

# Crime and Violence: Obstacles to Development in Latin America and Caribbean cities

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## Executive Summary

Crime and violence are a common threat to Latin America and the Caribbean, but their manifestations vary across countries, cities, and neighborhoods. Reducing and preventing crime is fundamental to achieving sustainable development in our region, and local governments are strategically positioned to tackle this challenge.

Today's cities are increasingly innovating with crime and violence prevention programs. Ensuring the safety and security of citizens is one of – some might even say the primary – functions of municipal governments. Owing to their proximity to local neighborhoods, mayors and other local actors are particularly well located to play a central role in designing, implementing and evaluating strategies to make cities safer and more secure. And while there are obvious benefits to be gained from improving the overall security of cities, they are far from guaranteed. In many parts of the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean, there are few incentives and limited capacity for local governments to play a more active role in improving citizen security.

Between 1950 and 2010, the proportion of people living in cities expanded from 30-80%. There are more than 55 cities with populations of one million or more and over 2,000 cities driving the region's economic growth. Notwithstanding the many benefits the region's cities have delivered, security is still one of the top concerns for citizens. Latin America and the Caribbean features some of the most dangerous urban centers on the planet: 41 of the 50 most murderous cities are located there. Not surprisingly, the region has given rise to a selection of remarkable city-led innovations to promote security and safety.

There is no one-size-fits all approach for cities to deliver safety and security. As with most social policies, strategies must be tailored to the specific characteristics of a city. What works outside the region may not necessarily generate similar effects in Latin America and the Caribbean. The region is characterized for having high level of informality, with low-income and vulnerable groups pushed to marginal and peripheral areas. Notwithstanding improvements in development, poverty has urbanized – encompassing roughly 25% of the urban population. Today, at least 160 million inhabitants of the region live in low-income informal settlements lacking title and access to basic services. Deep social and spatial divides in cities are deepening inequality and creating fertile grounds for crime to thrive. It is precisely in these and other neighborhoods that organized crime groups, street gangs, and private security entities are substituting for the State.

Insecurity results from a multiplicity of factors generally associated with socioeconomic conditions, institutional weakness, and lack of social cohesion. Given this complexity, approaches to reducing urban crime and violence must be intersectoral and interdisciplinary in nature. While crime economists have contributed to understanding the need to address incentives and consequences of committing crimes, public health approaches increasingly highlight the need to also address risk factors among the most vulnerable populations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See IDB (2017).

A growing number of Latin American and Caribbean cities are experimenting with innovative, comprehensive and evidence-based approaches to preventing and reducing crime and violence. The most promising strategies have achieved a balance between prevention and control measures to effectively reduce crime. They frequently entail improved police and intelligence effectiveness, strengthened management capacities, preventive work with the most vulnerable groups, proactive collaboration with civil society including the private sector, and a strategic engagement with new technologies, including data analytics and machine learning tools.

This report considers a number of innovative city efforts to improve security and safety. The assessment reveals a number of common recurring preconditions shaping their success. These can be summed up as: strong mayoral leadership and community involvement; multisectoral crime control and prevention strategies; balanced coordination among all levels of government; access to resources; a commitment to data-driven and evidence-based strategies; smart use of new technologies; and the implementation of monitoring and oversight mechanisms.

The first section presents an overview of the situation of crime and violence in Latin America and Caribbean cities. Section two reviews some of the drivers commonly associated with urban crime. The third section reviews actual experiences of urban crime control and prevention, yielding lessons learned and best practices for effective local security management, which are synthesized in the final section.

## Trends and patterns

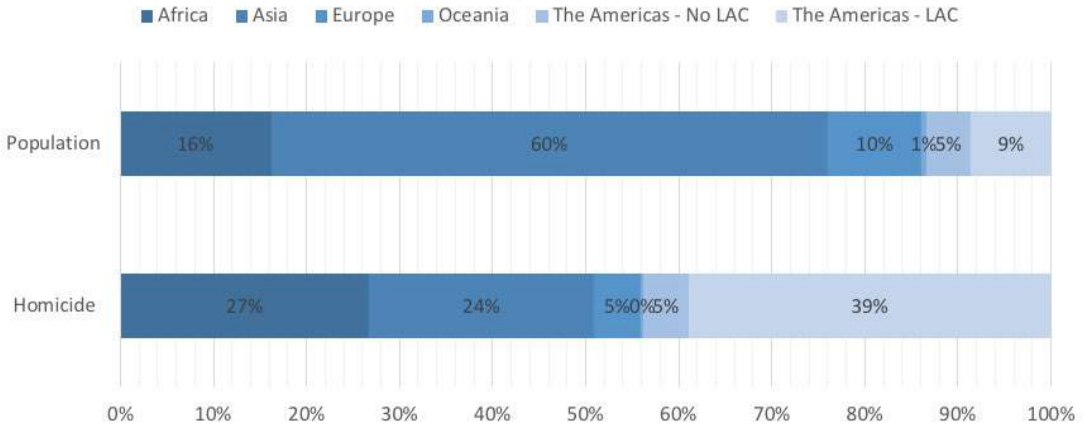
Although the Latin American and Caribbean region has made socioeconomic progress over the last decade, the incidence of crime remains high. Between 2004 and 2014, most countries experienced annual rates of economic growth of close to 4%, while poverty rates declined and the health and education levels of LAC citizens improved. In contrast, the main indicators concerning crime, victimization, and perceptions of insecurity remained high, with citizens exhibiting a low level of confidence in the institutions responsible for delivering citizen security services.

Latin America and the Caribbean remains the most violent region on the planet, with a 2015 homicide rate of 23 per 100,000 inhabitants (four times higher than the world average). The region accounts for 39% of world homicides, though it has only 9% of the global population (see Figure 1). Similarly, when external causes of death (homicides, suicides, and traffic accidents) are compared, LAC is the only region where homicide is the main cause of death (52%).<sup>2</sup> Latin American and the Caribbean cities are also worsening tendencies of crime and violence. The proportion of all homicidal violence occurring in Latin America and the Caribbean increased from 29% in 2000, to 37% in 2009, and 39% in 2017. The region as a whole has registered more than 2.5 million murders since 2000, roughly 75% of which are firearm-related. What's more, all else equal, the regional murder rate is expected to grow from roughly 22 per 100,000 in 2017 to around 35 per 100,000 by 2030.

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<sup>2</sup> See World Health Organization. Global Health Estimates.

**FIGURE 1**  
**GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOMICIDE**



**There is considerable heterogeneity in crime and violence.** One of the characteristics of the phenomenon of crime and violence is the degree of geographical concentration. In some countries, for example, less than 10% of municipios account for almost half of all homicides (as in the case of Central America).<sup>3</sup> At a more disaggregated level, crime is concentrated in microspaces commonly known as street segments. A study analyzing five LAC cities found that 50% of crimes were concentrated in 3% to 7.5% of street segments, with 25% of crimes occurring in between 0.5% and 2.9% of street segments.<sup>4</sup>

**Insecurity is particularly acute in the region’s cities.** Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean are among the most violent in the world. Homicide rates in the cities very widely compared with the global average of 7.2.<sup>5</sup> Several cities fall below the average, while there are also cities with rates that are 10 to 20 times higher than the world average. For example, the murder rate in cities such as Caracas, San Pedro Sula, San Salvador, and Acapulco is in excess of 80 per 100,000 inhabitants (see Figure 2). It is worth emphasizing that not all capital cities exhibit the highest numbers and/or rates of homicides. Smaller cities or rural areas can be the focus of violence, particularly where these are close to borders, in areas with limited government presence, or in areas where drug trafficking occurs.

**Homicide is not the only type of violence in Latin America and Caribbean cities.** Other types of violent crimes, such as robberies, are also growing. In 2014, the robbery rate in LAC

<sup>3</sup> See BID (2017).

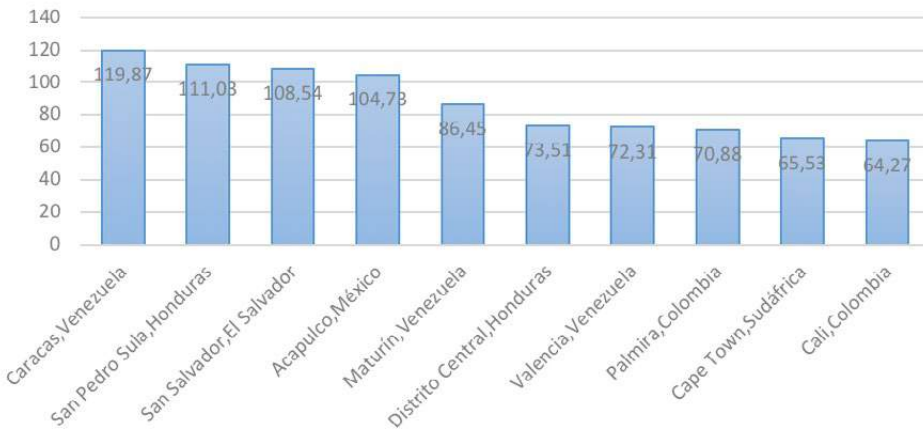
<sup>4</sup> See BID (2016).

<sup>5</sup> See Vilalta et al 2016.

averaged 321.7 per 100,000 inhabitants, compared with a world rate of approximately 108.<sup>6</sup> Six out of every 10 robberies in the region are violent.<sup>7</sup> Comparing the LAC subregions, the rate was 334.1 in Central America, 126.3 in the Caribbean, 339.5 in the Andean countries, and 482.8 in the Southern Cone. It should be noted that administrative data from police sources for these types of crimes (reports) are usually subject to a high degree of underreporting. The crime of cell phone theft has grown rapidly in Latin America in recent years. In Colombia, for example, 1 million devices are estimated to have been stolen in 2013–2,700 per day—yet only 18,000 were reported. In Argentina, the number of devices stolen stands at 6,500 per day<sup>8</sup>, affecting 3 million users since 2015, according to official figures.

**FIGURE 2**

**HOMICIDE RATE PER 100,000 AMONG WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS CITIES<sup>9</sup>**



**Violence is highest in poor urban neighborhoods and on the outskirts of cities.**<sup>10</sup> Crime and violence in LAC's cities are of a complex and multidimensional nature, affecting citizens in both public places and their own homes. Several types of violence interact: political, gang-related, economic, gender-based, interpersonal, and domestic. Disparities in levels of violence depending on neighborhoods' income levels are another characteristic of violence in LAC's cities. Neighborhoods with higher levels of income are affected mainly by property crime<sup>11</sup>, while violent crime is generally focused in poor urban neighborhoods, to the point that in some cases it is considered a routine part of daily life. Living in safer neighborhoods also reduces the

<sup>6</sup> See UNODC 2016.

<sup>7</sup> See UNDP 2014.

<sup>8</sup> See GSMA 2015.

<sup>9</sup> See Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y Justicia Penal 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Briceño-León and Zubillaga, 2002

<sup>11</sup> See Gaviria and Pages, 2002.



likelihood of victimization by approximately 50% compared with unsafe areas.<sup>12</sup> This reinforces feelings of inequality in terms of opportunities and available resources with which to protect oneself against crime, as well as access to security services such as policing and justice.

**Crime is costly and represents an obstacle to sustainable development in the region.** These high levels of crime lead to multiple distortions in public and private resource allocation and affect citizens' well-being. Accordingly, insecurity has been recognized as one of the main challenges to the competitiveness of businesses in the region.<sup>13</sup> According to the IDB's most recent study (2017), crime is estimated to cost countries in the region an average of 3.5% of GDP. For the region as a whole, this is equivalent to US\$170 billion at 2014 exchange rates, or US\$261 billion adjusted for purchasing power parity. These estimates include public spending on security (police, justice, and prison administration services), private sector spending on security, and the social costs of crime (due to victimization and the lost income of prisoners). Analysis of the LAC subregions shows that Central America suffers the highest costs from crime, at 4.22% of GDP, followed by the Caribbean (3.72%), the Andean region (3.08%), and, lastly, the Southern Cone (3.00%). The cost of crime for countries in the region is equivalent to annual spending on infrastructure, and is approximately equal to the annual income of the poorest 30% of the region's population.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Chioda 2017.

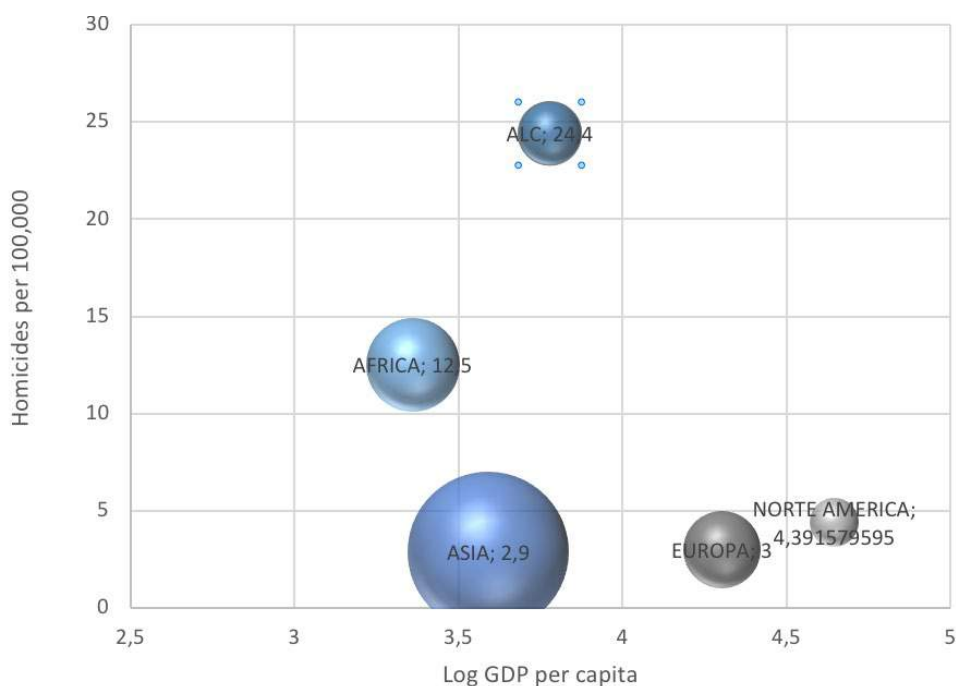
<sup>13</sup> See WEF, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> See IDB (2017)

## Risks and drivers

Latin America and the Caribbean face a paradigm. Although the region has achieved higher levels of development, this has not coincided with reductions in crime and violence. The precise relationship between poverty and homicide is still a mystery. Yet, in Latin America and the Caribbean, compared to the rest of the world, poverty rates are relatively low, while violence levels are surprisingly high.<sup>15</sup> The same is true when comparing homicide rates with Gross Domestic Product (see Figure 3), for countries in other world regions, similar GDP levels mean lower homicide rates. In Latin America and the Caribbean, not so.<sup>16</sup>

**FIGURE 3**  
**HOMICIDE RATES COMPARED TO GDP PER CAPITA BY WORLD REGION**



The relationship between violent crime and the overall development of a country or city is not linear. It has been observed that ‘homicide rates first increase as per capita income rises and then decline at high levels of per capita income.’<sup>17</sup> That is, violence is lower in countries with the lowest or highest levels of development. This is because as income grows, there are

<sup>15</sup> See IDB (2015)

<sup>16</sup> See IDB (2015).

<sup>17</sup> See Chioda (2017).

greater benefits and opportunities for committing crimes, and at the same time, investments in security and justice institutions lag resulting in an increase in crime.

Another driver commonly associated with homicidal violence is inequality. Although there is mixed evidence about the relationship between the two, studies have found that inequality at the local level is a strong predictor of violence. For instance, low-income youth who grow up in high income neighborhoods are more likely to be engaged in criminal activity, compared to those who grew up in lower income neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup>

The causes of crime and violence are complex. Studies and analyses have allowed a better understanding of common drivers in places with high levels of crime.

**Rapid and unregulated urbanization.** Latin American and Caribbean cities continue to grow in an unregulated manner, with deficit in public service provision and weak planning strategies. After 50 years of urban growth, the region shows unsustainable urbanization trends, at once for the high level of land use, low productivity levels, and high social exclusion. As a result, zones of exclusion are quickly established segmenting higher-income communities from lower-income ones.<sup>19</sup> These spatially segregated areas can inhibit physical and social connectivity with the rest of the city, resulting in spaces limited State presence, where organized crime groups can develop alternative mechanisms of social control.<sup>20</sup>

**Stalled productivity in cities.** The 200 largest cities generate over 65% of regional economic growth. Yet despite being engines of productivity, many large and medium-sized urban centers are experiencing stalling growth after a period of intense urbanization. With notable exceptions, most cities are not generating sufficient high-productivity jobs to employ expanding labor forces, and informal economic activity is soaring. This leads to a vicious cycle of worsened quality of life, increases in criminal activity, lack of investment in infrastructure, and the subsequent difficulties of attracting investment and generating well-paid jobs.<sup>21</sup>

**Youth unemployment** is particularly problematic for citizen security. In the region, 7.1 million youth are unemployed. There are also 15.1 million youth who classify as “NiNiNis” since they neither work, study, nor are looking to do so, they amount to 22% of the population in this age group.<sup>22</sup> Over half of those who actually do work are tied to the informal economy. Panel surveys have shown that a 1 per cent increase in youth unemployment leads to an additional 0.34 additional homicides per 100,000 people.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Chioda 2017.

<sup>19</sup> See Dammert (2007) and Muggah (2015b).

<sup>20</sup> See Briceño-León et al. (2008) and Concha-Eastman (2005, 1994)

<sup>21</sup> Labor Markets Sector Framework Document, Inter-America Development Bank, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> See Chioda (2017).





These conditions are magnified when coupled with dire socioeconomic circumstances, which often expose youth to even more risks associated with criminal behavior. Although employment is an important protective factor, evidence has increasingly shown that to protect against criminal behavior, the quality of the job matters. In fact, IDB penitentiary surveys of 5 countries in the region have shown that the majority of people who are imprisoned had a job when they committed the crime. Similarly, a study in Brazil and Mexico found that the quality of the job is an important factor when it comes to preventing criminal behavior.<sup>24</sup>

Another more explanation for high violence rates in Latin America and the Caribbean relates to the **limited response of security and justice institutions**. Limitation include low institutional legitimacy and uneven capacity. In Latin America and the Caribbean, just 20 in every 100 murders results in a conviction: the global rate is 43 in 100. As a result, people's faith in the policing and criminal justice system has plummeted. In fact, according to Latinobarometro, only 40% of citizens in the region trust the police and 30% the judicial system. Similarly, Latin America and the Caribbean has the highest levels of underreporting, with only 50% of crime reported to the police., usually due to a lack of trust in the capacity of security institutions to respond to crime.<sup>25</sup>

It is also worth noting that drug trafficking and organized crime can explain at least to some extent the high levels of violence in recent years. Several studies about the relationship between illegal markets and drugs have demonstrated that the recent increase in drug trafficking has generated a significant increase in levels of violence, mostly derived from confrontations with and among cartels.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See IDB 2017b.

<sup>26</sup> See Mejia and Restrepo 2013.

## Innovative responses

Latin American and Caribbean cities have become laboratories for innovative approaches to preventing and reducing crime and violence. Cities – and in particular mayors – are assuming an increasingly central role in shaping citizen security. Although urban security interventions differ in their scope and scale, they share a number of common features shaping their success. This section will analyze several cases of cities with a clear commitment to citizen security.

### **Aguascalientes green line urban renewal for crime prevention**

Aguascalientes, a city of roughly 886,000 residents (in 2017), is one Mexico's larger metropolitan areas and economic center. Although recognized as one of the country's wealthier cities with a high quality of life, it is nevertheless dotted with areas of concentrated poverty and rising crime. Inspired by similar innovations in Curitiba<sup>27</sup>, in 2010 the mayor explored a place-based strategy to recover a degraded areas of the city (then with a population of 804,000). The focus was recovering a neglected 12-kilometer zone with a catchment of roughly 300,000 people. The strategy involved a combination of strengthening urban governance, encouraging public use of space, promoting community participation, and implementing sustainable and multi-purpose measures to promote public security and local development.

Crucially, the municipal government assumed a lead role in designing and implementing what became known as Linea Verde, in an area that was inaccessible due to the presence of gas pipelines but also rising drug-related violence. The \$40 million dollar intervention was divided into a series of smaller parcels in order to more rapidly access funding from federal, state, city and private agencies. For example, the National Federation of Sports provided \$10 million for bicycle lanes, running trails, sports parks, and a public pool. The Ministry for Communications and Transport granted \$7.5 million for La Linea Verde Avenue. The national petroleum company, Pemex, made an in-kind contribution of \$1.1 million worth of gas.<sup>28</sup> The mayor also created a \$400,000 trust fund to continue running the park and programs. The national government covered roughly 80% while just 17% was paid for out of the city budget.

The Linea Verde program appears to be delivering results on the citizen security front. According to the municipality, violent assault and robbery have declined by 50% since it was launched. Meanwhile, the Linea Verde increased property values by as much as 20% since the intervention was undertaken. There are also signs that the intervention improved overall quality of life through improvements in services and the greening the urban environment.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Brazilian city of Curitiba launched a Linha Verde initiative in 2009. It was organized as an urban renewal and public transport program with some financing from IADB. See [http://www.omoradoronline.com.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=78:pinheiro-carlos-gomes-e-o-primeiro-onibus-do-novo-eixo-de-transporte-linha-verde&catid=7:politica&Itemid=5](http://www.omoradoronline.com.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=78:pinheiro-carlos-gomes-e-o-primeiro-onibus-do-novo-eixo-de-transporte-linha-verde&catid=7:politica&Itemid=5).

<sup>28</sup> It also sees value in the project since it protects pipelines with park rangers.

<sup>29</sup> See <https://policytransfer.metropolis.org/case-studies/the-green-line-social-development-comprehensive-plan>.

There are signs that the Linea Verde initiative may be replicated elsewhere in Mexico and was recently awarded the Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation.<sup>30</sup>

### **Montevideo's problem orienting policing experiment (2016-present)**

Montevideo, with 1.3 million people, is not typically associated with crime and victimization. Yet faced with raising concerns over street crime, youth violence and domestic abuse, public authorities there launched a series of innovative crime prevention strategies over the years. Many of these have combined both deterrence and community outreach, and a balance between control and prevention. The country has a long history of initiating innovative crime prevention strategies extending back to the 1990s. The latest – an integrated local management program for citizen security (2012 – 2015) and a new problem-oriented policing and community intervention initiative (2016-present) – are particularly interesting.

Faced with rising violent crime between 2005-2010, the Montevideo authorities with the support of the IDB initiated the “integrated local management program for citizen security” as a pilot in 2012.<sup>31</sup> The focus of the \$7 million dollar project<sup>32</sup> was on suppressing crime and strengthening social cohesion in three specific neighborhoods (or police precincts) exhibiting high rates of crime. The pilot included 750 police officers trained in improved investigatory and community policing techniques. Funding was also allocated to improving the national police academy's technological infrastructure, building three police units, and disseminating a new police code of ethics.

Alongside measures to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of local policing were investments in prevention programs focused primarily on at-risk youth. As part of the pilot, local authorities identified 680 young offenders for particular attention. Specific measures included efforts to improve the quality of the social support networks on the ground, strengthen statistics collection and evaluations of existing activities, improve human resource management through a program for civil servants involved in violence prevention, and support specific strategies around drug dependency to help young people leave the street.

Based on the results of the pilot, these efforts were scaled up in April 2016 with support from the IADB's Integrated Program for Citizen Security.<sup>33</sup> At the center of the new \$8 million initiative is a problem-oriented policing initiative that is designed to improve operational and strategic policing at the neighborhood level.<sup>34</sup> The scope of the strategy is impressive and involves the introduction of operational and human resource reforms<sup>35</sup> including the training

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<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.guangzhouaward.org/en/index.html>.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=36728527>.

<sup>32</sup> IADB provided \$5 million in support. See <https://www.iadb.org/en/project/UR-L1062>.

<sup>33</sup> The \$6 million IDB loan is for a 25-year term, with 5.5 years of grace, at a LIBOR-based interest rate. It includes an additional \$2 million in local counterpart funds.

<sup>34</sup> See IADB (nd) Uruguay Programa Integral de Seguridad Ciudadana.

<sup>35</sup> See IADB (nd) Uruguay Programa Integral de Seguridad Ciudadana.



of some 1,100 police officers in problem-oriented policing (POP). This project is also designed to help support the continual reductions in robberies that have been achieved by a hot spots strategy in Montevideo called el program de alta dedicación operativa (PADO). In particular, there has been a focus in further strengthening crime analysis and investigation techniques through training and advanced software.

Alongside the PADO are large-scale investments in reducing youth violence and domestic abuse. Started in 2015 and 2016, the “Pelota al Medio al la Esperanza” program includes a range of activities designed to promote co-existence and mitigate the risks of crime and violence. These include efforts to encourage school retention, promote employment schemes for former inmates, create safer urban spaces, launch recreational events<sup>36</sup>, reduce intimate partner violence, and promote micro-level projects in hot spot neighborhoods. The overall goal is to help promote underlying social cohesion and efficacy to diminish the risk of inter-personal and intimate partner victimization.

The PADO initiative is already credited with making an impact on reducing violent crime. Indeed, an IDB and the Uruguayan Ministry of the Interior 2017 study found significant initial impacts.<sup>37</sup> The IADB examined the period from April 2016 to January 2017. When compared to a similar period in 2015, it registered a 22% decline in robbery in areas where it was deployed. In some areas, robbery dropped by more than 60%.

<sup>36</sup> See <http://www.propuesta.com.uy/index.php/sociedad-2/3-sociedad/2438-miles-participaron-en-pelota-al-medio-a-la-esperanza>.

<sup>37</sup> See <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/8858?locale-attribute=es&>.

### Peñalolen´s comprehensive neighborhood security plan

Peñalolen, a mid-sized city of 248,000 nestled in the capital region of Santiago de Chile, has faced comparatively moderate levels of crime and victimization. Yet following a surge in criminality in the early 2000s, calls emerged for a crackdown. Crime control was typically the responsibility of the national police – the Carabineros – and operated autonomously from municipalities. Faced with growing pressure to address the issue, the mayor of Peñalolen launched a citizen security strategy in 2004.<sup>38</sup>

The so-called *Communal Plan for Citizen Security* featured a robust normative and institutional mandate and strategy. To be sure, it was developed in such a way that it was aligned with a pre-existing *National Policy on Public Security* to ensure a high level of coordination between central and local authorities. The Plan also included specific provisions to establish a municipal Directorate for Citizen Security with a high degree of autonomy – to coordinate activities, take decisions, recruit and train a team, and manage a budget. The consolidation of authority and discretion at the municipal level was essential to its overall impact.

From the beginning, the focus of the Communal Plan supported local approaches to prevent crime not exclusively through law enforcement, but through a wide array of social, economic and physical measures. Strategies ranged from discrete measures such as community policing, community alarms and smart lighting through to broader environmental design interventions to deter crime and promote social cohesion. The Plan also led to the creation of early crime detection teams, positive parenting programs, activities to anticipate early school drop-out, after-school programs, alternative prison strategies and reinsertion programs.

The Plan stressed the importance of focusing activities on hot spots and hot people. Geographically, this meant concentrating measures in five neighborhoods that generated disproportionate levels of crime and victimization in Peñalolen. To promote early warning and deterrence, the mayor introduced a protection system of community alarms reaching some 17,000 households. Meanwhile, social prevention projects focusing on at-risk youth and former offenders were also simultaneously launched. An SOS women initiative that combined panic buttons and emergency response services were also introduced to help address domestic abuse and sexual violence.

At the center of the Plan was a focus on rebuilding social cohesion to restore social efficacy within the hardest hit areas. As such, the Plan stressed the role of promoting community

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<sup>38</sup> The country´s constitutional law on municipalities authorizes a high degree of local authorities to support and promote citizen security measures within their jurisdiction. See [http://cesc.uchile.cl/buenaspracticasenprevencion/bbp\\_docs/12\\_plan\\_integral\\_barrios\\_seguros\\_chile.pdf](http://cesc.uchile.cl/buenaspracticasenprevencion/bbp_docs/12_plan_integral_barrios_seguros_chile.pdf).

development in areas experiencing above-average rates of crime and engaging citizens in the design, implementation and evaluation of a wide range of measures. What is more, the plan continuously adjusted to meet changing conditions on the ground, including adding in an out-reach strategy to address “perceptions” of crime that continued to increase even as real crime rates declined.<sup>39</sup>

The municipality has also invested in monitoring the outcomes of the Plan. The Directorate tracks official crime data from the police and prosecutors office and conducts period victimization surveys.<sup>40</sup> The results are impressive. The introduction of community safety committees and community alarms is correlated with a sharp decline in reported victimization from 2007-2010.<sup>41</sup> Reported victimization declined from 33% to 22% and reported violent robberies plummeted from 23.9% to 9.9% from 2011-2014.

### **A holistic approach in Honduras’ Central District and San Pedro Sula**

In 2011, Honduras was considered the most violent country worldwide, with the world’s highest homicide rate at 86 per 100,000 inhabitants. The country’s structural challenges including macroeconomic shifts, poverty and political instability coupled with the presence of gangs, transnational criminal groups, and complex drug trafficking routes made tackling crime and violence a challenging feat. As is true for other countries, crime, particularly gang violence, was concentrated in Honduran cities, Central District and San Pedro Sula alike. The high levels of violence in turn generated little to no trust in public institutions, with more than 80% of the population reporting zero or little trust in the National Police.

This situation gave way to Honduras’ National Comprehensive Policy for Coexistence and Citizen Security. This policy’s key starting point to reduce violence in general, and urban violence in particular, was to start by strengthening security and justice institutions. It included a deep reform of its National Police, focused on training and professionalization. Both the IDB and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (COSUDE) supported a project that helped transform the Honduran Police. Before, a police cadet could enter the police ranks after completing 6 years of basic education, now, s/he is required to complete 12 years of studies. Previously, patrol officers graduated with less than six months of training, now, they need 11 months of training which includes an internship on the field.

The police salary was increased by more than 40% and social security benefits, as well as infrastructure and equipment for academic training greatly improved. Likewise, there was greater participation of civil society in the design of security reforms, through the creation of a commission in charge of reforming the Honduras police.

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<sup>39</sup> See [http://www.lariojamunicipal.com.ar/multimedia/archivos/archivos\\_34579\\_68128.pdf](http://www.lariojamunicipal.com.ar/multimedia/archivos/archivos_34579_68128.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> See <http://cead.spd.gov.cl/estadisticas-delictuales/>.

<sup>41</sup> See [http://observatorio.Peñalolen.cl/sites/default/files/documentos/grafico\\_seguridad\\_ciudadana\\_resultados.pdf](http://observatorio.Peñalolen.cl/sites/default/files/documentos/grafico_seguridad_ciudadana_resultados.pdf) and [http://www.seguridadpublica.gov.cl/filesapp/13\\_ENUSC\\_2012\\_Peñalolen.pdf](http://www.seguridadpublica.gov.cl/filesapp/13_ENUSC_2012_Peñalolen.pdf).

This institutional and national level reform was coupled with efforts at the local level. The Policy emphasized the responsibilities of local governments in delivering citizen security. Doing so, often starts by generating better data to understand local criminal dynamics. With IDB and COSUDE support, there was a great advance in the generation and analysis of information to study violence and crime at a micro level. To support local governments in the data collection process,

30 Observatories of Coexistence and Citizen Security were installed and are operating in the municipalities that present the highest rates of crime, including Distrito Central and San Pedro Sula. The information of the observatories is concentrated in a server in the Ministry of Security, and is validated three or four times a week by a committee integrated by the representatives of the primary data sources, such as the public prosecution service, the police department of investigation, the Institute of Forensic Medicine, among others.

These analyses have enabled the design of data-driven citizen security programs. For instance, a study that analyzed the association between homicide rates and domestic violence and other variables such as sociodemographic characteristics, an urban index of marginalization, and geographical variables, found that the marginality index, the divorce rate, and the amount of space connectivity are positively associated with homicides in Distrito Central. This kind of information was key for the design of an urban intervention that the Honduras government is about to start implementing with the support of the IDB. The new project seeks to prevent and reduce homicides and domestic violence, the last one being largely an invisible crime that mainly affects women, youth and children. This will be addressed with a comprehensive approach, through the provision of citizen services by various state institutions, programs of violence prevention and the improvement of the urban habitat at the local level.

To date, this combination of efforts at the national and local levels has paid off. The homicide rate decreased by 50% in six years, from 86 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2011 to 43 in 2017. Perceptions of security and levels of trust in institutions have also increased. According to the Gallup global survey, the percentage of citizens who claim to feel safe walking in their neighborhoods increased by 11 percentage points from 2015 to 2016, and citizens' trust in the Police increased from 19% in 2015 to 54% in 2017.

**The Policy emphasized the responsibilities of local governments in delivering citizen security. Doing so, often starts by generating better data to understand local criminal dynamics.**

### **Ciudad Juarez's total approach to crime control**

Ciudad Juarez - a sprawling city of 1.3 million - experienced a dramatic surge in criminal violence from 2008-2011. The absolute number of homicides garnered global headlines increasing by more than 700% from 192 (2008) to 1,589 (2009) to 3,766 (2010), reaching a homicide rate of 271 per 100,000. Extreme levels of violent crime effectively shut down the city: an estimat-

ed 37,000 businesses closed and a quarter of the population fled across the border to the US and other parts of Mexico. A number of factors shape Ciudad Juárez's vulnerability to crime and victimization.<sup>42</sup> A series of rolling protests from 2008-2009 set the stage for change.<sup>43</sup>

Conceived by both municipal and federal partners, Todos Somos Juárez was formally launched in 2010. The \$400 million initiative drew inspiration from the Medellín experience, bringing in support from civil society and the private sector. The sheer scope and scale of the intervention is unparalleled in Mexico, however. More than 160 separate commitments were set out to mitigate risks and promote opportunities to prevent violent crime. These were organized around six core sectors: public security, economic growth, employment, health, education, and social development. The entire program was informed by a diagnosis and led by a multi-stakeholder coordinating team – the mesa de seguridad.<sup>44</sup>

The program was spread out across different levels of government, the private sector and civil society. This was important. A goal was to shift the focus of programming away from a narrow reliance on the armed forces and punitive law enforcement to an approach emphasizing social and economic prevention strategies. Todo Somos Juárez involved a massive investment in urban renewal schemes – schools, universities, and parks – as well as extending harm reduction, poverty reduction and credit and loan schemes to tens of thousands of families. It deliberately involved specially-created citizen councils to shape priorities, programs and projects. Moreover, federal agencies were required to work closely with state and municipal counterparts, with weekly reports feeding back to the president's office.

While far from problem-free, Todo Somos Juárez achieved many of its intended outcomes. The homicide rate dropped from 271 to 19 per 100,000 between 2010 and 2015. Other metrics of violent crime also plummeted, though these changes were also likely influenced by the (temporary) victory of the Sinaloa cartel over the Juárez cartel. Rates of school performance also increased dramatically, and more people reclaimed the streets that had previously been barren. Even so, criticisms also emerged about incomplete projects, the rushed nature of the intervention, and unmet expectations. There are also concerns that rates of violence have surged anew in recent years, raising questions about the overall impacts of the intervention.

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<sup>42</sup> The primary trigger was a major conflict between erstwhile business partners – the Sinaloa and Juárez cartels – who were battling over drug routes. They were joined by included literally hundreds of street gangs in the city. Other structural factors also contributed to a comparatively high risk of criminal violence, including high-levels of single-headed households, chronic social disorganization and a weak and compromised police force and criminal justice sector.

<sup>43</sup> The state and municipal authorities routinely protested against the national government's decision to deploy roughly 10,000 soldiers and federal police, some of whom were purportedly connected to criminal activity in the city. Civil society-led marches also rallied public attention within Mexico and around the world. The turning point, however, was the assassination of a group of students in early 2010 and the (reluctant) engagement of the president.

<sup>44</sup> The Mesa included officials from all three levels of government; representatives of the security forces including the army, federal, and municipal police, and the attorney general's office together with a range of civil society stakeholders. See <http://www.mesadesseguridad.org/>



There are worthwhile questions about the extent to which *Todo Somos Juarez* is replicable within Mexico and beyond. The sheer scale and cost of the initiative ensures that it is not readily adaptable to lower- or medium-income settings. Yet the initiative did generate a series of worthwhile lessons, not least the critical emphasis on comprehensive inter-sector strategies, the role of institutional bodies to coordinate multiple layers of government and citizen groups, the value of strong involvement of the private sector, and a persistent emphasis on results. The program has inspired similar “*mesas de seguridad*” in Mexico as well as possible pilots in Nuevo Laredo and Tamaulipas.

### **Kingston and Port of Spain’s targeted community-based interventions**

In several Caribbean countries, violent crime rates have increased significantly over the last two decades, while stabilizing or dropping in other parts of the world. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago reached some of the highest homicides rates in the world – peaking in Jamaica in 2009 (61.5) and Trinidad and Tobago in 2008 (41.6) – but they have decreased significantly in both countries since that time. In high crime urban areas of both countries, the use and tolerance of violence to exert control and resolve disputes in inter-personal and community relations has become a social norm reinforced by gang presence, family dynamics, and the weakness of legitimate collective entities.<sup>45</sup> Long-term exposure to high levels of violence have left lingering distrust, fear and deep fragmentation in targeted communities in both countries.

The Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP) in Jamaica and the Citizen Security Programme (CSP) in Trinidad and Tobago, have been implemented<sup>46</sup> by the respective Ministries of National Security and partially supported by the IDB. They use similar interventions focused on individual, family and community level risk factors in high crime, predominantly urban, marginalized neighborhoods. Some interventions target certain sub-sets of at-risk groups (e.g. parents for parenting training; youth for vocational training) or the community as a whole (e.g. social marketing activities). Violence interruption programs have been implemented in communities affected by gang confrontations, using a model similar to that of *Cure Violence* (Chicago)<sup>47</sup>. Finally, in Trinidad and Tobago there is an additional component to strengthen police and community relations, while in Jamaica there is a focus on expanding community justice services (legal aid, restorative justice, and mediation).

Some of the keys to the success of both programs have included concentrated interventions in specific high-crime neighborhoods, building of a vision, and a shared agenda, around the need for a multi-sectoral approach to violence prevention over an exclusively repressive one, the recognition of local diversity, and therefore the existence of diverse needs in different communities, which has led to an approach offering different actions at the community

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<sup>45</sup> See IDB 2017b.

<sup>46</sup> Implementation began in Jamaica in 2001 and is now in phase III since 2015. In Trinidad and Tobago implementation began in 2008 to the present.

<sup>47</sup> Peace Management Initiative (PMI) in Jamaica and Project REASON in Trinidad and Tobago.



level, according to local needs. There has also been a focus on community-based crime and violence prevention, aimed at building social cohesion and collective efficacy within these neighborhoods, as well as increased dedication of resources to monitoring and evaluation.

Indicators of positive changes in the targeted communities, according to programme reports, suggest there has been progress. In the case of Kingston, the murder rate in the eight parishes in which the CSJP has operated declined 43% compared to 35% nationally, and 44.1% of CSJP community residents responded that crime in their community has decreased in the past five years, compared to only 27.5% of residents from other communities.<sup>48</sup> In the case of Port of Spain, murders in the CSP communities dropped by 55%, compared with a national reduction of 26% for the same period. Wounding and shooting in CSP communities dropped by 40% between 2008 and 2013, compared with a national reduction of 12% for the same period.<sup>49</sup>

### **Bogota - sustained citizen security**

During the 1980s and 1990s Bogota, then with roughly 8 million people, was considered a dangerous city. Yet within a decade, the capital's homicide rate dropped from 80 per 100,000 (1993) to 22 per 100,000 (2004). Today it is closer to 14 per 100,000 (2017). The transformation was not reservedly a function of structural changes in politics, social life or the economy,

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<sup>48</sup> Jamaica National Crime Victimization Survey (JNCVS), cited in the Final Evaluation of CSJP II, p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> ANEVER LTD., FINAL REPORT Evaluation of the Citizen Security Programme - Trinidad and Tobago 2008-2014, June 30, 2015.

but also the result of deliberate strategies launched by a succession of mayors. The leadership and determination exhibited by these mayors are key factors explaining the cities rebirth.

A focus of mayors throughout the 1990s and 2000s was on building a “civic” culture of self- and mutual respect. While Bogota has witnessed numerous citizen security initiatives, arguably the most innovative period occurred from 1995 to 2003. During these terms approximately \$160 million was channeled toward citizen security measures. According to the World Bank, roughly 72% was allocated for police programs and 20% was devoted to so-called co-existence programs and projects. While a sizeable amount, these expenditures represented roughly 2.33% of the city’s budget. Bogota also received a \$10 million loan from IDB in 1998-2004 and raised roughly \$6 million in local funds as part of this support.

The “Mission Bogota” program in Bogota was arguably one of the most comprehensive approaches to citizen security ever undertaken in the city. The initiative combined police-led programs, community vigilance, the creation of so-called spaces of order and co-existence programs. Between 1996-2001 roughly 6,600 community councils were created in Bogota to work block-by-block with the metropolitan police. The mayor also recruited almost 4,000 civic guides to regulate citizen activities in areas of traffic, security, waste and community mobilization. These activities were complemented with 12 “safe zones” to intentionally reclaim degraded and dangerous areas.

A major focus of Bogota’s mayors was also on strengthening and working with the metropolitan police. In addition to investing in management and training reform and enhancing their investigation capacities, a community policing program was launched in 1999 with support from the Chamber of Commerce. The so-called Plan Cuadrantes program focused on proactive patrolling in hot spots and directly incorporated the community councils, generating a strong buy-in from city residents. Parallel strategies focused on amplifying “family police stations” to address domestic violence, introducing mediation and conciliation units to address everyday community tensions, and the creation of a citizen security and coexistence unit to maintain continuity.<sup>50</sup>

Bogota’s continued to renew and reinvent it’s approach to public safety and security. A large scale urban renewal program starting in 2016 in El Bronx, described locally as “the hell in the heart of Bogota”, also involved a major transformation in housing an infrastructure, also generated security dividends – as well as criticism.<sup>51</sup> Another set of innovative measures include the “casas de justicia” that provide legal services to local neighborhood disputes as well as the centros de atención móvil para dorgodependientes (CAMADA) designed to promote harm reduction. Meanwhile, the Homicide Prevention Protocol program – a special hotline to extract would-be victims of lethal violence – has also generated some positive impacts since it was launched in 2017.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTLACREGTOPURBDEV/Resources/841042-1219076931513/5301922-1250717140763/Bogota.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> See <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/new-operation-against-bogota-drug-hub-raises-old-issues/>.

<sup>52</sup> See Otis (2018).

These are far from the only innovative citizen security measures introduced by cities. For example, the Barrio Seguro program in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) is credited with rebuilding trust in crime-affected neighborhoods and reducing murder rates. It has been successfully scaled from 2 to 13 neighborhoods since it was launched.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the Fico Vico program in Belo Horizonte (Brazil) is also credited with reducing crime rates through focused deterrence and social programs in the hardest hit areas of the municipality.<sup>54</sup> Efforts to improve community policing in Quito (Ecuador), including linking citizens with police through mobile phones, are also credited with improving perceptions of security and reducing crime.<sup>55</sup> Although the examples vary, there are key lessons emerging from successful city-based citizen security programs.

## Recommendations

A recent mapping of citizen security measures detected literally hundreds of new approaches in cities across Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>56</sup> Just under one third (322) of the roughly 1,100 measures identified were city-level. City-based strategies targeted a range of threats – especially common crime and youth crime, and city-led strategies also focused overwhelmingly on preventive measures often with a strong participatory component to engage communities.

These initiatives are also generating more evidence of what works and what does not. Until recently, there were few repositories of information cataloguing positive outcomes, particularly applied to Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>57</sup> There are now more platforms to exchange knowledge and to engage in policy dialogue in the field of citizen security, such as Citizen Security Week organized annually by the IDB and the “Alizana Municipales para la Prevencion de la Violencia en Centro America y la Repbulica Dominicana” (AMUPREV)<sup>58</sup>. Likewise, impact evaluations<sup>59</sup> are becoming more common, including on Central American innovations<sup>60</sup> as well as those in Latin America.

There is no doubt that local government are well positioned to respond to citizens’ demand, including for more security. Local governments have a granular understanding of the problems and threats their citizens face. At the same time, local governments can address several key issues to effectively improve security.

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<sup>53</sup> See Muggah et al (2016).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> See Boyle (2018).

<sup>56</sup> See <https://citizenssecurity.igarape.org.br/> and Alvarado et al (2017).

<sup>57</sup> See IDB (2015).

<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.amuprev.org/historias/>.

<sup>59</sup> See Closing Knowledge Gaps: Towards Evidence-Based Crime Prevention Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, BID, 2015.

<sup>60</sup> See Berk-Seligson et al (2014) and App and Winship (2015).

**Sustained municipal leadership is fundamental to successful public security.** The key ingredient to virtually all effective municipally-led citizen security programs is capable, creative and courageous local management, especially the mayor's office. It is mayors and local governments who best understand their local context and challenges, and who can promote a move towards greater citizen security. Without strong direction and the harnessing of local champions from the private sector and civil society, it is difficult to generate the forward momentum to deliver positive outcomes.

**Different contexts will necessarily drive different responses.** Form always follows function. When it comes to high intensity organized crime, there may be more involvement of federal-level institutions and intelligence-led operations. With respect to lower-intensity street crime and domestic violence, the strategies tend to be more balanced, combining deterrence and prevention. Any city strategy must be informed not just by a master plan, but also access to real-time data and analytics to allow for highly granular targeting but also adjustments and course-correction.

Across virtually all settings, however, are a common array of risk factors giving rise to crime and victimization. **Getting ahead of crime and addressing these risk factors is fundamental.** Indeed, in most contexts access and abuse of alcohol is overwhelming correlated with crime and victimization. Likewise, easy availability of firearms and the abundance of drug trafficking networks all exacerbate criminal violence. What is more, sustained exposure to domestic and interpersonal violence is also a factor that influences future violence – both in terms of victimization and perpetration. City-level strategies must also be selective in their approaches, not least owing to cost concerns, and addressing these risk factors can be cost-effective.

**Urban crime prevention requires comprehensive, balanced, inter-sector and long-term strategies with a vision for citizen security.** To effectively prevent crime, it is necessary to identify associated risk factors (economic, social, institutional or structural). As such, local responses to crime must be comprehensive and to achieve this it is necessary to incorporate a priority for urban security in the local development agenda. This involves aligning the actions of local offices towards one goal: reducing crime and violence. This requires a coordination among levels of government and among various government sectors including health, education, and employment. At the same time, it is key to achieve a balance between crime control and crime prevention, requiring coordinated action not just with the police but also from other critical local and national actors. The demands of maintaining a common vision and agenda are challenging, and require a high degree of coordination, custodianship and communication.

**Creative and strategic financing is critical.** Generating resources from a variety of sources is critical. A narrow reliance on national and state authorities alone can be risky, particularly given periodic shifts in government. City authorities must identify creative measures to generate sustained financing. This may require breaking programs and projects up into smaller, more



Photo: National Colombian Police, AP Photo, William Fernando Martiez. May 3rd, 2008, Bogota. Flickr CC.

digestible, parts. It will also almost certainly demand the development of multi-stakeholder arrangements and public-private partnerships to raise capital. Cities are experimenting with blended finances, special municipal taxes, social impact bonds, targeted subsidies and incentives for private investment, among other measures.<sup>61</sup>

**Technology and real-time data collection and analytics are critical to guiding city-level citizen security.** In most cities of the region technology is already facilitating the collection and analysis of data as well as criminal investigations. High quality and granular information on crime and victimization prevalence, perceptions of citizens, and underlying social and economic correlates is essential to all aspects of the programming cycle. Without such information, city leaders and their partners cannot adequately design, implement, monitor or evaluate security interventions. The advent of powerful computer processing, machine learning tools and AI mean that the quality of data collection and analysis has improved and the costs have declined. But these tools also generate new challenges: developing capacities for the use of technology, leveraging alliances with the private sector, and ensuring appropriate and ethical protocols for data collection, storage and retention.

**Engage communities in the design, implementation, evaluation and communication of citizen security strategies.** All successful interventions reveal that the process matters. Specifically, the way in which citizens are involved in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of strategies is critical. Affected communities need to feel that they are own-

<sup>61</sup> See <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/12/this-innovative-financing-tool-could-reduce-violence-in-a-city-near-you/>.

ers of the process. Citizen security measures that actively canvass public opinion, that involve multiple stakeholders in the preparation of diagnostics and action plans, and that regularly provide evidence of results are likely to outlast those that do not. They are central to building the trust and confidence in public security that is so essential to its achievement.

**Ensuring that citizen security investments are rigorously monitored and evaluated is essential.** Too often, monitoring and evaluation are left to the end of a citizen security process and not the beginning. Alternatively, they are relegated to the bottom of the priority list - an unnecessary add-on. And yet without proper monitoring and evaluation, it is hard to make basic judgments about the cost-effectiveness of specific interventions. Fortunately, a culture of evidence is beginning to spread in the citizen security sector. Data-driven interventions are increasingly the norm, particularly with the advent of Big Data tools to process public perception as well as real results on the ground. While perfection should never be the enemy of the good, investment in high quality impact evaluation is essential to identify successes and failures, improve course-correction, and make a case for scaling interventions when they show positive results.

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