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There will be no development without security and there will be no security until we tackle the problem of violence, or so argue Gary A. Haugen and Victor Boutros in their book *"The locust effect: why the end of poverty requires the end of violence"*. Gary A. Haugen is the founder and the president of International Justice Mission (IJM), a global human rights agency that protects the poor from violence. Prior to founding the IJM in 1997, Haugen worked in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, as an officer in charge of the UN's investigation of the Rwandan genocide. Haugen is also the author of other books, such as *Terrify No More: Young Girls Held Captive and the Daring Undercover Operation to Win Their Freedom* (2010) and *Good News about Injustice: Study Guide* (2011). Boutros is a federal prosecutor at the U.S. Department of Justice addressing police misconduct and international human trafficking.

While many attempts to address the subject of poverty view it as a multidimensional issue — associated with a myriad of conditions such as hunger, disease and poor education— Haugen and Boutros cast this aside and argue that poor communities all face a fundamental constrain: violence. However, they do not just focus on headline-making violence of wars and genocide, but on day-to-day violence and a general lack of personal security—forced labor, sexual crimes, abusive police, arbitrary detention and land

seizures. This, in fact, constitutes the very succinct central thrust; of the book; addressing this quotidian violence is a strict "precondition for the achievement of economic development".

In arguing this position, the book pushes readers away from conventional concepts and causes of poverty through varied personal stories, from incidents of rape to slavery—it brings them to the "subterranean world of violence". A world invisible —according to the authors— to policy makers and international organizations, a world that targets the poor as they are the most vulnerable and profitable to chase. Thus, no matter how much effort is put into improving educational systems of access to health care, people in developing countries will never stop being poor unless their environment becomes safer.

The thesis of the book begins with the poor's chronic vulnerability to violence. Its importance can be described by three main reasons: 1) this type of violence usually has a privileged perpetrator behind that has the power to hide their crime; 2) Poor people tend not reports or discuss it due to its traumatic nature and 3) the treat of violence has become such a part of the air they breath that they barely speak of it as a distinct phenomenon.

They illustrate this with vivid accounts, such as a girl who was raped on her way to school, the grandmother whose land was seized by a more powerful neighbor and authorities ignore it, and a family that was forced to work under humiliating circumstances. All of these examples reflect their view that independent of how much effort we put into building schools or setting up infrastructure, these people are vulnerable to violence and live in fear of it, and “this implies lost productivity and ultimately lost growth for low-income economies”. These stories and the reports and the statistics behind them illustrate that they are not exceptions, but the rule itself for a vast majority of people in developing countries.

Throughout the book, the authors emphasize the ability of individuals to feel secure and the continued impunity of perpetrators. Boutros and Haugen cite various reports that show poor people are often unable to feel safe in their own local contexts. The authors reference a United Nations report that concludes: “violence and security issues can be regarded by poor people as considerably more important than housing or income issues.”¹ This same idea is reflected in a report elaborated by the World Bank in 1999, *Voices of the Poor*. The report highlights the lack of security felt by the poor but also points out the “silence [of victims] around the subject of violence.”² Although a large number of reports focus on the importance that day-to-day violence plays in poverty, this fact does not result in implementing those ideas in the development agenda—this is the main demand of the authors in the book.

¹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *The Challenge of Slums- Report on Human Settlements 2003*. Nairobi: UN Habitat, 2003. 59.

² Deepa Narayan, Raj Patel, Kai Schafft, Anne Rademacher and Sarah Koch.Schulte. *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* New York, Oxford University Press (2000). 194.

In developing their thesis, the authors emphasize how violence has been omitted from the development discourse, for instance in the Millennium Development Goals. However, since the book’s publication, the Sustainable Development Goals were established and include the idea of better judicial institutions in one of the goals: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” (Goal 16). But, although this could be promising, the specific indicators to measure such ambition have not yet been set. Moreover, if we look at the past, international organizations such as the World Bank or the IMF have barred themselves from investing in judicial systems as a matter of not intervening in internal affairs.

Opposite of this pessimistic picture and the daunting challenges it presents, Haugen and Boutros balance the “subterranean world of violence” with proven solutions. The answer is simply summarized: law enforcement. Across various examples of successful projects in Sierra Leona, Georgia or Brazil— most of them relying on a bottom-up approach— they demonstrate how it is possible to tackle violence and in doing so, combatting poverty. Among the various common themes along these projects, there are two important aspects to highlight: first, it is essential to build trust from the bottom and, second, successful reforms require local ownership and leadership.

One of the examples that the book describes is a partnership between the Philippine government and the NGO International Justice Mission (IJM). The main purpose was to transform the local law enforcement combating sex trafficking. After the 4-year program, the results were very successful: the rescue rate of victims grew 1,000% and all identifiable suspects were prosecuted.

Although the book presents evidence—through various reports and personal experiences—that addressing the causes of violence is effectively combatting poverty, it leaves some conceptual gaps in the connection between freedom from violence and the end of the multidimensional cycle of poverty. The authors do not underestimate the work and resources directed to education, hunger and state building, but taking only day-to-day violence as a root of poverty is both improbable and potentially risky. Assuming a one-directional causal effect between poverty and violence rather than a cycle with various factors at play has shaky foundations. And although authors do not forget the importance of assisting in other matter such as hunger or disease poverty they do give solving the violence problem a priority missing the multidimensionality of the whole issue. This book may be best read as a compliment to the canonical books “Why Nations Fail” (Acemoglu and Robinson) and “Bottom Billion” (Paul Collier) in order to highlight the multidimensionality of poverty at the micro and the macro levels. Nevertheless, the efforts of Haugen and Boutros are a welcome reframing of poverty and merit representation in the highest policy circles.

Its biggest strength lies in the powerful message of how the plague of violence is undermining

international efforts to end poverty. Its striking figures reflecting day-to-day violence, such as how the 11 million slaves extracted from Africa during 400 years only count for half of the people held in slavery during the year the book was written (2014); together with its analysis of how justice systems in most developing countries were structured to defend colonizers, thus failing to attend its citizens, certainly show how this day-to-day violence needs more attention from governments and international institutions.

In sum, this book brings a new perspective into the world of fighting poverty with new and fresh ideas. They come from academics and the experience of field practitioners, and hence merits reading by both scholars and policy-makers working in development and poverty. “*The Locust Effect*” is a book meant to shake the readers from previous conceptions of poverty and immerse them in how day-to-day violence prevents poor countries from developing. It appeals to a broad audience from policy makers, to academics or to general audiences as well, for its thorough argumentation and vivid imagery. Its value is only accentuated by its timeliness, as the new agenda of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, set by the United Nations in September 2015, takes form.