



Safer Cities Programme

Background document

PREVENTION OF URBAN CRIME¹

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CONTEXT

Increase in crime

Over the last 20 years, the increase in crime has become a problem in the majority of the world's largest cities both in the North and the South.

In the North, crime, and in particular petty crime, has risen by 3% to 5 % annually between the 1970s and the 1990s in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. From the beginning of the 90s, thanks to initiatives taken in the field of prevention and law enforcement, crime rates stabilised in most countries, with the exception of youth crime (youth aged between 12 - 25 years) and crime by minors (12 - 18 years) which continued to increase. The latter type of crime has become increasingly violent and it has entrenched itself even in the schools, while the age of entrance into delinquency has decreased to 12 years.

In the South, beginning in the 80s, crime increased considerably and continues to increase up to today, while youth crime and crime by minors have witnessed an exponential increase. Phenomena such as street children, school drop-outs, widespread social exclusion, civil wars and the small arms trafficking that goes with it, served only to aggravate the situation.

This increase in crime has developed in a context characterised on the one hand, by the growth of drug trafficking and abuse and, on the other by the globalisation of organised crime. The growth of organised crime contributes to the destabilisation of political order and increases the effects of economic crises through housing market speculation. Organised crime also tends to draw in some young delinquents as a source of cheap labour.

Causes of the increase in delinquency

The causes of delinquency are manifold. All research undertaken at the international level showed that there is not single cause of delinquency, but rather a combination of causes.

Three major causes can be identified: social, institutional and those related to the physical urban environment.

Social exclusion due to long periods of unemployment or marginalisation, dropping out of school or illiteracy, and the lack of socialisation within the family seem to be the most recurring factors amongst the **social causes** of delinquency. None of these factors on their own can be regarded as sufficient explanation.

In the case of the family, the traditional approach, which blames juvenile crime as the lack of parental authority, is not sufficient. It fails to take into account the changes in the traditional family and of the multiple family forms of today. Half a century ago, a new model of the family began to develop, moving away from a patriarchal economic unit with strong links to an extended family into a nuclear family based on affectionate relationships that often separate sexuality and reproduction. Subsequently, this has led to the development of multiple forms of family relations: traditional marriages, single-parent families, families without legal ties, families of divorced or separated parents and homosexual couples. The evolution of the traditional family into this multiplicity of forms results in the need for a variety of social responses. It is not possible to impose a "one-size-fit-all" policy.

In addition the families are confronted with varying scenarios shaped by the labour market, rapid social changes and the requirements of childhood education. Many families and social educators are not prepared to face these changes.

A causal link also exists between domestic violence and urban violence.

Changes in social controls, in particular the breakdown of social bonds at neighbourhood level, seem to be prevalent causes in most situations.

It is worth remembering that, contrary to the myth rooted in our minds, poverty is not a direct cause of crime.

With respect to **institutional** causes, it is necessary to mention the inability of the criminal justice system (police, justice and prisons) to handle cases of minor delinquency. Indeed, since the 60s, the majority of the *police* around the world have placed more emphasis on the fight against major crime and the technologies and approaches linked to this objective. In many countries, the use of foot or bicycle patrols has been rendered obsolete for the use of non-targeted motorised patrols.

These priority police objectives have distanced the police from the citizens who have subsequently lost their confidence in them.

With regard to the *judiciary*, it is not capable of facing the increase in the overall number of minor offences, which damage the quality of life and perpetuate a general perception of insecurity. Justice is slow, ill-suited to developing urban conflicts, overloaded and uses an outdated working methodology. Its language is inaccessible to the majority of the population. The police force, and even the general public opinion, often regards it as being too tolerant. Court decisions cover less than 10 % of the urban crime (major and minor delinquencies included). The sentences imposed, prisons and fines, are not adapted to responding to minor law breaking. In addition, an inefficient judiciary and a lack of accountability with respect to offences such as money laundering, organised crime, involvement in the Mafia, corruption and violation of human rights have all led to an increase in crime by generating a feeling of impunity.

Prisons, with the exception of some modern and experimental prisons, constitute technical schools for the training and development of criminal networks. Furthermore, the circulation of drugs and the promiscuity in prisons have contributed to the increase in crime.

Among the causes related to the **physical environment**, poor management of the urbanisation process, inadequate urban services, failure to incorporate security related issues in urban management policies, apparition of poorly protected semi-public spaces are key issues. Promiscuity and lawlessness of certain districts lead to the development of zones of lawlessness. Finally, the freedom to carry weapons and the illegal trafficking of small weapons resulting from civil wars or conflicts in bordering countries.

Consequences of the increase in crime

The primary consequence is the development of a generalised and not often objective feeling of insecurity, common in many urban populations. This perception crystallises all the fears of the population (insecurity with respect to employment, health, the future of children, domestic violence, and the risk of impoverishment etc.). It arises from an impression of abandonment, powerlessness and the incomprehension in the face of shocking crime and the multiplication of minor acts of delinquency or vandalism. Because of its emotional character this perception blows facts out of proportion, encourages rumour and can even causes social conflicts. The feeling of generalised fear can create a climate that may threaten the democratic foundation of a community or society.

At the city level, perception of insecurity has resulted in the abandonment of certain neighbourhoods, the development of an "*architecture of fear* ", the stigmatisation of districts or communities, the withdrawal or the refusal to invest in some cities, and spontaneous forms of justice leading to lynching. More positively, however, it has also led to the development of forms of self-defence and new social practices.

The second consequence of the increase of crime is **the impact of insecurity on the poor**. While all social classes are affected by insecurity, research shows that insecurity affects the poor more intensely because they do not have the means to defend themselves. Consequently, due to this vulnerability, urban violence erodes the social capital of the poor, and dismantles their organisations, thus preventing social mobility and particularly that of the youth.

The third consequence is the **increase in the overall costs of insecurity** which account for 5% to 6 % of the GNP in the North and 8% to 10 % in the South.

Fourthly, there has been a **widespread development of private security companies**. There has been an annual growth rate of 30% and 8% in the private security sector, in the South and North respectively, in last years of the 20th century. In many countries the number of private security officers has exceeded that of state police officers. It should be noted that in many cases, such as in the United States and in China for example, it is the government itself which proposes private security contracts. Indeed, several countries that initially gave green light to private security now increasingly tend to legislate in this area in order to prevent abuse and corruption. One of the problems of this widespread development of private security system is the relationship between the police and the companies, both in terms of action and responsibility and the recruitment of police officers. In many instances private security officers are ex-police or ex-army officers.

Indeed, a second problem is how to define the boundaries of private security: for example, should more private prisons be created?

The majority of countries have begun, albeit reluctantly, to accept private security not for political but economic reasons. The costs of the private security appear, in the short-term, to be less than that of the public sector but so far no analysis has shown the sudden appearance of this private sector security to be responsible for a decrease in crime. In certain cases, the opposite has occurred. Indeed, countries such as Colombia, the United States or South Africa where the private security sector is predominant have witnessed a marked increase in crime and a growth of prison populations. It is not evident that the cost of private sector security guarantees its accessibility to all in society, nor that its costs are, in the long run, less than those of public security. What is certain is that private security is neither accessible to all: in the European Union it is financially accessible to only 5% of the population. Nor is it accountable to the society or to the local community. The private security companies are driven by profit, which means, for example, that the more prisoners there are in the private prisons the more benefits the security company reaps.

In addition we are witnessing today a tendency towards the internationalisation of private security companies, which act in parallel as private security agencies, industrial espionage services, protectors of corrupt political systems and even, in certain cases, peculiar to Africa, as new forms of mercenaries. The fifth consequence are the attempts made by the public to address the increase in delinquency. Two general approaches have been observed. On one hand central governments have attempted to reinforce security through repression. These repressive measures include increasing police manpower, increasing the term of prison sentences, and applying repressive measures which are difficult to administer and at the same time questionable, e.g. "zero tolerance". Such measures can also include curfews for minors or the lowering of the age of legal responsibility.

The second approach favours prevention in addition to repression. This can be undertaken in two ways. One way involves the centralisation of the fight against insecurity by making police officers the key players in the matter. The other tends to decentralise the fight through the delegation of police responsibility either to local authorities or civil associations or both. The latter is obviously easier to implement in countries such as the United States or Canada, where the local police depend on the municipalities. Often the choice between the two options involves rivalry between governments and the municipal authorities. This is the case in several European, African and Latin American countries. It should be noted that in the two approaches, one often sees police reform applied in parallel to the implementation of preventive actions.

Several governments adopt either one of these options depending on the type of crime that is being targeted. For example, in the United States the government tends to adopt repression for all cases of minor delinquency. However, with respect to drug consumption, it has gradually developed a policy that favours prevention. In addition it is not rare within a country to see some cities or regions stress repression while others advocate the use of prevention. The most significant case is that of the United States, where certain cities have developed excellent prevention policies while others emphasise only repression.

The repressive approach has the advantage of having immediate effects which can satisfy the short-term demands of public opinion and the needs for effectiveness of the political class. Voters are increasingly demanding more security measures such as more police manpower and more repression, and naively think that the increase in prison populations constitutes an effective neutralisation of the serious offenders. It is clearly evident, however, that the cost of repression is much higher than that of prevention and that repression only has a short term and limited range of effects.

The preventive approach faces many challenges. First and foremost among these challenges is the reluctance of governments to invest in it. Another major obstacle is the absence of a legal framework to facilitate preventive actions that exceed the framework of NGO activities. Cities wishing to use a preventive approach often do not have the legal or financial capacity to do so.

DEMOCRATIC INTERVENTION IN SECURITY MATTERS

Fundamental principles: Law enforcement, solidarity and prevention

Within a democratic framework, the fight against crime is based on three principles: law enforcement for all, solidarity and crime prevention.

Law enforcement implies that repression is necessary and is undertaken by the state through the police force, which is responsible for the maintenance of law and order, law enforcement and decrees of various authorities. The law is enforced by the criminal justice which comprises of the police, the judiciary and the prisons. The laws to be enforced include not only the constitution and parliamentary statutes but municipal and regional by-laws as well. In many countries there are approximately 20 or 30 different authorities responsible for the enforcement of the various laws and decrees. For example, in urban areas, trade and restaurants are regulated not only by the police and the judiciary which intervene in the event of offences, but also by the tax department, institutions such as the city directorate of inspection, the fire department, the department of public health etc. All these institutions have a capacity for law enforcement and subsequently for repression. This role is not held exclusively by the central government but also by local institutions or municipalities.

Solidarity implies that no citizen or groups of people or neighbourhoods can be criminalised or stigmatised by the entire society. Stigmatisation is, however, frequent. Ex-convicts are often

stigmatised by their fellow-citizens. Entire neighbourhoods are often identified as zones of lawlessness and their inhabitants are suspected to be potential criminals. That means that individuals who come from this zone have more difficulty finding employment than other people. Stigmatisation of immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities and youth with a past of drug addiction is frequent in almost all countries. Solidarity also implies support for persons who have been victims of violence.

Crime prevention constitutes the third pillar of a democratic fight against crime. Prevention is not opposed to repression. Prevention involves the tackling of crime, addressing not only its symptoms but also more specifically its causes. Indeed, the best means of ensuring respect of laws and regulations is to eliminate their shortcomings, by eliminating the conditions that create these inefficiencies, by creating a social control which guarantees their enforcement and through education and persuasion or rehabilitation.

It is necessary to avoid falling into the trap of antagonism between repression and prevention. The discussions on this subject carried out in the 70s and 80s, showed that these two aspects are complementary and necessary. Elimination of repression is impossible because all societal institutions have their own rules and regulations which they enforce and respect. This is evident in football clubs, political parties, business associations, religious congregations and professional associations which enforce their rules and regulations through repression where it is necessary.

vast, and the construction of a range of prevention practices targeting the causes of crime requires a precise diagnosis. Innovative solutions must be adapted to the local context. In addition, the effects of social prevention policies are generally medium or long-term in nature. Only situational prevention can have an immediate effect.

There are different types of prevention: situational and social. **Situational prevention** consists of changing an environment that favours crime. For example: lighting dimly lit places which favour criminal activities; the installation of closed circuit television cameras in public spaces; improved management of public spaces where chaotic land occupation by informal trade may facilitate delinquent activities; ensuring security in sports stadia and prohibition of the carrying of weapons or the consumption of alcoholic drinks at certain places or certain hours are all forms of situational prevention.

Social prevention covers the entire range of social programs targeting groups at risk, ex-prisoners, stigmatised neighbourhoods or communities and certain forms of crime such as domestic violence or violence in schools. Social prevention is not simply the implementation of a social program (for example aiming at the reduction or eradication of poverty), but rather implies an added value in terms of the fight against insecurity. In other words, it is necessary that an explicit quest for greater security and not merely social integration or improvement of the economic welfare of the community concerned, is included in the programme.

Preventive action must also consider any activities that aim to **diminish erroneous or exaggerated perceptions of insecurity**. Finally, **assistance to the victims of violence** constitutes another form of prevention.

Police reforms

Parallel to these city initiatives and often in their support, are police reforms which aim at:

- The creation of police forces guided by clear and constant strategic principles;
- Accountability to civil society and municipal authorities;
- Collaboration with local security coalitions;
- Resolution of problems rather than a simple reaction in the face of occasional acts of crime;
- Creation of specialised neighbourhood police (for example the case of community policemen such as 'îlotiers' in France or Kobans in Japan). These initiatives require a cultural change amongst the police officers who are currently more oriented towards the fight against "major" crimes.
- Demilitarisation of the training and understanding of police work;
- Bringing the police closer to urban residents and civil society to facilitate the understanding of problems afflicting residents, and the search for common solutions;
- Addressing the problems of juvenile delinquency as well as those of serious crime or "narcotrafic", which calls for an increased presence in neighbourhoods, a readjustment of priorities and a different patrolling approach other than motorised, i.e. police officers on foot, bicycle or horse patrol.

Justice and prisons

In the face of the loopholes within the judiciary and the inefficiency of policies of modernisation of prisons, alternatives have emerged in several regions.

- Alternative sanctions which include considerable innovations. Community work constitutes the key element of these sanctions, which are adapted to the local context and in proportion to the offence;
- The practice of mediation which have been extensively developed in many countries and is applicable for all the types of conflict, including in schools;

- Local justice such as the "Houses of Justice" in France for example allow some magistrates to solve cases of conflict quickly and in the case of African countries, the justice meted out by communal elders or traditional customs achieves the same result;
- Certain cities, in agreement with the central government, have established forms of rapid justice for the resolution of problems concerning urban management;
- Varying kinds of judicial advisors have been incorporated so as to facilitate the accessibility of legal aid to the low income sectors of society;
- Considerable reforms related to minor delinquency and youth offenders have also been adopted with regard to juvenile justice.

MUNICIPAL APPROACH TO URBAN SECURITY

The local articulation of prevention

Defining the principal actors in prevention is a key issue in establishing the effectiveness and the scope of prevention policies. Indeed, today we can find prevention initiatives put in place by central governments, the police force, local governments, civil society organisations, churches, residents of neighbourhoods, business enterprises, schools and so on. While central governments are made up of entities that are too large to respond adequately to the day-to-day needs of the population and too "small" to resist the pressure of the giant multinational groups which stimulate globalisation, cities do have the capacity to ensure that their citizens have a say in the day-to-day running of their affairs. This means that cities accept their role as socio-economic organisers and local political administrators in the field of urban security.

To fulfil this role, cities require certain conditions:

- An institutional framework and financial resources which allow them to perform their actions in the field of urban security;
- A co-ordinating role in prevention programmes without completely delegating this role to the police or specialised organisations;
- The organised participation of the population; and
- Transparency, in particular concerning corruption.

Why decentralisation of urban security policy?

The advantages of municipal prevention, put in place by local coalitions, are based on several factors:

- Local prevention facilitates grassroots action that cannot be realised by the central government or state police and requires permanent co-ordination on the ground. The concept of "proximity" refers not only to physical proximity within the vicinity, but also to the notion of social accessibility of a service on a human scale.
- Municipal crime prevention permits the close linkage of crime prevention with a policy project that incorporates the city government. In this regard, an elected mayor or a democratically elected representative of the government has a legitimate right to convene and to champion the participation of the civil society, the private sector and the criminal justice system in the formulation and implementation of an urban security programme.
- Actions undertaken by the municipality normally are of a greater dimension than those of NGOs, local churches, schools or associations. This permits coverage of a wider geographical area and a broader consideration of the entire set of problems that challenge urban security. However, these

actions cannot be undertaken without the support and legitimisation of the central government. This is particularly important in the collaboration between municipal, police and judicial authorities.

- A prevention policy involves all municipal departments. In fact, a culture of prevention begins at the local government level when the various heads of the various departments, e.g. Transport, Education, Public Works and Health etc. integrate urban security as a cross-cutting dimension in the formulation and implementation of their departmental policy.

Different regional experiences

Since the 80s the growth of crime -organised crime as well as minor delinquency- has encouraged regional or international city associations to claim the right to set up prevention programmes, to be in charge of these programmes and to assume the primary responsibility in the fight against insecurity in terms of prevention and even repression. The international mayors conferences on urban safety which took place in Barcelona (1987), Montreal (1989), Paris (1991), Vancouver (1996) and Johannesburg (1998) emphasised the need for decentralising the responsibility for the fight against insecurity to the city level and in particular to the municipal level.

In 1995, ECOSOC published guidelines on municipal interventions with respect to security, recommended by the United Nations. Since the 80s, experiments at the city level have been developed in the northern countries. City networks such as the European Forum for Urban Security have been created to exchange experiences among cities, to disseminate these experiences, to improve them and to synthesise the lessons. Since the 90s, experiments have been developed in Latin America and Africa. The Johannesburg conference (1998) crystallised Third World experiences in particular those of Africa.

METHODOLOGY OF MUNICIPAL INTERVENTION

This methodology is based on the accumulated experiences by few international specialised organisations. Among them: the European Forum for Urban Security which is a network of 200 cities of the European Union, “Crime Concern” of the United Kingdom that provides technical assistance to municipalities and to civil societies in the field of prevention, American and Canadian experiences, and African programmes put in place in co-operation with Habitat and the International Centre for Crime Prevention (ICPC).

A rigorous process

Whatever form is adopted, municipal intervention implies the creation of a local partnership with the following characteristics:

- A local approach is implemented by local governments with the support of the central and regional government;
- Prevention is a strategic instrument for good governance and the enforcement of citizenship and community values and;
- Preventive action is most efficient when it is led by a multi-sectoral partnership that targets the causes of crime in a rigorous and systematic way.

A partnership with a leader

- The partnership is led by a public figure -either the mayor or a municipal councillor or a well-known local leader.
- The partnership includes the principal representatives of neighbourhood associations, the private sector, schools, churches, NGOs and civil society associations, as well as local representatives of the police and the justice system. It is important that women and youth have a core role in this partnership.

A partnership with a technical co-ordinator

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- It mentions, if necessary any remaining gaps in the primary diagnosis and identifies the themes for technical analysis (Victim Survey, “Focus groups”);
- It analyses the perception of insecurity of the inhabitants and its causes;
- It identifies (positive and negative) insecurity response practices and evaluates them. These practices can come from inhabitants, the municipality, the government, the police or civil society organisations;
- It identifies the local police resources, the private security sector and evaluates the way the population perceives these actors;
- It identifies local resources available to address security issues;
- It evaluates the degree of co-ordination between the different municipal services, the police and interested organisations;
- The local co-ordinator is responsible for this diagnosis even if it is implemented with the support of specialised institutions. He/she takes the responsibility for the progress of this diagnosis with respect to the partners. The co-ordinator generates a consensus on the results of the diagnosis between the members of the partnership.

A local strategy for urban security

After the approval of the diagnosis the formulation of a local security strategy begins. The principal aspects of this strategy are based on the results of the diagnosis.

The characteristics of a local security strategy are:

- The incorporation of security as a central element in the priority activities of the inhabitants and;
- Guidelines on how to put the strategy into practice and on how to mobilise human and financial resources;
- The presentation of a calendar of activities and the allocation of responsibilities of all actions that have to be taken, including costs, resources and financing.

The local security strategy will therefore include the detailed examination of:

- Possible options of measures to reduce the opportunities for delinquency;
- Measures of social development to assist groups at risk;
- Effective practices identified in the community or in similar situations which have a potential for replication;
- Local risk factors that cause delinquency, such as school drop-out rates, domestic violence and drug abuse, and concrete measures to counteract these factors put in place by the partners; and
- Situational prevention measures to change the local criminal environment such as recreational sportive or cultural spaces, adequate lodging, etc.

The strategy is then approved by the local government and the partners and is communicated to the inhabitants

The implementation of the strategy

The co-ordinator leads and supports the implementation of the strategy and together with the partners mobilises the necessary resources. The strategy will be adjusted to take into account the available resources, evaluations and outcomes.

During the implementation of the strategy, several local coalitions of partners will work on specific aspects. The initial partnership acts as an instrument for consensus, participation and evaluation.

It is particularly important to emphasise the role of the media in implementation. Community radio and TV and local newspapers are important for the dissemination of this strategy.

POSSIBLE FORMS OF CRIME PREVENTION AT MUNICIPAL LEVEL.

The interventions are derived from the results of the diagnosis and the local strategy and cannot be predetermined. It is however possible to mention examples of several forms of intervention which will depend on the local context.

Measures to reinforce family socialisation

- Measures aimed at the elimination of domestic violence;
- Assistance to poor single-parent families;
- Provision of support for children who suffer from difficult family situations.

Measures reinforce socialisation in schools

- Introduction of forms of conflict resolution in schools;
- Systematic prevention campaigns against drug and alcohol abuse and the possession of illegal firearms;
- Visits to schools, and organising of meetings and conferences by senior police officers within schools, to explain their work and the problem of juvenile delinquency from a police perspective;
- Participation of parents in the management of schools and the utilisation of schools as communal meeting places.

Measures targeting the neighbourhoods

- Undertaking participatory diagnoses of the insecurity in neighbourhoods, wards etc.;
- Measures to upgrade and restore the dignity of stigmatised neighbourhoods;
- Active campaigns against the dealers in the neighbourhoods.
- Engagement of neighbourhoods leaders and inhabitants in safety actions with the police;

Measures in favour of the security of women

- Safety audits for, and by, women;
- Assistance to victims of domestic violence;
- Assistance to rape victims;
- Involvement of men in campaigns against domestic violence.

Measures in favour of the socialisation of the youth

- Specific education programs targeting illiterate youth and school dropouts;
- Construction of recreational facilities, and developing of sporting programmes managed by trainers and linked to sport organisations;
- Creation of municipal town councils for the youth to address their problems and in particular youth delinquency;

- Widespread campaigns against drug abuse;
- Development of theatrical and cultural activities for the youth;
- Organising of visits to prisons, courts and police stations and facilitating discussions with both the personnel and the delinquents;
- Creation of radio, television and on the internet programmes on youth delinquency for, and by, youth;
- Formulation of flexible educational programs;
- Creation of youth brigades within the police;
- Programmes of action for social reintegration, and of education for the rehabilitation of street children.

Alternative justice

- Creation of alternative sanctions such as community work;
- Creation of legal advisers in the poor neighbourhoods;
- Establishment of community tribunals.

Measures of bringing the police closer to the population

- Creation of a community policing approach;
- Regular meetings of the police with the local authorities and regular exchanges of information;
- Establishment of a communal map of crime crossed with social variables;
- Installation of accountability practices for the police;
- Alignment of the administrative structures of the police to communal administrative structures;
- Creation of a municipal police.

Measures that relate to the perception of insecurity

- Regular and objective information campaigns, together with the media, on insecurity;
- Campaigns on the analysis of the causes of delinquency;
- Dissemination of successful preventive actions;
- Dissemination of information on the reception and assistance to victims of violence;
- Campaigns against the stigmatisation of social groups, neighbourhoods, people, etc;
- Effective measures against impunity concerning major crime, corruption and violation of human right, etc.