

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

At the request of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Mission in Mexico and USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, Office for Regional Sustainable Development, Democracy and Human Rights Team (LAC/RSD/DHR), Democracy International, Inc. (DI) conducted a study of crime and violence prevention models in Mexico's northern cities of Tijuana, Baja California; Monterrey and Guadalupe, Nuevo León, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua.

In each of the three target cities, USAID in partnership with the Government of Mexico (GOM) selected three communities or polígonos to focus their interventions. The crime and violence prevention activities implemented in these nine polígonos are funded by USAID as part of Pillar IV of the Mérida Initiative, a bilateral partnership to improve citizen security in Mexico by fighting organized crime and building strong communities.

The overall purpose of this assessment, which was informed by a broad literature review and field work, was to identify the relative success of a set of crime and violence prevention models in the nine targeted communities and assess their potential replicability in other locations. In particular, the objectives were to assess the success of these models in identifying, addressing, and reducing risk factors leading individuals to engage in violent and criminal behavior. For this assessment, USAID selected a total of 15 activities, each classified under a specific crime prevention model (the psycho-social, the situational, and the community-based crime prevention model) and level of intervention (primary, secondary and tertiary). The assessment team analyzed these crime prevention activities and it also interviewed implementers of five non-USAID crime prevention projects operating in these three target cities.

The assessment provides recommendations on how to improve performance and maximize results of crime prevention activities. The assessment findings will inform the design of USAID's Pillar IV portfolio, now and in the future.

METHODOLOGY

This assessment was conducted by Yemile Mizrahi, Ph.D., Team Leader, Sandra Ley, Ph.D., Senior Local Crime Prevention Expert, and Lilian Chapa and Leonel Fernandez, local experts and both researchers at México Evalúa, a leading think tank devoted to the evaluation of public policies in Mexico.

Before beginning field work, the assessment team conducted an extensive review of crime prevention literature, including scholarly articles, books and practitioners' reports from the United States and Latin America.

After a week of interviews in Mexico City with USAID officials, federal government officials, and USAID's implementing partners, the team traveled to Monterrey, Tijuana, and Ciudad Juárez from June 23 to July 4. Following a questionnaire previously discussed with USAID, the team conducted in-depth interviews with local activity implementers, Mexican state and municipal government officials, and USG consulate officials. In addition to these interviews, the team conducted focus group discussion sessions with these activities' beneficiaries to collect information on their level of satisfaction with activities' performance, perception of crime and security problems in their communities, and opinions about results of activities' implementation. These focus groups were held in the *polígonos* where the activities are being implemented.

This assessment is primarily based on qualitative data collected during field work and quantitative data provided by the activity implementers in their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reports.

CRIME AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION MODELS

The most commonly used approach for classifying crime prevention strategies is the epidemiological public health approach developed by Brantingham and Faust¹, which focuses on crime and violence as an epidemic. Following the epidemiological perspective, crime prevention can be classified by three levels of intervention:

1. **Primary intervention** is directed at modifying the conditions that lead to crime in the physical and social environment at large. Primary prevention efforts are directed to the general public or the community at large in a specific area.
2. **Secondary intervention** is directed at early identification and intervention in the lives of individuals or groups regarded as vulnerable. Secondary prevention interventions are targeted to a subset of the population considered at higher risk of committing a crime or being victims of crime.
3. **Tertiary intervention** is directed to an even smaller subgroup of individuals who have already succumbed to criminal behavior or have already been victimized. Tertiary prevention is oriented to preventing recidivism.

An alternative classification of crime prevention strategies first proposed by Tony and Farrington and widely accepted in the literature², typifies strategies by addressing the main risk factors that lead to crime and violence in the first place which can be classified in the following three models:

1. **Psycho-social prevention model**, which focus on the social and psychological individual conditions that generate crime, such as domestic violence, inadequate adult supervision of children, family dysfunction, school desertion, inequality, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, discrimination, etc.
2. **Situational prevention model**, which focus on the physical and environmental conditions that generate opportunities for crime and violence, such as inadequate lighting of public spaces, accumulation of trash, run-down facilities, lack of surveillance or police presence in public spaces, etc.
3. **Community prevention model**, which focus on community conditions that lead to the rupture of informal social controls that generate and/or tolerate crime, such as social apathy, lack of social cohesion, lack of trust, disempowerment, etc.

Combining these two crime prevention typologies yields a matrix of crime prevention models³ or methodologies that conceptually allows analysts to identify the type of a particular program or

¹ Brantingham, P. J. and Faust, F. L., "A Conceptual Model of Crime Prevention", *Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 22, p. 284, 1976.

² Tonry, M. and Farrington, D. "Preface", Tonry, M. and Farrington, D. (eds) *Building a Safer Society: Strategies Approaches to Crime Prevention, Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume 19, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1995.

³ The term "model" is an analytical construct that refers to a bundle of crime prevention activities that share a common understanding of the main causes of crime and violence, the main risk factors, the population considered at risk of criminal behavior and a shared theory of change—explaining the reasons why crime prevention interventions

project being assessed, the targeting strategy utilized, the logic or theory of change behind the particular intervention and the outcomes that can realistically be expected.

This assessment analyzes each model and intervention as it applies to the Mexican context. It explains the models' theory of change and the implications for design and implementation of particular activities. To assess results of implementation, the assessment examined 15 activities (—five in each city)— each classified under a particular model and level of intervention. For each activity, the assessment analyzed the objectives, expected results, performance indicators, beneficiaries' perceptions and environmental constraints and opportunities affecting activities' implementation. The following findings and recommendations summarize the conclusions drawn from the report.

CRIME PREVENTION VS. CRIME REDUCTION

A wide consensus exists among scholars, psychologists, criminologists, and development practitioners that crime is caused by a multiplicity of factors ranging from individual psychological characteristics to broader community, social and environmental conditions. Crime prevention efforts therefore require a multi-disciplinary approach as well as the active engagement of a wide variety of actors and agencies that go beyond law enforcement and the criminal justice system. However, little consensus exists on the definition of crime prevention itself and on the most appropriate indicators to measure and evaluate progress of different prevention efforts. Additionally, crime prevention should not be confused with crime reduction or with broader poverty reduction and employment promotion policies.

Crime prevention refers to the “strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes” (UNDP 2009). While the ultimate goal is to reduce crime, such as homicides, interventions within a crime prevention perspective are in fact designed to reduce risks of criminal behavior by building protective factors to increase resiliency.

Crime prevention interventions should be assessed by their effectiveness in reducing the risks of crime, rather than actual crime rates. This is accomplished by positively affecting risk factors including domestic violence and dysfunctional families, drop-out rates of primary and high school students, teenage pregnancies, bullying in schools, unemployment, drug and alcohol consumption, decrepit and abandoned buildings, lack of police surveillance, acceptance of violent behavior within the community, etc.

It is important to note that none of the crime prevention activities assessed in this report defined crime reduction as an immediate objective, or included indicators related to crime reduction, even though they all identified this as an overall goal. Instead, USAID indicators focused on the risk factors associated with community crime and violence as described above. Having this logical gap between risk factors and crime reduction makes it difficult to determine which crime prevention models are most effective in decreasing crime and violence rates in focus communities. Moreover, official data on crime and violence, which is not disaggregated by polígono, shows that some crimes, such as homicides, decreased in Monterrey and Ciudad Juárez, but others, such as extortion, kidnapping and mugging increased. In Tijuana, the number of homicides per 100,000

will produce the expected results, namely reducing the risk of crime and eventually reducing crime levels. Models are different from individual crime prevention activities, but different activities can be part of the same model.

inhabitants actually increased by 46 percent from 2012 to 2013. What would be more effective and realistic in terms of measuring the success of crime and violence prevention activities is not to measure fluctuations in crime statistics in the short-term, but rather, to measure how prevention activities positively affected key risk factors in the community. With sustained intervention over time alleviating the multiplicity of risk factors, crime rates will decline.

KEY FACTORS ENABLING SUCCESS OF CRIME PREVENTION EFFORTS

Collaboration with Local Government Authorities Building a relationship of trust with local government officials is a critical factor for successful implementation and eventual sustainability of crime prevention initiatives. Local governments can play a significant role in facilitating appropriate places to work, leveraging additional resources, assisting in targeting at risk individuals, avoiding duplication of efforts, and publicizing and communicating results of the interventions. In cities where the local government is actively engaged and collaborates with implementing partners, crime prevention activities have greater opportunities to succeed and become sustainable.

Parental Support Activities engaging youth require the active endorsement of their parents to succeed. The lack of parent involvement, if not the outright parental opposition, undermined the effectiveness of many of the activities assessed in this report.

Rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation through Outcome and Output Indicators The majority of the activities included in this assessment did not have adequate outcome indicators. Without adequate and measurable data on the activities results, it is difficult to objectively assess the activities' performance and make solid recommendations on which activities and models should be replicated. It is important that prevention models contain appropriate outcome indicators to assess their overall effectiveness in mitigating risk factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Preventing crime and violence is a critical element to improving citizen security, but ultimately, the reduction of crime rates requires a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, interruption, reinsertion and incarceration. Moreover, a comprehensive strategy also entails interventions at the individual, family, school, community and social levels. A series of “small wins” in these areas, if effective and well-coordinated, can have a lasting impact on a community.

The following recommendations and lessons learned are drawn from the findings discussed above and are structured around four organizing principles:

1) Effective targeting of at-risk population. The most effective crime and violence prevention interventions are those that are able to reach out to individuals who are truly at risk of engaging in criminal behavior. In communities experiencing high levels of crime, there should be increased investment invest more resources in interventions that target beneficiaries at the secondary and tertiary intervention levels. These individuals, particularly the youth, are the most vulnerable to becoming perpetrators and/or victims of crime. There should also be more concerted efforts to seek greater parental involvement in crime prevention interventions targeted for at-risk youth. Parental involvement is especially important for keeping and attracting children in after-school programs.

Although primary level interventions are important in increasing awareness about risks of criminal behavior, many of the primary level interventions examined in this assessment did not address the

root causes of crime and support a variety of activities that have no direct relationship to crime prevention.

2) Identifying and designing appropriate interventions in “hot spots.” In most places, criminal activity tends to concentrate in a few “hot spots” within a particular community. Affecting these areas effectively is likely to have an overall positive impact on reducing incidences of crime in the community. However, in addition to mobilizing the community, interventions designed to improve the conditions of a particular hot spot, typically characteristic of activities within the situational model also require the active engagement of the municipal government and the police to become effective and sustainable.

Therefore, it is critical to seek even greater collaboration with local authorities to improve the environmental conditions where funded activities operate and ensure greater sustainability of crime prevention initiatives, particularly interventions targeted to improving identified “hot spots” in communities. At the same time, over-concentration of crime prevention efforts in specific locations may be counterproductive. Therefore, geographic boundaries should be relaxed to expand the number of beneficiaries that are able to participate in activities and, at the same time, avoid competition among donors and other actors implementing similar crime prevention activities.

3) Alignment of resources and avoiding duplication of efforts. It is important to prioritize resources on initiatives that show more promising results rather than dispersing resources. Instead of funding a large number of small activities, support should be targeted to a smaller number of larger, well designed and articulated interventions with sufficient resources to maintain a strong monitoring and evaluation system. Spreading resources too thin among too many different activities limits the ability of activities to have a more significant impact in the places where they operate. A good practice would be to map existing crime prevention programs supported by other donors and the Mexican government to avoid duplicating efforts.

To maximize results, it is also important that crime prevention activities seek the collaboration of local government officials. The establishment of effective collaborative strategies with local government authorities will help actors gain access to local government’s diagnoses, which rely on official crime statistics, instead of duplicating efforts by developing parallel diagnostic tools that are not as sustainable because local governments do not have long-term incentives to use them.

Activities/programs that leverage direct and in-kind contributions from local partners – including the private sector – show greater prospects for impact and long-term sustainability.

4) Strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and public messaging. Developing adequate outcome and output indicators and obtaining or generating appropriate data is essential in explaining the impact and results in crime and violence prevention. Without objective information, it becomes difficult to assess the impact of interventions or design new evidence-based activities based on replication of successful models. Some examples of appropriate outcome indicators to assess overall effectiveness of crime prevention activities include: reduction of school desertion rates; reduction of youth unemployment; reduction of teenage pregnancies; revitalization of dangerous and decrepit urban spaces; and reduced perception of fear of crime, among others.

Additionally, it is important to invest in the training of implementing partners to improve their capacity to develop better monitoring and evaluation systems. These skills are fundamental for the effective assessment of crime prevention efforts, as well as for the enhancement of the activities’ sustainability in the long run. The improvement of monitoring and evaluating skills will also

contribute to an improved outreach dissemination strategy, particularly for crime prevention activities for at-risk youth. For example, outreach and dissemination of results can contribute to the engagement of local employers and persuade them to provide job opportunities to graduating beneficiaries.