



# HABITAT III ISSUE PAPERS

## 3 - SAFER CITIES

New York, 31 May 2015

*(not edited version)*





## ISSUE PAPER ON SAFER CITIES

### KEY WORDS

inclusiveness, community and urban safety, planned urbanization, crime prevention, city leadership and accountability, governance, social integration, social cohesion.

### MAIN CONCEPTS

#### City Leadership

Within the framework of national strategies and policies, all levels of government should play a leadership role in developing effective and humane crime prevention and community safety strategies and in creating and maintaining institutional frameworks for their implementation and review. This implies both 'government leadership' from national and local governmental levels (ministries, regional authorities, municipal authorities) but also the role of major urban stakeholders, and in particular business and community groups, in leading progressive urban safety efforts where governmental authorities are lagging behind or limited in scope and resources. Approaching Urban Safety by 'city' leadership means thinking through the governance structures of the city as catalysts for collective and collaborative action centred on the responsibilities of government, but also the possibilities and capacity of key business and community actors.

#### Resilience

Resilience concentrates on how individuals, communities and business not only cope in the face of multiple shocks and stresses, but also creates new opportunities for transformational development. Resilience at city level recognizes the urban area as a dynamic and complex system that must adapt to various challenges. Creating resilience of local communities to factors that may lead to engagement in crime and violence is key in order to reduce vulnerabilities, opportunities and rewards for offending.

#### Social capital

Social capital refers to social networks, to relationships of trust and to institutions; how individuals and/or communities enter and participate in social networks and how this participation results in obtaining opportunities for individual or collective action that contribute to community cohesion, to the strengthening of solidarity and social integration.

#### Crime Prevention

Prevention requires 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.



## Urban Safety

In addition to addressing the prevention of crime and violence, urban safety also includes the enhancement of individual rights including the physical, social and psychological integrity of a person. As such, urban safety is a complementary concept to crime prevention, as it starts from the observation that inadequate urban development and local governance and social and territorial exclusion patterns encourage crime and violence. In this perspective, urban safety adopts a citywide and participatory process to address the risk factors, and above all, protection factors of insecurity in cities, creating the conditions of more sustainable, inclusive, cohesive and just cities (Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2008).

## Innovation

Technology is a crucial factor contributing to security and opens a platform for vulnerable groups to have a voice. Making use of advanced technologies, including social media, may help to improve local crime prevention and community safety strategies, policies and programmes.

## KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Empirical studies show that it is not the size of urban agglomerations that create criminal surroundings but rather the poor planning, design and management of urbanisation (Vanderschueren, 2004).
- The functionality, layout and organisation of urban spaces influence people's level of security. The principles governing layout, functionality, management (and governance) of urban spaces that determine the quality of urban development are close to those that contribute to the safety of such spaces, as well as to their users' feelings of safety (Politecnico di Milano, 2006).
- Access, use and availability of public space including safe public transport for all is key for ensuring social inclusion and building safer cities. There are several innovative municipal crime prevention and urban safety practices, particularly in Latin America that have used 'appropriation of public space' as an asset to pacify gangs and in exchange regulate the proliferation of small arms and reduce the vulnerability of neighbourhoods to crime and violence.
- The urban nature of homicide for example is particularly noticeable in Central America, the Caribbean and much of Africa. For example, settlements of more than 50,000 inhabitants record a disproportionate number of homicides in countries in Central America. (UNODC, 2014). Studies have shown that a large percentage of urban dwellers in developing and transitional countries have been victims of crime over a five year period, with victimisation rates reaching 70% in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa (UN-Habitat, 2007).
- There is evidence from all regions of the world that most of those who become involved in crime, whether organized, gang-related or street crime, are young and male. Some 70% of homicide victims globally are male, mostly young men in the 15-25 year age-group, as are their perpetrators.<sup>1</sup>
- Findings from UN Women's Safe Cities Global Initiative indicate that sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces are an everyday occurrence for women and girls around the world—in urban and rural areas, in developed and developing countries.

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<sup>1</sup> UNODC (2011) *Global Study on Homicide*, p.11.



- Violent killings around the world involve the use of firearms. Guns are implicated in nearly 200,000 human deaths per year. A majority of this armed violence takes place in urban setting; more than two-thirds of reported victims of armed violence live in countries not in armed conflict.<sup>2</sup>
- Research points to inequalities (UN-Habitat, 2015), lack of institutional and social control and social exclusion (not poverty<sup>3</sup>) as underlying causes of crime and violence in urban areas
- States around the world have recognized the importance of cooperation and partnerships with community organizations, non-governmental organizations, the business sector and private citizens to enhance safety and security, including at the local level. <sup>4</sup> Equally states have initiated participatory urban planning processes targeting citizens participation in improving the safety of citywide public open spaces and streets,
- Coordination of local and national government action is essential for effective crime prevention and community safety, including addressing the interlinkages between transnational organized crime, and local crime, violence and insecurity.
- Disaggregated data on crime and violence at the sub-national level can help to define priorities for interventions and identify targets for programmes and assistance where they are likely to be most effective. Indeed, successful examples of coordinated crime and violence prevention at the local level often come from experiences of local government-led policies.<sup>5</sup>

## ISSUE SUMMARY

### Knowledge

- There is an increased global recognition, including within the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda process, that inclusive, safe and resilient cities and societies are a cornerstone for, and primary outcome of, sustainable development.<sup>6</sup> The majority of the world's poorest people live in cities affected by high crime and violence and largely in the context of tenure insecurity, weak social support networks and areas prone to manmade and natural disasters – over 1.5 billion people (IDRC, 2012).The Global Report on Human Settlements, which focused on 'Enhanced Urban Safety and Security', provided a first global overview of the state of urban safety and identified the need for a multi-dimensional approach to urban safety. Since then, several global flagship reports focusing on the urban dimension of crime and violence have been developed. Since 2011, Member States accredited to the governing bodies of UN-Habitat and UNODC have called for the preparations of UN Guidelines on Safer Cities to consider the prevention of crime, the building of urban safety and the fostering of social cohesion as priorities to be incorporated into sustainable urban planning, management and governance policies considering the existing Guidelines for Cooperation and Technical Assistance in the field of Urban Crime Prevention.

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<sup>2</sup> Global Burden of Armed Violence, 2015, UNODA Occasional Paper 25, The Gun-Free Zone – a tool to prevent and reduce armed violence 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Crime Victim Surveys such as conducted in Nairobi (2001), Dar es Salaam (2000), and Johannesburg (1997) show that on the contrary, crime impacts most on the urban poor

<sup>4</sup> See for example, the 13<sup>th</sup> UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Draft Report on Agenda Item 6, 'National approaches to public participation in strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice' (A/CONF.222/L.2/Add.5)

<sup>5</sup> (see IDB 2012, ICPC 2001)

<sup>6</sup> This is for example reflected in the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development with proposed goals to –“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” as well as a goal to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



- Where cities are well-planned, they are engines of economic growth and prosperity and offer access to services and contain numerous institutional frameworks that generate social capital and new urban identities that can enhance social integration and cohesion and help prevent urban crime and violence. However, for many cities in the developing world, poorly planned urbanization has contributed to rising income inequalities in cities. These inequalities are expressed through growing social discontent, mistrust in democratic institutions and rules, social unrest, conflict, crime and violence. In the city build, these inequalities are evident, materialized by urban segregation patterns that enlarge physical and symbolical distances between citizens which in some cases have led to progressive privatization of security, gated communities and ghettos. The horizontal and centrifugal expansion model of growth of our cities is a clear expression of social and economic exclusion patterns that need to be reverted by strong political policies to reorder social development around social cohesion, safety and sustainability.
- Well-planned citywide community-based integrated and comprehensive urban crime prevention and safety strategies, not only prevent crime and victimization, but also contribute to sustainable urban development. On the other side of the coin, urban sustainability can only be achieved and preserved through effective urban safety (Vanderschueren, 2004) Crime prevention and urban safety actions, including at the local level, have taken several approaches, including the promotion of well-being of people through social, economic, health and educational measures; changing conditions in neighborhoods that influence offending through urban planning and design; reducing opportunities, increasing risks of being apprehended; and preventing recidivism by assisting in the social reintegration of offenders.<sup>7</sup> Urban safety actions have encompassed two aspects: the value of neighborhoods as spaces and places of identity and belonging and the socialization of individuals, families, schools and communities; and the value of a holistic citywide approach to crime, violence and insecurity covering the whole territory under the jurisdiction of the local government. This systemic vision has allowed for cities to plan for social integration and to connect vulnerable areas with the areas of greatest opportunity and resources to achieve territorial cohesion within the city.
- While the relationship between socio-economic development and violence is complex, available evidence suggests that lethal violence is often rooted in contexts of inequality, social marginalization, weak rule of law and injustice. To break the vicious circle between violence and under-development, a better understanding of the dynamics at play is needed. Urban safety and crime prevention strategies, policies and programmes should thus be based on a broad and multidisciplinary foundation of knowledge about root causes of crime and victimization in a given area, and promising and proven practices to address them. Methods of collecting and using relevant crime and violence information at the local government level are evolving and many guides and tools to support the development of effective crime and violence prevention strategies for the production of social goods and for social change now exist (ICPC, 2014). Crime measurement has become less reliant on police records alone and is supported with population sample surveys of victimisation experiences (GCOCP, 2014) and local safety audits, which help to increase the involvement of the public in shaping local safety and crime prevention policies and actions. As well, the use of technology to promote collaborative planning and governance of safety may be considered to gather useful information for the development of comprehensive urban security plan.

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<sup>7</sup> The 2002 UN Guidelines on the Prevention of Crime emphasise the role of governments at all levels in facilitating sustainable planned comprehensive crime prevention policies, and outline four main approaches: crime prevention through social development; community, or locally-based crime prevention; situational crime prevention; and reintegration programmes. They establish eight basic principles – government leadership, social-economic development and inclusion, cooperation/partnerships, sustainability/accountability, knowledge base, human rights/culture of lawfulness, interdependency and differentiation. Moreover, the ECOSOC 1995 Guidelines for Cooperation and Technical Assistance in the Field of Urban Crime Prevention outlined that integrated crime prevention action plans should: 1) define the nature and types of crime problems; 2) consider involving a range of actors; 3) consider factors such as education, employment, housing, health, drug and alcohol abuse, and access to social services; 4) providing action at various levels, including primary prevention, prevention of recidivism, the protection of victims.



- In addition to the incidence of crime, violence and insecurity, is the perception of safety and fear of crime, violence and insecurity. When people feel threatened, they alter their behaviour and consequently the way they interact with the city. This is particularly the case for women who more likely to be victims of some type of crimes, such as rape and sexual harassment. Women are also very vulnerable to violent robbery. As a result, globally women tend to feel less secure than men in large cities, and the gap is increasing in the size of the city. Additionally, the perceived safety of a place impacts the local economic development and market prospects.

## Policy

- Safety and crime prevention strategies and policies that have not addressed a multi-level coordinated governance approach have produced unsustainable and short term actions and results. To ensure sustainability of crime prevention and urban safety actions at the local level, urban crime prevention / safety strategies have to be developed within the framework of national urban policies complementing the national crime prevention strategies<sup>8</sup>. This requires all levels of government to play a leadership role in developing effective and humane crime prevention and urban safety strategies and in creating and maintaining institutional frameworks for their implementation and review. Cooperation/partnerships should be an integral part of effective crime prevention and urban safety, given the wide ranging nature of the causes of crime and the skills and responsibilities required to address them. This includes partnerships working across ministries and between authorities, community organizations, nongovernmental organizations, the business sector and private citizens. As well, safety considerations should be integrated into all relevant social and economic policies and programmes including those addressing housing and urban planning, employment, education, health, poverty, social marginalization and exclusion. Particular emphasis should be placed on communities, families, children and youth at risk.
- 'City leadership' as prompted by major business actors is an increasingly central factor in Urban Safety: business leadership organisations (BLOs) and progressive government-business coalitions have an increasing stake in strategic urban planning and major urban development initiatives the world over. A UN-led effort for co-production of safety for all should harness this potential, and allow for appropriate scrutiny of the growing non-governmental impact of safety, technology, service and infrastructure providers in cities.
- Given the fact that most of those who have become involved in crime in urban settings, are young and male, a strong policy focus on the role of youth in local government safety interventions is key, particularly with attention to education, leadership and skills training and building on the social capital of young people living in the most vulnerable communities towards alternative productive livelihoods to drug and gang involvement; and tap into the positive transformational energies and learning abilities of children and young people as agents for change. As well, complementary national security strategies need to take into account the social and economic reality of the population, especially in countries where the majority of the people live and work in informal settings and pay attention not to criminalize poverty.

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<sup>8</sup> Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa are illustrative examples of the development of such national urban policy frameworks with safer cities guidelines



Figure 2: Typical municipal policy approach on Safer Cities<sup>9</sup> :

Source: UN-Habitat Safer Cities Toolkit, 2005

## Engagement

- Greater emphasis on safety as a public good enhances the need for collaboration and partnerships of traditional and non-traditional sectors in security and urban development. A broad-based approach to building consensus on urban safety constitutes establishing local coalitions and partnerships rooted in the co-production of safety for all. Local authorities can play an important role in facilitating such partnerships, while central governments provide the resources, enabling environment and necessary policy framework (UN-Habitat, 2007). At the onset of any safer cities approach, local stakeholder mapping is a key component. While Governments retain primary responsibility for providing security to citizens, the implementation of effective security and safety strategies, in particular at the local level, can benefit from closer coordination with the private sector and the civil society. This however requires the alignment of private sector interests with the public sector and its engagement along with the adoption of guidelines and mechanisms to make such a form of partnership both possible and effective.
- Many cities, particularly in high crime contexts have successfully tackled urban crime, violence and insecurity as an opportunity for new spaces for citizens' engagement. As key ingredient, successful experiences show that good governance and safe cities are reciprocal: where inhabitants are free from fear, and where safety is improved for citizens and neighbourhoods, interaction among people, groups and with the public institutions becomes possible. Promising practices on urban safety have opened up participatory opportunities for sharing urban solutions - paying

<sup>9</sup> This corresponds with the 2002 UN guidelines on the prevention of crime which refers to the following approaches: *Social development*, including promoting protective factors through social and economic development programs (health, education, housing, urban planning) and redress marginalization and exclusion and promote positive conflict resolution; *Situational crime prevention*, including environmental design, surveillance, target hardening; *Prevention of organized crime by addressing links with local crime* (reduce participation of criminals in lawful markets, prevent misuse of tenders, protect marginalized/vulnerable groups)



particular attention to issues such as youth at risk, gun-free zones, gender violence in public spaces and gang-prone urban areas<sup>10</sup>.

- Equally, the potential benefits of networking across national boundaries is demonstrated by the vast variety of city networks and ‘city diplomacy’ activities present today: with growing connections among peers located in very different geographical contexts, and a long traditional of national collaborations amongst municipalities, this networked governance offers critical advantages in tackling Urban Safety challenges beyond local limitations, lagging national agendas and in contexts of resource constraints. Undertaking city diplomacy for urban safety, then, means leveraging the ‘network power’ of cities in a globalised age.

## Operations

- Over the past two decades, financing of technical cooperation on ‘safer cities’ has grown to meet the ever increasing demand for decentralised security policies and enhanced role and capacities of local governments in coordinating safety and crime prevention strategies. Nevertheless, in spite of the advances made over the last twenty years since Habitat II, cities are still a long way from balancing the attention – and the resources – devoted by national governments to municipal-led urban crime prevention strategies compared with attention and resources given to other criminal justice operations to crime and violence.
- New communications technologies, like social media, can offer useful tools for government actors to enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention policies and strategies, including by engaging the public in crime prevention, in particular by law enforcement to facilitate information-sharing and awareness-raising regarding crime and violence.

## KEY DRIVERS FOR ACTION

- Citizens empowerment and participation: Genuine participation from communities and other stakeholders, including the private sector is critical for developing and implementing effective and inclusive policies and laws to enhance safety and security in cities. Evidence based programming and participatory approaches to crime prevention and community safety are important for the co-production of safety for all. Urban crime prevention and safety policies and programmes can only be effective when communities are consulted and when interventions are based on evidence and tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of key populations. The role of youth and women in creating safety and security in cities is key.
- Multi-level and multi-sectoral governance: Addressing the wide range of root causes of crime and violence requires coordination between national and local level authorities as well as amongst the various sectors of governance, including education, housing and urban planning, economic development, justice etc. As well, addressing urban challenges by coalescing key stakeholders around an agenda of leadership in and for cities, geared at a renewed urban partnership between government (local and national) and private actors (community and business). City leaders, such as mayors and their peers, have a core responsibility in spurring leadership for urban safety and can act as catalysts of pervasive multi-level efforts.

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<sup>10</sup> The city of New York is a much cited example. There, some notoriously criminal neighborhoods – Harlem, for instance – were transformed during the 1990s into safe places and simultaneously showed very favorable economic development. Likewise, in the City of Durban, the Safer Durban Warwick Junction was transformed integrating low income women’s trades into the urban regeneration of the market space within an integrated area development frame – transforming a high crime hot spot into a safe space for women and girls, and therefore for all citizens.



- Urban planning and design for social integration: Reinvigorating urban design through gender and age inclusive and adequate public spaces (including streets) as places for people to meet, as sites for social interaction and exchange, as landscapes of economic vitality especially for the urban poor and for the construction of citizenship and the framework for social and territorial cohesion and the coproduction of safety for all.
- Innovative financing for building safety through slum upgrading: Addressing the impact of crime on the urban poor, through proactive social and cultural investments using the notion of social urbanism as a form of crime prevention and innovative financing approach which incorporates both urban regeneration and planning and social and economic initiatives to reduce inequalities.
- Rule of Law and human rights: In terms of shaping good governance, trust in rule of law and an enabling environment are vital to encourage long-term investment. Promoting inclusive rules and regulations in line with international human rights standards and the collective capacities for implementation around laws and institutions of governance could shape the culture and conviviality of 'safe, inclusive and connected public spaces' and enhance the 'right to the city for all' which integrate vulnerable communities such as the poor, migrants, women and children and people with disabilities who together participate in the co-production of safety for all. Establishing clear legal and operational framework regulating public private cooperation and the engagement of civil society and at large to make security policies more inclusive and ready to address a wider spectrum of challenges and threats.

## PLATFORMS AND PROJECTS

- The Global Network on Safer Cities (GNSC)/ UN-Habitat Safer Cities Programme [www.unhabitat.org/safercities](http://www.unhabitat.org/safercities)
- The Safer and Inclusive Cities Initiative – IDRC  
[http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Programs/Social\\_and\\_Economic\\_Policy/saic/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Programs/Social_and_Economic_Policy/saic/Pages/default.aspx)
- The World Bank E-Learning Tool on Urban Crime Prevention <http://einstitute.worldbank.org/ei/course/urban-crime-and-violence-prevention>
- UN-Women Safe Cities Global Initiative <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces>
- Plan International – Adolescent Girls Creating Safer Cities <https://plan-international.org/girls/pdfs/adolescent-girls-safer-cities.pdf>

## Existing Technical Tools

- UNODA Municipal Gun Free Zone Guidelines
- UN-Habitat Safer Cities Toolkit; Regional Manuals on Local Crime Prevention; Youth Crime and Neighbourhood Vulnerability; Building Safety through Slum Upgrading; and Safer Cities for Women
- UNODC/UNHABITAT Crime Prevention Assessment Tool and Policing Urban Space Handbook;
- UNODC Training Manual on Victimization Surveys; Policing Urban Space
- UNODC Criminal Justice Assessment Toolkit
- UNODC Crime Prevention Guidelines – Making them Work;
- UNODC/ECE Manual on OECD Guidance Notes (with contributions from UNODC) on Preventing and Reducing Armed Violence in Urban Areas, Reducing the Involvement of Youth in Armed Violence;
- UN-Women Safe Cities Toolkit



- World Bank E-Learning Tool on Urban Crime Prevention
- IDB Citizens Security Manual
- UNDP Community Security and Social Cohesion Guidelines
- Handbook to assist the establishment of public private partnerships for the protection of vulnerable targets – UNICRI, 2010
- IPO Security Planning Model – UNICRI, 2007

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***This Issue Paper has been elaborated with contributions of UN-Habitat, WHO, UNICEF, UNICRI, UN Women, UNODA, UNODC, UNU and the World Bank.***