



RE-378

***Crime and Violence
Prevention in Latin America
and the Caribbean: Evidence
from IDB's Interventions***

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PREFACE

As part of its duties, OVE regularly conducts ex-post evaluations of the activities financed by the Bank. In this case, OVE is conducting an evaluation of the first generation of citizen security projects, approved before October 2009. These projects predate the Guidelines for Program Design and Execution in the Area of Civic Coexistence and Public Safety (GN-2535).

The objective of the evaluation is primarily to assess these projects' contribution to the reduction of crime and violence in the countries in which they have been operating. A secondary objective is to determine their contribution to the knowledge on what is effective for reducing crime and violence. The evaluation methodology has two elements: First, whenever feasible, statistical analyses are conducted to measure the impact of the projects. Second, evaluability analyses are used to determine the projects' ex ante degree of evaluability. These two elements are combined and complemented with a brief review of the relevant literature to place the projects in the broader context of the discipline and come to a final evaluation of their contribution.

I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Opinion polls systematically show that violence and crime are among the top welfare concerns for Latin America's residents and have become more important over time. According to Latinobarómetro 2008, criminality (citizen security) was the worst problem the region faced: 18.5 percent of respondents throughout the region considered it the worst problem in their country—the second worst problem being unemployment, with 16.3 percent of responses. Between 2001 and 2003, in contrast, criminality was considered the fifth worst problem (8.3 percent of responses), after unemployment, low wages, poverty, and corruption.
- 1.2 These opinions seem to be consistent with the actual problems of the region, for crime levels in Latin America are higher than in most of the world. According to data from the United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime, for example, in 2004 there were almost 30 intentional homicides per 100,000 people in Latin America (excluding Mexico and the Caribbean), a rate only surpassed by southern African countries (Geneva Declaration, 2008).
- 1.3 Violence between family members who live together is one of the most important manifestations of violence in the region. Domestic violence against women, children and the elderly can be physical, psychological or sexual. In LAC, women are at higher risk of being the target of violence at home than in the street. Between 10 and 40 percent of them are victims of their partners' physical violence, 30 to 75 percent of the women with male partners have been victims of psychological abuse, and their partners have sexually abused between 10 and 20 percent of them.
- 1.4 Recently, the IDB responded to these stylized facts by prioritizing initiatives to address the problems associated with violence and conflict resolution. The rationale of the Bank interventions in this area is that violence consistently undermines development efforts at various levels and can lead to the depreciation of all forms of capital. Also, violence disproportionately affects the poor and erodes their livelihoods and assets. Violence not only has direct effects (i.e. income loss, injuries, etc) but also indirect effects that decrease human capital accumulation, reduce productivity, erode social capital and reduce quality of life, among other effects. In the case of domestic violence, children who are witnesses to or victims of violence show lower performance at school and lower productivity. Women who are victims of domestic violence are less productive on the job, have lower incomes, and show higher absenteeism at work.
- 1.5 In 1998, the Bank started financing citizen security programs to redress the perceived causes of violence. Currently, the Bank's portfolio includes thirteen

projects that represent almost US\$300 million.¹ The Bank's incursion in this area was innovative, as no other multilateral development agency had ventured in the uncharted waters of citizen security. To guide its actions, in 2002 the Bank issued a set of Preliminary Guidelines for the Design of Violence Reduction Projects (GN-2217; henceforth called "Preliminary 2002 Guidelines"), when four projects had already been approved. Seven additional projects would be approved before these guidelines were updated and approved on October 6, 2009. As of October 2010, these recent Guidelines for Program Design and Execution in the Area of Civic Coexistence and Public Safety (GN-2535; henceforth called "Guidelines") have served as a reference framework to four citizen security projects.

- 1.6 This report presents an evaluation of the 'first generation' of Citizen Security interventions, namely the following eleven interventions, approved before the Guidelines: Colombia's "Support for Peaceful Coexistence and Citizen Security" (CO0213; Bogota, Cali, Medellin, and the national component), Uruguay's "Program for Citizen Safety: Crime and Violence Prevention" (UR0118), Jamaica's "Citizen Security and Justice Program" (JA0105), El Salvador's "Project to Support the Social Peace Program" (ES0116), Honduras's "Peace and Citizen Coexistence Project for the Municipalities of the Sula Valley" (HO0205), Chile's "Program Safer Chile" (CH0178), Nicaragua's "Citizen Security Program" (NI0168), Guatemala's "Violence Prevention Program" (GU0163), Guyana's "Citizen Security Program" (GY0071), Panama's "Integral Security Program" (PN-L1003), and Trinidad and Tobago's "Citizen Security Programme" (TT-L1003).
- 1.7 An evaluation of the projects approved after the Guidelines—and indeed of the Guidelines themselves—is an interesting and important task, but perhaps too premature as of yet. Nevertheless, an annex to this report comments briefly on some aspects of these projects and Guidelines as well as on other current Bank efforts to reduce crime and violence in the region.
- 1.8 The rest of the report is structured as follows: Section 2 presents a brief review of the literature on crime and violence, discussing both theoretical aspects as well as some evidence on the effectiveness of preventive approaches to the reduction of crime and violence. Section 3 presents the objectives and implicit hypotheses of the Citizen Security projects that have been financed by the Bank. Section 4 assesses the evaluability of the projects. Section 5 presents the estimated impact of the interventions and their results. Section 6 discusses the execution problems faced by the projects. Section 7 concludes and makes some recommendations for the Bank's future interventions in this area. Lastly, Annex I contains a commentary on recent work done by the Bank on the area of citizen security and Annex II the Tables referenced in the report.

¹ This figure includes US\$27.9 million of a program in El Salvador which was approved in 2002 but was cancelled. In addition, two more projects (in Costa Rica and Belize) are currently in preparation and there are other projects that might have an impact on violence but are not stand-alone projects.

II. CAUSES OF CRIME AND VIOLENCE: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

- 2.1 Academic interest on the subject of crime and violence has been present since several decades ago and as a result there is a large literature dedicated to explaining its causes, assessing its effects, and evaluating the effectiveness of the large number of interventions aimed at reducing the problem. This section summarizes the arguments that theory has put forth to explain crime and violence, and briefly discusses the rationale behind prevention programs such as those implemented by the Bank.
- 2.2 Before presenting the theoretical explanations for crime and violence, it is important to keep in mind that crime and violence are not the same thing. Crime can be violent—e.g. a murder—or not—e.g. a financial fraud. Similarly, violent actions can be considered criminal or not depending on the legislation. In a recent document, the World Health Organization defines violence as “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation” (cited in WHO (2002), p. 1084). Under this definition, a relatively constant verbal aggression of a man to his wife, for example, would constitute domestic violence but would not represent a crime in most LAC countries.
- 2.3 One problem that is often found in the public policy debate on crime and violence is that these concepts are bundled together—as this report has done so far—or are treated almost interchangeably. This does not represent a major problem because the two phenomena are closely linked; however keeping them separate allows a better understanding of the problem.
- 2.4 Criminal acts are the result of a combination of two things: Voluntary decisions made by the individuals who commit the crime, and a series of factors or circumstances under which the individuals make these decisions (see PNUD, 2009). Concentrating on the first line of argument, Becker (1968) laid out a framework to explain the factors behind a person’s decision to commit a crime. According to his theory, all individuals decide on whether to commit a crime depending on the net expected utility of doing it. The probability of being punished—either through imprisonment or through the payment of a fine—combined with the cost of the punishment represent the expected cost of committing the crime. The expected benefit is composed of the gains derived from committing the crime—either monetary or non-monetary—and the valuation each individual makes of them—which depends on the individual’s utility function. Along the second line of argument, crime can be the result of a series of circumstances which influence the decisions individuals make. Those circumstances, or “risk factors”, are not sufficient conditions; that is, their presence does not unequivocally result in a criminal act, it only makes it more likely.

- 2.5 Likewise, violence can be instrumental or emotional (Berkowitz, 1993)². The difference between the two is that the former is “a means to obtain a different goal” while the latter “is an end in itself” (Buvinic, Morrison, and Shifter, 1999; p. 10). That is, violence can result from a rational decision—as in Becker’s model of crime—or from a series of risk factors that predispose individuals to that type of behavior.
- 2.6 It is important to highlight that these two explanations are not mutually exclusive. They are complementary explanations to both crime and violence, but their relative explanatory power depends on the specific crime or violent act that one is looking at. The specificity goes beyond the classification typically made by criminal justice systems. The murder of a drug lord may be mainly the result of a rational decision by a rival drug lord while the killing of a woman by her husband may be mostly driven by circumstantial factors—e.g. cultural values mixed with feelings of jealousy and the effects of alcohol consumption. Understanding the causes of all crimes and violent acts is therefore a phenomenally complex task which the literature is only beginning to accomplish.
- 2.7 The so-called ecological model classifies the risk factors affecting violence in four groups or levels of influence (see WHO, 2002). First, there are individual factors, such as educational and biological endowments; second, there are relationship factors, namely the type of relationships an individual holds with other people—parents, siblings, partner, peers, etc. A third group of factors are present at the community level. These include all the characteristics of the community in which the person lives that affect his or her behavior. Finally, another group of factors operates at the societal level. This group includes aspects such as the country’s overall poverty level, and the society’s tolerance to violence.
- 2.8 Using the ecological model as a basis, the WHO (2002) reviews the empirical research on the risk factors associated with different types of violence. The report mentions that, at the individual level, delivery complications at birth, low heart rates, hyperactivity, high levels of risk-taking behavior, poor concentration, attention difficulties before the age of 13 years, low intelligence, and low educational attainment are all factors that are positively associated with violent behavior among youths. Physical violence of men against their partners has been associated with the following characteristics of the aggressor: young age, low income, violence in the family of origin, alcohol use, emotional dependence and insecurity, low self-esteem, and a high propensity to exhibit anger, hostility, depression, and personality disorders.
- 2.9 At the relationship level, the report mentions that youth violence is associated with poor monitoring and supervision as well as the use of harsh, physical

² There are other classifications of violence. Moser (2004), for instance, classifies violence in four types depending on “the motivation for the physical act that consciously or unconsciously is used to gain or maintain power” (p. 4). The WHO (2002) establishes a typology of violence based on its source—self, interpersonal, or collective—and nature—physical, sexual, psychological, and deprivation or neglect.

- punishment during childhood by their parents. Violent youth have also been found to come from families in which there was conflict among the parents, little attachment between parents and children, a large number of children, and a mother who had her first child at an early age. Low socioeconomic status and single-parent households are also likelier to breed children who will become violent as youths. Peer effects may be present as well since violent youth tend to have delinquent friends.
- 2.10 At the community and societal levels, youth violence has been found to be associated with living in neighborhoods with high levels of crime as well as in societies that exhibit “Rapid demographic changes in the youth population, modernization, emigration, urbanization and changing social policies” (WHO, 2002; p. 35). Poverty, income inequality, low governance, and cultural factors—such as tolerance to the use of violence as a means to resolve some disputes—also are also directly related with youth violence. Violence by men against their partners is fostered by poverty and social norms promoting family privacy and male authority over women.
- 2.11 Many of the risk factors mentioned above are interrelated or share common causes among themselves and the violent behavior they seek to explain. For that reason, in many cases it is not possible to establish a direct causal link. This implies that more parsimonious explanations of the different types of violence may emerge as research advances. In the case of domestic violence, the WHO says that “while there is an emerging consensus that an interplay of personal, situational, social and cultural factors combine to cause abuse [among intimate partners...], there is still only limited information on which factors are the most important” (WHO, 2002; p. 97).
- 2.12 Some of these findings on violence apply also to crime because the violent behaviors explained there in most instances constitute criminal acts. It has been argued that criminals present “criminogenic traits” developed in childhood, have lower IQ scores, present problematic behavior, and experienced abuse as children (see Freeman, 1999, and the references contained therein). In the U.S., self-reported as well as administrative (arrest and incarceration) data reveal that criminals “tend to be young, male, high school dropouts with troubled family histories and low scores on standardized tests” (Freeman, 1999; p. 3536).
- 2.13 However, the empirical research on the causes of crime has focused on factors operating at more aggregate levels—community or societal—rather than at the individual or relationship one. Freeman (1999) reports several studies for the U.S. that find unemployment rates to be positively associated with crime rates—particularly property crime. He also reports other studies that find a positive association between income inequality and crime—even homicide rates (Land, et al, 1990). Fajnzylber, et al (2002a and 2002b) confirm this finding. They analyze panel data from a large number of countries and find that homicide and robbery rates are caused by income inequality and reduced by the rate of economic

growth. Again for the U.S., Gould, et al (2002) find an inverse relationship between the wages paid to low-skill workers and crime—both violent and non.

- 2.14 Finding evidence on the causes of crime and violence is a methodologically complex task. The findings on the causes of crime summarized above have convincingly established causal relationships—rather than just simple correlations—through the use of different identification strategies; however, not all of the findings on violence have managed to go beyond identifying correlations or chronological precedence. The problem is not only methodological but also one of data paucity. This issue is discussed below because it also has important negative consequences on the evaluation of crime and violence reduction projects, including those that have been financed by the Bank.

A. Prevention and Control of Crime and Violence

- 2.15 The public debate on crime and violence reduction classifies the plethora of interventions as being either *preventive* or *control*-based. These two categories are often seen “as mutually exclusive concepts, polar opposites on a continuum of «soft» versus «tough» responses to crime” (Sherman, et al, 1997, p. 2-2). On the preventive end of the continuum lie interventions directed at changing the behavior of people—both criminals and not—in such a way that *violent and criminal* acts are not committed. On the control (punitive) end of the continuum, policies seek to stop *criminal* activity by separating perpetrators from the rest of the society, either temporarily or permanently—as in the case of the death penalty. In other words, preventive measures try to reduce *crime and violence* before they happen by changing the potential perpetrators’ tendency to engage in criminal and violent activities. Control measures, on the other hand, reduce *crime* by keeping criminals from further committing criminal acts.
- 2.16 However, as Ehrlich (1981) and Buvinic and Morrison (1999) acknowledge, even the most ‘controlling’ of crime-reduction measures contain some degree of prevention through the deterrence of future criminal and violent actions of other people. If, as argued by Becker, crime is a rational decision, then increasing the probability that crimes will be punished—through increased policing, reducing hiding places, improving judicial processes, etc—as well as the punishment itself should reduce criminal behavior by way of increasing its expected cost.
- 2.17 The separation between prevention and control measures is therefore an artificial one. In fact, according to Sherman, et al (1997), the criminology literature does not make this distinction. In their report to the US Congress, Sherman and co-authors define “«crime prevention» broadly as any practice shown to result in less crime than would occur without the practice” (Sherman, et al, 1998, p. 2). Indeed, “...crime prevention is a result, while punishment is only one possible tool for achieving that result” (Sherman, et al, 1997; p. 2-2).
- 2.18 This artificial distinction between preventive and control measures is commonly found in Bank documents on the subject and appears to be an imperfect heuristic

guiding the decision of which interventions to finance and which not. Indeed, the Preliminary 2002 Guidelines show the Bank's concern about financing programs that could involve reputation risks or that could result in human rights violations:

“Given past history of police involvement in political affairs during non-democratic periods, the concern is that Bank activities with police forces have the potential to indirectly interfere in political affairs—should a police force that has received Bank resources take part in political activities at some future date.

Another concern frequently expressed is that, by undertaking projects with police forces, the Bank may be financing activities that inherently present some risk of human right abuses.” (GN-2217, par. 2.34 – 2.35).

- 2.19 This report coincides with the authors cited above in that the distinction between preventive and control measures is artificial because both types of measures can prevent future criminal (and violent) acts. The feature driving the distinction seems to be the punitive character of the measures—the latter being those that involve some type of punishment—but the use of the word “preventive” to describe only those actions that do not involve punishment implies depriving that word from its meaning. Since a good part of the literature as well as many of the Bank documents talk about preventive and control measures,³ this report must use that artificial distinction in its discussions. Still, to emphasize the fact that the words preventive and control represent labels and do not contain their normal meaning, the remainder of the report will use italics whenever it makes that distinction.
- 2.20 One important point that emerges from this distinction is that, in principle, *preventive* measures can have effects on crime and violence; *control* measures, however, affect crime—and violence only to the extent that it also constitutes a crime. This is because *control* measures are applicable only to crimes. To illustrate the point, consider the example given in paragraph 2.2 above. A man who constantly exerts verbal violence against his wife cannot, in principle, be deterred from doing it through more police work unless this verbal violence is legally considered a crime.

B. The Evidence on *Preventive* Measures to Reduce Crime and Violence⁴

- 2.21 There are two general types of *preventive* measures of crime and violence: situational and social. The first approach seeks to reduce the situations in which

³ As mentioned in Annex II, this problem is still prevalent in more recent documents, such as the Guidelines (GN-2535).

⁴ The evidence mentioned in this section corresponds to *preventive* measures, only. Evidence on the effectiveness of *control* measures is also difficult to come by but examples can be found in some of the sources cited below (Sherman, et al, 1998; WHO, 2002; Freeman, 1999; Stemen, 2007; and The Campbell Collaboration). For an example of evidence of *control* measures found in Latin America see Di Tella and Schargrodsky (2004).

crime and violence can occur. In some cases, this is achieved by reducing the number of places where crime or violence can occur with a low probability for the perpetrator of being caught.⁵ A good example is the elimination of dark and isolated areas in a neighborhood—a practice commonly known as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). In other cases, the measures consist on reducing the availability of factors that incite violent behavior, such as alcohol and weapons.

2.22 The second type of *preventive* measures is of a behavioral nature; it seeks to make individuals less prone to violence. An example of this type of interventions are the parental training programs that teach parents non-violent methods of child rearing—identified by Sherman, et al (1998) as being effective. Another example is the teaching of peaceful conflict resolution to children. As the evidence mentioned above suggests, the improvement of macroeconomic conditions such as unemployment and income inequality would constitute another *preventive* measure of this type because it would reduce crime without changing its objective expected cost. Two possible mechanisms of how crime could be reduced in this way are that lower unemployment would imply better possibilities of earning income legally, while lower income inequality would reduce feelings of relative deprivation and thereby increase the utility cost that individuals would attach to criminal and violent acts.

2.23 *Preventive* measures are growing in importance as evidence of their effectiveness accumulates in developed countries. In 1998, the University of Maryland Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice presented to the US Congress a systematic review of over 500 different evaluations of crime and violence reduction efforts carried out in the US, and concluded that several *preventive* measures were effective in reducing crime and violence. Their review rated the evaluations depending on the scientific validity of their results and classified the evaluated policies in three⁶ groups—“what works”, “what doesn’t”, and “what’s promising”—depending on the results, quality, and number of their evaluations. Freeman (1999) also cites two meta analyses which find that juvenile delinquency programs (Lipsey, 1992) and rehabilitation programs (Andrews, et al, 1990) had “modest crime-reducing effects” (p. 3557). In addition, the report on violence conducted by the WHO (2002) included a review of *preventive* measures against specific types of violence and classified them as effective, not effective, and promising. Finally, the Campbell Collaboration contains several systematic reviews of different types of programs aimed at reducing crime and violence.⁷

⁵ Note that under the distinction made in paragraph 2.19 above, these measures belong in fact to the set of *control* policies because they do not change the intrinsic value individuals attach to crime. Rather, they increase its expected cost by raising the probability of apprehension.

⁶ A fourth group—the largest—contained all those policies for which no conclusive or promising evidence has been found.

⁷ The Campbell Collaboration is an ongoing effort to conduct and publish “systematic reviews on the effects of interventions within the areas of education, crime and justice, and social welfare” (cited from the organization’s website: <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org>).

- 2.24 Table 2.1 presents a summary of the findings gathered by the University of Maryland Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice (Sherman, et al, 1998), the WHO (2002), and the Campbell Collaboration. The table includes only those results that correspond to *preventive* measures (as defined above) that have been found to be effective, non-effective, or even harmful. It is important to note that the University of Maryland's report followed a rigorous methodology to determine whether a particular intervention could be deemed effective or not. Their method consisted of rating each available evaluation on the basis of the internal validity of its results, and then comparing the results of all those evaluations (see Sherman, et al, 1998 for details). The report by the WHO (2002) simply mentioned as evidence the results of any scientifically solid evaluation. The contributing authors to the Campbell Collaboration chose different criteria for the selection of the studies they reviewed and, although they generally were careful to select rigorous evaluations, their criteria were not as strict as those of Sherman, et al. For this reason, the evidence identified by WHO (2002) and the Campbell Collaboration may not be as reliable as that found by Sherman and his co-authors.
- 2.25 More than being just effective, there is evidence that in some instances *preventive* interventions may be more cost-effective than *control* measures. Stemen (2007) reports the results of a few studies⁸ indicating that increases in incarceration rates or number of police per capita in the US have a less than proportional decrease in crime rates while reductions in unemployment as well as increases in real wages and education produce more than proportional falls in crime rates. In a similar vein, Greenwood (1997) estimates that parental training, graduation incentives for youth, and delinquent supervision prevent more crimes per US\$1m spent than the three-strikes law in California.
- 2.26 The overwhelming majority of the evidence comes from the U.S. and other developed countries. Hence, this evidence only makes *preventive* measures a promising approach for Latin American and Caribbean countries. Their success is not guaranteed. The results obtained in developed countries may not be attained in developing settings because institutions in the latter group of countries are less efficient and less able to carry out the interventions themselves. Buvinic, Morrison and Shifter (1999) argue that "Prevention may be especially cost-effective in situations where very high levels of violence take place alongside weak capacity of key social control institutions such as the judiciary and the police, as currently occurs in much of Latin America and the Caribbean" (p. 32). The position of the present report is that this argument is valid only if the institutions that would be in charge of delivering the *preventive* measures are more efficient than those "key social control institutions". However, it is not clear that this is the case among Latin American and Caribbean countries.

⁸ See Gould et al (2002), Grogger (1998), Kovandzic and Sloan (2002), Levitt (1996 and 1997), Lochner and Moretti (2004), Marvell and Moody (1996), Raphael and Winter-Ebmer (2001), and Spelman (2000 and 2005).

- 2.27 This report has not found rigorous quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of *preventive* measures in the region. Akpokodje, Bowles and Tigere (2002) carry out an extensive review of crime prevention programs in developing countries. None of the 91 evaluations included in the review presented a quantitative analysis.⁹ In fact, the authors find that “the studies of crime prevention activities in developing countries are driven more by rhetoric than reality” (p. 8). The work by Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza (2002a) is perhaps the only rigorous quantitative analysis (and even then, with important data constraints) available on the causes of violent crime, but their results regard macroeconomic causes of crime, not the effectiveness of some *preventive* policy.
- 2.28 Since the evidence found in developed countries is still scant, since it is not possible to ensure its validity in Latin American and Caribbean countries, and since there is a significant paucity of evidence from the latter countries, this report concludes that *preventive* measures may be promising but it is not possible to assert that they are more effective or efficient than *control* measures. Expressions such as “it is clear that prevention activities are generally more cost-effective than remedial or control approaches” (GN-2217, par. 1.22) are not sufficiently supported.
- 2.29 A final point to discuss regarding the effectiveness of *preventive* measures has to do with their scope. The multiplicity of factors causing violent and criminal behaviors suggests that the programs aimed at reducing them should be multi-faceted and address all—or the most important—of these factors. This has been a subject of debate within the Bank. Although several authors agree that integral, multi-faceted programs are necessary to reduce violence substantially (see Guerra, 2005; Buvinic, Alda, and Lamas, 2005; Lamas, et al, 2006), these programs have several difficulties. On the one hand, they “have tended to exceed the institutional capacity of the executing agencies”. On the other, this approach “also requires a strategic association between institutions from the State, the private sector, and the civil society” (Lamas, et al, 2006, p. 10). Furthermore, social *preventive* interventions yield results only in the long run which implies that a multi-faceted intervention requires a long-term political commitment. More specific programs, on the contrary, are easier to implement but may be ineffective because they address only a limited number of risk factors while leaving the rest unchanged, which could represent a necessary but insufficient condition for the reduction of crime and violence.
- 2.30 In sum, there is little clarity as to what type of intervention would work best in LAC. From a theoretical perspective, multi-faceted interventions are accepted as the preferred solution. From a pragmatic perspective, narrower approaches may be more effective due to their feasibility. But even if this issue were resolved, the choice of the specific interventions that would be implemented remains a

⁹ The authors included only one quantitative evaluation but it corresponds to a program implemented in the U.S. It was included in the review because, in the authors’ opinion, “the methodological design could be adapted readily and duplicated in a developing country setting” (Akpokodje, Bowles, and Tigere, 2002; p. 54).

challenging task. There is some evidence of the effectiveness of a few *preventive* interventions, but most of it comes from developed countries where the institutions in charge of delivering the interventions may be significantly more efficient. The *preventive* measures that have worked in these countries may be promising for LAC countries, but they are not guaranteed to bring success.

III. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES OF IDB'S INTERVENTIONS

- 3.1 Up until the approval of the Guidelines, the IDB had financed eleven¹⁰ interventions specifically directed at reducing crime and violence (“stand-alone” projects). The objectives of these programs focus on reducing violence, conflict, and perceptions of insecurity, both at the community and household levels. Some projects also included as objectives a change in the perceptions of what is acceptable behavior—particularly by the youth. Table 3.1 presents the stated objectives of the Bank’s stand-alone projects.
- 3.2 As discussed in the next section, these objectives are typically not well defined. They target extremely broad concepts—“violence”, “crime”, and “insecurity”—thereby rendering the projects either unrealistic or unclear. This is likely a reflection of the lack of knowledge of the specific problems faced by the communities where the projects were implemented. It may also reflect the uncertainty—both within and outside the Bank—on the causes and mechanisms to reduce specific types of crime and violence.
- 3.3 Because of this uncertainty, the Bank’s Citizen Security projects are a collection of many interventions. Some are directed at the household, attempting to change behavioral patterns such as domestic violence, and others are targeted at youth, providing them with opportunities to engage in constructive activities (e.g. after-school sportive or artistic activities) in order to reduce violent behavior. Still other components include working with the police by changing the way in which they interact with the community, or simply providing them with resources and training to perform their functions more efficiently.
- 3.4 Just how exactly these components are expected to work is unclear in the loan documents. In a review of the different interventions included in the Citizen Security projects, this report found four implicit mechanisms by which they could be expected to reduce crime, violence, or both. The financed interventions can thus be classified according to these mechanisms (logical chains). As is often the case with any classification, the categories are not completely exclusive or exhaustive. That is, there are some interventions that fit more than one category

¹⁰ This includes the program in El Salvador that was canceled. After the approval of the Guidelines, two more Citizen Security projects were approved—Argentina’s “Citizen Security and Inclusion Program” (AR-L1074) and Jamaica’s “Citizen Security and Justice Program II” (JA-L1009)—and two more are in preparation—one in Costa Rica and another in Belize.

because their various elements—specific activities—correspond to different categories, and there are others that contain atypical elements for which no category has been created.

- 3.5 The four basic types of interventions are the following. First, there are those that concentrate on developing the “*capacity*” of the institutions of the criminal justice system (CJS)—i.e. the police, the judiciary, and the correctional system. Second, there are those interventions which are mostly concentrated on *educating* individuals so that they will be less prone to crime and violence and have better opportunities to participate in legal and non-violent activities. Third, there is a large group of interventions whose main focus is on the promotion of *community participation* and improving the relationship between the community and government authorities—police, judicial officials, local government officials, etc. Finally, there is a much smaller number of components working through the *prevention of situations* that could give rise to crime and violence. The following paragraphs explain these logical chains in more detail and Table 3.2 presents them schematically.
- 3.6 a) *Institutional capacity* is a vague concept which is very often found in the Bank’s project documents. The expression is used in this report simply as a label for a type of interventions that affect the functioning of the CJS and other governmental institutions. These interventions include technical advice on organizational improvements to the institutions, training of their staff, provision of equipment and infrastructure, technical advice on policy design, data collection, and monitoring and evaluation. The immediate expected effect of these actions is to have new policies being designed on the basis of quantitative evidence and to increase the efficiency of those institutions. As a result, crime and violence are expected to be reduced through both *preventive* and *control* policies.
- 3.7 b) *Educational*. This group of interventions operates by teaching individuals a series of social values and skills that are expected to turn them into less violent and less crime-prone people. Those values and skills include a higher overall appreciation for non-violent behavior, non-violent child rearing techniques, and peaceful conflict resolution techniques, among other things. Interventions in the “education” group also include the teaching of job market skills which allow the individual to obtain a legal employment more easily, thereby reducing the individual’s relative benefit of participating in criminal activities. Drug abuse treatments, which allow individuals to better insert themselves in the legal society, are also part of this group.
- 3.8 c) *Community participation*. There is a large number of interventions within the Bank’s citizen security projects which are centered on community participation and the improvement of the community-police—and more generally, community-government—relationship. This declared emphasis can be justified by the hypothesis that community participation and a better relationship between the community and the government would result in better diagnoses of the problems

faced by communities (which results in needs-based policy making), higher probabilities of reporting crimes, and higher efficiency of the CJS.¹¹

- 3.9 d) *Situational prevention*. A substantially smaller number of interventions are directed towards reducing the situations in which crime and violence can arise. By modifying the design of public spaces—lighting up dark streets or eliminating hiding places—keeping potential criminals busy with other, more positive activities—such as sports and cultural activities—and reducing the availability of drugs and arms, these interventions seek to reduce the number of instances and situations in which crime and violence typically occur.
- 3.10 These logical chains are extremely vague. They only assert that “crime” or “crime and violence” could be reduced as a result of certain actions but do not offer any specifics about those actions or the types of crime and violence that would be affected. This is because the projects do not propose specific actions to reduce specific types of crime or violence. In fact, as mentioned above, these logical chains have been deduced as part of the production of this report and were not explained in any loan document.
- 3.11 One question that arises immediately is the relative frequency with which those types of interventions occur in the Bank’s Citizen Security projects. To this end, Table 3.3 presents a list of all the projects’ components and the implicit hypotheses behind their working. It shows that all eleven projects include interventions that fall within the Institutional Capacity and Educational categories, and all but the Panama project include interventions in the Community Participation category. The Situational Prevention category is present only in El Salvador, Honduras, Chile, Nicaragua, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago.
- 3.12 Ideally, the choice of interventions that are included in these projects would heavily depend on the available evidence; however, this does not appear to be the case. The previous section showed that there is some evidence that certain *preventive* measures that would fall in the Educational category have been effective at reducing crime and violence in developed countries. This provides a motivation for the inclusion of this type of interventions in the Bank’s projects. Indeed, all projects—except the one for Guyana—include interventions aimed at teaching children and youth non-violent social skills and values, or interventions directed at teaching parents how to raise their children in a non-violent manner. Nevertheless, since the loan documents do not always provide details about these interventions—e.g. Chile—it is not possible to tell whether they resemble closely the interventions referred in Table 2.1. And even if they did, again, the evidence presented in that table may not be applicable to LAC countries.

¹¹ For the specific case of community policing, Sherman, et al (1997) identify four mechanisms through which the literature has hypothesized this intervention can reduce crime: 1) neighborhood watch, which increases deterrence against future criminal activities; 2) community-based intelligence, by which community members inform the police of criminal activity; 3) public information about crime, by which the government informs community members of the state of affairs in the community; and 4) police legitimacy. All of these four hypotheses can be summarized into three direct effects identified above for this group of interventions.

- 3.13 Institutional Capacity interventions could in principle be justified with the argument that efficient institutions are a necessary condition for the implementation of any program. Indeed, the establishment of crime monitoring and recording centers is an example of such necessary condition.¹² However, many of the interventions that fall in this category do not seem sustainable—e.g. the training of employees who can later move on to other jobs—and there is no evidence that more efficient institutions actually do emerge as a result of these interventions.
- 3.14 A similar situation occurs with interventions of the Community Participation category. Buvinic, Alda, and Lamas (2005) maintain that “it is vital to involve the community in developing and implementing prevention strategies. In addition, community participation is an essential tool in changing attitudes, and empowering and mobilizing its members” (p. 17). However, there is no certainty that community participation is an effective means of reducing crime or violence. In the U.S., as of late 1996, “there are no community-based crime prevention programs proved to be effective at preventing crime” (Sherman, et al, 1998).¹³ Sherman, et al (1997) argue that this is due to a lack of consistency between the causes of crime and violence and the proposed solutions. “More than any of the other institutional settings¹⁴ [in which interventions take place], the community setting shows a striking divergence of causal analysis and prevention programs” (p. 3-1). They attribute this problem to a neglect of the root causes leading to problematic communities. “Ironically, a central tenet of community prevention programs has been the empowerment of local community leaders to design and implement their own crime prevention strategies. This philosophy may amount to throwing people overboard and then letting them design their own life preserver. The scientific literature shows that the policies and market forces causing criminogenic community structures and cultures are beyond the control of neighborhood residents, and that «empowerment» does not include the power to change those policies (Hope, 1995)” (p. 3-2).
- 3.15 One possible explanation of why the Bank has placed so much emphasis on community participation is the concern of being involved in the countries’ internal politics or in human rights violations. Indeed, as a way of verifying that this will not occur, the Preliminary 2002 Guidelines propose that the following question be asked: “are there mechanisms in place in Bank operations (such as advisory councils, community consultations and other systems of checks and balances) which foster transparency in the allocation of resources and openness in the execution of activities, especially in sensitive areas?” (GN-2217, par. 1.23;

¹² To be precise, the centers themselves may not be necessary. What is necessary is to have precise and timely data (see Section 7).

¹³ The Neighborhood Watch program—in which neighbors agree to be alert and ready to report to the police any criminal activity—may be the sole exception (Bennett, Holloway, and Farrington, 2008).

¹⁴ Sherman and his collaborators find that crime prevention measures take place in seven institutional settings: Communities, families, schools, labor markets, places (specific premises), police, and criminal justice.

emphasis added). This suggests that community participation is probably being included because it gives transparency to the projects, rather than because it is a strategy proven to be effective in the reduction of crime and violence.¹⁵ As Section 5 discusses, the Bank's projects have gathered little evidence about their effectiveness. Therefore, the Bank has heavily relied on interventions that lack any robust evidence of their usefulness.

IV. EVALUABILITY OF IDB'S INTERVENTIONS

- 4.1 Starting with the Colombia project, the IDB has been financing a series of innovative projects to reduce the levels of crime and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. As always, policy innovation calls for a concomitant learning process which allows higher effectiveness and efficiency of future interventions tackling similar problems. Unfortunately, the programs on citizen security financed by the Bank thus far have not contributed substantially to such learning process.
- 4.2 There are at least three reasons for this. First, the projects' evaluability is poor, which means that even without data limitations it would not be possible to assess whether the projects achieved their objectives. Second, the interventions were not designed in such a way as to allow the identification of the impact of each of their components separately. Finally, data on crime and violence are extremely difficult to come by, and even though several of the projects financed by the Bank included in their design activities to improve the collection and administration of data, their paucity is still a major obstacle to learning what works and what does not work for reducing the different types of crime and violence.
- 4.3 OVE's standard of evaluability covers several dimensions of a project, but there are three in which Citizen Security interventions have been especially weak. The programs reviewed in this report coincide in making an incomplete diagnosis of the problem, in having poorly defined purposes, and in lacking complete indicators of their achievements. First, a project's goal and purposes need to be directly related to the diagnosed problem. Second, each specific objective (purpose) must be well defined. This means that all concepts referenced should be clear and measurable, and that the purpose must be linked to a timeframe within which it should be achieved. Finally, all purposes should have complete indicators—i.e., each must have well-defined and measurable indicators with baselines and targets. When some of this information is absent, the evaluability of the project is compromised as there is no clarity about what the project set off to achieve. In that case, the project's effectiveness can only be assessed through an ad hoc evaluation strategy.

¹⁵ A similar type of justification can be found in the Guidelines, as they claim to provide a framework which “promotes community partnership and participation, to ensure that citizen security policies will be transparent, effective, and sustainable” (GN-2535, Box 1).

- 4.4 Programs directed at reducing crime and violence, as any other type of project, need to make an accurate and comprehensive diagnosis of the problem. This includes an assessment of its magnitude, causes, and consequences. A proper diagnosis is important because it provides the information necessary to justify the intervention as well as to determine its magnitude and line of action so as to provide an effective solution to the problem.
- 4.5 The projects analyzed in this document include an incomplete assessment of the problem they want to tackle. They typically present aggregate figures of crime and violence around the time the project was being designed instead of describing the prevalence of specific types of crime and violent acts by geographic or administrative area and by different demographic characteristics. This nuanced analysis is necessary to identify where the main problems are, but still it would not be a complete diagnosis. For that, it is also necessary to explore the evolution of the problem over time and its root causes. Some of the loan documents present recent changes in crime rates, but not a long-term view of the problem. It is thus difficult to tell whether the current problem is new or another manifestation of a long-standing phenomenon.
- 4.6 Most of the projects do not present a causal analysis that explains the current levels of crime and violence. The Uruguay, Jamaica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guyana, and Chile projects contain little or no discussion on the origin of the problem. The Nicaragua project mentions violence in the 1970s and 1980s, the proliferation of small guns, and poverty as possible structural causes. It also mentions three risk factors that incite violent behavior in individuals, but it does not provide—or make reference to—a comprehensive causal analysis that explains the current levels of crime and violence in the country. The Guatemala project briefly mentions the civil war, impunity, and inequality of opportunity as possible structural causes of violence. The Colombia project presents a brief summary of the potential causes and directs the reader to complementary readings that support that summarized explanation.
- 4.7 As for the consequences of the problems, according to the Bank's Preliminary 2002 Guidelines, the reason to support programs aimed at reducing violence is that "violence slows economic growth and impedes social development" (p. 1). According to that document, there are various channels through which these effects occur. First, a substantial amount of resources is dedicated to trying to control violence or to coping with its consequences. Second, violence and insecurity discourage investment, lower productivity, and negatively affect the accumulation of human capital. Third, violence has non-monetary costs such as physical injuries, deaths, and psychological suffering. Finally, violence undermines social development by diminishing social capital, de-legitimizing governmental institutions, and by transmitting itself across generations.
- 4.8 While the projects for Colombia and Jamaica make explicit reference to some of these considerations, the rest of the projects do not discuss the development consequences of crime and violence, which undermines the importance of the

intervention vis-à-vis other development projects. In fact, the Chile loan document acknowledges that crime rates in the country are lower than in almost any other country in the region. Similarly, the Nicaragua document states that the country's government "is interested in protecting the country's image of being «one of the safest countries in Central America»" (p. 3, translated from Spanish).

- 4.9 In addition, the projects do not build on previous experience. Admittedly, this problem is not only a fault of each particular project, but a result of the lack of solid evidence resulting from earlier interventions. That is, some of the citizen security programs that followed after the Colombia project have the explicit intention of building on previous experiences. However, none of the interventions thus far has been able to provide solid quantitative evidence of their results, hence it has not been possible for subsequent interventions to build from past experience.
- 4.10 The evaluability problems of the projects are also evident in the specific objectives they set. Most of the projects reviewed have purposes that are vaguely defined—e.g., they want to "increase the level of social integration of young people"—are not measurable, and lack a temporal dimension (see Section 3).
- 4.11 Furthermore, the projects rarely present adequate outcome indicators. In order to make a global assessment of all eleven interventions on citizen security, the following set of criteria was established to determine the adequacy level of an indicator.¹⁶ Indicators need to:
- Correspond to development outcomes, not outputs;
 - Be measurable;
 - Be comparable (opinions, expectations, and perceptions are not proven to be comparable across individuals);
 - Be well defined and specific;
 - Be unambiguous.
- 4.12 An indicator that satisfied all five criteria was determined to be adequate. If an indicator satisfied the first three criteria but was not specific (e.g. "number of major violent crimes") or was ambiguous (e.g. "number of reports of cases of domestic violence"), it was determined to be partially adequate under the assumption that the project would have additional information that was not contained in the loan document—strictly, these indicators would also be inadequate. Finally, if an indicator did not satisfy one or more of the first three criteria, it was determined to be inadequate.
- 4.13 This way, 56 outcome indicators were found among all eleven projects (the loan documents included a few more indicators but they were excluded because they represented output rather than outcome indicators). Of these 56 indicators, a little

¹⁶ These criteria are the same criteria of the evaluability instrument developed by OVE, except for the metric indicators, which are analyzed separately below.

over a quarter (15) were considered adequate, while 19 were deemed partially adequate, and 22 inadequate (see Table 4.1).

- 4.14 When matching these indicators to specific objectives, the evaluability limitations of the projects become even more evident: Of the 40 specific objectives identified, 16 did not have any indicator; and among the 24 that did, 15 did not have an adequate indicator. That is, only 8 of 40 specific objectives (20%) had one or more adequate indicators. Further adding the requirement that the indicators have a baseline and a target, then only 6 out of 56 indicators satisfy these three criteria, which corresponds to only 5 of 40 specific objectives having at least one adequate indicator with a baseline and a target—6 if we include partially adequate indicators.
- 4.15 The problem most often found with the indicators proposed by the loan documents is that they are not measurable. Indicators that suffer this problem seek to measure, in a direct way, behavior determinants that cannot be directly observed. They try to measure perceptions, opinions, expectations, or attitudes of survey respondents simply by asking them to report their own.
- 4.16 The issue is not that perceptions, opinions, expectations, and attitudes are not important but rather that the measurement method is not proven to be appropriate and there are reasons to believe that it may be wrong. One reason is that these concepts are difficult to quantify in a comparable way. Joe and Peter could both report that they feel “very safe”, but that is no guarantee that they both think that the probability of them being robbed in the street is the same. For Joe, a 10 percent probability could mean “very safe” whereas for Peter only a 2 percent probability has that meaning. Another reason is that self reports are subject to unobservable biases. Depending on circumstances, respondents may systematically misreport their true perceptions, opinions, expectations, preferences, and attitudes. The motivation could be conscious—as in the cases when respondents want to influence the results of a study or want to give their interviewer a different picture of themselves—or unconscious—as in the cases where the framing of a question influences the response.
- 4.17 The bias in these responses becomes particularly troublesome when it is systematic and associated to a program that needs to be evaluated. A person who participates in a community-based intervention, for instance, may report to feel safer than he actually does out of self encouragement or because he thinks that if he says he does not feel safer the program funds will be shut off.
- 4.18 Instead of attempting to measure these concepts directly, one more certain way of doing it is indirectly, to let behavior reveal them. Providing false answers about one’s preferences is costless; however, acting against them is costly. People constantly act according to their preferences and the constraints they face. If we observe that a year ago one person used to walk every day along street X to go to work but now does not do it anymore, and if nothing has changed other than crime levels—and perceptions—then it must be that this person feels less safe

now about walking along that street than a year ago. Admittedly, this method of measurement may be complicated but it has the additional advantage of making quantification comparable.

- 4.19 Another weakness of these projects is the monitoring and evaluation system that accompanies them. In this regard, while all projects proposed monitoring and evaluations—at least an intermediate and a final one—they have not made enough provisions for collecting data on adequately defined outcome indicators as well as for guaranteeing that a rigorous impact evaluation of their interventions will be possible once the programs are concluded.
- 4.20 This is an extremely important point, especially due to the lack of theoretical and empirical knowledge on how to reduce crime and violence. It has been argued that the cost of acquiring this theoretical knowledge may be very large. Lamas, et al (2006), for instance, say that “a greater investment on the development of ‘scientific’ modeling techniques that are able to establish quantitative estimates among causes and effects is not necessarily desirable. The costs of developing those methodologies could outweigh the benefits of making those estimations.” (p. 15; translated from Spanish). The present report does not share that opinion. Investing in a scientific understanding of the specific causes behind the different types of crime and violence is necessary for the design of effective mechanisms to reduce these problems. Achieving that understanding requires gaining both theoretical and evidence-based knowledge. Theory is necessary to select among an implausibly large set of interventions those that are logically expected to be the most effective while impact evaluations and cost-benefit analyses are necessary to prove or falsify those expectations.
- 4.21 Unfortunately, the Citizen Security projects financed by the Bank have not made provisions for collecting the data necessary to carry out that learning process. In light of the prevailing uncertainty about what interventions are effective, it is not clear how the three available PCRs—Colombia, Uruguay, and Jamaica—and all the latest PPMRs for the remaining projects assert that it is “probable” that the projects’ development objectives will be reached.

V. IMPACT AND RESULTS OF IDB’S INTERVENTIONS

- 5.1 The evaluability problems of the Citizen Security projects discussed above make it extremely difficult to assess their results. Adding to this problem, there is very little information to this date about the programs’ achievements. This section summarizes the results reported in the available PCRs and the latest PPMRs of the projects as well as on a series of impact evaluations contracted by OVE.
- 5.2 As of March 2010, only three of the eleven projects had been completed—Colombia, Uruguay, and Jamaica—and the rest were still in operation (except for El Salvador). The information contained in the corresponding PCRs and PPMRs

is far from complete. Only the documents corresponding to the Colombia, Uruguay, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Chile, and Guyana projects contain some information on the progress of their outcome and output indicators. And even in those cases, the indicators reported do not always coincide with those originally proposed in the loan documents (LDs): The Colombia project did not propose any indicators while the Uruguay, Jamaica, Guyana, and Nicaragua projects included in their PCR and PPMR indicators that are different from those listed in their LDs (see Table 4.1).

- 5.3 In addition to these problems, the results reported in the projects' PCRs and PPMRs may not be indicative of the projects' achievements because they do not contrast them with the results of control groups. In other words, PCRs and PPMRs do not present the results net of what would have been obtained had the project not been implemented. If evaluating the impact of a project is complicated, evaluating the impact of each of its components is even more complicated because it requires isolating their impact from the impact of the remaining components of the project. These are not easy tasks and indeed they may be beyond the scope of the PCRs and PPMRs; however, it is important to keep these caveats in mind when reviewing the results they present.
- 5.4 According to the Colombia project's PCR, increasing access to justice and educational interventions aimed at reducing violent behavior—within families and among youth—were successful interventions. In Bogota, the Unidades de Mediación are said to have increased the beneficiary communities' ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. In Cali and Medellin, the organization of local networks to prevent domestic violence and encourage social cohesion is said to have resulted in stronger social control over domestic violence and more peaceful coexistence among neighbors. In these two cities, the programs designed to make youth “unlearn” violence resulted in beneficiaries reporting to think of themselves as more peaceful and less willing to engage in violence. Finally, interventions directed at improving young people's insertion in the labor market appear to have had weak results, since the PCR reports that in Bogota and Medellin the job training efforts yielded no effects in terms of employment.
- 5.5 Uruguay's PCR indicates that trust in the Police increased in Montevideo and Canelones between December 1999 and July 2004. In the same period, the sensation of insecurity went down in Montevideo—where the project concentrated its efforts—but increased in Canelones. The PCR also shows an important increase in the absolute number of victims of domestic violence who report the crime to the police, which is taken as an indicator that greater and better attention was given to this issue and its victims.
- 5.6 In Jamaica, the interventions dealing with the development of a National Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy, capacity building of the Ministry of National Security and Justice, as well as strengthening of the Criminal Justice System and a series of Community Actions have been associated with substantial reductions in homicide rates and the number of major violent crimes. Interestingly, indicators

- of public perceptions about security—as drawn from self-reported, survey measures—deteriorated substantially in the Kingston Metropolitan Area.
- 5.7 In Chile, the annual victimization surveys have tracked a five-percentage-point reduction in victimization rates as well as a ten-percent reduction in serious crimes that remain unreported during the implementation of the program. However, it is worth mentioning that the component dedicated to encouraging community-police relationships has not played a role in those reductions given that the interventions of that component have not been initialized.
- 5.8 In the case of Nicaragua, the PPMR reports sizeable changes in some ambiguous indicators. Between August 2005 and March 2009, the number of domestic and sexual violence cases that were being attended by justice officials increased from 8100 to almost 22,500. In that same period, the number of teens under 18 years of age that were arrested went down from 2218 to 1757, and the number of reports about crimes committed by teens under 18 climbed from 60752 to a little over 91400.
- 5.9 As evidenced in Table 4.1, the Guyana project is the only project that has kept track of all its five outcome indicators—although one of them was modified. The 2009 PPMR reports that the percentage of undetermined deaths/crimes in regions IV and VI went down from 35 to 30 as a result of the project. The document also reports a reduction (from 36 percent to 30 percent) in the proportion of people who think the Guyana Police Force is not preventing crime well in those two regions, as well as a small reduction (from 42 percent to 40 percent) in the proportion of people who report to not feel safe on the streets of their communities.
- 5.10 In sum, these reports tell very little about what has worked to reduce crime and violence and what has not. Very few projects have provided data tracking the progress in the consecution of their results; when data are provided, then a common problem is that they correspond to inadequate indicators—mostly, indicators based on opinions and perceptions—or to concepts different from those originally proposed in the LDs; and in the even fewer cases in which data on adequate indicators are provided, there is a problem of identification which makes it difficult to attribute the observed changes to the interventions and not to other factors.
- 5.11 In order to obtain more information on whether the Bank’s Citizen Security projects have been effective, OVE contracted a series of impact evaluation studies. The projects covered were Colombia—Bogota, Cali, and Medellin—Jamaica, and some components of Chile. The studies faced the extremely complicated task of evaluating the impact of programs which had not been designed in a way that allowed them to be evaluated—i.e. that constructed appropriate control groups and separated their interventions—and sometimes in the absence of good data.

- 5.12 To overcome these problems, the studies resorted to different econometric techniques and in some instances to collection of additional primary data. Nevertheless, not all the analytical problems could be solved satisfactorily. Table 5.1 presents a summary of the results of these impact evaluations together with a brief description of the data and analytical methods used. The last column of the table lists the analytical problems that challenge the validity of the results.
- 5.13 There are two things that stand out from Table 5.1. First, there are very few results. The studies explored a much wider variety of issues that could have been impacted by the projects' interventions; however they corresponded to outputs—e.g. utilization of institutions—or were measured through inadequate indicators—e.g. self-reported perceptions of insecurity. This report does not take into account those results because they either are unreliable or do not represent development outcomes. Instead, the report concentrates on the projects' impacts on crime and violence.
- 5.14 The second thing that stands out from Table 5.1 is that three projects—Cali, Bogota, and Jamaica—appear to have resulted in a reduction of the use of physical punishment of children. Since the results are not conclusive because the studies could not successfully resolve a number of analytical problems, further research is required to conclude the effectiveness of these interventions on this outcome. However, the results of Table 5.1 are an encouraging finding, especially in light of the findings reported by Sherman, et al (1997) and the WHO (2002) in the sense that less-violent child rearing has been shown to result in less violent youth in the U.S.
- 5.15 Table 5.1 also shows that the Bank's interventions may have had crime-reducing effects. There are indications that in Chile the program has reduced the high-crime rate—an aggregate of seven serious types of crime—as well as battery and theft rates, specifically.¹⁷ In Jamaica, the results point towards a reduction in burglary rates in the treated areas but a worrisome increase in robbery rates.

Once again, these results are not conclusive and must be taken as indications. Precisely for this reason, they point to the need of establishing a solid learning mechanism within the Bank's interventions.

¹⁷ The reduction is only relative to the control group. That is, these crime rates increased both in the treated and control municipalities; however, the increment in the latter was significantly larger.

VI. EXECUTION PROBLEMS

- 6.1 This section synthesizes the execution problems faced by the Bank's Citizen Security interventions. It reviews the projects' PCRs and latest PPMRs to identify common problems that could be prevented in future interventions as well as systematic patterns in the types of interventions that were the most problematic.
- 6.2 The Bank's Citizen Security interventions have faced various execution problems whose consequences have ranged from the total cancellation of the project—El Salvador—to the cancellation of some components or activities, partial achievements or delays. The Colombia project consisted of two subprograms, one at the national level and another at the municipal level. The first of these was cancelled in 85 percent. In the case of Jamaica, one component—social marketing and public education—was cancelled and several activities from other components were cancelled or achieved their targets only partially. In Uruguay, none of the activities was cancelled but five activities achieved their targets partially. The rest of the projects are still ongoing and only those in Chile, Honduras, and Guyana have reported some delayed or not-initiated activities.
- 6.3 The information contained in the PCRs and PPMRs on these issues is not very detailed. It is not possible to tell, for instance, exactly what fraction of the loan was affected by cancellations and partial achievements. In many instances, only some of the activities of a given component presented these problems and the documents do not declare what fraction of the funds assigned to the whole component corresponds to them. Also, the explanations provided as to the causes of these problems are very succinct.
- 6.4 Still, it is possible to analyze whether these execution problems present some common patterns. This report classified the different interventions contained in the projects according to four implicit causal mechanisms by which they can conceivably result in a reduction of crime and violence (see Table 3.2). Although the interventions assigned to each group can be substantially different from project to project, they share important characteristics in terms of the activities required for their implementation. "Educational" interventions, for instance, could involve training or public anti-violence campaigns. This raises the possibility that the difficulties found when executing each type of intervention would be common across countries.
- 6.5 This does not seem to be the case. A review of the PCRs and latest PPMRs available reveals that no group of interventions was systematically facing more problems of cancellation, delay, or partial achievement. From the 20 activities and components identified as problematic, 6 belong to the "institutional capacity" group, 6 to the "education" group, 7 to the "community participation" group, and 1 to the "situational prevention" group. The fact that the last group appears only once in the list of problematic interventions—and then as a result of a political decision (see below)—suggests that implementation of this type of activities is

less challenging; however, these activities are found much less frequently in the Citizen Security projects than the other three types hence the previous conclusion must be taken only as an indication.

- 6.6 From the point of view of the factors that have caused the execution problems, three main reasons stand out. Although the specific circumstances and events that have led to the cancellation or delay of any given activity are obviously different in each case, they all correspond to political, institutional, and technical factors. The first two factors could be considered exogenous to the project, especially the political ones which account for most of the execution problems. Technical factors, however, correspond to deficiencies in the design of the interventions.
- 6.7 In several cases, the activities proposed have been cancelled or delayed as a result of the decision of some political actor. In El Salvador, for instance, the project was cancelled seemingly because the country's Legislative Assembly never approved the project's execution.¹⁸ In Guatemala, the project has not started disbursements and has recently (September 23, 2009) been reformulated. The latest PPMR available (10 March, 2009) mentions that the project was awaiting approval by the National Congress. In Colombia, the government decided to reduce the country's external debt and so 85 percent of the national subprogram was cancelled. In Jamaica, the government decided to expand the scope of the social marketing and public education campaign and so that component was cancelled in order to implement it as a separate project. In Uruguay, the lack of political priority is given as the explanation for the failure to develop the National Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy and for the underachievement of the public sensitization campaign. Finally, in Guyana, according to the latest available PPMR (25 June 2009) the "Minister of Home Affairs has suspended all the activities under this component [community participation]" (p. 4).
- 6.8 In a few other cases, the explanation resides in the inefficiency or lack of coordination among institutions involved in the execution of an activity. In Uruguay, for instance, the training of members of the Citizen Security Liaison Committees was not as extensive as planned because not all Commissions were completely integrated or constituted. In Chile, the lack of coordination between the Ministry of the Interior and the Police (*Carabineros*) caused various activities of the Strengthening of Police-Community Integration component to remain uninitiated.
- 6.9 Although the previous examples correspond to causes exogenous to the projects, there is a substantial number of instances in which the execution problems were the result of deficient planning and design of the projects. In some of these cases,

¹⁸ The latest available PPMR for this project, dated 27 June 2003, says that the project "has not started execution because the Legislative Assembly has not authorized the Executive to subscribe the loan contract with the Bank" (p. 2). The report also indicates that an extension of the period to sign the contract was requested to the Executive Vice President of the Bank, who granted an extension until August 7, 2003—instead of until October 6, as requested. OVE has no further information about this project.

the interventions achieved their targets partially or were delayed because they were hindered by other activities of the intervention. In Honduras, for instance, the Communications and Social Awareness Strategy was delayed as a result of delays in the other components of the project. Also, some activities of the Institutional Strengthening component were delayed partly because the municipalities did not have equipment, the provision of which was part of that component's activities.

- 6.10 In other cases, the assumptions of the project failed. In Uruguay, for instance, the training of teachers was incomplete because the number of education centers identified was smaller than expected and because the first teachers trained did not subsequently train as many other teachers as originally expected. Also in Uruguay, the problem of insufficient constitution of the Citizen Security Liaison Committees mentioned above is partly consequence of the project's failure to achieve its target of strengthening those committees and help them coordinate better. In Jamaica, the new Police Code of Conduct was not implemented because abuses committed by the Police "rendered the instrument useless in the opinion of the community residents" (Jamaica PCR, p. 14). In Trinidad and Tobago, the Institutional Strengthening of the MNS component was designed "with no consideration of an examination of the entire institutional context" which resulted in the project implementation unit hiring "a full time Co-ordinator to integrate and network these [crime analysis] units rather than creating a new crime analysis unit specific for CSP" (Trinidad and Tobago PPMR, p. 4).
- 6.11 Thus, while most of the causes for non-execution have been political, errors of design and wrong assumptions have also been important sources of execution problems.

VII. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Findings

- 7.1. The main objective of this document has been to assess the overall success of IADB's programs in reducing crime and violence. To this end, the report has briefly explored the literature on the causes and ways to reduce crime and violence—both from developed and developing countries—and used this as a point of reference to determine the extent to which the different interventions financed by the Bank have been based on theoretical predictions or empirical evidence.
- 7.2. This exercise has revealed two conceptual weaknesses present not only in the projects financed by the Bank but also in the Preliminary 2002 Guidelines. First, the concepts "crime" and "violence" are commonly used without a clear distinction, almost interchangeably. This adds to the inherent difficulty of understanding the causes of both problems and their solutions. Second, an

artificial distinction is made between so-called *preventive* and *control* measures. This distinction makes the word “preventive” be devoid of meaning, for *control* measures also prevent crime. Under the understanding that *control* measures can be differentiated from other measures in that they are punitive, this report has adopted the *preventive-control* distinction as a pragmatic analytic convenience.

- 7.3. As of October 6, 2009, the Bank had financed eleven projects in different Latin American and Caribbean countries with the objective of increasing citizen security. These interventions have presented various problems all of which result in a failure to learn which interventions work—and which work best—to reduce crime and violence.
- 7.4. First, the interventions have not been based on solid scientific evidence on the effectiveness of similar interventions carried out in other places. Perhaps motivated by the particular evidence mentioned above, most loan documents assume the general premise that *preventive* measures are more effective than *control* measures. They also admit evaluations that lack scientific validity as evidence of the effectiveness of some type of intervention.
- 7.5. Second, a related problem is that the Bank’s interventions have not taken the necessary steps to guarantee that a learning process takes place through them. The projects did not ensure that a rigorous evaluation of their components would be feasible at the end of the intervention, and presented incomplete outcome indicators as well as often badly defined specific objectives. On top of that, they have not collected the data necessary to conduct a rigorous evaluation of their impact.
- 7.6. When empirical evidence is lacking, theoretical predictions are normally used to guide policy making. A third problem of the Bank’s interventions is the lack of clarity regarding their theoretical grounding. The loan documents do not explain the logical mechanism by which the proposed activities would result in the attainment of their specific or general objectives.
- 7.7. In addition, projects make poor diagnoses of the problems they want to solve, and the indicators with which the loan documents propose to keep track of the achievement of the purposes are incomplete. Specifically, although they often have clear targets, they lack baselines and milestones. In addition, some of the indicators are not clearly defined—e.g. “10% reduction in the insecurity associated to violence and criminality”.

B. Recommendations

- 7.8. The Bank’s experience with citizen security interventions is unsatisfactory. After spending more than ten years and 250 million dollars financing various interventions it cannot be sure that its investments have helped reduce crime and violence in the countries where it has intervened. The basic hypothesis underlying all of these Citizen Security projects—namely, that the so-called *preventive*

measures can effectively reduce crime and violence in Latin America—has not been demonstrated empirically.

- 7.9. The first broad recommendation of this report is that the Bank does not continue financing citizen security interventions in the way it did up until 2009. The Bank should only finance projects which satisfy at least one of the following requirements:
- The project guarantees that upon its conclusion there will be solid evidence to learn whether its interventions were effective. In other words, when there is no evidence to guarantee that a project has a high likelihood of being effective, the project design should be based on well-justified hypotheses and contain monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which ensure that, upon completion, it will be possible to evaluate the program and learn what its impacts were.
 - The project has a high likelihood of being effective. A project can be said to have an ex ante high likelihood of being effective if there is robust evidence that a very similar intervention to the one proposed was effective when implemented in very similar circumstances to those anticipated in the project.
- 7.10. Projects on the area of citizen security have the disadvantage of dealing with issues about which there is little scientific knowledge. But even if that knowledge were substantial, it would not by itself justify projects such as those reviewed in this report because they are poorly specified. To resolve this, projects should improve their diagnoses, definition of objectives, and explanation of their interventions (how they are expected to work and based on what evidence or theoretical formulation).
- 7.11. Especially important among these aspects is improving the clarity and specificity about the problems they want to solve. The Citizen Security projects commonly refer to crime and violence without adequately distinguishing among the two concepts and without data. They also make very little effort to differentiate the various types of crimes and violence, to explain their root causes, and to determine the prevalence of each of those types in the targeted communities. As a result, the proposed interventions are not clear: There is no certainty about the exact mechanism by which the different activities will bring about a reduction in crime and violence. Similarly, it is unclear which specific types of crime and violence are expected to be reduced and to what extent.
- 7.12. For this reason, it is surprising that the available PCRs and the latest PPMRs assess as “probable” that the development objectives of the projects will be achieved. There is little clarity in those documents regarding how those assessments are made. This report also recommends that they be made in a more nuanced and transparent manner.
- 7.13. The Bank has acknowledged the prevalent lack of knowledge on the issues of crime and violence and how it negatively affects the efforts to reduce them. For

- this reason, citizen security projects have included components aimed at improving or establishing new organisms for the systematic registering, administration, and publication of data on crime and violence. If carried out successfully, this would doubtlessly represent a promising learning effort around which the development community has built a consensus about its usefulness.
- 7.14. But the data collected thereby would still be insufficient. There are four sources of data that are important for helping improve our understanding of the issues of crime and violence. The first are victimization surveys, which can provide more accurate crime rates than police records because often crimes are not reported to the police—either because victims do not trust the police, they think it will be ineffective, or because the crime imposes a social stigma.
 - 7.15. In addition, victimization surveys usually collect information on people's perceptions and beliefs; however the latter information is unreliable because responses are not comparable across individuals and are subject to systematic, unobservable biases. The advantage of victimization surveys comes from the information they collect regarding an observed behavior—namely, criminal and violent acts. Victimization surveys could provide more accurate information by concentrating on observed behavior rather than perceptions and beliefs. Instead of asking how likely it is that a person would walk alone at night, for instance, the survey could ask how often the person walked alone at night in the previous month. This information is still noisy, as it is subject to recall error, but it is not as affected by systematic biases as perceptions and beliefs are, and is comparable across individuals.
 - 7.16. The second source of data are the administrative records from the institutions in charge of procuring justice—i.e. the police, and the judiciary system. Currently, this information is incomplete and disconnected. If a robbery is reported to the police, for instance, it is extremely difficult to follow the complete process of the case: What did the police do about the report? Was an arrest made? What are the characteristics of this person? What evidence led to his or her arrest? How much time did he or she spend in jail awaiting trial? What happened during the trial? What was the sentence? Establishing the connection between all the different parts of the process and ensuring the data are complete is important to identify inefficiencies or failures in the process, and how they affect individuals and overall crime rates.
 - 7.17. The third source of data is the penitentiary system. Prison records combined with police and judiciary system records could be extremely useful to investigate the experiences of convicted criminals inside the prison and to help determine their future behavior. The information could also be used to more accurately determine recidivism rates.
 - 7.18. One final source of data are other institutions that are capable of observing the consequences of violent acts as part of their daily activities. Hospitals and schools, for instance, could keep detailed records of every instance in which they

find indications that a person has been the victim of a violent act. This information is a valuable resource to keep track of events that could otherwise be unobserved by researchers and policy makers.

- 7.19. Data collection issues are one half of the reason why there is very little learning on how to reduce crime and violence. The other half is the actual evaluation of the projects. A significant amount of effort still needs to be placed on this, which involves both choosing adequate indicators for measuring the projects' outputs and outcomes, as well as taking evaluation into account at the time of designing the intervention. Because of deficiencies of both data collection and evaluation design, the projects have failed to rigorously keep track of their progress and have impeded their ex-post impact evaluation in a scientifically valid fashion.
- 7.20. To reiterate, one recommendation of this report is that, in the absence of knowledge of what interventions effectively reduce crime and violence, the Bank finances only interventions whose impact can be evaluated and hence guarantee a learning process. This does not suggest that the Bank should finance any project so long as it has a good evaluation design; they also need to have a clear and strong theoretical justification for the interventions they propose.
- 7.21. This report started discussing the pernicious effects that crime and violence can have on economic development. These effects are also identified in the Bank's Preliminary 2002 Guidelines. As of the time this report is being written, evaluations of the Bank's Citizen Security projects have not attempted to assess the impact of these projects on the broader objective of improving economic development. Although it is reasonable to expect that this outcome would be affected by changes in the levels of crime and violence only in the long run, it is important that the Bank conducts this evaluation. Thus, it should invest in learning whether its efforts to reduce crime and violence have also resulted in improvements in economic development.
- 7.22. A second broad recommendation of this report is for the Bank to make a programmatic revision of its interventions on citizen security. The Bank's effectiveness on crime and violence reduction could benefit from a reassessment of the type of interventions it has promoted. Specifically, the recommendation is for the Bank to reflect on the issues affecting crime and violence that have not been addressed.
- 7.23. From the present review of Citizen Security projects, it emerges that interventions have leaned substantially more towards effecting a change in the population than in the institutions in charge of promoting justice. The projects contain many educational interventions aimed at changing peoples' values and attitudes towards crime and violence as well as their abilities to legally and peacefully integrate to society. These interventions effectively seek to reform some of the core values of societies to make them more peaceful and law-abiding.

- 7.24. However, a similar approach towards the institutions in charge of delivering justice is not observed. Although the projects contain a large number of interventions directed at increasing their efficiency, they do not seek to improve their fundamental operational and incentive structures. The activities proposed seem to be, for the most part, short-lived, partial, and superficial. An example of a short-lived intervention is the training of staff, since the people trained are most of the time only a fraction of the institutions' personnel and can later move to another job leaving the institution without the benefits of the training. In order to promote a long-lasting, fundamental change in the CJS and other government institutions, it is necessary to carry out a complete institutional diagnostic and design the necessary interventions on that basis.
- 7.25. The recommendation made here is not that the latter types of interventions must be carried out. It is recognized that they carry reputation risk (related to possible human right violations) for the Bank as well as the difficulties related to the political economy of these reforms. The recommendation is for the Bank to assess whether these interventions are necessary to reduce crime and violence in Latin America, and hence decide which of them could possibly be recommended to member countries.
- 7.26. Finally, a word of caution. There are other interventions that the Bank has financed that also carry significant reputation risks—such as detention systems for young offenders or penitentiary systems for condemned juvenile offenders—whose effectiveness remains to be demonstrated. Continued financing of these interventions should be contingent on significant improvement of the evidence basis of justifying these policies.

ANNEX I

RECENT WORK ON THE AREA OF CITIZEN SECURITY

On October 6, 2009, the Board of Executive Directors approved the Guidelines for Program Design and Execution in the Area of Civic Coexistence and Public Safety (GN-2535; henceforth called “Guidelines”). Since then, two other projects have been approved—Argentina’s “Citizen Security and Inclusion Program” (AR-L1074) and Jamaica’s “Citizen Security and Justice Program II” (JA-L1009)—and two more are in preparation—one in Costa Rica and another in Belize. In addition, two Knowledge and Capacity Building Products (KCPs) have been proposed on these issues—“Innovación en Prevención de la Violencia con intervenciones efectivas” and “Generando Capacidades Técnicas para la consolidación de la Alianza de Ciudades por la Seguridad Ciudadana.”

An evaluation of this work merits a separate report. The intention of this annex is only to comment briefly on some general aspects of these documents. Specifically, it quickly verifies whether the main problems identified by the report are being addressed and whether the main recommendations are already being adopted. The conclusion is that the main problems noted by the report still seem to prevail in the Guidelines and approved projects; however, there are promising indications of progress. First, the Bank recognizes the weak evidence base informing investments in this area.¹⁹ Second, the Guidelines recognize the need to improve information systems and learn what works. The Guidelines also recognize that “Problems should be prioritized for targeting action” (GN-2535, Box 2).

Persistent problems and corrective intentions

The conceptual problems identified in the report can still be found in the Guidelines. First, the artificial distinction between preventive and control measures can be seen throughout the text. Paragraph 1.6 of Annex I, for instance, says that a new paradigm of intervention in citizen security has meant “moving away from an exclusive and centralist «police-justice-prison» focus (with the emphasis on controlling crime) toward one that gives prominence, complementary to control efforts, to prevention strategies”. Second, the Guidelines continue to talk about crime and violence almost interchangeably, without explaining the relationship they bear with each other and with their causes.

Also, the Guidelines and projects JA-L1009 and AR-L1074 do not recognize the lack of evidence on what policies are effective at reducing crime or violence in Latin American and Caribbean countries. For instance, project JA-L1009—the second phase of project JA-0105 (CSJP I)—integrates to its interventions “the promising and most successful components and strategies developed in CSJP I” even though it admits that “CSJP I did not establish an appropriate evaluation mechanism” (PR-3506, par. 1.13). Not

¹⁹ On footnote 4 of the comments sent to OVE by the Management on the first version of this report, the Management mentioned that “ICS ha desarrollado durante el 2009 un exhaustivo relevamiento de más de 400 documentos de evidencia científica de programas de seguridad (en conjunto con la Universidad de Chile) y la conclusión de la mayoría de ellos no es concluyente en cuanto a qué medidas funcionan y cuáles no.”

recognizing that there is little knowledge on these issues has led these documents to make policy recommendations without the appropriate support of empirical—or even theoretical—evidence. Project AR-L1074, for instance, claims that “The actions and policies to be pursued under the program will be selected on the basis of empirical evidence” (PR-3446, par 1.16) and yet it proposes to strengthen citizen participation mechanisms without offering any evidence to support their effectiveness. The Guidelines, on their part, make a long list of recommendations and include an annex with a review of the evidence that supports them. However, the majority of the documents cited in that annex do not constitute rigorous evidence; in fact, some do not constitute any evidence (for instance, the reference provided to justify the program “São Paulo em Paz” as a “success story of community participation” is only a brief description of the program, see footnote 31 of Annex IV).

As stated in the report, when there is no evidence to guarantee that a project has a high likelihood of being effective, the project design should be based on well-justified hypotheses and contain monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which ensure that, upon completion, it will be possible to evaluate the program and learn what its impacts were. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that this learning process has been put in place yet. The Guidelines mention repeatedly the intention to monitor and evaluate the Bank’s programs, mostly in the context of the Bank’s efforts to collect and improve the quality of information on crime and violence. However, they do not make an explicit emphasis on monitoring and evaluation; there is not one section dedicated to setting minimum standards for these important issues. Project AR-L1074 does not present a sound evaluation mechanism that guarantees that the results of its interventions will be rigorously measured. Project JA-L1009 presents more detailed evaluation provisions; however there are still important concerns that cast doubt on whether solid evidence of the results of the project will be obtained after its completion.

Moreover, the efforts directed at collecting and improving the quality of information have not been accompanied by a reflection on the phenomena that need to be measured and the best way to do it. Crimes and acts of violence are intrinsically difficult to measure because they are often unobserved—either in whole or partially—by researchers and policy makers. In addition, the full process that a criminal case goes through—from its report to its resolution—is often not recorded or its registry is done by various instances and it cannot be put together. Other phenomena, such as security perceptions and fear, are difficult to measure because direct methods—such as self reports—are not reliable. The effort needed to solve these measurement issues remains pending.

Nevertheless, there are indications that the Bank may be moving in the direction of establishing an effective learning process through its interventions in the area of citizen security. On the one hand, both the Preliminary 2002 Guidelines and the Guidelines (GN-2535) assert the importance of having high quality data on crimes and acts of violence. Moreover, both documents stress the importance of learning what results the Bank’s—and others’—interventions have as well as of prioritizing the problems to be tackled. In accordance with these purposes, two Knowledge and Capacity Building Products (KCPs) on the area of citizen security have recently been proposed—“Innovación en Prevención de la Violencia con intervenciones efectivas” and “Generando Capacidades Técnicas para

la Consolidación de la Alianza de Ciudades por la Seguridad Ciudadana”. Both proposals seek to use empirical evidence to generate knowledge on the area of citizen security and use it to guide public policy. These messages from the Preliminary 2002 Guidelines and the Guidelines, together with the stated objectives of these KCPs are consistent with the central recommendations issued by this report. The Bank and its borrowing member countries have much to gain if these messages are heeded and consequent actions are taken.

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