruption is thought to be on the rise in many countries, and trust in government is weakening worldwide. Transparency International turned to more than 114,000 people in 107 countries for their thoughts on the issue. Jim Tedder has more on the findings.

The Global Corruption Barometer 2013 is not a pretty picture. Transparency International says, for example, that bribery was common in some countries. A bribe is something given to a person in a position of power for special treatment.

Robert Barrington is Executive Director of Transparency International-United Kingdom.

“In terms of bribe paying, there are a couple of countries where three in four people say they have had to pay bribes in the past year. That’s Sierra Leone and Liberia.”

The report found that more than half of those who were questioned believed corruption and bribery had increased in the past two years.

“Ultimately, our target has to be policymakers, because leadership from the top is critical in this. And when you look at the countries that have improved, perhaps Georgia and Rwanda compared to past surveys, it’s generally been politically driven governments that want to do something about corruption that’s made the change.”

Bertrand de Speville leads an anti-corruption group that has advised more than 50 governments. He says that too often the early push by new leaders to fight corruption weakens over time.

“This is a strategy that’s going to apply to the whole country and everybody in it. It suddenly dawns on him that that might affect colleagues, friends, political allies, family, maybe even himself. And time and time again, I’ve seen the political will die while you’re talking to him.”

In India in 2011, social activist Anna Hazare gained worldwide fame after leading a hunger strike against corruption. He described the reasons for his protest.

“I want the poor to get justice and to see the money given back that has been lost to corruption.”

Hundreds of supporters joined him in the protest, and the government agreed to offer anti-corruption legislation. But the resulting Lokpal Bill has not been passed.

Anti-corruption expert Bertrand de Speville says it is poor people who suffer most, and bribery must be tackled at every level.

“Small incidents of corruption can have disastrous consequences. You only have to think of the fields of security or public health to realize the truth of that. One small bribe can have disastrous consequences.”

But, he says efforts by international organizations like the World Bank to advise on ways for fighting corruption have had little effect.

“Given the amount of resources that have been devoted to the problem, in my view it is little short of scandalous. I don’t believe it’s that difficult. And indeed places like Hong Kong and Singapore have demonstrated that it’s not that difficult.”

Transparency International says at least some individuals appear willing to fight corruption. More than half of those questioned in the survey said they would be willing to report an incident of bribery.

I’m Jim Tedder.

And that’s As It Is for today. I’m Caty Weaver.



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