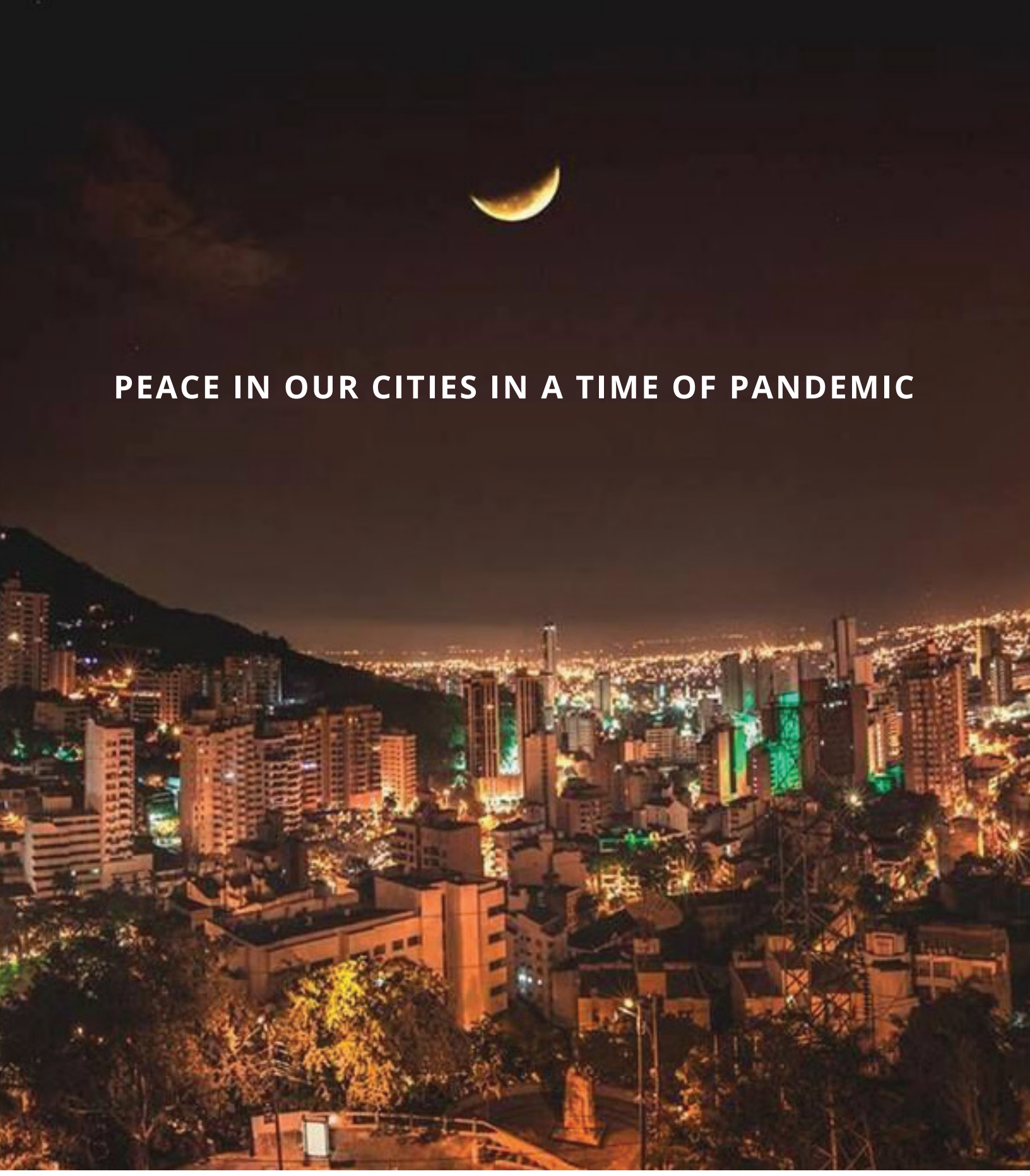
PEACE IN OUR CITIES IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC



PEACE
IN OUR CITIES

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ABOUT THE REPORT

Peace in Our Cities in a Time of Pandemic is a compilation of action-oriented research on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted dynamics of urban violence, with an emphasis on strategies to save lives and protect populations in the midst of a global public health crisis.

The report is based on desk-based research and interviews conducted from September 2020 to March 2021 by subject matter experts. The areas of research were selected by members of Peace in Our Cities in the Spring of 2020. Research has been overseen by Rachel Locke, Director of Impact:Peace at the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all members of Peace in Our Cities, who articulated their knowledge needs and supported one another in the pursuit of tools to help save lives and protect urban residents. We would like to extend deep gratitude to all of the authors who contributed chapters, developing high quality research products while coping themselves with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to thank Thomas Wheeler (FCDO), who provided advice and guidance on the development of this research. Peace in Our Cities co-facilitators Daniel Mack and Bojan Francuz (Pathfinders), Monica Curca and Zander Willoughby (+Peace) provided reviews and expert opinion on each chapter. Molly Wallace copyedited this report with an expert eye. This report was designed by Studio Page Design. Finally, we'd like to thank the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice's Impact:Peace staff who worked on this research, including Julia Canney who aided with all aspects of the development of this work, as well as Marjon Saulon and Nasema Zeerak who provided advance research support.

PEACE IN OUR CITIES

The Peace in Our Cities platform was launched on International Day of Peace in September 2019 with an urgent demand to reverse trends of urban violence around the world. Peace in Our Cities (PiOC) brings together the political leadership of Mayors, local and international peacebuilders, the imperatives of the Sustainable Development Goals, and a bold assertion that we have the tools and knowledge to build peace and save lives in urban areas. With nineteen cities and more than two dozen organizing partners signed on to date, PiOC represents over 20 million people globally. Working together through evidence-based approaches, PiOC is committed to achieving a 50% reduction in urban violence by 2030.

Peace in Our Cities is co-facilitated by three organizations: Impact:Peace, Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego; +Peace; Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, Center on International Cooperation at New York University. Find out more about Peace in Our Cities: www.sdg16.plus/peaceinourcities

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INTRODUCTION

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The COVID-19 pandemic has upended all aspects of life globally, including individual and collective safety and security. The pandemic has influenced the myriad stressors that can motivate violence, the incentive structures of violence, and the response capacities to violence. As the scale of the pandemic began to be made clear in early 2020, formal and informal city networks rapidly came together to provide concrete tools, ideas and resources to address COVID-19's fall-out. Some of this sharing took place over hastily stitched together WhatsApp groups, some through formal networks of local government associations, and some through the array of urban networks already established to link municipalities in our increasingly interconnected world.

The Peace in Our Cities network emerged out of an urgent demand to reverse the pernicious impact of urban violence. Launched on the International Day of Peace in September 2019, Peace in Our Cities (PiOC) brings together the political leadership of mayors with the power of civil society and the imperatives of the Sustainable Development Goals to boldly assert that we have the tools and knowledge to build peace and save lives in urban areas. With 19 cities signed on as of April 2021, PiOC represents over 20 million people globally.[i] Working together through evidence-based approaches, PiOC is committed to achieving a 50 percent reduction in urban violence by 2030.

In February 2020, PiOC held a strategy retreat in Amman, Jordan, meant in part to identify the specific violence priorities of each participating city and the associated research needed to help address these priorities. Representatives from our member cities and civil society organizations discussed what everyday violence looks like in each of their contexts, drawing similarities between different forms of harm, with the overall goal of achieving significant reductions in violence and increased peace. Participants ranked these different manifestations or forms of violence in order of priority, ranging from group or gang violence to violence against women to political violence.[ii] The group also made explicit the need to see the ways in which these different forms of violence interact with and possibly reinforce one another. We emerged from the retreat with a mandate to support action research that would feed directly into city violence reduction planning. A month later, the world had shifted drastically and irreversibly.

Peace in Our Cities remains dedicated to supporting city efforts to reduce violence, despite the increased difficulties the pandemic has presented. Our members have been clear: their urgent priority is advancing

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[i] Please see Annex 1 for a full list of all city and organizational partners.
[ii] Identified categories of violence manifestation in Amman in order of priority: Group/Gang Violence; Violence Against Women (within and outside the home); Economic and Social Violence; Political and Ideologically-based Violence (includes violent extremism); Violence associated with backlash against migrants/refugees; Violence over land and property rights.

public health while simultaneously reinforcing public safety. The research presented in this compendium is a direct response to that demand, bringing forth knowledge and practical tools to deliver on violence prevention goals in the highly dynamic context presented by COVID-19.

URBAN VIOLENCE: WHY CITIES?

In 2018, the year for which most recent data is available, 596,000 people worldwide lost their lives to direct violence. Of these lives lost, the vast majority (409,000) were a result of intentional homicides, with much of these homicides taking place in cities.[1] Conflict-related violence further impacts cities as political contestations move increasingly to urban contexts, as has been seen in Mosul, Idlib and Bangui. Currently 55 percent of humanity resides in urban areas – a number expected to rise to nearly 70 percent by 2050.[2] With more people moving to cities, it is imperative to deploy strategies that help ensure safety for all urban residents.

While in large part cities represent the power and potential of our collective humanity, for far too many people the benefits of collective urban life are elusive. Nearly half of all people – 44 percent – in mid-sized[3] cities face epidemic levels of violence.[4] Over one billion people globally live in informal settlements ("slums"), most often within or on the fringes of major cities. Providing service – both infrastructure service like water and electricity and public safety service such as outreach work and responsible policing – is a particular challenge in these areas where capacity and resource gaps are only part of the difficulty. Political and social inequalities reinforce, and are often the underlying reason for, these gaps, creating not only technical but also political challenges necessary to overcome. Further, while it is men and boys who are vastly more impacted by *lethal* violence, women, girls, LGBTQ+ and gender-non-conforming individuals are regularly threatened with a range of forms of violence.

Whether it takes place in informal settlements or otherwise, violence in urban contexts is often chronic, affecting specific populations more than others. This violence tends to run in a vicious cycle where trauma, disenfranchisement, prejudice, exclusion and poor policy "solutions" compound one another, reinforcing simplistic notions of "bad neighborhoods" or "bad people." While urban violence is complex, reactions to it too often conform to overly simplistic enforcement-oriented responses that pay insufficient attention to the structural drivers of violence, risk violating human rights, and fail to prevent violence in the long term. At the same time, as the following chapters suggest, cities are also spaces of real innovation and resilience when it comes to addressing violence, having demonstrated greater effectiveness in reducing violence than their national counterparts.[5] For all these reasons – the global percentage of people who lives in cities, the unique challenges cities face in relation to violence, and the range of effective responses that have developed – urban violence merits special attention.

PEACE IN OUR CITIES IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

In April of 2020, Peace in Our Cities facilitators re-polled our members to learn what emerging knowledge gaps were most imperative to address. Violence against women and domestic violence strongly emerged as the top concerns. Violence broadly defined as economic and social in nature, to include stressors related to food insecurity for the most vulnerable, also moved up in priority. Organized and armed violence was an evolving concern as city partners observed the ways in which violent groups responded to the shifting incentive structures of COVID-19.

The chapters presented in this compendium represent the action research completed to respond to these knowledge gaps. Our members sought practical examples to inform their violence prevention efforts in the dynamic context of COVID-19. The practical constraints that our partners were confronting each day included drastically constrained budgets, limitations on in-person work, inequality with regard to the impact of the pandemic across different segments of society, escalating misinformation and scapegoating, and a clear demand to remain evidence informed while operating in dynamic change environments. For these reasons, the chapters that follow, summarized below, are action oriented, include city-specific examples, and acknowledge the challenge of acting and building evidence simultaneously in the midst of a crisis.

As a group, PiOC members made a decision to ground all research in three fundamental principles:

1. Peace in Our Cities is focused both on addressing the expression of violence taking place today, while simultaneously reinforcing positive peace in the long term. We must reduce the violence impacting people and communities today, keep it down tomorrow, and reinforce more peaceful urban landscapes in the long term. We appreciate that different capacities may need to be brought to bear to achieve these aims.

2. All research should be action oriented in nature with a focus not only on the what but also on the how. Operationalizing good practice requires not only technical tools but also practice and process tools.
3. Research must embed violence within its spatial and historical context. Violence typically concentrates in certain areas, with some parts of the city and some individuals impacted more and differently than others based on structural marginalization, exclusion and inequality. The action research described below takes this fact as central across all thematic areas such that it is appropriately responsive to these fundamental dynamics.

Not only do the chapters in this compendium provide concrete examples of specific and urgent action being taken in cities around the world, but in the aggregate, they communicate the imperative of recognizing and sufficiently resourcing the frontline organizations – governmental and non-governmental – doing the work of building safe communities for all.

The six chapters below highlight different but related themes. When these chapters are taken together, four key themes emerge across geographies and types of violence. First, we saw exceptional strength in community-driven responses. In large part, these efforts were due to the vitality and ingenuity of women and young people. The essential, life-saving action taken by women and youth stands in contrast to their relative power dispossession around the world – an irony all too long understood but all too often ignored. Second, the urgency of the pandemic motivated efficient and very often effective cross-sector collaboration. This collaboration, when effective, helped to build trust, legitimacy and accountability. A key take-away: if collaboration is possible during a crisis, it must also be possible outside of a crisis. Given the integrated nature of violence, this should lend credence to calls for greater cross-sector collaboration in the long term.

Third, technology was leveraged to support pre-existing efforts to reduce violence. Across different types of violence, from that directed against women to more organized group-activated violence, the online space offered significant opportunities for adaptation. However, as in all areas of intervention, there is a potential for harm in the application of technology. Finally, the all-too-often-overlooked dynamics between cities and their national government counterparts fundamentally constrain or enable effective violence prevention and public safety. While public pressure is often applied at one level or the other, it is very often constraints *between* levels of government that undermine progress. Much more concerted analysis can and should be done on how to overcome these constraints and activate their respective positive capacities to support peaceful cities.

EVIDENCE BRIEFS:

In the first chapter, "Preventing Violence in Informal Settlements in the Age of COVID-19," author Mark Weston describes the challenges of addressing public safety and public health in informal settlements. **Around the world, one billion people live in informal settlements, representing one out of eight people; by 2050, this number is expected to increase to roughly three billion people.** As Weston describes them, informal settlements are characterized by "weak provision of public services, heightened levels of poverty, low levels of trust in the authorities, and, in some cases, high rates of crime and violence." Informal settlements are also often spaces where those on the losing end of social inequalities find themselves relegated, compounding resource constraints with social prejudices, disenfranchisement and state-initiated harm. And while many living in informal settlements are exceptionally resourceful and resilient, ambitions are all too often undermined by crime and violence. In a national survey in South Africa, for example, one-quarter of respondents said that the fear of crime deters them from setting up businesses.[6]

In the context of COVID-19, an immediate fear was the impact of the pandemic on food security. Stampedes, looting and rioting by people desperate to secure food for themselves and their families occurred around the world. The heightened competition for and violence over food distribution prompted cities to call for more learning from one another about solutions that were demonstrating positive results. Weston's chapter provides examples of how local leaders created effective interventions, supporting farmers and consumers, alongside policing and justice sector interventions to prevent an escalation in crime and violence. With examples from cities around the world, Weston demonstrates the ingenuity of those living in informal settlements to engage in life-saving and violence-reducing activity. From tools connecting farmers and traders to markets to the distribution of temporary ration cards, the chapter shows how local and national governments can contribute to public safety and food security, including through the use of technology and collaboration with the private sector.

Roughly one-third of all women and girls globally experience physical or physical violence in their lifetime.[7] As COVID-19 worked its way around the globe and countries responded with stay-at-home orders, the amount of violence directed against women and girls spiked dramatically, with increases ranging from 25 percent to 50 percent over a baseline that was already far from acceptable. In her chapter "Preventing an Escalation of Violence Against Women," author Flavia Carbonari details how quarantine, social isolation, diminished protective service capacity and the emotional and economic toll of the pandemic compounded pre-existing gender disparities in such a way that threatened the lives of millions around the world. As Carbonari makes clear, violence against women and girls is a complex

phenomenon, driven by several factors and requiring a multi-sectoral response – just the type of effort that was put under immense strain as a result of the pandemic.

The evidence of violence in the first several months of the pandemic was shocking enough that it provoked a considerable amount of action. Carbonari's chapter provides a wealth of examples of people harnessing the power of technology to set up hotlines, crowdsource reporting, embed victim assistance or emergency calls to avoid detection, shift in-person renewal of protection orders online, and much more – changes that may benefit violence prevention systems in the long term. In the offline space, pharmacists provided code words for women to covertly indicate they were under threat, safety checks were done using messages in grocery bags, and mutual aid societies broke down social isolation, while local governments in many cities led campaigns to bring attention to the "pandemic within a pandemic" of violence against women. Carbonari provides principles to help us in moving forward with improved preparedness and response. The question remains as to whether the spotlight the pandemic shined on the scope of violence against women (VAW) will be enough to compel the scale of change needed to reverse trends.

The pandemic led to other, sometimes less visible forms of violence and threats as well. In her chapter, "Digital Threats and Urban Violence Prevention," Lisa Schirch details the way in which the online space, and social media in particular, has influenced and been influenced by COVID-19. The public health measures that prompted massive shifts to online education, work and social life also prompted criminal activity to shift online. **Scapegoating, fear and isolations caused by the pandemic has given rise to xenophobia; ethnic, racial and religious identity-based violence; extremism; and gender-based violence.** This has resulted in cities' efforts to combat digital threats fueling violence and division among communities, as well as increasing calls for public safety.

Although struggling with the fall-out from online incitement, cities have often had a hard time influencing terms of use or individual engagement in digital platforms. Yet while much of the debate on safe online space takes place nationally and internationally, Schirch's chapter makes clear that cities were rapidly developing innovative and effective tools to confront disinformation, overcome divisions, and address mental health dimensions that led to risk-taking behavior. In particular, the collaboration seen between city governments, youth, tech companies and others should be taken as a clear signal of the strength that comes in partnership, underscoring the idea that preventing violence and building peace is solidarity-reinforcing.

As Schirch's piece suggests, one of the impacts of the shift to online space was the utilization of that space by organized criminal groups (OCGs). But OCG behavior shifted in the real-world space as well, in highly context-specific ways that ranged from the provision of items to respond to urgent needs to the hardening of positions of power and the reinforcement of territorial control. In his chapter, "Competing for Governance and Legitimacy with Organized Criminal Groups in the Time of COVID-19," author Carlos Muñoz Burgos focuses on how OCGs reacted to the pandemic and the concomitant impact on violence and government legitimacy. **Burgos' research found a high likelihood that as the pandemic continues, many OCGs will work to strengthen their status and positions in communities, expand control of illicit and licit markets, and exploit weak oversight and inadequate transparency with corrupt state officials.** The latter can also contribute to further erosion of trust in local government institutions.

While OCGs in many parts of the world look to strengthen their positions of influence, there are also examples of local governments and civil society asserting their legitimacy. In some places there has been a degree of competition for public appreciation through the doling out of food items, protective gear and "stay-at-home" support. To reduce the likelihood of public sector complicity with OCGs or rent-seeking, local governments in some locales helped to set up monitoring systems with local residents to ensure transparency of budget allocations. Connecting back to Schirch's work, other cities intentionally worked to combat the spread of self-serving, disingenuous messaging from OCGs through public campaigns to raise awareness and disseminate accurate information.

Community and government relations have heavily influenced the facilitation or hindrance of public safety in the wake of COVID-19. In his chapter, "Communities, Police and Relationships," Adrian Bergmann focuses specifically on the policing aspects of these relationships. His chapter discusses how the pandemic exacerbated pressure on law enforcement, while also worsening conditions for officers and creating great uncertainty and vulnerability for citizens. While the pandemic revealed long-standing tensions in many locales, it has also spurred new innovations in law enforcement practice in collaboration with communities.

Research makes clear that where law enforcement earns the trust of residents and is thereby perceived as legitimate – where there is a positive relationship, to put it simply – there tends to be less community violence. Where the relationship is negative, there tends to be more violence. This is not necessarily a causal claim – there is a lot at play within those dynamics – but the correlation does demand attention to relational matters. In many cities, COVID-19 exacerbated pre-existing predatory or abusive use of force by police against communities, further undermining prospects for fruitful partnerships between them. The implications of this negative dynamic will resound for years to come.

Finally, in their chapter, "Local-National Dynamics in Violence Prevention," Joel Day and Nasema Zeerak speak to the challenges of harmonizing local and national policy, how these local-national dynamics influence violence prevention, and what has been learned as a result of the pandemic. The struggle to address violence requires both immediate and more medium- to long-term measures. **To fully understand both the violence and the dynamics of response, one must consider how both are embedded not only within a historical context but also within nested levels of governance, from local to regional, to national and even global.** In their piece, Day and Zeerak provide examples of cities that are striving to advance effective prevention measures in the context of an unsupportive national environment, highlighting key strategies of collaboration and networking.

One thing that Day and Zeerak's piece reminds us of is the power of networks. Birds flock together precisely so that they can go for longer, supporting one another through the air, pushing through wind that could otherwise exhaust two single wings alone. This is the whole idea behind Peace in Our Cities. Overcoming violence takes perseverance, commitment to the evidence, and dedication to those most affected. It also takes one another. We will not succeed alone. The chapters included in this compendium show how cities – made up of individuals, families, communities, governments – are striving to uphold a commitment to freedom from fear for all residents. They remind us that while we must get much more ambitious with our goals to preserve life and reduce violence, the solutions can be right in front of us, among our neighbors, colleagues and local organizations.

PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

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OVERVIEW

This briefing makes recommendations for preventing violence in informal settlements in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on violence that results from food insecurity. It describes the problem, reviews case studies of effective violence prevention efforts, and presents lessons learned from the successful cases. The briefing aims to assist mayors and civil society organizations (CSOs) as they collaborate to address urban violence. The research was conceptualized by members of Peace in Our Cities — a network of 19 cities and over two dozen organizing partners from around the world that aims to decrease urban violence by 50 percent by 2030. It was directed and overseen by Impact: Peace at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, University of San Diego.

What's the problem?

One billion people live in informal settlements, or slums. By 2050, this number could increase to three billion. Informal settlements are often characterized by weak provision of public services, heightened levels of poverty, low levels of trust in the authorities, and, in some cases, high rates of crime and violence. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit many informal settlements hard. Cramped living conditions, inadequate sanitation and ventilation of dwellings, and densely packed populations provide a breeding ground for viruses.[8] That many slum residents are young offers protection against the worst health impacts of the disease, but the economic impacts promise to be severe. The World Bank has predicted the worst global recession in 80 years,[9] and informal settlements around the world are already experiencing mass job losses and food shortages.

Urban violence

Half a million people worldwide die violent deaths each year, and millions more are injured and left traumatized.[10] People in urban areas are especially worried about violence, and their fear impacts their economic activity. Data from Nairobi, Kenya, show that half of the city's residents worry very often about crime, while in urban Nigeria 90 percent fear being killed by criminals.[11] In a survey in South Africa, one-quarter of respondents said that the fear of crime deters them from setting up businesses.[12] Intimate-partner violence has been found to cost countries at least one percent of GDP via lost productivity and medical costs, while some studies show that the total cost of violence to the worst-affected Latin American countries equates to 25 percent of gross domestic product.[13]

COVID-19 may exacerbate the risks of urban violence, including in informal settlements. Inequality and social exclusion are proven drivers of violent conflict,[14] and if the pandemic leads to those living in informal settlements falling further behind the rest of society — including with regard to their access to food — motivations for violent action may intensify. A pre-COVID study of informal settlements in Patna, India, found that poor living conditions were a key factor behind conflicts and violence,[15] while a survey in urban South Africa revealed that the unemployed were significantly more tolerant of murder and domestic violence than were those who had jobs.[16]

Inequality *within* informal settlements also poses risks. Many settlements are divided along ethnic lines, for example, and favoritism — or perceived favoritism — in the provision of food and other services during the pandemic is likely to increase friction between groups. Such friction, particularly if accompanied by distrust of the security services, can provide opportunities for gangs or divisive politicians to foment violent conflict, potentially triggering vicious spirals whereby violence renders it harder still to distribute food and healthcare, allowing the coronavirus further scope to spread.[17]

Ten months into the pandemic, there have already been a number of outbreaks of violence in urban settings as a result of food shortages and increased poverty, including the following:

- A stampede in Nairobi's Kibera slum injured dozens as residents mobbed a food aid distribution point.[18]
- Protests in Manila in the Philippines over the lack of access to food have turned violent, leading to multiple arrests.[19]
- Grocery stores in informal settlements in South Africa have been looted during anti-lockdown protests.[20]
- In March 2020, thousands of informal sector workers in El Salvador were dispersed by police using pepper spray as they queued up for government subsidies during lockdown.[21]

- Those who have been economically affected by the virus were found to be significantly more likely to take part in the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States than those who have not.[22] While the vast majority of protests have been peaceful, a small percentage have led to violence by the authorities and/or protesters.[23]

Food insecurity

In recent years, steep rises in the prices of staple foods have sparked protests and violence in informal settlements and other urban districts in countries such as Sudan, Burkina Faso and Venezuela. Increased food insecurity resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic also poses risks of increased violence.

Infections and virus containment measures have left farms unattended, food transportation systems disrupted, and wholesale and retail markets closed.[24] Rising unemployment has reduced purchasing power, particularly of the least affluent. If supply squeezes lead to food price rises, basic items will be out of reach for millions of people.

In the early stages of the pandemic, international food prices remained steady, in large part due to strong harvests of staple crops in 2020.[25] In recent months, however, indications have been less positive. International prices of wheat and maize declined between March and June 2020, but by November they had climbed to a level higher than in November 2019.[26] A study in 136 countries found that in 118 of them the prices of common food items had increased between mid-February and April 2020.[27]

Price increases are beginning to take a toll on individuals and families. In 30 informal settlements in Lagos, Nigeria, 78 percent of survey respondents reported that they had been unable to meet basic needs since the pandemic hit. Eighty-five percent reported that government support had not reached them.[28] Surveys in the United States, India, South Africa and Myanmar found significant increases in the proportion of individuals facing food insecurity.[29] The World Food Program has warned that the number of people facing acute food insecurity could double by the end of 2020.[30]

How to Prevent Violence

Preventing COVID-19 from sparking violence in informal settlements will require a multi-pronged approach. Mobilizing the security sector, public health and justice professionals and communities themselves to avert violence will be pivotal, as will securing food supplies to informal settlements.

Direct Violence Prevention

Alternatives for young people

Assisting young people in informal settlements to engage in productive activities can help remove their incentives to engage in violence.

A striking example of using the expansion of services for young people to drive down violence in informal settlements comes from Medellín, Colombia, which was once one of the world's most violent cities. Beginning in the early 2000s, the city government collaborated with the private sector and a public services company to invest in education, health services and community policing in slums that had been taken over by drug traffickers. Rehabilitation of urban spaces provided new employment opportunities to young people, while community involvement in urban planning increased local ownership. The city's homicide rate fell from 381 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1991 to 20 per 100,000 in 2016.[31]

The *Luta Pela Paz (Fight for Peace)* program, which began in informal settlements in Brazil and has been rolled out in multiple countries, combines boxing and martial arts for young people with career advice, education and professional training, often delivered by peers.[32] In evaluations in informal settlements in Rio de Janeiro, more than 80 percent of participants said they had stopped "getting into trouble on the streets" as a result of the program, while more than 60 percent said they were less likely to commit crimes.[33]

Those working to prevent violence in slums can also draw lessons from successful programs that assist vulnerable or excluded communities in cities as a whole. The Community Safety Strategy developed by the city of Toronto, Canada, includes a Jobs for Youth component whereby CSOs can access government funding for summer employment projects for youth in vulnerable neighborhoods. CSOs and community members who come up with ideas for safety-related projects can apply to a Youth Challenge Fund for help in implementing them. Support is also provided to community-based organizations that deliver counseling, anger management and other violence prevention training to young people in at-risk parts of the city.[34]

Public health interventions

Public health approaches show promise for preventing violence in informal settlements, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Disease surveillance is a key public health tool, and similar methods can be used to provide an early warning of food insecurity and violence. The Hunger Vital Sign is a two-question food insecurity screening tool used in healthcare settings in the United States for early identification of food insecurity.[35] Beyond its use to refer at-risk individuals to appropriate services, the tool could also be used to help municipal governments pinpoint food insecurity hotspots, to which they could then quickly direct resources.[36]

Collecting accurate data on violence is similarly important. Municipal Crime and Violence Observatories in Latin America and the Caribbean help detect incipient violence via collaboration between health, criminal justice and other sectors, which share data from courts, police stations, hospitals, mortuaries and population surveys. In Colombia the observatories have been found to help reduce homicide rates.[37]

Amending local by-laws governing the use of alcohol and firearms is a proven means of preventing violence in urban areas, including in the informal settlements that comprise the greater part of many cities in developing countries.[38] South Africa banned the sale of alcohol during its COVID-19 lockdown, and rates of violent crime plummeted.[39] In the informal settlement of Diadema in São Paolo, Brazil, prohibition of alcohol sales after 11 p.m. and monitoring of alcohol vendors were combined with infrastructure improvements such as street lighting and security cameras, the establishment of mediation centers for peaceful resolution of conflicts, and drug prevention education and apprenticeship schemes for youth. The city's homicide rate halved in two years.[40]

Behavior change is a further public health intervention that can be applied to violence prevention. The Cure Violence program works in a number of cities around the world, including in informal settlements, to tackle gun violence.[41] It uses a disease control approach of interrupting community transmission, preventing diffusion in the community, and changing harmful norms. The program relies on violence interrupters who themselves are high-risk individuals to help at-risk young people prevent and mediate conflicts and change their and their communities' attitudes to violence, while also facilitating provision of services such as drug treatment and employment support. Evaluations have found significant reductions in the acceptability of violence as a means to resolve disputes as well as declines in violence in affected areas of 20-70 percent.[42]

Within informal settlements, women are at higher risk of experiencing certain forms of violence. Tackling gender-based violence not only improves women's quality of life; it also reduces other forms of violence. Individuals who have witnessed intimate-partner violence in their homes as children are more likely to perpetrate violent acts as adults.[43] In crisis settings in particular, men who cannot fulfill their traditional perceived gender roles of provider and protector of their families may be vulnerable to resorting to violence

to reassert their masculinity.[44] Tailored violence prevention efforts help improve women's participation in social and economic activities, while also dampening the culture of violence in settlements as a whole:

- A project in south-western Nigeria reduced physical and sexual violence against female street hawkers. Educational materials and training sessions were delivered to hawkers, their families and friends, and police and judicial officers. The project helped raise awareness of the problem, strengthen hawkers' assertiveness, and increase reporting rates.[45]
- The SASA! program in Kampala, Uganda, trains community leaders, volunteer community activists, CSOs, police officers and healthcare providers in new ways to think about gender-related power imbalances. The community activists and CSOs cascade what they have learned to people in the city's informal settlements. A randomized, controlled trial of the intervention found a 52 percent decline in intimate-partner violence in participating communities, as well as decreased social acceptability of violence.[46]
- Mayors and CSOs can use the media to reach informal settlements with nonviolent messaging. South Africa's Soul City project used television, radio and leaflets to inform communities about domestic violence. The television and radio channels in particular reached large proportions of the intended audiences and led to greater awareness of support services as well as reductions in gender-inequitable attitudes.[47]

Where it has been impossible to prevent violence, treatment for those affected is critical to reducing its impacts. For instance, counseling and therapy services for children and women have been found to reduce the psychological and social impacts of a violent incident.[48] Providing shelter to domestic victims is particularly important during lockdowns, which both increase the risk of such abuse and make it more difficult to escape. In Bangladesh, Namibia and Thailand, for example, one-stop crisis centers offer a range of health, social and psychological services to victims of child abuse and intimate-partner violence.[49] Where a lack of space or facilities prevents such services from being established in informal settlements, outreach will be needed from shelters in formal districts.

Policing interventions

As the 2020 protests in Nigeria and the United States demonstrate, heavy-handed policing often increases rather than reduces violence. Worldwide, one-third of people believe the police are corrupt,[50] and mistrust of the police is an important driver of violence and extremism.[51] The trust deficit is often greater in informal settlements, which have a history of being either ignored or discriminated against by police.

The past two decades have seen a number of innovations that enhance the role of the police in preventing urban violence. Most of them posit policing not as the only solution to violence reduction but as part of a broader, multi-sectoral approach.

Working with — rather than against — communities is key to improving police effectiveness. Police should work with community leaders, CSOs and citizen volunteers on surveillance, upgrading the physical environment, designing new laws, resolving conflicts, and rehabilitating offenders:

- In the late 1990s, the average homicide rate in São Paolo's Jardim Angela informal settlements was 111 per 100,000 population. A network of CSOs came together with the police and the municipality to implement community-based interventions including rebuilding derelict public spaces, surveillance of crime and violence, and support to domestic violence survivors, recently incarcerated children, and alcohol and drug abusers. By 2005, the homicide rate in the city had fallen by more than three-quarters.[52]
- In the Khayelitsha informal settlement in Cape Town, South Africa, community centers called "Active Boxes" have been set up in places where violence and crime once proliferated. The centers are run by resident groups and guarded around the clock by volunteer patrols. They host activities including markets, sports centers, creches and youth clubs, with the aim of replacing criminal activities in an area with more constructive pursuits. Active Boxes have contributed to a one-third decline in the murder rate in the settlement.[53]
- In Tanzania, community members in low-income areas receive training from the police so that they may carry out duties including night patrols, acting as first responders in emergencies, and reporting on crime and violence to a community-led security committee. In the city of Mwanza, where 75 percent of residents live in informal settlements,[54] this model of community policing, known as *ulinzi shirikishi*, has improved perceptions of neighborhood safety and reduced crime.[55]
- Lagos, Nigeria, where more than 60 percent of the population lives in informal settlements, achieved dramatic declines in violent crime between 2007 and 2010. The city's multi-pronged approach included training to shift police attitudes towards community rather than regime protection; the creation of conflict management bodies in communities, including informal settlements; consistent dialogue between the municipality and citizens; and social development initiatives such as job creation programs and the upgrading of healthcare and transportation infrastructure. The approach was funded by voluntary donations from the private sector, the state government and community members.[56] (The recent protests in Nigeria against police violence are an indicator that such efforts need to be maintained.)

Justice sector interventions

Justice actors can also play a vital role in preventing violence. In most of the world's informal settlements, however, justice is a distant mirage — judicial systems are physically far away, and they speak a language and impose fees that make them inaccessible to most citizens.[57]

Without justice during the pandemic, the threat of violence will intensify. Justice systems can ensure that emergency measures — including food distribution — are implemented in a fair manner that treats all population groups equally. They can monitor and prosecute abuses by security forces, prison officials and other service providers. They can ensure that laws implemented to contain the virus comply with human

rights standards and do not exacerbate social exclusion. And, working with communities, they can respond to grievances and provide redress for rights infringements.

Bringing justice closer to informal settlements will require the involvement of non-traditional justice actors. Paralegals, legal aid providers, citizens' advice services and community leaders have a stronger understanding of the needs of such communities, better access to them, and greater legitimacy than courts and lawyers.[58] Working with CSOs as well as Chambers of Commerce and other private sector bodies whose operations are negatively affected by violence, municipalities can support a collective response to injustice using interventions that are proven to reduce violence.

Among the most effective of these is a shift from punitive policing and sentencing approaches towards rehabilitation and conflict mediation. Prisons generally fail to rehabilitate offenders — recidivism rates worldwide are more than 60 percent[59] — and programs that instead direct convicted individuals to drug rehabilitation services or cognitive behavioral therapy programs, for example, are proven to be much more effective in reducing repeat offending.[60]

The Fica Vivo program in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, worked with young offenders to provide alternatives to violence. Workshops on health, sexuality and gender; sports, art, dance and theatre activities; and classes aimed at improving employability and leadership skills were held during times when youth might otherwise be on the streets and were combined with policing that aimed to build ties with communities. The city saw homicide reductions of up to 47 percent.[61]

Community-based mediation has proven effective in delivering justice and peace to marginalized communities. In Honduras, buses have been requisitioned to serve as mobile judicial offices in remote settlements.[62] In informal settlements in Latin America, *Casas de Justicia* (Houses of Justice) provide mediation services that bring together police officers, lawyers, social workers and psychologists to address conflicts holistically and reach solutions that do not require expensive court appearances.[63]

Paralegals — grassroots justice providers — help people living in marginalized communities such as informal settlements to understand, use and shape the law and to access justice services. They promote legal education, support community advocacy, and assist individuals and communities as they negotiate legal processes. Paralegals can also play a part in identifying individuals and families in need of food aid and in reporting violence to municipal authorities. Making paralegals an essential service during the COVID-19 pandemic — and providing them with protection from violence — can ensure that justice services continue to be provided in informal settlements and that the risks of injustice are reduced.

Securing the food supply

Supporting farmers

In most urban informal settlements, much of the food consumed by residents is grown on farms in nearby rural areas. To secure sustainable food supplies, therefore, cities should adopt a regional perspective, helping to strengthen rural infrastructure and integrate into markets the smallholder farmers who account for almost 40 percent of the world's agricultural food supply.[64]

The Urban Food Agenda developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) includes assistance for cities as they work with rural and urban food producers to build resilient and inclusive food supply chains.[65] As part of the agenda, the FAO launched a "City Region Food System (CRFS) Toolkit,"[66] which provides guidance for building sustainable food systems that link cities with their surrounding regions.[67]

In Medellín, Colombia, the CRFS approach has been used to create an observatory to monitor food security and nutrition in the city region; facilitate access to urban markets for small food producers and low-income consumers; develop urban activities such as community food gardens and food banks; and enhance community participation in planning the food supply.[68] In Kitwe, Zambia, a multi-stakeholder platform created by the city to manage the CRFS has been "instrumental in fostering coordination among actors in the supply chain in defining strategies and coordinated actions to mitigate COVID-19 impacts and dealing with post pandemic scenarios."[69]

Rural farmers can also be supported via technological inputs provided by municipalities and CSOs in partnership with the private sector. Online platforms in China, for example, have linked out-of-work farm laborers to potential employers during the pandemic.[70] In Sri Lanka, *FarmerNet*, a virtual trading floor, allows farmers and food traders to connect via text messaging.[71] In East Africa, the private sector has introduced improved and more varied seed varieties, which have greatly strengthened food security and nutrition.[72] The distribution of bio-fortified orange sweet potato vines in Mozambique led to significant improvements in Vitamin A consumption among children whose households participated in the program relative to those whose households did not.[73]

Urban farming offers a further opportunity to diversify a city's food sources and strengthen its resilience to shocks. Urban agriculture, which can be carried out in gardens or vacant lots, on roofs or balconies, or even in old tires, supplies up to 20 percent of the world's food. Improving urban soils and educating urbanites on farming techniques can help increase this proportion:[74]

- In British Columbia, Canada, the government declared community gardens, including those run by volunteers, an essential service that must remain open during the pandemic.[75]
- A re-zoning initiative in Pittsburgh, United States, made it easier for urban dwellers to acquire permits to farm in the city and to lease vacant lots to farm.[76]
- Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture responded to the pandemic with a Home Gardening Program wherein it distributed seed packages to all households in urban and peri-urban areas.[77]
- In Wuhan, China, the municipality encouraged the cultivation of 20,000 hectares of urban land to supply fresh vegetables during lockdown.[78]

- Kenya's One Million Kitchen Gardens campaign provides starter kits, grants and advice for vulnerable communities to plant their own food gardens.[79]
- In Quito, Ecuador, the Participatory Urban Agriculture scheme trains vulnerable urban residents in organic farming techniques and has established open-air markets where participants can sell their surplus produce. The program has created 2,500 urban gardens and trained 16,700 people, most of whom are women.[80]
- In Quelimane, Mozambique, food waste is collected from markets and recycled into compost by community associations trained in compost-making. The compost is used to improve soil fertility in urban food gardens and has led to increases in food yields and higher incomes for farmers.[81]

From farm to city

Ensuring that food grown in rural areas reaches urban consumers is the second key step in securing the supply chain, and a number of technological innovations have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic to clear the path from farm to city. In India, the Kisan Rath Mobile App has helped farmers and food traders find transport companies to deliver food to markets during lockdowns.[82] The app disseminates farmers' requests for transportation to transport aggregators, who then obtain quotes from truckers and fleet owners.[83] Also in India, farmers have used WhatsApp to negotiate directly to deliver produce to urban housing cooperatives, while consumer groups have used social media to connect with farmer collectives and arrange the direct delivery of food to markets.[84]

Once food arrives in the city, flexibility is needed to ensure it reaches all those who need it. The city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands has temporarily waived fees for market stallholders.[85] In Wanjiu, South Korea, direct sales locations have been set up to link 2,000 local smallholders to 100,000 urban consumers.[86] Street vendors in informal settlements, moreover, could be designated as an essential service, allowing them to buy food in wholesale markets and to continue to deliver goods during confinement periods.

Food banks and other community food distribution initiatives run by CSOs and community members play an important role in securing food supplies for the urban poor. Municipalities can assist with the collection and distribution of these supplies:

- The local government of Quito, Ecuador, has helped food banks map the urban areas that are most in need of food support.[87]
- The municipality of Lima, Peru, is working with markets to monitor food prices and deter speculation, which could drive up prices.[88]
- Barcelona's Mercabarna wholesale market has worked with Deutsche Telekom on an app that allows CSOs to arrange free food basket deliveries to households in need.[89]
- In Kerala, India, hundreds of community kitchens are providing free or low-cost food to the most vulnerable. Volunteers deliver food to households for a small additional fee. Hotels and catering companies have offered their services and kitchens without charge.[90]
- The Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad (AMC), India, responded to lockdown by setting up a "Vegetables on Wheels" program. Partnering with the Self-Employed Women's Organization (SEWA), a trade union of informal sector workers, AMC issued a pass to designated fruit and vegetable vendors that allowed them to visit wholesale markets to buy food and travel via

rickshaws funded by the municipality to deliver it to urban areas under curfew.[91] Thousands of kilos of vegetables were sold or given free to the most vulnerable.[92]

- Mexico City's Community Dining Rooms program provides affordable meals in deprived communities. The 488 dining rooms are operated by CSOs and neighborhood groups, while the private sector donates food and the municipality provides technical, administrative and economic support. The program has reduced hunger by 30 percent in areas where the dining rooms operate.[93]

Support for consumers

Effective delivery of food from farms to cities will need to be complemented by proactive efforts to support the most vulnerable consumers to access it. Such support can help narrow rather than widen the gap in service provision and quality of life between informal and formal settlements, lessening the unequal impacts of COVID-19 in a way that can help to mitigate the risks of violence and to "build back better" in the wake of the pandemic.

Municipal governments are not always aware of who is most in need of food support. Helplines and web-based services, such as those established by local authorities in Nagpur, India, for vulnerable individuals who need home deliveries, can help those who live in remote settlements or are unable to travel to food banks or community kitchens.[94] CSOs can also help: Mumbai's KhaanaChahiye.com, a volunteer and donor network that provides 70,000 cooked meals a day across the city, relies on information from community-based organizations to target those most in need.[95] CSOs can also monitor food distribution campaigns and advocate for equitable delivery.

As cities emerge from lockdowns, replacing direct food distribution with cash transfers or vouchers is likely to have positive impacts on longer-term food security. Cash — delivered electronically where possible — enables people to help stimulate local economies that have lain dormant during confinement periods, and it can give those in informal settlements greater agency over their own food security. In Yemen, cash transfers led to significant increases in per capita food consumption, with much of the money spent on nutrient-rich vegetables, milk and eggs.[96] Cash transfers have also been found to be more efficient and more cost-effective than in-kind humanitarian support[97] and, in some studies, to contribute to violence prevention by reducing intimate-partner violence.[98]

In Pune, India, the local council distributed temporary ration cards to 80,000 undocumented people. The cards could be exchanged for food grains delivered to people's homes as part of a government program.[99]

Lessons Learned

Reviewing successful initiatives to prevent urban violence and to secure the food supply to informal settlements, a number of common factors emerge that can guide mayors and CSOs as they navigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Respond to the context

Informal settlements are not all alike. Climate, soil quality, proximity to rural farmers, population density, demographic structure, income levels, trust in the state and other factors that can influence the risk of violence can vary widely. Violence prevention programs will be most effective if they are tailored to local contexts. Assessing the needs of a particular settlement should involve regular consultation with community leaders and citizens drawn from different population groups, with the aim of identifying weaknesses in the food supply, the risk factors that make violence more likely, and the services required to address these problems. Including the most marginalized in such consultations and listening to young people and women are key to a satisfactory response.

2. Make communities your partners

Community members should be enlisted in both the design and implementation of interventions. In Nepal and Uganda, involving citizens in service delivery via community meetings and grievance procedures was found to improve perceptions of local and national government actors.[100] Again, it will be important to ensure that diverse population groups are represented in the process.[101] CSOs' close connections with people living in informal settlements mean they are well placed to pass information in both directions between government and citizens, to mobilize and train volunteers, and to deliver services such as food aid, cash transfers and people-centered justice.[102]

3. Evaluate and learn

Few cities have prior experience with pandemics, and the imperative to act quickly to prevent food shortages from triggering violence means that city leaders have little robust COVID-specific research to draw on. Case studies from previous emergencies such as those presented in this briefing can serve as a starting point for action if adapted to local contexts, but evaluation of the impact of programs should be ongoing, and those that are ineffective should be jettisoned. Regular surveys of community members can assess whether programs are helping to reduce food insecurity and violence and highlight areas for improvement.[103]

Learning from the experiences of other cities will assist municipal leaders as they develop and refine their responses. For example, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact unites 210 cities worldwide whose mayors committed to develop sustainable food systems that feed all urban citizens and to reduce food waste.[104] Member cities of the non-binding pact work with CSOs, businesses and policy-makers to share resources and knowledge and monitor progress towards key food sustainability indicators.[105]

4. Communicate clearly & regularly

Efficient two-way communication between municipal leaders and people living in informal settlements is critical to preventing both food insecurity and outbreaks of violence.

A survey in Nagpur, India, showed that one-third of residents lacked reliable information on the availability of food in markets during the city's lockdown, while 35 percent did not know if food delivery services were available to them,[106] despite the existence of government websites and apps that provided such information. This points to the importance of working with community leaders and CSOs to transmit messages related to the food supply, since they often have stronger relationships than do municipal governments with marginalized individuals and communities.

The private sector can also be engaged to improve communication. Wholesale and retail markets should publish food availability information on different platforms to both consumers and municipal leaders.[107] Telecommunications firms can help set up hotlines for citizens to report food or violence emergencies and

to seek information and advice. Local and national media companies should be encouraged to deliver accurate information and to correct false claims.

The government of Pakistan is sending COVID-19 awareness messages on cell phones, replacing ringtones.[108] Similar systems can be used for messaging around food and violence.

Perhaps the most important communications partners are community members themselves. More likely than outsiders to be trusted by those living in informal settlements, they also speak a more comprehensible language (or languages) and have a greater awareness of the most popular information channels. Supplying community influencers with accurate information — for example, to correct misleading news that blames certain groups for shortages — can help reduce the likelihood of violence while also improving access to food.

5. Reach out to young people

Young people are already experiencing the harshest economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic hardship may increase the temptation to resort to violence to solve problems, and it is critical for municipal leaders and CSOs to support young people to find alternatives.

Youth who are already in conflict with the law should be rehabilitated via diversionary and restorative programs and taught skills needed by local economies.[109] CSOs can assist with service delivery, as well as with young people's access to COVID-19 relief programs.

Involving young people in interventions to address the effects of the pandemic can help reduce the temptations of violence and enhance both their self-respect and the regard in which they are held by the rest of the community. Youth can be engaged to distribute food, transmit information, deliver basic services such as water and sanitation, and contribute to programs aimed at deterring their peers from violence and crime. Cash payments for such activities can help young people withstand the pandemic and give them capital to set up their own businesses after it subsides.[110]

6. Adopt multi-pronged approaches

It is unrealistic to expect municipal governments or the police to prevent food insecurity and related violence without assistance. The most successful violence prevention strategies involve multiple sectors of government; multiple stakeholders from civil society, the private sector and communities themselves; and multiple strategies that encompass policing, public health measures, community engagement and support to those at risk of committing or experiencing violence.[111]

To manage the multiplicity of actors and approaches in such programs, cities should develop frameworks that outline objectives, define the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and coordinate implementation and evaluation.[112] A policy framework developed by the government of Western Cape in South Africa, for example, adopts five key strategies to address violence and crime:

1. Strategic and systematic deployment of prevention resources to target high-risk hours, places and groups
2. Reducing the availability of firearms and the availability of alcohol
3. Improving victim support programs
4. The development of an accessible evidence base, the production of reliable injury surveillance data and the ongoing monitoring of outcomes and risk factors
5. Developing life skills and parenting skills which will eventually change social and cultural norms that produce violent offenders.[113]

PREVENTING AN ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING COVID-19

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The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impacts on Women's Safety

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has had wide-ranging impacts on daily life worldwide, with social and economic effects falling harder on women than on men,[114] and women and girls' safety being particularly affected. Quarantine, social isolation and lockdown measures put in place to prevent the spread of the virus have led women and girls to be exposed to increased risks of victimization. Previous research from other pandemics and emerging data from the COVID-19 crisis indicate several contributing factors. Confinement with potential perpetrators, in a context of increased socioeconomic and psychological stress and increased caretaking responsibilities at home, has made women more likely to be exposed to intimate partner violence. School closures have also meant that girls are more likely to spend more time with potential abusers at home, potentially increasing risks of sexual exploitation and abuse.

At the same time that risks have been increasing, it has also become more challenging to access services and support. Already over-stretched and under-resourced health, social assistance, security and justice sector services have experienced further restrictions in access and reductions in funding, as resources have been diverted to the public health crisis.[115] Health service providers and emergency first responders, specifically, often a first entry point for survivors of violence against women (VAW), have experienced a significantly increased burden due to the virus. Informal services and networks, such as those provided by civil society organizations or women's groups, often sought by survivors, have also seen their activities limited due to economic stress and quarantine orders.[116]

Evidence has confirmed expectations of a significant rise in VAW during COVID-19. In several countries and cities there were immediate spikes in calls to VAW hotline numbers at the beginning of the crisis. In others, declines in reporting also raised concerns, as experts expected women to be more restricted in their ability to seek help when confined with abusers.[117] In Brazil, data from twelve states pointed to a 27 percent increase in complaints to the national VAW helpline in the first two months of quarantine, in comparison to the same period of the previous year, and a drop of 25.5 percent in the number of domestic violence complaints reported through police stations.[118] Calls to VAW hotlines in Cyprus and Singapore registered an increase of 30 percent and 33 percent, respectively,[119] and in areas of China police reports of domestic violence increased threefold in the first two months of quarantine, as compared to 2019.[120] In Canada, Germany and Spain, to mention a few, increases in reports of domestic violence and an escalation in the demand for shelters were also reported.[121] Most of these initial data were based on administrative records and from multiple sources. With time, rigorous research started to emerge to confirm those initial trends. In a review of 30 studies measuring VAW and children (VAW/C) during COVID-19 in places as diverse as Bangladesh, India, Mexico, Peru, Uganda, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, authors found that 13 studies (43 percent) showed increases in VAW/C and eight (27 percent) had mixed findings, with increases in at least one measure.[122] There is also growing evidence suggesting that mixed or decreasing trends are also partially linked to underreporting.[123]

BOX 1. DEFINING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women (VAW) takes many forms and occurs in many places. It includes sexual, physical and psychological abuse and can happen in the home, on the streets, in schools, in workplaces, in farm fields and in refugee camps. Domestic violence refers to violence perpetrated within the home, and it may be perpetrated against women, children, the elderly, siblings and so on. Intimate partner violence (IPV), often used interchangeably with domestic violence, actually refers only to violence perpetrated by a partner or former partner, and it is one of the most common forms of VAW. Finally, although VAW and gender-based violence (GBV) are also often used as synonyms, GBV also includes violence against men, boys and sexual minorities or those with gender-nonconforming identities. Hence, VAW is one type of GBV.

Source:
Violence Against Women and Girls Resource Guide.

Intimate partner violence has been the most widely documented and analyzed form of VAW during the pandemic. However, women have also experienced increases in other forms of violence. The extensive economic hardships related to COVID-19, the familial and social impacts of school closures,[124] and dangerous changes in migration due to travel restrictions and stricter border controls have all created fertile ground for both labor and sex trafficking to flourish during the pandemic.[125] Although human trafficking also affects boys and men, women and girls regularly account for the majority of victims.[126] Researchers have also documented landlords' sextortion of vulnerable young women in the United States and the United Kingdom unable to pay rent during the pandemic.[127] Online violence has also increased, with more sexual harassment cases, dissemination of unsolicited pornographic content (increasing the risk of sextortion), and searches for child abuse being registered in several places.[128] New forms of online violence have also emerged, such as zoom-bombing and sex-trolling. The risk of VAW in public spaces has also increased. Lockdown, social distancing and curfews have led to reduced circulation of people on the streets, in parks and on public transport, affecting women's freedom of movement, access to services and livelihoods. In places such as Chile, the United Kingdom, Canada, Nigeria, the Philippines, Kenya, India and the United States, there have been reports of sexual violence against women during quarantine.[129] Vulnerable women, such as those with disabilities or unstable housing, LGBTQI and migrants, have also been at higher risk of sexual exploitation and abuse by law enforcement authorities charged with enforcing lockdown and quarantine measures.[130] Finally, health care workers, most of them women, have also experienced a higher risk of violence at work by patients and their families, in public spaces when commuting to work, and in their homes, given the increased pressure from work and personal caretaking responsibilities.[131]

This brief presents an overview of policies implemented by governments, often in partnership with other stakeholders, to address the aforementioned increased risks of VAW that have emerged with COVID-19. It aims to provoke thinking on actions that can be taken by city governments to protect women whose violence burden and isolation have increased in the context of COVID-19. Some of these measures could also be considered as permanent options to improve the protection and care of women and girls at risk of victimization, as COVID-19 also exposed several gaps in the provision of services, data and legislation. Adverse impacts of quarantine and social isolation measures on mental health may also persist for a

significant period of time after the pandemic, and some of those – such as depression, mental health struggles and related negative coping mechanisms, such as alcohol abuse – have been associated with increased risks of VAW. This emphasizes the need for the adoption of short-, medium- and long-term measures to prevent VAW.

Policy Trends and Recommendations to Address VAW in the COVID-19 Context

The increased risks and trends of different forms of VAW have generated many innovative responses (see Box 2). Greater attention to VAW has also led to intensified public support for investments in support services for survivors and engagement in awareness raising.[132] While it may be too soon to evaluate the full extent of these responses, there are valuable lessons to be learned from these experiences, particularly as we navigate the different waves of the COVID-19 pandemic and anticipate future scenarios.

Violence against women is a complex phenomenon, driven by several factors, and as such requires a multi-sectoral response, engaging a wide range of actors and services. In the context of the pandemic, where services are already strained, a comprehensive approach is even more needed. The practices and recommendations described below span sectors as diverse as public health, social assistance, law enforcement and justice. They also involve different levels of government and partnerships with multiple actors, from community-based organizations, schools and faith groups to the private sector, the media and international organizations. The policy recommendations and related practices are divided along the following main lines of action: (i) response and protection systems; (ii) justice and law enforcement interventions; (iii) awareness raising; (iv) interventions focused on controlling environmental factors that can increase risks of VAW; and (v) measures to prevent VAW beyond the domestic space. These were identified based on an extensive review of the existing literature on the impacts of COVID-19 and other pandemics on VAW, as well as official documents and news articles. Annex 1 provides a list of guidelines and tools that could be useful in the design and implementation of similar efforts.

BOX 2. TRACKING POLICY RESPONSES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING THE PANDEMIC

While this research brief is focused on policy responses at the city level, there has been significant action at the national and international levels worth considering as well. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker is an online tool, with an integrated gender lens, that has been gathering information on national government-led policy measures to confront the COVID-19 crisis. As of November 2020, the platform had registered 704 initiatives specifically related to VAW, of which 83 were implemented in Africa, 190 in the Americas, 157 in Asia, 224 in Europe and 50 in Oceania. The World Bank has also been systematizing information on VAW policy responses in the GBV and COVID-19 Initiatives shared document, which has identified five major trends in government responses: (i) adaptations to justice sector interventions; (ii) communications campaigns using mass media; (iii) increased resources available to survivors; (iv) innovations in the provision of support to survivors; and (v) increased funding to organizations that work on the prevention of VAW.[i] As of November 2020, the tool had captured 163 initiatives around the world, including at least 30 subnational or city-level interventions. The Center for Global Development (CGD), the Lancet Commission on Gender-Based Violence and the Maltreatment of Young People, the UN University International Institute for Global Health, and the German Institute for Global and Area Studies have also announced a new joint research effort to assess how current policy responses, led by sub-national governments, align with evidence on "best practice" in reducing VAW and supporting survivors, while also identifying remaining gaps.

1. Strengthen and Adapt Response and Protection Systems

A crucial first action taken by many governments early on was to ensure that VAW prevention and response services would not only continue but also be strengthened during the pandemic. That involved several different measures, including: (i) establishing as essential services in national and sub-national laws facilities such as shelters, one-stop-shop centers and other services that provide health, psychosocial and legal support for survivors of VAW and their families and ensuring this information was widely disseminated; (ii) ensuring that women in situations of violence would be allowed to circulate to seek help; (iii) expanding, enhancing or adjusting existing services, such as helplines, support centers and shelters, by hiring additional personnel and providing specialized and additional training for emergency situations, including in the provision of remote services;[133] and (iv) introducing new ways of reporting and accessing support, such as through WhatsApp, online chat, video calls or code-word systems implemented in essential businesses,[134] such as grocery stores or pharmacies.[135] The following initiatives illustrate the kind of action being taken:

- Several cities established services for women victims of violence as "essential services," for example in New York City, which has allowed key VAW services to remain in operation. In Mexico City, the government also provided an online mapping of services that remain in operation and ensured that hospitals continue to provide emergency prophylaxis kits and perform abortions in cases of sexual violence.[136]

- In Teresina city, Brazil, social workers started to send daily comforting audio messages through WhatsApp to women at risk, including advice on positive parenting and coping strategies.[137] The city also launched its own hotline number women could call to receive counseling, hear women's empowerment messages, and be referred to other services if needed.[138] It also used different outlets – WhatsApp, radio, TV, social media (including Instagram and Facebook Live with the Secretary of Women and other guests), and the citizen feedback/consultation app Colab – to disseminate information about service hours and discuss increased risks of VAW.[139] The state of Kerala, India, relaunched a WhatsApp number and a state tele-counseling facility for women, and similar efforts were implemented in several cities of Bolivia.[140]
- In Bogotá, Colombia, the local hotline Línea Purpura expanded its reach by adding to the toll-free number options via WhatsApp, online chat, and email. The line provides orientation on judicial, health and psychological support, and refers survivors to the appropriate services. The city also launched a massive campaign to advertise the existence of the hotline and encourage reporting.[141]
- In the Province of Córdoba, Argentina, the Ministry of Women established a Gender and Violence Emergency Plan immediately after lockdown to guarantee assistance through a local hotline with 100 operators, available 24 hours a day, to provide assistance and refer cases to specialized professionals on duty. A WhatsApp messaging line was also made available, connecting survivors to professionals. In addition, coordination teams were put in place to respond, follow up and monitor each individual case according to its specific needs. The Plan also included the establishment of Women Emergency Reference Points, with information on VAW support placed in essential businesses (e.g., pharmacies, grocery stores, gas stations, etc).[142] It also used the existing Municipal Network to Fight Violence Against Women to coordinate emergency actions at the community level through the engagement of mayors with social and local leaders.[143]
- The Government of Yukon, Canada, provided free mobile phones to 325 women at risk of violence and equipped them with internet and four months of free services to facilitate access to support.[144]
- In several U.S. cities, such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, local governments partnered with hotels to expand the shelter capacity for victims of domestic violence.[145]
- In Houston, the city government partnered with Uber, who provided a $50,000 grant to provide free rides to victims of domestic violence.

Innovations in the provision of support services and prevention measures must not rely on digital platforms alone. Efforts must also reach women with no or low-tech access, in addition to those who may have access but may not feel safe to use it in a context of confinement with their abuser. In these settings, it is important to focus on managing personal safety during a period of prolonged confinement by stimulating the creation of safe zones in the home. Public safe spaces can also be equipped with phone booths/stalls where survivors can call VAW case workers on standby at particular times. Alternative entry points and systems can also be established for survivors to seek help – such as pharmacies, grocery stores, water pump stations, public transport stations, etc. Other discrete forms of alert and request for support developed by women's organizations, security forces and human rights activists vary significantly and can be adapted to different contexts, according to existing resources, cultural norms and safety. They include code words, whistles/alarms and the placement of specific objects outside the home.[146] For example, in northeast Nigeria, VAW phone booth stations have been put in place, enabling survivors to access phone-based case management support at specified hours. [147]

Strengthening response and protection services also requires updating and disseminating information on referral systems, raising awareness among all frontline workers involved in the crisis's response, and ensuring coordination between government agencies and service providers.[148] Since some disruption or modification to protection and response services is expected to happen, clear, updated information on referral pathways and partners from all sectors (health, justice, security, social services) should be disseminated and made accessible to professionals in these areas and communities, via phone or other online platforms. VAW should also be fully integrated into health system response.[149] The initiatives below exemplify this type of action being taken:

- In Mumbai, researchers from the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) have been reviewing the scale-up of Dilaasa, a crisis intervention program for survivors of VAW. Although Dilaasa and helpline services were recognized as essential services during lockdown, they had to adapt service delivery methods and inform citizens and parents about such adaptations. The program continued with psycho-social support services at public hospitals, while also introducing remote counseling and establishing contact with shelter homes to enable access for women in danger. Dilaasa also made arrangements with police to facilitate emergency travel passes for women, mobilizing private transport providers and engaging with community housing committees to assist women facing violence.[150]
- In Khartoum State, Sudan, a 24/7 community-based referral mechanism was established and expanded to three more states – Blue Nile, White Nile and North Kordofan – with higher demand.[151]
- In Somalia, the national Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster provided frontline aid workers with training on VAW and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and service providers updated referral pathways.[152]

Teachers and school staff should also be provided with training on the increased risks of VAW/C during the pandemic, as well as with guidance on how to respond in the event that suspected abuses emerge during their remote engagement with students or are identified upon students' return to classes. They should also receive appropriate training to manage confidential discussions with students and be supported in establishing referral systems to the mapped services that exist in their communities.[153]

Finally, strengthening informal networks (e.g., family, friends and community support systems, as well as community-based organizations[154]) is also crucial to ensuring that women access services for support.[155] City governments should allocate resources to the work of women's groups and local organizations working

on VAW prevention and create flexible funding mechanisms, which may be crucial in the event that other services are partially or temporarily suspended or strained.[156]

2. Adopt Justice and Law Enforcement Interventions

Several measures have been taken by justice system and law enforcement agencies to ensure women's protection by facilitating reporting and legal services. These include (i) improving access to and maintenance/renewal of restraining orders; (iii) establishing virtual court hearings; (iv) providing online legal services; (v) increasing time and mechanisms for reporting, for example through apps and online platforms with geo-referenced systems and panic buttons with links to police services, information on geo-located provision of services and chat options for support;[157] and (vi) expanding training to police officers.[158] The list below provides examples of cities and provinces that have been implementing this type of measure:

- In Washington, D.C., and New York, extensions to stay-away and protection orders for domestic violence cases started to be provided during the pandemic without the requirement that victims show up in court. This measure has remained in effect during the public health emergency.[159]
- In Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil, judges started to provide remote assistance for VAW victims after in-person assistance was suspended and continued processing new requests and automatic extensions of existing emergency protective measures during quarantine.[160] In São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, police started to allow online domestic violence reporting. São Paulo also allowed judges to grant emergency protective measures virtually and to transmit summonses through WhatsApp.[161]
- In India, courts in Jammu and Kashmir directed local government to create special funds for addressing VAW and alternative/informal spaces for women to report abuses (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies). In the State of Odisha, the police started a special patrol with the help of the state's crime records bureau to reach out to VAW survivors.[162]

3. Raise Awareness

Many governments, civil society organizations and activists have increased social awareness efforts to help prevent the escalation of VAW during the pandemic. Such measures have included broad awareness campaigns on the risks of VAW and the services available for survivors, along with the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to promote social messages on issues such as healthy conflict resolution and positive parenting.[163] Awareness campaigns should disseminate information and resources via multiple types of platforms and leverage national, local, community-based, civil society and private sector actors to reach a broader audience as well as more targeted locations and groups. Everything from television and radio to paper flyers posted in neighborhoods, essential businesses (pharmacies, grocery stores) and other public spaces (elevators, public transport stations) should be considered.[164] Distance learning and remote work also make schools and employers good sources for the dissemination of information about the heighted risks of VAW and resources for survivors. City examples of awareness raising initiatives are described below:

- In Madrid, Spain, the government launched the campaign "You Are Not Alone" (*NoEstásSola*), focused on intimate partner violence, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and sexual violence. Information to

raise awareness about the issue and publicize support services and other resources was broadcast on social media, radio and television. A printable poster was also sent to the city's neighboring communities to be placed in highly visible places. All the campaigns' materials were also made publicly available so that communities and other organizations could use them as well.[165]

- In Houston, United States, city and county leaders together launched a campaign website – #noCOVIDabuse – where all information related to resources for survivors was systematically compiled. The website includes messages of support to survivors; information about resources for shelter and temporary hotel lodging, safety planning and domestic violence services through program partners; and specific instructions on what to do to be safe at home (e.g., "If things escalate, stay in a room with quick access to an exit"; "Keep your phone fully charged"; "Give your children, friend or family members a 9-1-1 code word"; "Know where weapons are stored in the house").[166] The website also provides links to resources and printable versions of the campaign's key information, in English and Spanish. It also has suggestions for how citizens in general can engage in and support the campaign, for example by offering video script samples for making a personal video to disseminate or templates for taking a selfie with the campaign's logo.
- In Phoenix, United States, the city's Family Advocacy Center, the Phoenix Police Department and the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence joined forces to spread awareness of the resources available for survivors through the "Domestic Violence Help!" campaign.[167]
- In Hawassa City, Ethiopia, safe city messages on prevention of and response to domestic violence and sexual violence were shared with religious authorities for community outreach.[168]

4. Control Environmental Factors That May Exacerbate VAW Risks

External factors that influence the risks of VAW should be understood and mitigated, including by local governments. Evidence shows, for example, that a woman is five times more likely to be killed by a domestic abuser when a firearm is accessible.[169] The well-documented link between firearms and VAW has led to specific recommendations to prevent an increase in VAW through arms control during the pandemic.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) has provided several specific recommendations[170] to governments, including: (i) to improve data collection on crime (by including more variables of interest) and ensure better coordination and sharing of official data between the various relevant institutions (police, public ministry, forensic institutions); (ii) to cross reference data on records of perpetrators of domestic violence and VAW to cancel firearm licenses; (iii) to suspend or revoke firearm licenses of potential perpetrators of VAW, disable permit applications, and confiscate arms and ammunitions when necessary; (iv) to include protocols for registering the presence of firearms in the home in complaint handling and risk assessment procedures; and (v) to ensure that arms control measures are included in initiatives to address VAW during the pandemic.

The European Union-supported Armed Violence Monitoring Platform, which detected new incidents of family violence involving the use of firearms in southeast Europe right after lockdown measures started to be enforced in 2020, has also called for increased alertness and response to the risks related to the presence of firearms at home.[171]

Amid the surge in gun and ammunition purchases in the United States during the pandemic, NGO Everytown for Gun Safety has recommended that law enforcement be given enough time to complete background checks and that essential community gun violence intervention programs continue and be provided with the needed support.[172] Others have recommended awareness-raising on safe and controlled storage of firearms in the home.[173] During the pandemic, U.S. state courts in Oregon, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, among other states, have allowed extreme risk laws filings and proceedings to be carried out remotely when possible. These laws, which are also referred to as "red flag" laws, allow family members or law enforcement to petition a court for an order to temporarily prevent someone in crisis from accessing guns.[174]

Substance abuse is also a well-known risk factor for intimate partner violence. The potential increase in the consumption of alcohol and other substances during quarantine as a coping mechanism has led some governments to impose restrictions on alcohol sales in an attempt to reduce the risks of VAW/C during confinement. For example, in Nuuk, capital of Greenland, alcohol sales were banned in the beginning of quarantine.[175]

5. Consider Different Forms of VAW Beyond Intimate Partner Violence

Although most of the evidence on increased risk factors and the incidence of VAW have focused on intimate partner violence, the increased risk factors for women in public spaces in the context of the pandemic should also be considered by city governments. In addition, local authorities should be aware and ready to respond to other forms of VAW, such as human trafficking and exploitation and abuse by state agents.

Measures to ensure greater vigilance in public areas with higher incidence of VAW, and especially in public transportation, have been implemented and should be considered. Partnerships with the private sector for free or discounted transportation services may also be recommended. Examples of initiatives of this kind being implemented are listed below:

- In Valparaiso, Chile, the Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Initiative, in collaboration with the Mayor's office and UN Women, is promoting bystander interventions around empty buildings to prevent VAW in public

spaces during COVID-19.[176] Valparaiso's Regional Ministerial Secretary of Women and Gender Equity also launched a contingency plan against gender-based violence during COVID-19 and called for the support of community residents to report cases.[177]

- In Colombo, Sri Lanka, the government is working with the World Bank to gather data, including crowd-sourced data, to identify areas of higher risk of victimization and implement evidence-based policies to enhance safety in public transport and other public spaces. It is also working with the UN to promote public awareness regarding women's safety in public spaces.[178]
- In Bogotá and New York, alternative safe and autonomous transportation options for women, such as cycling, have been encouraged.[179]
- In India, different cities such as Mumbai and Delhi have been using the Safecity app to highlight sexual harassment and assault trends in public spaces and provide support to victims. Safecity is a crowd-sourcing platform through which users can anonymously report violent incidents by place, time and type of harassment/violence. The data collected is aggregated into hot spots on a map that indicate trends at a local level, which people can then use to improve their own situational awareness, engage communities to take action, and make representations to institutions such as the police, civic officials or transport authorities for safer spaces and better security. The app also offers access to helplines, hospitals and police information in a user-friendly format.[180]

Specific measures should also be taken to address the increased risks of human trafficking, even in the absence of data showing increases in prevalence. Combating human trafficking should remain a priority of national and local governments, law enforcement, philanthropists and the private sector, and its risks should be included in awareness-raising initiatives.[181] Recommended measures include: (i) providing protection and assistance through essential services for human trafficking victims, regardless of documentation status; (ii) training staff and volunteers in all sectors handling VAW and trafficking, ensuring the provision of safe referrals; (iii) ensuring that migrants, including irregular migrant workers and displaced people, are included in preparedness and response plans and activities and that support is based on the criterion of vulnerability, not legal status;[182] and (iv) prioritizing livelihood interventions targeted at those at higher risk of trafficking and exploitation (e.g., female workers in the informal market, women dependent on their work for immigration/residency status, and workers who live with their employer, among others).[183]

The initiatives described below provide examples of both government and non-government led initiatives being implemented that could help to prevent human trafficking:

- Cities have been engaging in international advocacy to improve the lives and ensure protection of migrants and refugees during the pandemic. The Mayors Migration Council Leadership Board, which includes mayors of cities as diverse as Amman, Freetown, Milan, Kampala and São Paulo, called for a global COVID response inclusive of migrants and refugees.[184] The pledge included a commitment to take action to ensure safe, equitable access to services regardless of migration status, including healthcare and economic relief; to empower migrants and refugees to be part of the solution to COVID-19, including through the regularization of immigrant essential workers; and to combat misinformation, racism and xenophobia.
- City governments have also provided positive examples of inclusive and human-rights-based policies towards migration, which can help to prevent trafficking and exploitation.[185] Mayors are increasingly reaching across borders to help one another achieve common goals, as demonstrated by the Mayors Dialogue on Growth and Solidarity initiative, focused on improving human mobility. The initiative is composed of 20 cities across Europe and Africa. One concrete action resulting from this work includes a

partnership between Milan and Freetown to support the Milan fashion industry's investment in Freetown talent.

- Some nongovernmental organizations and multi-stakeholder coalitions of businesses, governments, civil society and academia are working with online platforms to create new opportunities in the tech business for survivors, while developing tech-based solutions to help prevent human trafficking and improve understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on human trafficking.[186] For instance, AnnieCannons has created long-term employment solutions for trafficking survivors in tech-based jobs that could be expanded during COVID-19. Based in California, the organization has established relationships with local shelters and case management providers to receive referrals.[187]

The potential increase in abuse by law enforcement agents and the army, who in some countries and cities have been charged with the task of enforcing lockdown and social distancing measures, also requires special attention. In the context of economic and social stress caused by the pandemic, vulnerable areas with persistent inequality and already deteriorated social cohesion may see an increase in public disorder and a consequent increase in public space militarization. Women are often more exposed to psychological, sexual and physical abuse and torture by state agents, especially those in the most vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQ+, women with unstable housing, migrants, refugees and those with disabilities. Authorities should guarantee immediate and impartial investigation when these cases emerge and train their forces in charge of patrolling to prevent abuses from happening.[188]

Finally, the increase in online and ICT-facilitated violence has also led to the design or strengthening of policies to prevent this specific form of violence. An increase in online violence may prevent victims from accessing services that have been offered digitally during the pandemic, from legal/judicial services to school and groceries. By contrast, ensuring women's safe and inclusive access to the internet may contribute to increased women's participation online and reduce the gender digital divide. Practices in this area have included: (i) disseminating information on how to report cases of online VAW and access services; (ii) awareness-raising and training; and (iii) ensuring user privacy and safety. In order to prevent a further escalation of different forms of online VAW and promote women's online inclusion, governments should: (i) include online violence prevention in COVID-19 response plans and programs focused on VAW; (ii) strengthen law enforcement and justice officers' capacity to address online violence through a gender lens; (iv) provide and widely disseminate information to internet users on how to report cases and access services online during COVID-19; and (v) engage women's rights organizations in the development of guidance on safe and inclusive ICTs for women and girls.[189]

The following initiatives are examples of efforts to address online VAW:

- In El Alto, Bolivia, the city is developing simple communications material on the impacts of online violence and how to report it.[190]
- The global Take Back the Tech! campaign shares information and creates collective knowledge related to women and ICT, providing capacity building and education, producing media alternatives, networking and disseminating practices from different countries.[191]
- The Jigsaw[192] platform is undertaking research and developing technology to address violence and harassment online against women.

Transversal Principles of VAW Response and Preparedness

In addition to the overall policy trends and recommendations described in the previous section, there are a few general principles and suggestions that city leaders should consider when planning their immediate, medium-term and long-term responses to VAW in the context of COVID-19.

First, all emergency response and preparedness planning should specifically include measures to prevent VAW. While the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic caught the world off guard, there are now enough lessons and evidence to help city officials plan ahead. The recommendations discussed in this brief ideally would be included in medium- and long-term local strategic planning and resources secured to ensure the readiness of response and protection systems. Plans should include training personnel dealing with VAW in specialized and non-specialized services on how to respond in a context of emergency where VAW rates can quickly escalate. Protocols also need to be in place for how these services should continue to function safely for survivors and workers in emergency situations. It is also crucial to have strategies developed to disseminate information about service hours of operation. Finally, investments must consider women's safety in public spaces, including those repurposed for health and food security and temporary shelter during the emergency period.[193]

Second, women should be involved in every phase of decision-making regarding plans and policies to combat the adverse impacts of COVID-19,[194] especially those related to VAW. The presence of women in policy-making has been shown to result in the enactment of more gender-sensitive policies[195] and women's leadership in local government to result in better outcomes related to safety and security of marginalized groups.[196] Women's groups are also actively responding to the pandemic crisis in several areas where women have been impacted. Their leadership, views and innovations on design and delivery methods should be part of response programs and policies.[197] The views of those groups mostly affected by the pandemic, such as female health workers, migrants, refugees and informal sector workers should be taken into consideration in order for policy actions to adequately meet their needs.[198] In the medium and longer term, local governments should consider implementing strategies to meaningfully increase women's voice and agency in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies, for example through the promotion of gender quotas at the local administration; targeted trainings in political literacy for women; and the provision of increased financial resources for organizations working on VAW at the community level.[199]

Third, local governments should establish coordination mechanisms with a specific focus on women's safety, involving all relevant sectors, such as health, security, social assistance, economic development and transport. These authorities should gather all relevant sex-disaggregated data – following ethical guiding principles of data collection and exchange, and prioritizing existing administrative systems while social isolation and quarantine measures are still in place – in order to assess not only impacts on VAW but also specific vulnerabilities of women in the pandemic context, which should then inform responses. Partnerships with civil society and community-based organizations should also be strengthened during the crisis, ensuring that VAW community-based prevention efforts will continue if there are safe alternatives to do so (e.g., through radio, television, or faith and community leaders). Multi-sectoral partnerships with those actors, as well as women's organizations, the private sector and academia, should also foster knowledge production and exchange, community mobilization and the design of more comprehensive policies to promote women's resilience.

Conclusions

COVID-19 increased several risks to women and girls. At the same time, the pandemic became an opportunity to significantly enhance women's policies and build the necessary resilience to prevent increases in VAW in the long term. Awareness of the scope of risks facing women increased dramatically, leading to higher concern and potentially more public support for investments in this area. The pandemic also exposed gaps in the provision of protection, response and prevention services and programs, indicating areas that should be prioritized and leading to innovative policy-making. Also, despite the enormous diversity in settings, which prohibit general prescriptions, the policy trends show that several of those policies were adapted in cities of different sizes, cultures and income levels.

This crisis could therefore enable improvements to women's safety in the long run, helping to build resilience and to ensure safer cities for women and girls in any emergency context. Regardless of the level of decentralization and autonomy, city governments are crucial players on this front. Cities should be ready to respond to these increased risks and raise awareness about women and girls' safety and health during the pandemic, with technical capacity and resources allocated to this issue.[200] Local authorities should also be diligent in documenting and sharing their good practices and lessons learned from actions implemented so far, helping to promote continuous learning across contexts and ensuring women's participation and agency throughout these processes. Finally, future research on this topic should be more action oriented, prioritizing the links between existing evidence on policies that are known to be more effective to prevent and reduce VAW in emergency contexts. [201] This includes identifying the gaps to fill to ensure better responses in the future, including specific discussions on government and donors' financing, coordination and partnerships.

Appendix 1. Available Tools to Prepare for & Respond to Increased Risks of VAW During COVID-19

With the increased risk of violence against women and girls during the pandemic, several tools can help governments and other stakeholders provide better support to survivors. These include:

i. Digital Services Toolkit: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic[202] provides information on the use of tools such as online chat, text messaging and video calls to support survivors of VAW, from how to develop capacity to how to choose a vendor or platform. The resources target programs and agencies focused on domestic violence, sexual assault and victim services.

ii. Guidelines for Mobile and Remote Gender-Based Violence Service Delivery[203] offers detailed guidance on how to establish and provide mobile and remote services to survivors of VAW, with details on how to handle case management, psychosocial support and referrals.

iii. COVID 19: Resources to Address Gender-Based Violence Risks[204] is a webpage that provides key resources to support the integration of VAW risk mitigation into COVID-19 response.

iv. Identifying & Mitigating Gender-Based Violence Risks Within the COVID-19 Response[205] notes key, sector-specific GBV risks that are likely to occur and/or be exacerbated during the COVID-19 response, along with recommendations on how to mitigate these risks.

v. Remote-Offered Skills Building Application (Rosa)[206] provides continuous training to staff working on VAW, including key content on VAW knowledge, case management, communication and attitude skills. It also offers a space for facilitated remote discussions and distance supervision.

vi. Developing Key Messages for Communities on Gender-Based Violence[207] provides preliminary guidance on how to implement effective communications at the community level, combining different formats for different audiences (survivors, women, adolescents, LGBTQI, men and so on).

vii. Guidance Note 4: How Can VAW Prevention Programs Adapt?,[208] developed by international NGO Raising Voices, offers a series of ideas to organizations on how to continue with community-based prevention activities safely while also mitigating increased risks of COVID-19 for women.

viii. Not Just Hotlines and Mobile Phones: GBV Service Provision During COVID-19,[209] a brief produced by UNICEF, provides a series of alternative entry points for survivors of VAW with no- or low- tech options to alert trustworthy stakeholders and access support services.

ix. Guidance Notes to Support Activist Organizations in Adapting and Sustaining VAW Prevention Activities During COVID-19[210] provides recommendations on how organizations should continue to implement prevention efforts in a safe environment, including through online means and traditional media (e.g., radio or television) and through key stakeholders (e.g., faith and local leaders, community organizers, teachers/school administrators, public health officials and so on).

x. Handbook to Address Violence Against Women in and Through the Media[211] shows how visual, audio, print and online media can help continue to raise the visibility of VAW. Launched prior to the COVID-19 crisis, its guidance may still help show how the media can advance the understanding that the risk factors that drive violence are exacerbated in the context of a pandemic.

xi. United States' National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)[212] discusses how to safely protect VAW survivors and other vulnerable groups, with specific recommendations regarding confidentiality and mitigation of risk in communications and community engagement.

xii. Spain's Guidelines for Women Experiencing VAW During COVID-19[213] (in Spanish) provides detailed information on how women experiencing violence during the pandemic can access psychological, judicial and support services, with specific guidance for women living with their abusers and for those not living with abusers.

xiii. Peru's Guidelines for Awareness-Raising[214] (in Spanish) discusses how to build awareness of VAW risks during the pandemic.

xiv. RESPECT Women: Preventing Violence Against Women provides guidance based on the most up-to-date evidence for medium- and longer-term VAW prevention efforts. This guidance may be useful, as risk factors for VAW may be enhanced after the pandemic due to loss of income and livelihoods and the effects of potential increases of abuse at home and in public spaces.

Sources: Inter-American Development Bank 2020; Bastos, Carbonari and Tavares 2020; UN Women, 2020.

DIGITAL THREATS & URBAN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

PEACE IN OUR CITIES

UKaid from the British people

INTRODUCTION

Diverse threats have emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic. Around the world, the pandemic is triggering increases in urban violence. Many cities declared their violence prevention units "essential workers" at the start of Covid-19 lockdowns, recognizing the link between the pandemic and various forms of violence.[215] In Europe and other regions, the pandemic is increasing resentment toward refugees[216] and attacks on migrants.[217] Human Rights Watch reported increases in anti-Asian racism and xenophobia worldwide.[218] In Latin America, criminal groups are expanding their reach during the pandemic in what the International Crisis Group deemed "virus-proof violence."[219] In the United States, a study of 34 cities found a 30 percent increase in homicides in 2020 compared to 2019, noting that the pandemic is increasing physical, mental, emotional and financial stress for at-risk individuals.[220] Gender-based violence became widely known as "the pandemic within the pandemic," particularly in cities in Africa[221] and Latin America.[222] Experts in terrorism and violent extremist recruitment warn of increased recruitment during the pandemic.[223] In West Africa, Boko Haram increased terror attacks during the last year.[224] The January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol is but one example of how mass digital radicalization on social media is translating into violence during the pandemic.[225]

Social media platforms enable users to share information, ideas, photos, videos and other content. Unlike digital tools like email or messaging apps, social media platforms enable users to communicate with large digital communities via computers or cell phones. While platforms such as WhatsApp provide private messaging services, they are also used for large group conversations, therefore constituting a form of social media.

The pandemic also is triggering "infodemics," including contagious waves of false information about the source of the virus, conspiracies about who would profit from Covid-19, fake cures and anti-vaccine messages. Social media is playing a central role in all of these trends. While the Covid-19 virus is spreading primarily through the air, social media is the vector for spreading disinformation and incitement to violence.[226] Even before the pandemic, there was growing evidence that violent groups such as drug cartels[227] and violent extremist groups[228] were relying on social media communications—and that this reliance was amplifying levels of violence.[229] Social media is bringing a "techtonic shift" to human relations by acting as a vehicle for organizing violence and amplifying disinformation, xenophobic conspiracies and polarizing public discourse.[230]

People in urban areas tend to be more highly connected via social media platforms like Weibo, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, as well as via video conferencing platforms like Zoom and Webex. Digital connectivity seems to have brought both more access to information and services and more risk of exposure to false or dangerous information or cyberthreats.

The pandemic accelerated technological innovation, as the lockdowns and social distancing required cities to help people figure out how to have virtual consultations with medical workers and local government, attend school, work from home, and develop new online business models. The Global Innovation Exchanges' Covid-19 Innovation Hub[231] documents how city leaders have used Zoom sessions for the public to attend city hall meetings, crowdsourced social media movement data to check on supplies of face masks

and contact-tracing, new apps to address fake news, and new digital networks to enable more people to work and attend school from home.

City leaders around the world are keen to harness the positive power of social media to interrupt cycles of violence and to counter negative social media trends. Law enforcement in particular are finding social media a potent tool for identifying potential threats of violence, as well as communicating and building trust with communities. City leaders and communities are trying to keep up with the rapid expansion and explosion of new technologies that can bring communities greater empowerment and inclusion but also increased risk of hate and violence, particularly during the pandemic.

This brief offers city leaders ideas for and examples of urban innovations in the use of social media to address various forms of violence during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Research Methodology

Research took place primarily online and via interviews during November and December 2020. Search terms focused on examples of city actors working to prevent violence in the wake of COVID-19 related to social media, including responding to disinformation or incitement to violence promoted online, as illustrated in Figure 1. Where case studies from city actors could not be found, the brief drew on examples from state leaders, civil society and international organizations. According to this analysis, the UN system has done the most to create social media-based methods of addressing urban violence during the pandemic.

This brief explores forms of harm or violence that have accompanied the pandemic. The research draws on Peacetech Lab's Covid Violence Tracker, which finds that the primary forms of pandemic-related violence are gender-based and xenophobic violence.[232] It also explores the ACLED Covid Disorder Tracker covering violence and protests related to the pandemic.[233] Unlike these trackers, this brief does not cover protests or excessive use of force by police related to enforcing lockdowns or pandemic restrictions. This research focuses instead on the following forms of violence in urban areas (illustrated in greater detail below): Harms from lack of access to information or from disinformation; xenophobic violence; criminal, drug and gang violence; violent extremism; and gender-based violence.

In each of these areas, the brief offers examples of and recommendations for how city leaders have used or could use social media to counter these threats. The brief concludes with a series of recommendations detailing how urban leaders can simultaneously reinforce both positive public health messaging and public safety priorities via social media.

What Is Unique about Social Media Communication?

Social media is a potent new force in human history and a massive technological experiment that can be used to benefit and harm society. Social media is used to organize gang fights, to distribute violent pornography, to exploit children, to threaten minority groups, and to recruit new members to violent extremist groups. Social media is also used to offer webinars on women's empowerment, preventing gang violence, or countering hate speech. Authorities use social media to create communication channels between governments and the communities they serve to inform them of threats and how to stay safe. And communities and civil society groups use social media to share their stories of resilience and recovery.

Communication on the internet is distinct from communication via other "legacy" media such as radio, television or print news.[234] When compared to television or newspapers, a message on social media can travel faster, reaching millions of people around the planet instantaneously. Whereas legacy media's gatekeepers filter public information, digital technologies enable a single person to instantly post a false message about Covid-19 to millions of people around the world. Digital technologies allow groups of people to communicate with each other about Covid-19, gang violence or any other related topic by creating a shared digital space or "room" for discussion. With digital technology, a person can post a message on any topic with near total freedom of content, unhampered by editors, to millions of people with no or low cost. Unlike legacy media, information shared on social media carries legitimacy based on relationships, a dynamic known as social confidence. When people share either true or false information about Covid-19 online, they endorse that information, increasing the likelihood that their friends will consider that information important.

Social media also enables authorities to track data in new ways, with both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, scientists and health officials can collect and share Covid-19 data in real time, providing instant data on cases and deaths in different regions of the world.[235] On the other hand, with the ability to track users' locations, friends, interests and digital activities, some governments have used the pandemic to greatly increase social media surveillance and repression of political opponents.[236]

In addition, social media platforms operate on a different economic model than legacy media. Access to most social media platforms is free because users are the product, not the client. Political and corporate advertisers pay platforms for access to users. Platforms collect information from users about their interests and identities. The more information a platform can gather about users, the more they profit. Advertisers are able to target audiences more receptive to their ideas or products, making advertising on social media more effective than on legacy media. Platform designers use neuroscience and psychological research to keep users on platforms longer with emotionally-engaging colors and buttons and algorithms that show users sensational content. Some scholars argue social media addiction is built into the design. With Covid-

19's lockdowns and restricted movement, unemployment and canceled schools, more people spent more time on social media. Researchers in a variety of countries found significant increases in the use of digital technology during the pandemic, as well as increased mental stress related to social media.[237]

Types of Harm Related to Social Media and Covid-19

During the pandemic, social media fueled multiple forms of harm. Even before the pandemic, a large body of research documented the negative emotional impact of time spent on social media, particularly for youth.[238] With the pandemic and the additional anxiety, stress, economic insecurity and social isolation it has brought, these negative effects of social media are compounded, resulting in a wide range of mental illnesses, including self-harming behaviors not covered here. This brief focuses on forms of harm related to and resulting from both a lack of digital access and the spread of false or harmful information. Implications are described briefly below.

Information Access

The World Economic Forum warns that the pandemic exposes the digital divide. Half of the global population have no access to the internet, and during the pandemic that means they have less access to health warnings, online services and other life-saving information.[239] A survey of U.S. city technology offices conducted by the Urban Institute found that "digital inequities and the digital divide [could lead] to higher rates of death" if communities without the internet did not have access to information about Covid-19, or were unable to work from home, attend school from home, complete homework on time, or access city services. Small businesses without an online presence, most often found in low-income communities, had a more difficult time surviving than those businesses that moved part or all of their services online. Four out of five U.S. survey respondents reported that the highest-demand technology-based city services included Covid-19 informational pages on small business loans, unemployment and food assistance.[240]

Pandemic Disinformation

Soon after the pandemic began, the World Health Organization announced that an explosion of information, much of it untrue, was emerging. This "infodemic" has contributed to a variety of harms, including increases in violence against medical workers and minority groups. A global study of disinformation related to the pandemic in 87 countries and 25 different languages published in the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* found that during the first few months of the pandemic approximately 800 people died, 5,800 people were admitted to the hospital and 60 people developed complete blindness as a result of dangerous disinformation promoting drinking methanol as a cure.[241] The article also records dozens of conspiracy theories about who created the virus to make profit, who was

using the virus as a biological weapon to weaken other religious or ethnic groups, or who was using the virus to wage an economic war on other countries.

- In Colombia, false rumors on WhatsApp accused doctors of running a "Covid cartel" to profit from the pandemic. The rumor caused distrust of and threats toward medical staff, with some patients dying because they were fearful of seeking treatment.[242]
- Mexico's Ministry of Interior documented 47 cases of aggression toward health workers by April 28, and some doctors and nurses avoided public transport and taxis to prevent attacks.[243]

Xenophobia and Ethnic, Racial and Religious Identity-Based Violence

The "infodemic" also included "Coronaphobia": the racist blaming of people from China (or anywhere in Asia) or of Jews, Muslims, immigrants or any minority group, spread primarily on social media. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres observed that the Covid-19 pandemic has created "a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scaremongering," adding that "[a]nti-foreigner sentiment has surged online and in the streets..."[244] Crises and disasters are often opportunities for those driving xenophobia and identity-based discrimination. Psychologists have long analyzed the human tendency to blame other groups, particularly in the midst of a disaster.

- In Țăndărei, Romania, xenophobic false accusations blaming Roma people for spreading Covid-19 circulated mostly on private social media messaging applications.[245]
- In Masanchi, Kazakhstan, mobs carried out a deadly pogrom against the Dungan population, who are Muslims of Chinese descent, charging they spread the virus.[246]
- In Delhi, India, social media accelerated Islamophobic accusations against all Muslims after a meeting of the Islamist group Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) became a super-spreader event.
- South Africa built a wall in an attempt to prevent migration from Mozambique during the pandemic. The growing "Afrophobia" movement resulted in potentially dangerous hashtags and protests with names like #ForeignersMustGo and #PutSouthAfricansFirst.[247]

Criminal, Drug and Gang Violence

The pandemic created conditions that escalated violent crime in many cities. Drug dealers and gangs have used social media as a tool to recruit new users, arrange for drug delivery, organize brawls or incite gang fights.

- In Lagos, Nigeria, gangs spread rumors on social media about a Covid-related increase in violent crime, but most were fake attacks and false rumors.[248]
- In Mission Bay, New Zealand, over a hundred youth organized a massive school brawl on social media during the Covid-19 pandemic.[249]
- In Liverpool and Manchester in the United Kingdom, drug traffickers recruited local youth to "work the county lines" to distribute drugs in urban areas via social media during the pandemic.[250]
- In Brooklyn, United States, two prominent gangs, known as Woo and Choo, were more active on social media during the pandemic both to organize fights and to share music that includes references to violence.[251]

Violent Extremism

During the pandemic, violent extremist groups including ISIS, Al Qaeda and far-right white supremacist groups actively capitalized on the Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to advance their ideology, recruit new members, raise funding for operations, and carry out training. Violent extremist groups have long exploited social media because of its privacy and anonymity, particularly on platforms like Telegram, a secure, encrypted messenger app that protects against government surveillance. Experts anticipate a potential increase in online recruitment, given that more people are spending more time on social media, particularly among vulnerable groups including young, unemployed men looking for a sense of meaning and belonging.[252]

- In a variety of U.S. cities, far-right extremist groups have used social media to share conspiracy theories that Covid-19 is a hoax and that Bill Gates created the virus to profit from the vaccine.[253] The Wall Street Journal reported that the first five months of the Covid-19 pandemic saw a 600 percent increase in membership in the ten largest QAnon Facebook groups.[254] QAnon conspiracies about both Covid-19 and the U.S. election prompted many social media followers to take part in the January 6 white supremacist extremist violence in Washington, DC. [255]
- Among German-speaking populations, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue reports that online extremist activity dramatically increased by at least 14 percent during the pandemic. This online increase, primarily on Telegram, seems to have contributed to growing support for real-world demonstrations and rallies against Covid-19 safety measures and has often included anti-migrant, antisemitic and anti-vaccine messaging.[256]

Gender-Based Violence

The pandemic's lockdowns, unemployment and family stress have dramatically increased domestic violence as well as cyber abuse against women and girls, including physical threats, sexual harassment, stalking, zoom-bombing and sex-trolling. UN Women also reports that people with minority identities (i.e., members of LGBTQI) also experience high levels of online abuse through discrimination and hate speech. As a result, they tend to self-censor and withdraw from digital discussions.[257] During quarantine, privacy is scarcer, and many have fewer outside contacts on which to call for help. Domestic abusers often monitor all phone and computer activity, such as texts, emails and social media accounts, also limiting access to help.[258]

- In Pakistan, 40 percent of females reported cyber abuse including sexually explicit messages, sex-trolling and blackmailing.[259]
- In Orlando, United States, police investigators noted a dramatic rise in reports of online child pornography, particularly as children attending school online potentially spend many hours each day unsupervised and vulnerable to online abuse.[260]

Smart City Recommendations

Covid-19 accelerated urban adoption of digital technologies by city managers and leaders. "Smart cities" leverage technology to improve governance in a variety of ways. Analysts estimate that in the next few years "smart city investment" will reach $203 billion globally. In an urban "internet of things," cities increasingly use physical objects embedded with sensors, software and other technologies to connect and exchange data via the internet to improve public services such as public safety.[261] Urban leaders are ramping up their public-private-people partnerships, mapping out how new technologies can serve information needs of both residents and public officials, and also taking care to anticipate potential digital risks, such as privacy violations or cyberwarfare.[262] The pandemic provides an opportunity for city authorities and urban populations to build capacity for using social media to prevent violence in a range of different ways with low cost and high impact.

Gather Digital Information for Violence Prevention

City staff can use sentiment analysis software to collect data from social media platforms to understand public attitudes, identify potential threats, and find sources of false information. Bearing in mind that any type of surveillance tools must be accompanied by strong accountability mechanisms, examples of such work include the following:

- In Cape Town, South Africa, the Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change (CABC) uses social media to analyze polarization, divisive rhetoric and narrative manipulation related to xenophobia and Covid-19.[263]
- In Chicago, United States, social workers use social media to build relationships with community members to improve their understanding of individuals' wider circle of influence and to enable more effective violence prevention interventions.[264] When racial justice protests began after the police killing of George Floyd, the information officers followed social media conversations about the protests in order to develop effective messaging for communicating with the public about wearing masks at the protests.[265] Chicago researchers note that it is important to have racial and cultural literacy in decoding social media posts.[266]
- Taiwan's Digital Ministry uses the social media polling platform Polis to create public conversations about responses to Covid-19. With this method of developing "collective intelligence," ordinary citizens can vote up or down on each other's ideas, providing feedback and helping each other understand differences as well as common ground. This prompts people to "listen at scale" to develop a rough consensus that also leads to more creative, crowdsourced policies that address the needs of others.[267]
- In India, Safe City invites anonymous reporting of sexual and gender-based violence by crowdsourcing reports of assaults that take place in public spaces.[268]

In many countries, the public primarily accesses information through social media, not legacy media. Public health officials could adopt well-tested methods of reaching constituents with fact-based narratives.[269] Advertising companies do extensive research to find out where their potential customers get information, what they care about, and how to frame information to attract attention. Advertisers like to use social media because major platforms enable them to show different ads to different identity groups, making it possible to be more culturally attuned to their unique interests. City governments could use these same social marketing techniques, leveraging social media to frame culturally sensitive information to diverse urban populations. Before the pandemic, the Ohio State University's Moritz Law School had developed a slate of ideas for city leaders on how to use social media to help reduce community divisions in the midst of a crisis—ideas that are now relevant for the current crisis.[270] For example, city leaders can develop a social media following over time by posting a constant stream of compelling, culturally relevant digital content and collaborating with urban influencers online to amplify city leaders' posts. These examples below illustrate how city leaders have used social media ad campaigns to prevent violence during the pandemic:

- In Mexico City, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) identified rumors suggesting that migrants and refugees were transmitting Covid-19, fueling xenophobia. They developed a social media campaign to sensitize citizens about the importance of protecting human rights and avoiding xenophobia and hate speech. The campaign targeted urban locations where there are migrant shelters, safe houses or temporary camps for people on the move. The goal was to foster greater empathy and understanding, urging the public and officials tasked with helping address the pandemic not to discriminate and to understand migrant vulnerability. IOM found that the campaign reached hundreds of thousands of users on Facebook and Twitter. IOM is now in the process of researching how the campaign affected public perceptions of migrants over time.[271]
- In New York City, United States, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs developed a multilingual campaign in newspapers and on social media promoting city services available to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status, ability to pay or employment status.[272]
- In Uzbekistan, a national program before the pandemic that had used sports to promote youth resilience to violence moved online. The "I Choose Sport" campaign developed social media videos featuring Uzbek sports champions as positive role models for the country's youth.[273]
- In Vancouver, Canada, Lt. Governor Janet Austin launched an anti-racism campaign on Twitter called "Different Together." The campaign aimed at reducing hate by celebrating diversity during the pandemic.[274]
- In Spain, the government launched a digital campaign "We stop this virus together," using the official Twitter account of the Ministry of Social Inclusion and Migration.[275] The campaign published short videos and tweets informing the public about the important positive contributions that migrants make

to the Spanish economy and society, including contributions to the pandemic response efforts, for instance as volunteers or intercultural mediators.[276]

- In Lagos, Nigeria, the EU-UN-funded Spotlight Initiative uses social media videos to sensitize people to gender-based violence as "the pandemic within the pandemic." Videos also combated victim blaming.[277] The #IDeyWithHer digital awareness-raising campaign is modeled after the global Spotlight Initiative to raise awareness of and challenge harmful gender stereotypes that perpetuate violence against women.[278]
- During the pandemic, UNESCO created a "social media package," including messages and hashtags like #HumanJustLikeYou, #IAmNotAVirus and #FightXenophobia. UNESCO also created shareable graphics for cities, organizations or individuals to post on their social media accounts. One interactive element of the campaign was asking people to take a photo of themselves and use a message frame with one of the hashtags.[279]

Promote Fact-Checking and Digital Literacy to Debunk Disinformation

There is no quick fact-checking technological fix. Countering disinformation requires a long-term strategy that also addresses broader cultural factors. Urban leaders are best able to prevent and counteract disinformation when they develop a proactive social media strategy to provide science-based public guidance in culturally accessible ways. Public information officers can "meet people where they are at" by addressing the identity and cultural factors that help explain why disinformation is attractive to some people. People share false information for a variety of reasons, including profit, public attention, a sense of civic duty, humor, social cohesion and trust with others, and uncertainty or anxiety.[280] Even before the pandemic, there was an urgent need to conduct digital media literacy, given the destructive effects of disinformation on electoral processes, xenophobia and polarization. These innovative examples of cultivating digital literacy provide inspiration for how city leaders might counter disinformation:

- In Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, the Ministry of Health worked with Tik Tok to create captivating social media videos to prevent Covid-19 disinformation that garnered more than eight billion views. The #ONhaVanVui Campaign encouraged people to "stay happy at home" in the fight against Covid-19.[281]
- Taiwan Digital Minister Audrey Tang argues her country was effective at stopping disinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic because of its coordinated "humour over rumour" campaign. Her staff and local comedians worked to develop humorous memes to share on social media to combat disinformation.[282]
- In South Sudan, local community groups organized the #DefyHateNow campaign: a digital community of youth collaborating to address misinformation related to Covid-19.[283]
- In Indonesia, a consortium of tech companies and civil society groups worked together to develop a fact-checking organization called Cek Fakta to counter disinformation that spreads on both social media and legacy media in the country.[284]
- "Digital first responders" increase the volume and reach of trusted, accurate information surrounding a crisis. Building on successes debunking disinformation in Latvia, the UN launched the Verified program to create a cadre of journalists during the pandemic to share science, solidarity and solutions.[285]
- Finland has been at the forefront of ensuring its entire population develops digital media literacy skills that enable people to debunk disinformation and conspiracy theories. Finnish leaders noted that digital media literacy skills could help other populations identify dangerous Covid-19 disinformation.[286]

Provide Public Information via Chatbots, Websites and Apps for Violence Prevention

Cities are innovating special websites and apps to provide reliable and high-quality online-accessible public services. Cities have been working for a long time to develop a suite of tools for digital or digitally delivered responses to domestic and intimate partner violence during COVID-19.[287] Cities can use technology to hold public meetings and education events via digital platforms. In research conducted by the Urban Institute during the pandemic, survey respondents reported cities are increasing low-cost or free internet, improved access to connected devices (computers, mobile phones), and digital literacy training.[288] Such efforts facilitate the kind of access necessary to making digital outreach and services practical in the first place. Ideally, city leaders can build social media engagement with the public long before a crisis, so that when a crisis emerges, the public turns toward the city's own social media channels for information. The following initiatives illustrate how digital public engagement can help in violence prevention efforts:

- In Birmingham, England, a community organization called Solve: The Centre for Youth Violence and Conflict holds webinars to help professionals understand the scope of the gang violence problem in their city, including how gangs taunt each other on social media apps like Houseparty and Snapchat to intimidate their rivals.[289]
- Piloted in Ghana and now rolling out in 29 countries, Primero X was launched by UNICEF and Microsoft in December 2020. Primero X is an open-source case management web application that helps social service providers coordinate critical support to vulnerable children who may be affected by domestic and gender-based violence linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. The app provides access to lifesaving services and protection programming, including psychosocial support, assistance to unaccompanied and separated children, family reunification and tracing, while observing physical distancing and movement restrictions due to Covid-19.[290]
- In Israel's remote Bedouin communities cell phone reception is sparse. Tech innovators created the "Wonder Jewel," a 3D-printed jewelry sensor that can send a distress signal to local authorities,[291] making it useful to urban settlements without phone access.
- Saahas is a platform operating in 196 countries providing access to information that can help prevent gender-based violence. Saahas ("courage" in Hindi) is a web-based and mobile app, as well as chatbot operating on Facebook and Telegram social media platforms, that helps survivors access support and information on resources such as legal and medical services.[292]
- In U.S. cities, a coalition of suicide-prevention agencies developed an interactive web resource to offer digital applications for coping, relaxation, distraction and positive thinking to ease mental distress during the pandemic. For example, the Virtual Hope Box (VHB) is a smartphone application designed for use by patients and their behavioral health providers as an accessory to treatment. The Breathe2Relax app uses breathing exercises to manage stress.[293]

Offer Individual Counseling and Group Meetings via Social Media to Prevent Violence

Digital technologies offer a wide variety of innovations for providing psychosocial support that can contribute toward violence prevention with at-risk populations. Social media also offers the best option for reaching people in a pandemic due to both the scale of need and people's inability to access help in other ways because of stay-at-home orders. Social media enables anonymous, non-judgmental forums for sharing mental health challenges. Over ten thousand mobile phone applications exist to aid mental health, including chatbots that can offer automated supportive messages, spaces for people to share stories and support each other, and professional support direct to those in need. City leaders can also invite the public to share positive messages and stories to demonstrate how urban communities are responding with resilience and innovation. These examples below illustrate how city residents can gather virtually to share stories online and to support one another in new ways:

- In Istanbul, the Turkish Ministry of Health partnered with EU-funded Refugee Health Training Centres to provide online psychosocial support to Syrian refugees. Digital technologies enabled the provision of safe, affordable, culturally sensitive health services to over 40,000 refugees.[294]
- In Sacramento, United States, La Cultura Cura offers online discussions to promote transformational health and healing based on Indigenous teachings related to sacred values and cultural identity.[295]
- Columbia University in New York City (United States) is building a "Digital Social Worker" to collect stories about how Covid-19 is impacting people's mental health and how people are coping. The hope is that hearing these stories will help others cope, thereby preventing self-harm and domestic violence and limiting the appeal of drugs or gang involvement.[296]
- In Jordan, the "HeForShe" campaign addresses the gender impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The program has used social media to host online discussions about gender-based violence during various crises, including the present public health crisis.[297]

Host Hackathons, Games and Contests for Violence Prevention

City leaders can create contests and hackathons to develop creative digital solutions to violence during the pandemic. Examples include the following:

- In Kenya, Konza Technopolis partnered with the Kenyan Association of Countrywide Innovation Hubs in April 2020 to host the "Great Covid-19 Innovation Challenge," which fosters partnerships between government, communities and technology companies to innovate solutions to Covid-19-related challenges in poor and remote communities. The collaboration aimed "to birth the next frontier of techno-developmental-governance interface" necessary to solve complex problems.[298]
- In Israel, a partnership of local governments and tech companies held a hackathon to develop new technologies to prevent gender-based violence. The hackathon event included over 1,500 participants and delivered 100 registered ideas for life-saving technologies. Technology entrepreneurs partnered with domestic violence experts from the courts and law enforcement and with tech partners such as Google, Wix, Amdocs, Waze, and Intel, among others. A panel of judges from academia, government and tech companies (like Facebook, Microsoft, and Salesforce) decided on the winning digital innovations, who won free legal and strategic counseling, plus monetary prizes.[299]

Follow and Make Available Safety Guidance for Digital Violence Prevention

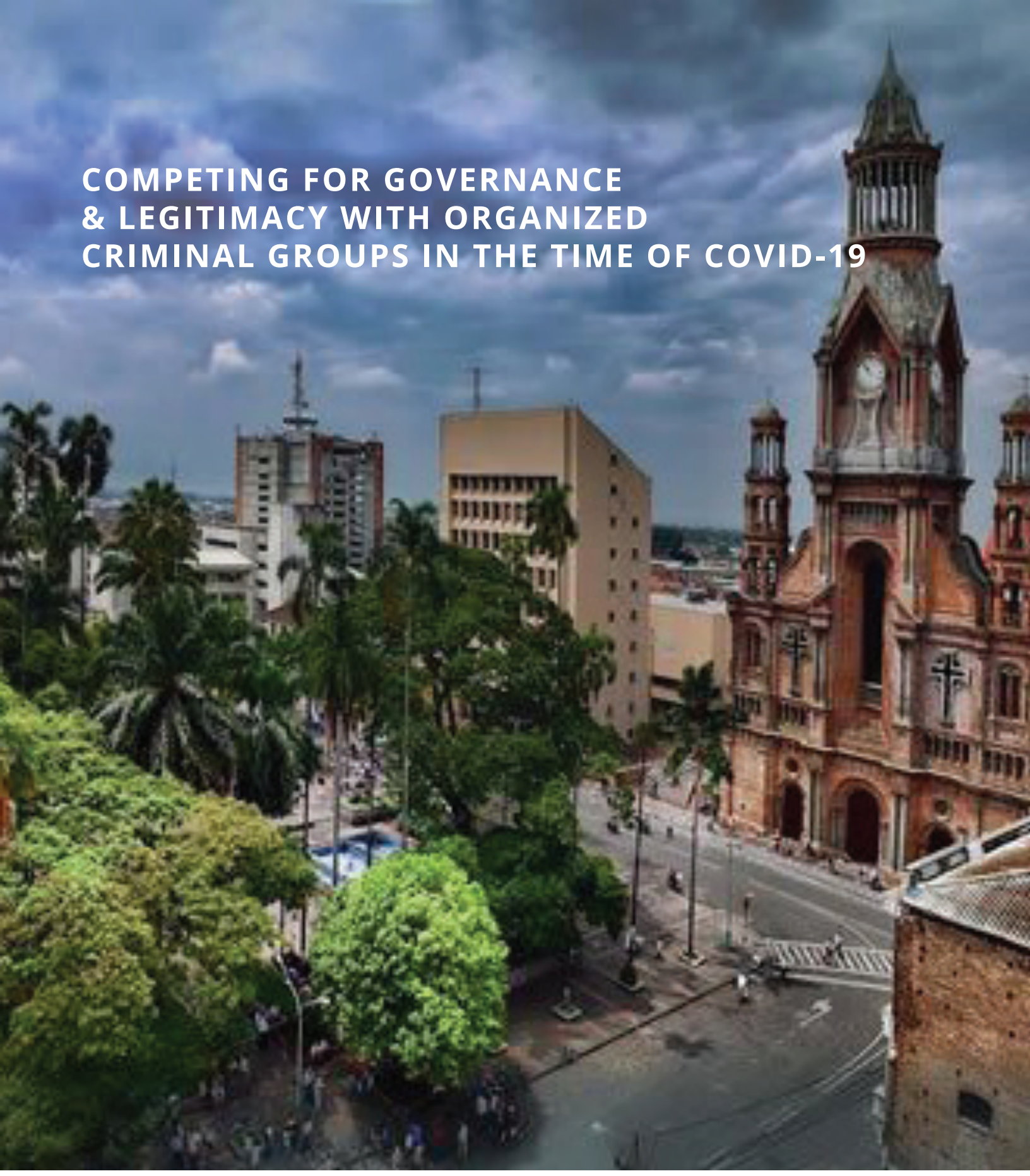
Digital technologies also expose cities and their populations to privacy concerns, hacking and ransomware attacks. Cities exploring new digital methods of violence prevention should also take note of potential unintended digital threats.

- Australia offers a variety of resources to address technology safety for domestic and family violence, including a set of best practices for digital safety with phones or emails, as well as guidance for texting or videoconferencing with survivors of gender-based violence.[300]

Conclusion

The pandemic accelerates the need to both tackle digital threats fueling violence and harness the full power of social media to prevent violence and increase public safety. This brief has outlined dozens of creative ways that urban leaders are innovating new approaches to violence prevention via social media and digital technologies demonstrating the power of local action to address urban challenges.

COMPETING FOR GOVERNANCE & LEGITIMACY WITH ORGANIZED CRIMINAL GROUPS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19



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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in more than 80 million cases and 1.8 million deaths worldwide.[301] Its impact modified social and economic interactions like no other event in this generation. An estimated 3.9 billion people (more than half the world's population) were under some type of lockdown by the first week of April 2020[302], which was followed by a plethora of ever-changing restrictions to contain the spread of the virus. The global economy took a major hit with US$28 trillion in lost output and an average 4.4 percent contraction.[303] Weaknesses in government service delivery and response capacity were further exposed, with many countries' health systems and other services succumbing to the virus.

BOX 1: ORGANIZED CRIMINAL GROUPS

In this brief, organized criminal groups are broadly understood using The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime definition which includes four criteria: 1) A structured group of three or more persons; 2) the group exists for a period of time; 3) it acts in concert with the aim of committing at least one serious crime; and 4) to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.

Focus throughout the document centers on larger, more organized groups; however, smaller, looser groups are not excluded from the analysis. Also, youth gangs are included in the analysis for practical purposes, although it is understood that they are not necessarily categorized as organized crime. Insurgent and terrorist groups are excluded from the analysis.

Overall, organized criminal group (OCG) activity seems to have increased worldwide during the pandemic (Box 2), affecting governments' legitimacy as providers of security, economic stability, public health, and social services. OCGs have been quick at adapting to the pandemic, and the strongest have further consolidated their control in their territories. This brief summarizes the medium to long-term implications of OCGs actions on local governments' legitimacy and proposes immediate actions at the local level to strengthen governance against these groups. It also presents best practices to enable cooperation between municipal law enforcement and social service providers to ensure security responses to organized crime that do not place communities at risk of further economic or social insecurity.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its ongoing restrictions have had an impact on OCGs. Its effects have not been homogeneous, however, given different pre-existing socioeconomic conditions, governance capacity, and variation in types of crime.[304] The impact on homicides – one-fifth of which can be attributed to OCGs worldwide, and which constitute more deaths than conflicts and terrorism combined[305] – provides an important glimpse into OCG activity, demonstrating an initial hit and posterior adaptation of OCGs to the pandemic globally.

In March and April 2020, lockdown restrictions resulted in a 25 percent decrease in homicides in countries for which comparable data is available.[306] For instance, South Africa recorded 94 homicides during the initial weeks of the lockdown, compared with 326 during the same period in the previous year.[307] In India, officials reported a decline in the number of murders, citing data from the state of Kerala where a 40 percent reduction in homicides was recorded during the first two months of the lockdown.[308] However, in some

places, crime was unaffected, and it even increased. Mexico saw its most violent month on record in March 2020 with more than 2,500 homicides.[309] Similarly, in the northern Brazilian state of Ceará, violent crime soared by 98 percent just a few days into the lockdown.[310]

Most reductions in homicides were short-lived. Immediately after the loosening of lockdown measures, homicides went back to pre-pandemic levels in countries as diverse as Chile, Ecuador, Italy, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Spain.[311] The United States experienced a 28 percent increase in violence during the first 9 months of the pandemic.[312] The Philippines recorded a 47 percent decrease in crimes between March and September 2020; however, police killings related to the government's "War on Drugs" was 50 percent higher between April and July 2020 than in the previous quarter.[313]

BOX 2: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OTHER CRIMES PERPETRATED BY ORGANIZED CRIMINAL GROUPS[314]

PROPERTY CRIME: As millions of people are off the streets and in their homes, robbery, theft, and burglary has fallen by more than 50 percent in a group of 30 countries for which information is available. The decline may also be due to a decrease in the number of crimes reported. Property crimes are likely to increase in the near future due to the COVID-19 economic downturn.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS: The pandemic has exacerbated the conditions that contribute to labor and sexual exploitation. In the United States, a human rights organization reported a 185 percent increase in human trafficking cases during the pandemic. Two-thirds of survivors surveyed by Tech Against Trafficking reported receiving less support during the pandemic. Europol, as well as countries such as Sweden and Spain, have reported an increase in online child sexual exploitation material (CSEM).

DRUG TRAFFICKING: In destination markets, supply and quality of drugs are down, but prices are up. Trends in drug seizures have varied among countries: in Italy, Niger, and some countries in Central Asia, seizures have decreased. On the other hand, Morocco, Iran, and Belgium have reported large seizures. Reports from Nigeria also show that drug trafficking has continued uninterrupted. Opium harvesting has been affected in Afghanistan by the restrictions, while the cocaine price drop in Peru may have discouraged coca cultivation in the short-term. The unavailability of precursors may be limiting the production of synthetic drugs; however, OCGs are rapidly adapting to the new circumstances.

Criminal governance: Medium to long-term implications of organized criminal groups' actions on local governments' legitimacy

The pandemic has exposed weaknesses in the capacity of governments at all levels to provide effective governance.[315] OCGs have quickly stepped in to fill this void and impose social order through the provision of goods and services. Criminal governance in communities is being shaped by OCGs' ability to overcome forgone economic opportunities and exploit the new operating environment to further their objectives.[316] Their actions on local governments' legitimacy could have at least the following six social and economic implications in the medium to long-term.

1. OCGs are expected to build up political and social capital and strengthen their status and position in communities.

OCGs are using the COVID-19 pandemic's economic slump and restrictions to further boost political and social capital.[317] Cartels in Mexico have provided groceries to the communities under their control.[318] In Italy, mafia groups have used fake charities to distribute food, clothing and money to underprivileged families.[319] Yakuza groups in Japan handed out free masks, toilet paper, and tissues to kindergartens and pharmacies, and even offered to disinfect the Diamond Princess cruise ship.[320] Gangs in Cape Town established a temporary truce to deliver food to struggling households.[321] OCGs have also enforced lockdowns to boost their position in communities, particularly in the Americas. Drug gangs in Brazil, youth gangs in El Salvador, *colectivos*[322] in Venezuela, and dissident FARC groups and paramilitaries in Colombia have enforced curfews, threating violators with violence including death. Other non-state armed groups around the world have allegedly engaged in similar actions to bolster their credentials in their territories.[323]

OCGs' use of their soft power is not new; in fact, the large and strong ones have been doing it for decades, as they need their communities' support to survive and maximize profits from their illegal activities.[324] However, this relationship can also be symbiotic. The current "altruism" is solidifying OCGs loyalties in their communities, strengthening them, and further reducing public trust in governments for their lack of action. OCGs emerge more powerful from crises, as it occurred with yakuza groups in Japan and the Italian mafia after WWII's economic downturn,[325] and the COVID-19 pandemic is proving to be no exception.

2. OCGs will endeavor to expand control of illicit and licit markets as a result of the economic slump

The pandemic's impact on the global economy resulted in 400 million full-time jobs lost in the second quarter of 2020, with up to 100 million people pushed into poverty.[326] Lack of economic opportunities may cause people to engage in illicit livelihoods and presents an opportunity for OCGs to recruit vulnerable populations, especially youth. In Kenya, child recruitment into gangs has increased during the pandemic.[327] In Cape Town, gang members reported that sixty days into the pandemic, it had become increasingly easy to organize community members to loot businesses alongside them.[328] Struggling licit businesses with limited access to public capital will seek OCGs liquidity to survive. OCGs will attempt to take over these businesses and use them to further their criminal activities through money laundering.[329] In Italy, early into the pandemic mafia groups were already engaged in loan sharking, where desperate business owners have been accepting illicit lifelines despite being aware of the consequences.[330] In Mexico City, OCGs offered loans to small businesses to ensure they could reopen after the pandemic.[331] Some OCGs have countered and downplayed local government's lockdown measures for their economic gain. In South Africa, gangs took advantage of people's resistance to the lockdown to continue selling drugs on the streets.[332] In Rio de Janeiro, militia groups – paramilitary-style organizations made up of active and retired police officers who control up to 33.1 percent of the city – prohibited businesses from closing to avoid losing income from extortions.[333]

3. OCGs are likely to exploit weak oversight and inadequate transparency to make a profit in collaboration with corrupt state officials

Corruption erodes public trust in government institutions, and it is particularly damaging during times of crisis.[334] Governments have injected large amounts of funds – both national and international – to procure medical supplies and equipment to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. This has created opportunities for OCGs to exploit weak oversight and inadequate transparency. Crises often provide an opportunity for OCGs

BOX 3: INTERPOL WARNS ABOUT OCGs THREAT TO COVID-19 VACCINES[350]

With the successful development of the COVID-19 vaccine, INTERPOL issued an alert to members' law enforcement institutions warning them to prepare for OCGs targeting vaccines physically and online. Possible OCG and corruption threats to the vaccine include:

- **Vaccines may be stolen during the transportation process and diverted to the black market or for personal use.**
- **Vaccines may be stolen by public health staff for resale in the black market or use in their private practices.**
- **Limited vaccine supplies may result in bribes to public health professionals to obtain a vaccine.**
- **Health professionals may demand a payoff from patients to access the vaccine, affecting poor, marginalized, and vulnerable populations.**
- **Corruption may occur during the procurement process of the vaccine, leading to misappropriation of public funds or embezzlement.**
- **Corruption may occur with the large amounts of funding directed for the purchase and distribution of the vaccine.**
- **OCGs may manufacture and traffic falsified and substandard vaccines.**
- **Conflict of interest may influence vaccine selection and policy decisions.**

to influence the misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds. In 2010, post-hurricane infrastructure projects were awarded to firms controlled by drug trafficking groups in Honduras. In Japan, yakuza groups' companies were awarded massive reconstruction contracts in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake.[335] During the Ebola epidemic, it is estimated that 30 percent of the development assistance given to the government of Sierra Leone was unaccounted for due to fraud and corruption.[336] OCGs interference has also occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. In El Salvador and Guatemala, gangs have tried to profit from government emergency aid and health care equipment. Salvadoran authorities have been forced to include gang families among the beneficiaries of subsidies and handouts.[337] In Kenya, Somalia, South Africa, and Uganda, there have been corruption cases related to COVID-19 emergency funds.[338] This is particularly troubling given that in 40 of the 54 African countries, state-embedded criminal actors have significant or severe influence on society and state structures.[339]

4. Corrupt and abusive security forces with potential ties to OCGs could further erode trust in local government institutions

Security forces (police and the military) have been tasked with enforcing communities' compliance with lockdown measures and restrictions. As such, they have largely become the public face of countries' response to the pandemic.[340] Reports of police abuse and collaboration with OCGs have been reported during the COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. In Guinea-Bissau, criminal groups and the police allegedly closed the Osvaldo Vieira Airport, citing COVID-19 restrictions as a facade to let planes carrying cocaine land.[341] In Cape Town, restrictions were enforced brutally by security forces, as people refused to comply with them due to a historical mistrust in an ever-absent police force. Some of these police officers have allegedly supplied drugs to gangs and been working under the orders of gang leaders.[342] Reports from Kenya suggest that at least 16 people have been extrajudicially killed by the police while enforcing the lockdown, and that corrupt police officers have been passing information to gang members on police patrols, so they can target businesses for looting.[343] Security forces are not corrupt across the board, and many have become infected by the virus and died enforcing lockdowns. However, instances where pre-existing patterns of police abuse and corruption have been exacerbated will make it difficult for affected citizens to follow government recommendations to contain the spread of the virus. Instead, they will seek support from groups who already govern their territories, regardless of their activities.

5. OCGs are expected to offer counterfeit and trafficked medical products[344] for COVID-19, thwarting governments' efforts to contain the spread of the virus

The surge in demand for medical products to address the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in the trafficking of substandard and counterfeit products. This has greatly occurred through cyberattacks and fraudulent websites claiming to offer medical products for the virus. German health authorities procured €15 million worth of face masks through a cloned website of a legitimate company in Spain.[345] The *Jalisco Nueva Generación* cartel in Mexico has been promoting the production of fake COVID-19 medical products and forcing pharmacies to sell them.[346] The government of Slovenia ordered 3 million medical masks worth €300,000 that were never delivered from a company in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[347] In April 2020, Thailand seized 3,300 thermometers smuggled from China and Vietnam via Laos.[348] Multiple similar cases have occurred worldwide, including cyberattacks to hospitals. In March, a hospital in the Czech Republic was forced to postpone urgent surgical interventions and reroute new acute patients to a nearby hospital due to a cyberattack.[349]

On the internet, these substandard and fake medical products claiming to treat, or cure COVID-19, are also targeted to regular people who are desperate to protect themselves from the virus. The impact of this type of crime on local governance is threefold: 1) given that medicines claiming to cure or treat COVID-19 are available online, people question governments' claims on the unavailability of treatments for the virus and whether those claims are based on lack of capacity; 2) the consumption of fake or substandard medicines can exacerbate the public health crises and further use up limited state resources; and 3) public resources lost in fraudulent purchases makes citizens questions their representatives' ability to govern.

6. Scammers posing as government officials will probably prey on vulnerable local populations

There have been reports around the world of door-to-door scammers who impersonate government officials providing informational material, offering hygiene products, carrying controls, or conducting COVID-19 tests.[351] In Lombardy, Italy, scammers disguised as Health Service officials have targeted the elderly, telling them that they are carrying out COVID-19 controls to break into their homes and steal money and other valuables.[352] In Switzerland, criminal groups claiming to be from state agencies have been breaking into properties to supposedly disinfect them from COVID-19.[353] In South Africa, the National Reserve Bank has alerted of scammers who claim to be bank representatives collecting contaminated bank notes with the virus.[354] These scams can generate distrust in governments even when they have not been responsible for these acts, since the immediate reaction to this type of crime will be to "be cautious of government officials." Law enforcement agencies in countries around the world have attributed some of these activities to organized criminal groups[355]

Immediate actions at the local level to strengthen governance against organized criminal groups

State neglect had created the conditions for many social and economic problems – including crime – to emerge in marginalized communities even before the pandemic started. COVID-19 exacerbated these conditions, and consequently, it is not surprising that those communities affected by crime and other issues are also the ones who have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. Strengthening capacities at the local level, can have positive outcomes at the national and international levels in the fight against OCGs. The following are 4 immediate actions at the local, national, and international levels to address the implications of OCG actions on local governments' legitimacy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Start building social capital at the community level immediately

OCGs depend on strong networks in communities to operate. In turn, communities often seek alternative social control structures when the state is not present. Communities with strong internal social capital and positively reinforcing interactions with government can help to reduce the likelihood of crime. Local governments that invest in the social contract can help to build trust, thereby countering OCG influence and control in their communities. This is a long-term and continuously evolving process.

BOX 4: THE MUNICIPALITY OF QUITO OFFERS FREE WI-FI[356]

In August 2020, the Municipality of Quito, Ecuador, installed 703 free Wi-Fi hotspots, particularly in neighborhoods with low internet connectivity. The mayor emphasized that these hotspots will support telemedicine and tele-education, so students can have access to their curricular activities. Beneficiaries will be able to connect to the municipal network for up to two hours daily. Through a partnership with Google, the municipality has been able to place pins on Google Maps, so users can find the locations of the several hotspots in the city.

Local governments around the world have provided subsidies and handouts to vulnerable populations; however, this has often occurred at centralized locations, forcing citizens to break lockdowns and social distancing measures to receive their benefits.[357] Where possible, local governments should provide these benefits inside communities. Establishing presence through setting up health clinics, providing information on the virus, or offering free internet access to students, are immediate actions that local governments can do to build rapport in communities. For example, city authorities in Abidjan, Johannesburg, and Lagos have delivered personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies such as gloves, masks, disposable gowns, bleach, hand washing devises, hospital beds, and other equipment to communities, social workers, and health centers.[358] In Brazil, the Municipality of Barra Mansa distributed basic goods baskets to 17,000 families of students at their public schools in their communities to alleviate the pandemic's negative impacts.[359] These actions can concurrently address risk factors associated with OCG joining and recruitment, such as low educational

attainment, negative peer influence, and substance abuse,[360] demonstrating the extended returns of social capital investments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has weakened some loose and opportunistic criminal groups, opening an opportunity for local governments to build trust in communities. These actions can have an impact at the national and international levels, as OCGs strength expands through the consolidation of networks that emanate from communities all the way to transnational criminal organizations. Hence, building social capital at the local level can go a long way for both OCGs and local governments. As such, local governments should start reclaiming social control in their territories through inclusive policies.

2. Provide economic relief packages for businesses and people

BOX 5: MILAN ESTABLISHES A MUTAL AID FUND[366]

In March 2020, the mayor of Milan announced the creation of a mutual aid fund to help those most in need due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to support recovery of city activities. The City Council approved the allocation of €3 million to start the fund, known as the San Giuseppe Fund, which is open to economic contributions of individual citizens, companies, and associations. The fund raised €800,000 on it first day on March 14, 2020 and has disbursed €3,850,900 – approximately half of what it raised – to 2,039 people since.

Seven out of ten workers in developing countries work in informal markets and most of them are engaged in activities that cannot be carried out from home.[361] Consequently, the COVID-19 lockdowns have exacerbated their vulnerability to engage in criminal activity. To counter this, local governments can work with their national counterparts to provide temporary unconditional cash assistance[362] to the people most vulnerable to poverty. In May 2020, a monthly budget of €250 million to provide a minimum income guarantee to 850,000 families and 2.3 million individuals was approved in Spain.[363] Similarly, the government of Colombia launched the *Solidarity Income* plan to provide assistance to 3 million vulnerable households and increase cash transfers to 12 million people during the pandemic.[364] Some governments have also provided electricity and water subsidies to help people and small businesses afront the crisis. For example, in Machakos, Kenya, water bills were waived from May 1 until December 31, 2020 for its residents.[365]

To prevent OCGs from financing and taking over businesses, easy-to-access financial support should be offered to them. A United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) survey of 21 African countries showed that 90 percent of countries surveyed were providing COVID-19 support to small businesses, including direct cash disbursements, short and medium-term forgivable loans and deferment of payments, as well as tax rebates.[367] In India, the government has committed $50 billion to help small businesses face the pandemic.[368] Cities have also joined efforts in providing support to businesses. In Buenos Aires, public bank *Banco Ciudad* launched a new reduced-interest loan program to provide funds to small and medium-sized businesses for their payroll payments.[369] The Tokyo metropolitan government provided financial aid to small and medium-sized businesses that agreed to suspend its operations to contain the spread of the virus.[370]

Economic stimuli must be sufficient and targeted to produce a significant effect against crime. Thus, if necessary and possible, governments should seek additional support from multilateral and regional organizations not only for financial but for technical assistance too. In Ecuador, through its agencies, the United Nations is helping more than 120,000 small and medium businesses increase their capacity to offer their products and services online to weather the effects of the pandemic.[371] The City Council of Bilbao, Spain, has set up an online and telephone consultancy service for small and micro businesses to provide information for free on different palliative opportunities and options to afront the pandemic.[372] Similarly, Lisbon has created a support team to ensure information on all existing support reaches micro, small, and medium-sized businesses to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.[373] Providing fast economic support and knowledge to vulnerable businesses and people can prevent crime from expanding during the pandemic, while increasing government legitimacy in historically marginalized locales.

3. Empower communities and civil society, and strengthen local governments to fight COVID-19-related corruption

Evidence demonstrates that OCGs can exercise more influence over local institutions than national counterparts.[374] Therefore, efforts to counter corruption should be strengthened at the local level. This could include involving Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) and Anti-Corruption Authorities (ACAs) in consultations on the design and management of emergency aid and procurement.[375] These bodies possess prior knowledge of state institutions and can provide recommendations on areas where additional oversight and attention may be required.[376] For example, the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) developed guidelines for the Executive Committee of Coronavirus Response in charge of preventing the risk of fraud and corruption in the distribution of food and funds.[377]

Robust due diligence and transparent processes of procurements and distribution of funds at the local level can also prevent corruption and counter OCG influence. Suppliers must continue being verified, technical requirements for goods and services should be clearly specified, and competitive prices with thresholds should be determined to ensure the proper use of public funds.[378] The local government in South Chungcheong, South Korea, is operating a "Watchdog for Proper Budget Spending," where residents participate in monitoring and on-site investigations with officials.

BOX 6: CITIZENS COME TOGETHER TO FIGHT CORRUPTION IN PATZICIA, GUATELMALA FUND[379]

In Patzicia, a municipality located 60km from Guatemala City, more than 150 neighbors have organized to fight corruption in their city. They are part of the Patzicia Neighbors Against Corruption Association, an organization that is overseeing the implementation of COVID-19 initiatives by the municipal government. Specifically, the association requested information from the municipal government on a food baskets program to help vulnerable families who have been affected by the pandemic. The information requested trough the Municipal Access to Public Information Office includes the criteria used to select program beneficiaries, the contents of the food baskets, the number of families who benefitted from the program, a list with the full names of the basket recipients, the neighborhoods selected, and the number of baskets distributed. On July 30, the municipal government disseminated the requested information partially and committed to disclose the rest of it in ten additional days, per the Access to Public Information Law.

To strengthen accountability, local governments can invite civil society organizations (CSOs) and private citizens to be part of anti-corruption task forces or other oversight initiatives to monitor and guarantee the implementation of COVID-19 funds.[380] In Latin America, Transparency International organized a 13-country taskforce to identify corruption risks in COVID-19 emergency public procurements as well as measures to mitigate them.[381] Another important immediate step that local institutions could take is subscribing to open government practices to allow effective public oversight of current COVID-19 contracts and their future inspection. A step in this direction was taken in 2020 by 56 municipal governments around the world who joined the Local Open Global Partnership, a global network representing more than two-billion people to promote accountable, responsive, transparent, participatory, and inclusive local governance.[382]

Corruption reporting mechanisms should be encouraged to be used and established where they do not exist. Additionally, local and national governments must ensure that whistleblowers are protected and that any reports of corruption are taken seriously and investigated. Countries such as Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo have created special hotlines to report corruption during the pandemic. In Toronto, the fraud reporting hotline in 2020 received 89 reports – equivalent to 10 percent of all complaints – directly related to COVID-19.[383] Reporting mechanisms must be supported by effective judicial systems to rapidly process cases and dictate sentences, and states must continue guaranteeing access to justice during the pandemic.[384] To overcome lockdown restrictions and ensure access to justice, jurisdictions around the world have been having court hearings online and are requiring that evidence is submitted online.[385] In Washington, DC, the Superior Court has been conducting hearings remotely, except for a limited number of Criminal Division hearings, which have been done partially remotely[386]. The DC courts have also provided remote hearing sites for those without a home computer or laptop, good internet connection, or for any other reason that would prevent them from connecting from their homes.

BOX 7: WOMEN FIGHT COVID-19 IN NAIROBI'S COMMUNITIES FUND

Female community health volunteers in Nairobi's informal settlement of Kawangware go from house-to-house talking about COVID-19, showing residents how to wash their hands, and answering COVID-19-related questions. They are usually recruited and trained by local governments and NGOs, and have experience providing support from past disease breakouts. This group of women volunteers have been essential in debunking myths about the virus, especially those pertaining to false claims of medicinal cures. The local government relies on these women, as they can pass on messages to the communities that the government cannot. Female community health volunteers are also active in communities in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Malawi, Liberia and South Africa. Generally, they are poorly paid, or not paid at all. Local governments should set aside funds to pay for the impactful work that these women are carrying out.

4. Generate awareness about fraudulent COVID-19 medical products, and engage in multiagency and international cooperation to stop the trafficking of medical supplies

Local governments must ensure that citizens are aware of the risks associated with counterfeit medical products online, the threat of door-to-door scams, and the consequences of corruption related to the disbursement and allotment of COVID-19 funds. In Sevilla, municipal health authorities and the Civil Guard issued a warning to residents from Aljarafe – a predominantly elderly community – about a home vaccination scam reported in the city. Residents were urged to report any suspicious activity to the Civil Guard's hotline or through mobile app Alertcops.[387]

BOX 8: THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES COUNTERS MISINFORMATION[97]

The Los Angeles City Attorney stopped companies from advertising and selling unapproved home test kits, anti-COVID disinfectants backed by fabricated scientific studies, COVID-19 prevention/cure vitamins, radish paste as a purported COVID-19 prevention/cure, and other false claims. The city's work led to collaboration with the U.S. Attorney's COVID-19 task force and case referrals from multiple federal, state, and local agencies.

Awareness raising campaigns are necessary for people to know how to identify threats online, assess the legitimacy of the information consumed, and report fraud and corruption. Additionally, people should understand the risks associated with utilizing substandard medicines and medical products. This information can be disseminated via social media, internet platforms, television, radio, and online and physical newspapers, among others.[388] In Järva Vald, Estonia, the municipality is using a community engagement app to keep its citizens informed about the COVID-19 pandemic to counter misinformation.[389] The City of Chicago and Chicago Public Health Departments are advising residents through its official channels and social media not to respond to calls, text messages, or emails, offering early access to a COVID-19 vaccine, as they are scams.[390] In the beginning of the pandemic, Chicago also encouraged residents to be cautious of COVID-19-realted consumer fraud.[391]

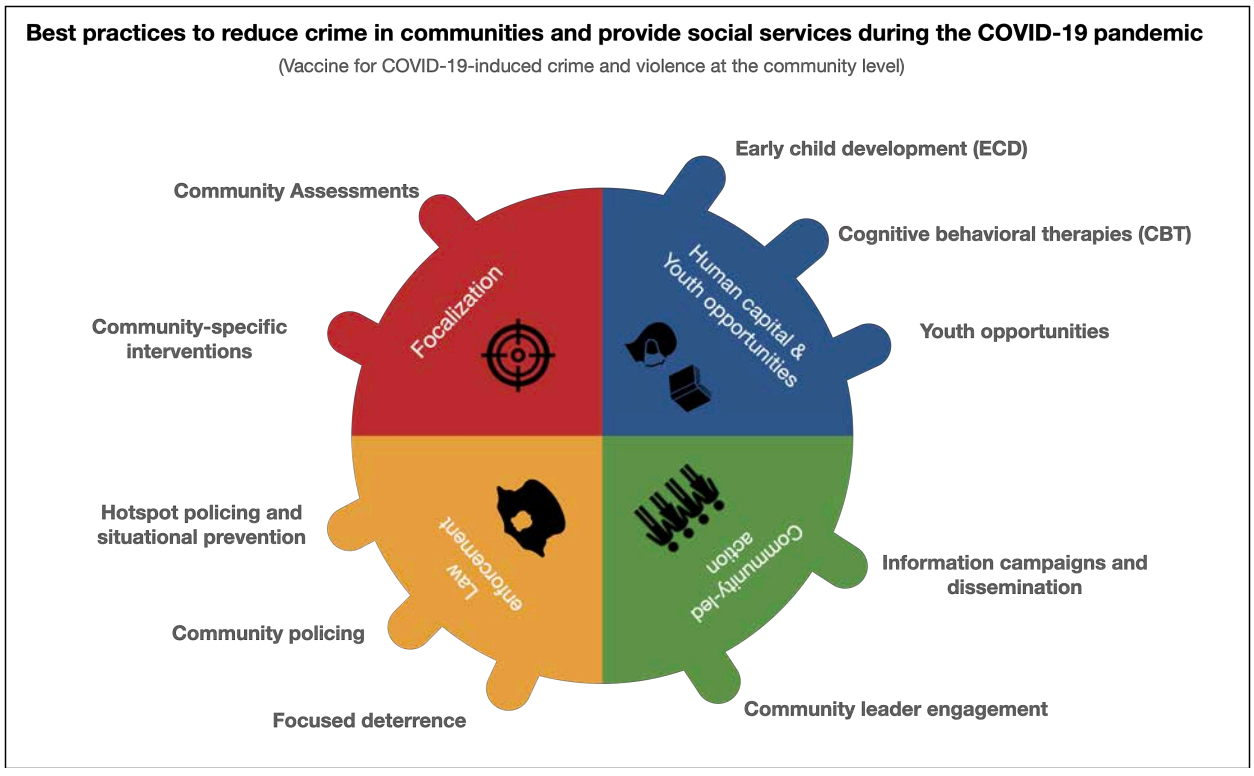
Engaging CSOs is also important for innovative practices in support of disseminating accurate information. NGO "Coronavirus Facts Database" monitors COVID-19 disinformation through factcheckers in 70 countries, while "Accountability Lab" debunks pandemic rumors to help governments deliver accurate information.[392] The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNODC have also produced materials for members states to communicate about the risks of purchasing fake and substandard medical products.[393]

Sharing information among national and international law enforcement, civil society, financial intelligence units, the private sector, and regional oversight institutions to identify criminal schemes can have positive results.[394] In March 2020, INTERPOL carried out Operation Pangea XIII to target illegal online sales of medical products and medicines. Health regulatory authorities and law enforcement from 90 countries partook in the operation which led 121 arrests globally and the confiscation of fake and substandard face

masks and US$14 million worth illicit pharmaceutical products.[395] A total of 37 OCGs were blocked and 2,500 web links taken down.

MUNICIPAL LAW ENFORCEMENT & SOCIAL SERVICE PROVISION

Approaches to prevent OCG activities have primarily focused on law enforcement and criminal justice processes to incapacitate offenders and groups.[397] However, although useful, these approaches tend not to focus on the structures and conditions that enable OCG activity. Enabling factors often arise at the local level and, hence, must be addressed to 1) disrupt networks before they become large and powerful, 2) prevent further recruitment into OCGs, 3) build resilience in communities through social service provision and human capital accumulation, and 4) build trust in government as well as its legitimacy in communities. The following are best practices proven to reduce and prevent crime and violence in communities. These interventions ensure social service provision and address risk factors associated with crime and violence. Additionally, they can be carried out complementarily with the actions presented in the section above to maximize results. An important caveat to this section is that given the multifaceted nature of OCGs, the recommendations below may not apply to all types of OCGs or their vast array of illicit actions. However, carrying out these activities at the local level, particularly in at-risk areas, have the potential to greatly prevent youth and other individuals from engaging and being recruited. Further, these interventions can build the social capital needed for communities to rebuff, condemn, and report OCG activity.



Focus

- **Do**: Carry out community assessments to understand the structures and conditions (risk factors) that may be driving youth and others to engage in criminal activity. Understand that drivers of crime and violence are likely to be different even in neighboring communities. The same applies to individuals.
- **Do**: Design community-specific interventions for the particular characteristics of communities. Mexico City launched the *Barrio Adentro* (Inside the Neighborhood) program in November 2020. The program is based on specific community needs and has a localized approach to provide social services to vulnerable communities and to prevent youth recruitment into organized criminal groups.[398]
- **Don't**: Use one-size-fits-all approaches to reduce crime. Limiting access to drugs and alcohol is a common strategy to reduce crime and violence. However, this restriction provided Cape Town gangs' an opportunity to sell alcohol in the black market and emerge stronger during the COVID-19 lockdown.[399] As a result, it is imperative that interventions are carried with an in-depth understanding of the context to avoid exacerbating current conditions and strengthening OCGs.
- **Don't**: Associate poverty with crime. Poverty is not a predictor of crime. Latin America, despite seeing major reductions in poverty, has experienced an increase in violent crime. Associating poverty with crime stigmatizes marginalized communities and creates further exclusion.

Law enforcement

- **Don't**: Use repressive "tough on crime" policies. Evidence shows that these types of policies do not work and increase criminal activity instead of deterring it. According to the UN, violence in Central America's Northern Triangle intensified between 2005 and 2010 as a result of these policies.[400] Similarly, enforcing COVID-19 lockdown measures through coercion has had negative outcomes throughout the world.[401]
- **Do:** Implement community policing initiatives to generate collaboration between the police and communities to identify and solve community problems. In theory, community policing fosters trust between communities and police officers. In Quito, community police have been offering concerts and K-9 shows that residents can enjoy from their windows or balconies. A police puppet named Paquito has also been providing educational activities for children via Zoom – all in an effort to alleviate the phycological effect of the pandemic on people.[402]
- **Do:** Carry out "hotspot policing." Evidence shows that focusing on the "hot" people and places can reduce crime. The strategy leverages the fact that it is typically less than 5 percent of the population in any given locale that is responsible for the majority of violence, in some instance with 50 percent of crime occurring in only 3 - 8 percent of cities' street segments.[403] Further, hotspot policing is an ideal strategy during the pandemic given that law enforcement is overstretched enforcing lockdown measures. After a series of violent crimes in Oakland's Chinatown during the pandemic, the Oakland Police Department is reallocating resources so more officers can focus on addressing crime in this area.[404] This strategy should be complemented with situational prevention initiatives, including urban upgrading and better urban planning.[405] Improved spaces can increase sense of belonging and place attachment, which in turn strengthen social capital and can reduce crime.
- **Do:** Consider adapting focused deterrence to reduce crime and violence. This strategy focuses on high-rate offenders, including group members and drug sellers, where police officers, influential voices in the community and social service providers interact directly with high-risk individuals, communicating clear consequences for criminal activity alongside direct messages of support. Incentives include the community's willingness to provide social services, such as job training, job opportunities, drug

treatment, etc.[406] Oakland and New Orleans, among others, have had positive results implementing this strategy in recent years.[407]

Community-led action

- **Do:** Carry out information campaigns with trusted community leaders to disseminate messages. This will be very important to debunk any myths people may have about vaccines. In Mahwah Village, Liberia, authorities engaged local leaders to inform the community about the Ebola virus and secure their cooperation, ensuring an effective response to the epidemic.[408] In Addis Ababa thousands of women community health workers, who are trusted in their communities, are spreading awareness about COVID-19 and identifying people with symptoms.[409] Community strategies, such as community mobilization have also been successful in reducing crime, as well as work through credible messengers to stop violence in communities.
- **Don't**: Impose ideas or projects on communities. Communities know better than anyone what they need. Consult with communities on their needs and orient assistance around their priorities.

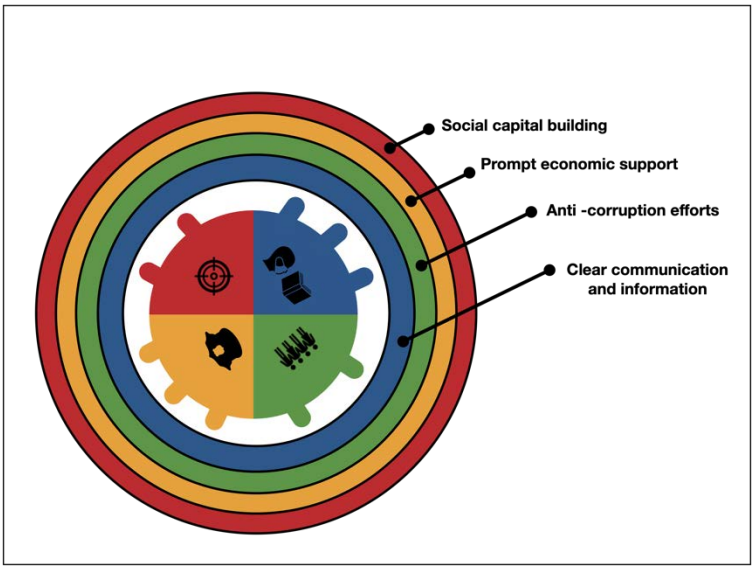
Human capital accumulation and youth opportunities

- **Do:** Invest in human capital. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the provision of health and education, so investing in these areas is of paramount importance. By providing social services and support in these two key areas, local governments can establish presence and legitimacy in vulnerable and marginalized locales.
- **Do:** Invest in health initiatives such as cognitive behavioral therapies (CBT). These interventions are the most successful in reducing recidivism in prison populations, with declines of up to 52.[410] Evidence shows that these interventions are as effective in community settings as they are in prisons.[411] Studies have also shown that CBT is helping populations cope with anxiety and depression during the pandemic.[412] Cities such as Lima, Barcelona, Philadelphia, and Istanbul are providing free online and/or in-person mental health services for their residents as part of their COVID-19 response efforts.[413]
- **Do:** Invest in early child development (ECD). ECD programs are one of the most cost-effective ways to prevent risky behaviors among youth - mainly for those who are most disadvantaged. In January 2021, community-based organizations (CBO) representing 9 cities in the U.S. joined Safer Childbirth Cities, a grants-driven initiative that supports cities with a high burden of maternal mortality and morbidity. The focus of the interventions in these cities will include addressing the impact of COVID-19 on pregnant women and new mothers to improve maternal health outcomes, reduce racial inequalities in care, and

ensure long-term support before, during, and after childbirth.[414] Investing in EDC is more important than ever given that for the first time in 60 years, child mortality may increase due to the indirect effects of the pandemic on children, particularly in low-income and middle-income countries.[415]

- Do: Provide life skills, job training, vocational training, job search and placement support for youth. Build partnerships with the private sector to provide job training and guarantee a specific number of jobs for youth in the community. The Agency for Employment of the Municipality of Madrid is offering free online courses to people who are currently unemployed. A total of 1,000 spaces will be provided with the purpose to improve the employability of residents. Additionally, for every 50 hours of online study, residents can request €100 to further support their studies.[416]

V. CONCLUSION



Studies of historical trends in violent crimes highlight the importance of good governance and the rule of law, as well as of trusted and professional police and justice systems, in reducing crime and violence. Governments must work to build up social capital in communities, provide prompt and sufficient economic support, deter corruption at all levels, and provide clear communication and information to counter further criminal activity and strengthening during the current crisis. As a conclusion, this brief recommends that the immediate actions to counter the influence of OCG on communities are complemented and supported by longer term actions at the community level to address the main drivers of violence. This way, law enforcement, judicial, and root-cause initiatives can work concomitantly to reduce opportunities for increased OCG activities. It is imperative that with the current experience, local governments start preparing and building resilience against crime in communities for the next crisis. Local governments must be innovative and constantly update their arsenal of tools to quickly adapt to ever-changing situations. As Guillermo Cespedes, Chief of Violence Prevention of the City of Oakland, posits:

"We cannot use pre-COVID thinking to tackle the current challenges… the analysis must be contextualized. The new context must take into account long-term historic inequities in availability to health care, a re-imagined transformational version of public safety, and emphasis on corrective actions to address the impact of systemic racism on individuals, families, and communities. This is the case whether we are focused on the favelas of Brazil, the barrios of Central America, or the urban ghettos of the U.S."*[417]*

COMMUNITIES, POLICE & RELATIONSHIPS

PEACE IN OUR CITIES

UKaid
from the British people

INTRODUCTION

Across the world, in cities big and small, law enforcement officers are endowed with responsibilities concerning the rights of citizens and fostering safe communities — and thereby play a key role in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and providing access to justice for all. Nonetheless, law enforcement officers and agencies in municipalities around the world struggle to live up to this promise, whether due to earnest mistakes from which they try to learn or to a long trajectory of pervasive, systemic abuse.

With the caveat that law enforcement institutions often are co-opted to serve an elite minority rather than the broader community, in those locales where community safety is mandated, building and sustaining healthy relationships between police and the communities they serve is crucial to their effectiveness. Such relationships allow officers to better understand communities; connect with local needs; conduct more effective patrols, investigations and intelligence work; expand the reach of preventive programming; and develop the trust vital to garner collaboration with citizens, for victims to seek assistance, and witnesses to assist — all of which contributes to preventing and reducing crime and violence in our cities.[418]

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed great pressure on law enforcement, worsened working conditions for officers, and thrown many citizens into greater uncertainty and vulnerability. In many places, these pressures have further strained the already fraught relationships between law enforcement and communities. This, in turn, has given way to an exacerbation of abuses, further undermining the prospects for fruitful partnerships between law enforcement and other actors committed to community safety.

This evidence brief examines the state of the art in our understanding of how to build stronger relationships between law enforcement and communities; it also tackles some common misconceptions about community policing and relationship-building and, crucially, recommends immediate actions that cities can take given the ongoing and residual effects of COVID-19. Despite the complexity of the challenges facing them, a number of cities are innovating in the midst of the pandemic in ways that may indeed forge healthier relationships between law enforcement organizations and communities in the longer term.

This brief suggests four cornerstones upon which law enforcement, supported by city leaders, should build their efforts to foster healthier relationships with communities:

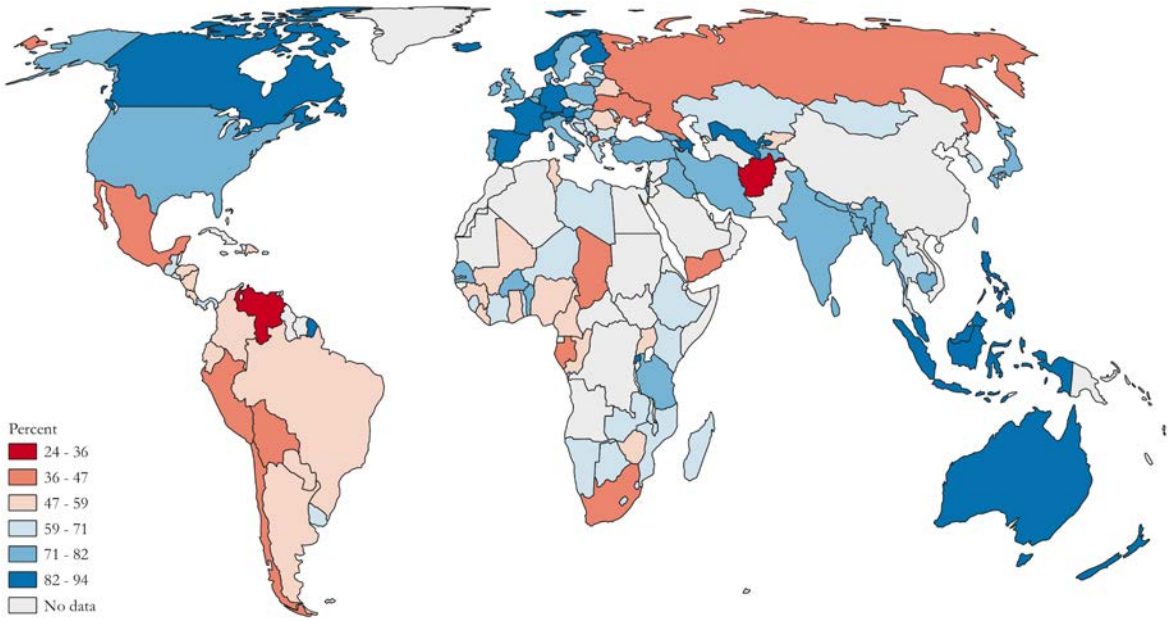
1. Proceed fairly
2. Narrow the focus of law enforcement
3. Engage with community partners
4. Take part in healing

1. Proceed Fairly

Legality—what is justifiable from the perspective of law—is central to law enforcement. However, equally important is *legitimacy*—what is justifiable from the perspective of the citizens and communities law enforcement is meant to serve. Relationships between law enforcement and communities that inspire trust and confidence lead not only to greater acceptance but also to increased efficacy. That is, there is overwhelming evidence that when law enforcement organizations and officers are seen to be respectful, accountable and responsive to the needs of communities, citizens' compliance with the law and cooperation with law enforcement is boosted, which again yields reductions in crime and violence.[419]

However, in many parts of the world, citizens tend to lack confidence in law enforcement organizations and officers, and, unfortunately, distrust tends to be higher in the communities and populations that are in greatest need of good law enforcement, such as racial, ethnic, or religious minorities.

Perhaps most egregiously, recent research confirms that controversial use of force by law enforcement officers has a "remarkable effect on citizens' beliefs about police, potentially undermining the perceived legitimacy of a major governmental institution."[420] Today, a broad cross-section of citizens learn about police misconduct through text, video, messaging services and conversations with others—such as when four- and seven-year-old cousins Emily and Rebeca were shot and killed by police in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) on December 5, 2020, while they were playing on the street.[421] The implication of such technology being that one does not need to be immediately present in order to bear witness to abuse. Other citizens have even stronger impressions of use of force, hearing shots themselves or knowing of or seeing someone get killed by law enforcement officers.



Citizen Confidence in Local Police around the World

The map reflects the share of respondents surveyed in 2019 that expressed confidence when asked, "In the city or area where you live, do you have confidence in the local police force, or not?"[422]

The notion of *procedural justice* focuses on how the fairness of interactions between law enforcement officers and citizens impacts community members' views of law enforcement but also their willingness to comply with the law and partner on crime prevention activities. According to a state-of-the-art review, "citizens' perceptions of procedural justice during interactions with the police positively affect their views of police legitimacy, satisfaction with police services, satisfaction with interaction disposition, trust in the police, and confidence in the police."[423]

To improve these interactions, it is important that law enforcement organizations work systematically to raise awareness among officers about their own implicit biases and how these may unconsciously shape their interactions with members of the public. Such biases commonly result in racially disparate law enforcement outcomes, even when an interaction is not overtly racist.[424] In the United States, the cities of Birmingham, Fort Worth, Gary, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh and Stockton joined together through the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice to engage in two processes aimed at addressing bias:

- Firstly, police engaged *inside* their organizations through policy reforms and training on implicit bias led by seasoned, respected officers.
- Secondly, police engaged *outside* their organizations through community-facing activities to recognize biased practices and their effects on citizens and communities—especially on minorities and vulnerable people.[425]

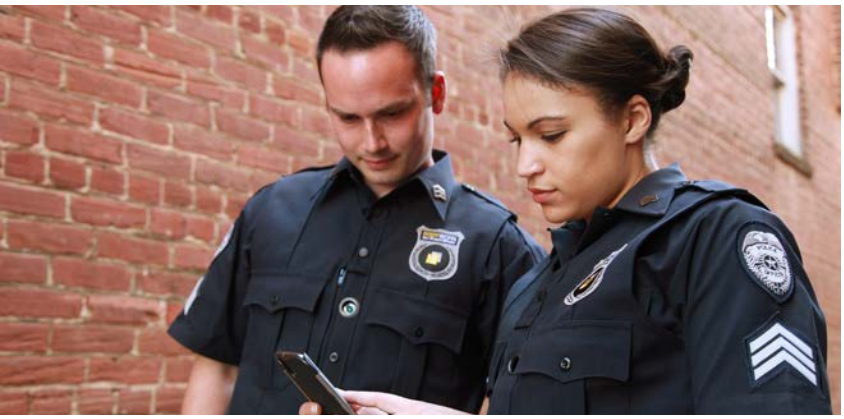
Furthermore, citizen perceptions of fairness are also linked to law enforcement organizations' transparency and accountability. As in other areas of life, openness about individual instances of failure or misconduct may be difficult, but in the long run can help foster trusting and healthy relationships.

Research shows that there is no silver bullet for fostering trust and legitimacy rather, doing so requires a comprehensive approach to professional, accountable law enforcement. This includes systematically collecting data on police misconduct, implementing restrictive use of force policies, raising awareness around procedural justice and implicit biases against groups and communities, training in de-escalation, diversifying the make-up of law enforcement personnel, empowering civilian review boards, and expanding the use of body-worn cameras.[426]

Not least for young people, encounters with law enforcement are teachable moments of legal socialization. Since most citizens do not study the laws themselves, they tend to learn about them through law enforcement officers—for better or worse. When law enforcement officers themselves break the rules, say, by soliciting a bribe or physically mistreating someone, citizens learn to distrust laws and the institutions meant to enforce them. In New York City (USA), researchers found a clear "association between the number of police stops they [young people] see or experience and a diminished sense of police legitimacy." The researchers add, however, that "the impact of involuntary contact with the police was mediated by evaluations of the fairness of police actions and judgments about whether the police were acting lawfully."[427]

Taking the above into account, processes to strengthen legitimacy tend to demand a clear, oftentimes renewed vision for law enforcement, its roles and relationships. Max Campos served as the founding national director of community policing at the National Police of Ecuador and recalls the process that the Ecuadorian police underwent throughout the 2000s as one of reconceiving the police "not only as a guarantor of security, but also as a guarantor of human rights."[428] Starting in Quito and later expanding

across the country, this implied "decentralizing the police service to the neighborhood level, with presence in every sector, whereby the police got closer to the community, by then with a focus more toward the prevention of crime."[429] Without a clear vision for law enforcement, Campos believes it would have been difficult to reshape relationships with communities.



2. Narrow the Focus of Law Enforcement

Citizens call upon law enforcement agencies to deal with mental health crises, family conflicts and disputes between neighbors, traffic accidents and natural disasters, the presence of people who are homeless or begging, not to mention emergencies arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. To the extent that these situations imply any law enforcement responsibilities at all, officers are often ill-equipped to handle them effectively. All too typically they are the only public officials with capacity to respond when there is a need, pointing to the necessity of boosting other, more appropriate public services. What is more, strengthening non-law enforcement institutions is necessary for law enforcement to be able focus on their own core mandate and do that well.

Oakland (USA) is among the cities that have moved toward a narrowly targeted law enforcement response, focusing on the relatively few people who repeatedly engage in serious criminal and violent behavior and diverting others from criminal justice programming to other services. Key stakeholders hold that this greater specificity of approach has been key to the city's recent success in reducing gun violence.[430]

Across much of the world, arrest numbers have long been considered indicators of effective law enforcement, yet ramping up arrests is consistently found not to reduce crime and violence even in the short term. Instead, overzealous responses to minor infractions—including month-long detention without trial for leaving one's home during COVID-19 lockdowns in San Salvador (El Salvador)—tend to undermine the legitimacy of the law enforcement and criminal justice systems, as well as their relationships with the citizens and communities they are meant to serve.[431]

For individuals, even a brief arrest can lead to stigma, loss of income or employment, and a police record that follows them throughout life. As a rule, involvement in the criminal justice system—if sometimes warranted—is almost always harmful to people and relationships. For marginalized communities, a wave of hardline law enforcement can be traumatic, while also failing to provide them with protection against serious crime and violence. This paradox reduces the likelihood that citizens report crimes, cooperate with law enforcement, and serve as witnesses, which, in turn, frustrates efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and prevent future crime and violence.

All the while, the scientific evidence is strong that problem-solving, person-focused, place-based and community-based approaches to policing can, for one, strengthen law enforcement legitimacy and, at the same time, effectively address the crime and violence that affects communities the most.[432] For this to happen, these approaches must be inclusive of citizens and informed by meaningful, sustained engagement with communities.

The relationship between law enforcement and young people merits special attention. Evidence from sixteen cities, ranging from Hamilton (Canada) and Kansas City (USA) to Wolverhampton (England) and Canberra (Australia), shows that police-led diversion of low-risk youth who come into contact with law enforcement is more effective in reducing a young person's future contact with the criminal justice system compared to traditional processing.[433] Diversion responses include referral of youth to needed and effective services inside or outside the criminal justice system. This avoids labeling young people as "criminals" while also limiting their contact with others in detention involved in more serious crime, which may aggravate their own involvement. At the same time, police-led diversion offers law enforcement officers a viable alternative to, on the one hand, simply ignoring and, on the other, criminally charging youth engaged in minor wrongdoing.

The relationship between youth and law enforcement also goes two ways. In Quito, the cultural expressions of many young people, such as graffiti and hip-hop artists, have long been stigmatized. Up to the 2010s, these and other countercultural and border-testing behaviors regularly prompted responses from law enforcement officers. Correspondingly, many young people came to see the police as abusive. Campos—the retired national director of community policing—recounts how he was able to sow the seeds of a sustained conversation between local police officers and youth, including gang members in communities, slowly fostering a degree of mutual empathy. Diego Carrillo, retired gang leader of the Sacred Tribe Atahualpa of Ecuador, recalls that, "before, the police acted in a repressive way and detained youth just because of the way they dressed. Now, that is changing and there is an understanding and respect for our urban cultural identity."[434] Campos mentions as an indicator of improved relations that, "today, there are far more young people applying to become police officers than ten or fifteen years ago."[435]

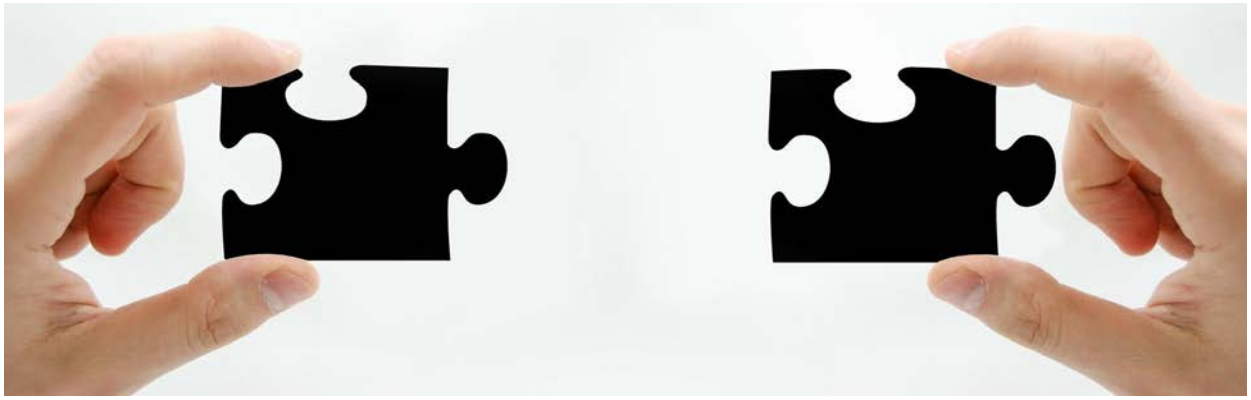
3. Engage with Community Partners

Law enforcement institutions cannot resolve the justice and safety needs of citizens and communities by working alone. Building healthy relationships entails extensive engagement between law enforcement officers and other actors, and "partnerships between the police and the wider community to tackle safety issues are a cornerstone of contemporary thinking about policing."[436]

For well over a decade, community activists, social workers, police officers and other residents of Los Angeles (USA) have worked together to transform the city's approach to community safety and gang violence, garnering significant results. In July 2020, amid the global pandemic and harsh criticism over handling of the #BlackLivesMatter protests, Mayor Eric Garcetti further cemented this approach by unveiling the creation of a new bureau of the city's police department, the Community Safety Partnership Bureau (CSP), as an anchor for its continued commitment to community outreach, community policing and social media engagement. At the launch, police chief Michel Moore said, "Our CSP officers are measured

by the trust they build and the relationships made, rather than arrests or citations," adding that "this commitment to creating safe and healthy communities saves lives."[437]

Over the years, different, context-specific community safety partnerships have developed everywhere from Edinburgh (Scotland) to Maiduguri (Nigeria), where citizens work alongside law enforcement officers to reduce crime by developing sports, recreation, and other programs tailored specifically to their communities. Moreover, they put a heightened focus on tackling quality of life issues, and seek to bridge communication and trust gaps between community members and the police. Not least, partners focus on connecting people in need with resources and support, ranging from work skills training and medical programs to counseling and legal aid.



Community-oriented policing strategies vary vastly from city to city, continent to continent. However, a comprehensive review of existing research on such strategies found that they have positive effects on citizen satisfaction, perceptions of disorder and police legitimacy. However, in isolation, they have limited effects on the prevalence of crime and fear of crime.[438] That is, community-oriented approaches to policing are best understood as laying the groundwork and fostering the conditions for longer-term impact on crime and violence.

Understanding that law enforcement is only one piece in a broader partnership for community safety also creates space to substitute law enforcement with more appropriate responses where any infraction of law is a subsidiary issue. In New South Wales (Australia), for instance, there are communities that have embraced "crisis intervention teams" made up of police officers who have received extra training to understand and respond to mental health emergencies, or teams composed of mental health professionals along with or instead of police officers.[439] In Stockholm (Sweden), mental health professionals have been deployed since 2015 onto the streets without police officers,[440] while Toronto (Canada) reports success with co-responding police-mental health teams.[441]

While partnership-based approaches such as these may present law enforcement institutions and officers with new challenges, research from England and Wales highlights that, rather than experiencing a conflict with established police culture, "police officers involved in partnerships find them effective, crucial to their work and, at times, enjoyable."[442]

Meanwhile, in Conakry and N'Zérékoré (Guinea), councils for security and crime prevention made up of local citizens—common in much of the world—are valuable focal points for locally led efforts to understand and prioritize crime and violence-related dynamics and needs in communities, especially in a context of

very limited state resources. Moreover, in Guinea, the councils have contributed to the transition from military to civilian governance and leadership in preventing and responding to crime and violence.[443]

In war and postwar cities where centralized state services are far less developed, additional sets of challenges present themselves—yet efforts to pioneer community-oriented approaches to law enforcement are possible. Reconstituting the police in the midst of war, in Zaranj (Afghanistan), police did not seek to displace or substitute the existing community institutions for managing local conflicts but rather to build upon, connect with and support them. By tying into tradition-bound councils for collective decision-making and dispute resolution, as well as a watchman system, police have recently been able to develop relationships with communities that allow them to better do their job.[444]

Modern technologies also power innovations in community engagement for safety. *Safecity* is an online platform that collects and analyzes anonymous, crowd-sourced information relevant to the safety of girls and women in Indian cities. The insights generated through the platform allow law enforcement and policymakers to better establish priorities for patrols as well as resource allocation, so as to foster safer spaces.

4. Take Part in Healing

Be it political ideology or war, religious strife or racial injustice, law enforcement officers routinely find themselves policing long-standing fault lines in our societies—and sometimes exacerbating them. Where relevant, law enforcement institutions should be encouraged to engage in frank conversations about their complicity in past and present-day harms and injustices, and do their part to repair relationships and foster trust in the communities they serve. This is particularly true for cities emerging from war.

Belfast (Northern Ireland) is a notoriously divided city, both socially and physically, with walls up to eight meters tall separating communities of majority Catholic and Protestant residents. Under the terms of the 1998 peace accord, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was transformed into the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), addressing the safety and wellbeing of citizens in the present but also the contentious history of law enforcement, as well as crimes of the past.[445] In 2014, the head of the Northern Irish police, George Hamilton, warned that "to continue to ignore, hesitate or procrastinate on the past will have unpredictable and far-reaching consequences." He added, "It would be both unfair and irresponsible not to make clear the significant strain that the current piecemeal approach to our history is placing on the organisation I have responsibility for leading."[446] Here, Belfast fits into a broader pattern where delegitimized law enforcement institutions are oftentimes replaced by new institutions, without substantially dealing with past abuses—neither those committed by law enforcement officers nor those committed by previously powerful actors. While such a trade-off may be seen as necessary for police or military forces to concede to losing power, the legacy of injustice persists lest it is dealt with—some instances of which are addressed below, in the context of the present pandemic.

Another common challenge of law enforcement organizations relates to their diversity and inclusiveness, as seen with the RUC, which was composed of largely Protestant officers and perceived by many Catholics as a tool of state oppression: While some 40 percent of the Northern Irish population identifies as Catholic, in 2001, a mere eight percent of police officers did the same. This gave way to the PSNI introducing the "50:50 Rule" of Catholic and Protestant recruits, and, ten years later, thirty percent of PSNI officers identified as Catholic.[447] A number of Israeli cities, meanwhile, committed to work systematically for "inclusiveness in the police rank-and-file," so that the police force would better reflect the cities' cultural diversity. Research shows that this served "to foster legitimacy and cooperation from the Arab population."[448]

Another divided city, Beirut (Lebanon), has also made recent efforts to improve relations between communities and law enforcement, focusing on engagement between youth and police, with some success. However, their strides have ultimately been undermined by continued abuses by other branches of the police, especially against sex workers, persons with alcohol or drug addiction, the LGBTIQ community, and other stigmatized groups.[449] This experience points to the importance of proper oversight and accountability, as well as a sufficiently comprehensive and inclusive approach to ensure broad progress.

While these paths are seldom straightforward, law enforcement institutions in several other postwar societies, including Timor-Leste, Bougainville, and Solomon Islands,[450] Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone,[451] have realized at least at some level that to reduce and prevent crime and violence, emphasis should not concentrate only on existing state law enforcement capacity. Rather, beyond conventional law enforcement, existing community-based groups can make major contributions to the everyday safety of citizens. What is more, such engagement with community-based and tradition-bound practices can aid in making amends for past harms and promote healthy relationships going forward.

The Pandemic as Crisis & Opportunity

The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating long-standing tensions between law enforcement and communities around the world, as seen with #EndSARS in Lagos (Nigeria), #ChileDespertó in Santiago (Chile), and #BlackLivesMatter and #DefundThePolice across much of the United States. However, the crisis is also spurring innovations in law enforcement practice and relationships with communities, suggesting that this can also be an opportunity for transformation moving forward.

2020 saw many instances of harsh—even lethal—law enforcement carried out to enforce COVID-19 restrictions, from beating and shooting a 13-year-old boy in Nairobi (Kenya) to spraying Indian migrant workers with chemicals, trapping curfew breakers in dog cages in Manila (Philippines), deploying teargas against commuters in Mombasa (Kenya), and unlawfully detaining huge numbers of people in San Salvador (El Salvador).[452] Minorities have often been subject to special vulnerability, and these abuses risk undermining the long-term relationships between law enforcement and citizens.

"The pandemic has amplified challenges that were already there," says Kemi Okenyodo, executive director at the Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative in Abuja (Nigeria), be it with regard to arrests, conditions

of imprisonment, law enforcement misconduct or lack of trust on the part of citizens. Between the COVID-19 pandemic and months of #EndSARS protests against the infamous Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS),

Okenyodo describes the relationship between law enforcement and citizens as "strained to the limit."[453] Nonetheless, Nigerians' grassroots activism led not only to the disbandment of the SARS but also to most states ushering in judicial panels of inquiry into police brutality, prominently made up of representatives from the legal and religious communities, youth and women's organizations.[454] While this does not resolve the deep-seated issues related to law enforcement in the country, it constitutes a step toward greater accountability.

Among the long-standing challenges brought to light by COVID-19 is the health and wellbeing of law enforcement officers, who generally suffer higher infection rates than other professions and face tremendous, ongoing pressure to support COVID-19 public health measures in addition to their ordinary duties. As such, the pandemic constitutes a call for law enforcement institutions as employers to boost efforts to ensure the long-term wellbeing of officers through measures ranging from alleviating stressors and promoting physical and mental health to debt relief and child care assistance.

Because community safety is a shared responsibility, the well-being of others in the constellation of essential actors must also be considered. In Los Angeles (USA), Ronald Noblet, senior consultant on conflict and violence at the Urban Peace Institute, explains that the city's robust institutional and community capacity to prevent and reduce violence has been effectively mobilized—but at some cost to individual health. For many years, the city has trained and hired community intervention workers, trusted, credible members of the community who work proactively to de-escalate tensions, prevent revenge violence, and channel necessary services. During the pandemic, he says, "community intervention workers have taken on the roles of social worker, health worker, community helper, and dispenser of food, while still trying to keep violence down—and a larger share of the community is seeing that, as well as the police. I think that has been good for the way the community intervention worker is seen," Noblet says, adding, "but it's bad for the community intervention worker—because they're burned out."[455] That is, community intervention workers—not unlike many law enforcement officers, health workers, and other frontline workers around the world—require proper support in these extraordinary times.

On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, since early on in the pandemic, the indigenous Māori of New Zealand set up approximately fifty roadside checkpoints to manage access to areas with significant Māori populations, strongly encouraging travelers to limit their movements and return home, so as to protect communities against the impact of COVID-19. New Zealand's police commissioner noted that, "With minor exceptions, police were satisfied that the action being taken in these communities was strongly aligned to

the controls that the Government had put in place, and community interactions were positive and enhancing community safety."[456] As such, Elizabeth Stanley and Trevor Bradley find that the COVID-19 crisis generated an opportunity for Māori communities to "reestablish some degree of community control" and self-determination as regards local law enforcement and safety provision. "These spontaneous actions to a global pandemic reflect an opportunity to not merely 'fine tune' or improve existing partnerships between Māori and NZ [New Zealand] Police but to reimagine and recast those relationships."[457]

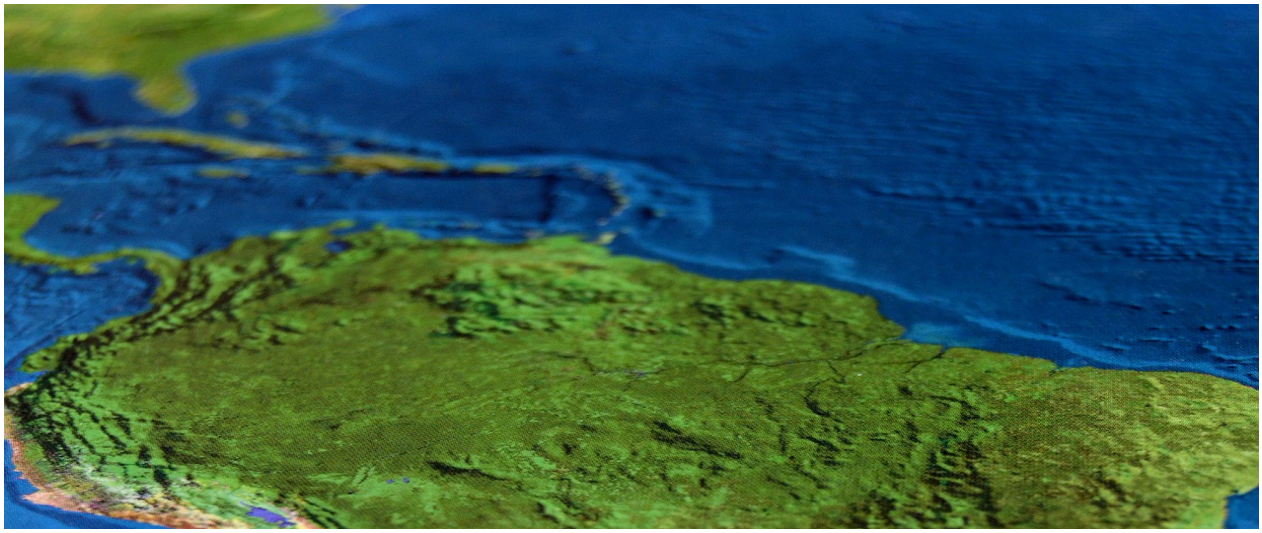
During the pandemic, it is especially important for law enforcement to communicate effectively with citizens. Especially as guidance may change quickly, mass sending of text messages may be useful. Police in Bangalore and Mumbai (India) are among those who have found more creative ways of raising awareness about the importance of reducing movement outside the home, practicing proper hygiene, and following public health guidelines, including songs, a popular online video of officers doing a "handwashing dance," and traffic police dressing up as a virus.[458]

Meanwhile, the city of Singapore fought the spread of disinformation about COVID-19 by law enforcement continuously monitoring online content and prosecuting people who disseminated inaccurate information. The active monitoring also served to dispel false rumors about police intrusion in residential homes and excessive roadblocks to enforce safe distancing measures.[459]

Another significant challenge for law enforcement during the pandemic, has been to address gender-based violence in the home, especially against women and children, which for many has been aggravated by a mix of factors including increased economic hardship and more time spent at home during the pandemic.[460] As similar to other types of violence, higher levels of legitimacy and trust in law enforcement are significantly associated with more positive police responses to intimate partner violence.[461] During the pandemic women's police stations were established in some locales to help address violence against women, resulting in higher trust in the police among women, driven by improved perceptions of personal safety.[462] Amritsar, Bhopal, Gandhi Nagar, and Lucknow in northern India are among the cities that report evidence that citizen perceptions of police effectiveness and corruption improve where all-women police stations operate.[463] Across a number of cities in Brazil, evidence suggests that these stations contribute to reducing intimate partner violence, and especially homicides of women, with the strongest reduction found in urban municipalities among women aged 15 to 29 years.[464] Although originating from an awful set of circumstances, the pandemic shed light on steps that can be taken to address long-term challenges concerning violence against women.

All the while, a survey of police agencies in 10 large cities across Latin America uncovered a number of police-initiated activities to address new challenges presented by the pandemic. Many of them relate to internal challenges, from the persistent need for equipment, training and clear protocols to protect law enforcement officers against infection to significant adjustments to shift schedules. In terms of practices that directly affect relationships with communities, many police agencies have ordered officers to reduce the number of arrests for minor offenses and have adapted patrols to respond to changed social activity and criminal dynamics. Moreover, they have diversified channels of communication with the public, with greater use of social media and videos, while also relaying messages to communities using megaphones, giant screens and music, in part to inform about COVID-19-related restrictions but also to assist in the distribution of food, medicines and other essential goods to vulnerable populations.

While the pandemic entails great risks to law enforcement officers and to their relationships with communities, especially through increased abuses, it is clearly also a practical and symbolic opportunity to stand with communities in a time of great need: Already in April 2020, three in four of the Latin American

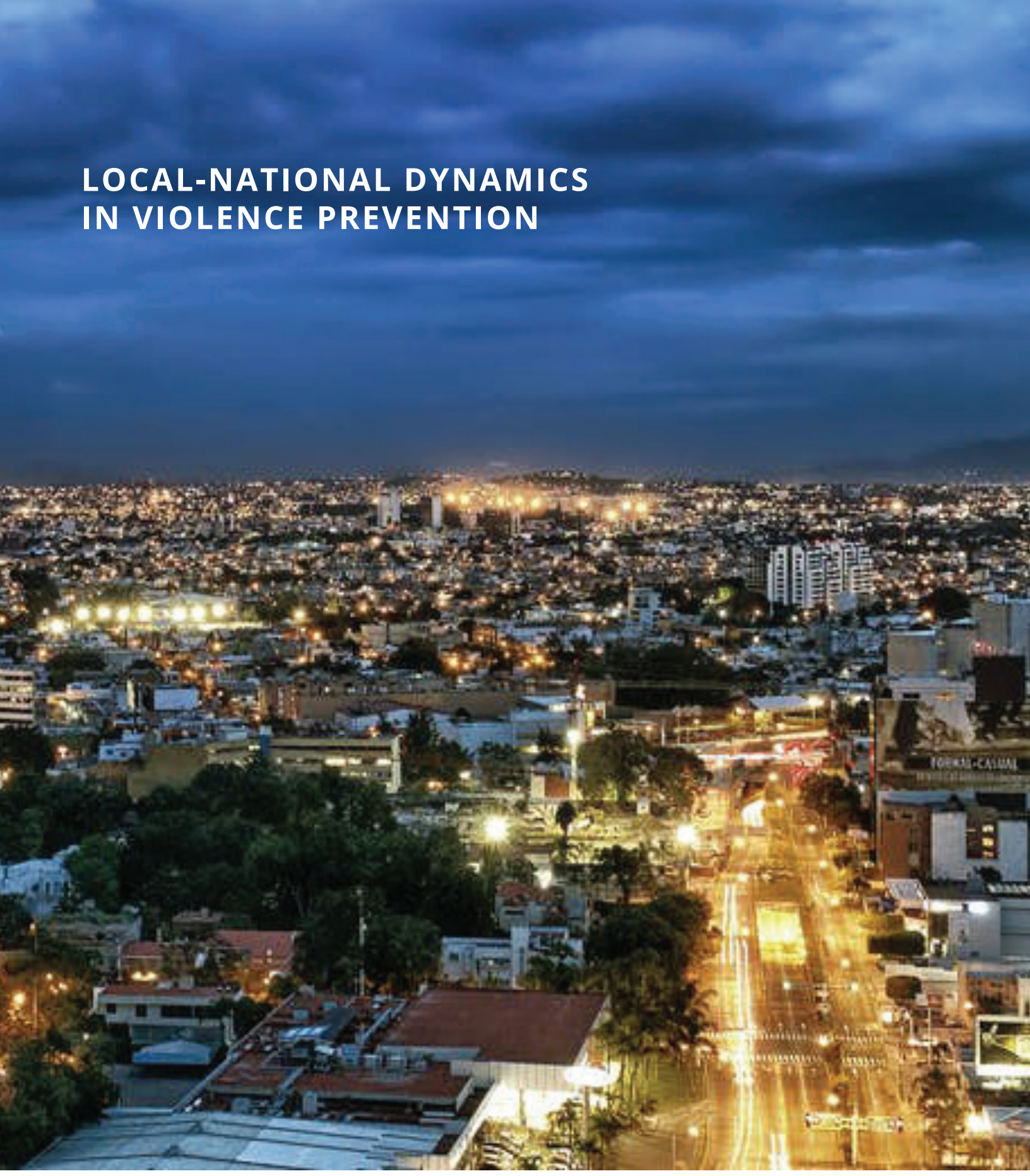


police agencies surveyed "reported having implemented innovative ideas to show gratitude internally to the officers and externally to citizens for their behavior during the pandemic."[465] Law enforcement officers all around the world have been responding to needs—providing food to those experiencing homelessness and essential medicines to those who are sick, along with songs and dances to boost morale. Inspector Munish Pratap Singh recalls bringing a birthday cake to a boy under lockdown in Noida (India): "The happiness on the boy's face made everything worthwhile. My team and I forgot how tired we were."[466]

To turn such sparks of hope, innovations and attempts to repair relationships into durable partnerships for community safety, however, these efforts to improve law enforcement must be part of broader transformative efforts. Law enforcement cannot, on its own, satisfy community safety needs but instead must rely on political commitment and broad coalitions of social actors in cities to sustain transformations over time. At the same time, broader initiatives to boost community safety are usually doomed to failure unless law enforcement agencies are on board and take part in leading the way in addressing community concerns.

As the COVID-19 pandemic fuels social, economic, and political transformations across the globe—for both good and bad—, the relationships between law enforcement and communities are also changing. For these to be more conducive to peaceful and just cities, the scientific evidence and experiences from around the world stress the importance of ensuring that law enforcement institutions act both legally and in ways that are perceived as fair, in order to promote trust and cooperation. Moreover, the focus of law enforcement should be narrowed to target the relatively few people who repeatedly engage in serious criminal and violent behavior, in order to significantly reduce crime and violence. These endeavors gain strength not least through the partnerships that law enforcement institutions are able to develop with citizens, as well as other public and private institutions, to build local solutions for community safety. Finally, reckoning with a legacy of injustice, abuse, and trauma is difficult, and law enforcement institutions have often been played a part in perpetrating harm. This is a legacy they must acknowledge and own up to as to get on the path to healing and building new relationships in the wake of the pandemic.

LOCAL-NATIONAL DYNAMICS IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION



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Overview

Reducing urban violence requires concerted focus at the city level but also coordination with national governments. The relationship between city and national authorities creates both opportunities for and impediments to the work of violence reduction. Several cases evaluated in this brief demonstrate the inherent agency of globalized cities in the 21st Century.[467] Yet, in their ascendancy, cities confront challenges in their relations with national governments. This brief identifies three national-local dynamics – coordination, competition and capacity – and demonstrates how cities have effectively sought to navigate these complex dynamics in the context of violence.

The cases speak to common trends but cover diverse manifestations of violence in diverse locales, including violent extremism in North Macedonia, gun and gang violence in the United States and Colombia, migrant vulnerability in Europe, gender-based violence in Argentina, and knife crime in South Africa. The case studies point to challenges and solutions that cut across regime type, wealth and development status, culture and religion, and other conditions. The result is a problem-driven comparative analysis that provides a clearer understanding of national-local competition, coordination and capacity dynamics in violence prevention work.

The next section looks comparatively at the concrete actions city actors (public and non-public) can take to create feedback loops with relevant national-level actors that reinforce resilience. Global organizations, academics, city diplomats and activists all play a role in ensuring better synergy between national and local violence prevention and sometimes enable local governments to bypass intransigent or reactionary national politicians.

Finally, COVID-19 presents a lens to better understand how municipalities and national governments are attempting to overcome the divides between them. In countless cases around the globe, national governments have devolved powers to municipalities to tackle the pandemic. Broader funding mechanisms to support new local programs may prove the new normal post-pandemic and serve as a model for violence prevention. At the same time, however, extended emergency orders, increased government surveillance tools, and police enforcement of public health orders have shown that increased government capacity does not necessarily mean better policy on violence prevention. Many of these same COVID-19 response tools could boomerang back onto vulnerable communities and contribute to escalatory patterns of violence.

Lessons or policy prescriptions make up the final section of the paper. These are tools that municipalities can explore further and tailor to their local needs. At its core, the work of bridging local-national divides is about both strategically internationalizing issues and situating global responses at the neighborhood level.

Problem Statement

Reducing violence is a geographically nested problem, meaning that while acts and patterns of violence exist in a specific place, that place exists within other jurisdictions and policy environments, each of which add layers of complexity. While acts of violence are felt at the individual level, whole neighborhoods, wards, and cities can be wracked by deprivation or predation, driving patterns of greed, grievance and

opportunity.[468] Cities also exist within broader markets of violence, including drug and human trafficking, which produce economic drivers outside of the city and national unit. Furthermore, decisions at the national and global level on issues, such as sanctions, humanitarian interventions, arms deals and refugee flows, shape the conditions of violence locally. Within such nested complexity, we choose to focus here on *relational* constraints in violence prevention, rather than on specific causal drivers of violence. A generalizable context that emerged from the cases in this study, namely – coordination, competition and capacity – helps frame national-local dynamics across cases. While each of these relational constraints is distinct, they do interact with and reinforce one another. Overcoming these systemic relational constraints between national and local governments can aid in tackling discrete causal drivers of violence in specific contexts. A brief set of definitions is provided below to guide case study discussion.

I. Coordination

How can cities and national governments better coordinate on violence prevention?

Coordination challenges confront all levels of government working together to reduce violence. National bureaucracies may prioritize multiple streams of work and communicate divergent messages about how localities are expected to produce results. Uncoordinated government programs can also direct localities to divert resources into lanes of work that may conflict. On the other hand, high-capacity funding situations could lead to funding multiple projects, where a number of agencies are engaged in redundant or competing tactics and accountable to divergent authorities. Too many programs may reduce the systemic capacity and economies of scale that a common workstream provides. More fundamentally, resource conflict aside, local and national governments may agree on a problem-set but fail to coordinate strategic frameworks or theories of change. Many theories of change from national agencies may prove mutually exclusive, resulting in a strategic conflict at the local level, even while the objective or desired outcome is in alignment. Divergent programming from the national government may become counterproductive and lead to internal fracturing and siloed implementation within the city. Such siloed implementation means that various departments pursue competing or overlapping initiatives each with various implementation timelines and monitoring and evaluation standards by the sponsoring national agency. Finally, while cities may be starved for resources, just applying for disparate grants is effectively the “tail wagging the dog” – programs for the sake of getting the funding, without much thought to integrating programs (or not applying for specific programs) according to an underlying theory of change.

II. Competition

In what ways can cities and national governments work around political competition?

The competition identified here is less on the programmatic level and more closely related to interpersonal or political rivalry stagnating progress. A key example of competition is divergent political parties jockeying for advantage using their offices as bully pulpits to challenge one another. Political office holders will compete to set the narrative, the strategy and the allocation of resources. As we will explore below, such competition manifests as narrative struggle between national and local priorities. Local officials may use their power to hamper national officials of another political party. Conversely, national officials can redirect resources away from rivals in municipalities or elevate and amplify allies locally. Competition is especially poignant in a resource-scarce environment, where officials can provide necessary survival strategies to constituents through patronage networks.

III. Capacity

How can municipalities amplify their violence prevention initiatives in a resource-constrained environment?

Much of the local-national dynamic centers on the faultline of resource allocation. Even when perfectly coordinated and without competition, lack of capacity remains a constant tug of war between local and national jurisdictions. Capacity concerns both monetary and personnel investments in a project, as well as the struggle to articulate a unified framework for project sustainability. Local efforts to request support and lobby for resources consume a lot of time. Similarly, in order to allocate funds, national governments tend to expect proof-of-concept or scalability-of-model programs, creating a vicious cycle where programs stall due to lack of resources and resources stall due to lack of fundable programming.

Case Studies: City Action Overcoming Constraints in National-Local Relations

I. Coordination

In response to the coordination challenges outlined above, many cities have taken the burden of creating strategic frameworks for violence prevention. The cases of Kumanovo and Chicago illustrate ways in which cities can de-conflict competing priorities.

Case 1: Kumanovo, North Macedonia

Foreign fighters joining violent extremist movements remains a global concern requiring local preventive action. In North Macedonia, the risk environment is threefold: First, there is the task of preventing foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from traveling to and from war zones in Syria and Iraq. Second, the population suffers from ethnic tensions and political polarization, which makes the work of counter-radicalization also about addressing ethno-nationalism and political violence. Third, the risk of violence is exacerbated by party clientelism along ethnic lines, meaning that the work of preventing violent extremism is about strengthening dialogue and building cross-cutting ties. But a lack of coordination between national mandates and local implementation continues to hamstring efforts.

After the violent conflict in 2001 between the government and Albanian armed forces, the country created "local prevention councils" to directly address ethnic rivalries and political violence.[469] The effectiveness of these councils varies, and in some cases cities have outright refused to comply with the national mandate to adopt them.[470] Coordination issues emerge as national mandates are not supported by clear direction, and the national strategy lacks clear mechanisms for local-national communication. The result is that local councils may pursue projects for the sake of engaging the issue area, but enforcement, funding, or political capital to make meaningful change.

The mitigating solution in Kumanovo is the establishment of a Community Action Team (CAT).[471] Under the auspices of the local prevention council, the CAT focuses on the FTF threat environment and is institutionalized with permanent members (the mayor, law enforcement, social workers) and invited

members from the community. Broader community connections include schools, religious organizations and municipal departments, all of whom help to build coordination horizontally and vertically back up to the office of national coordinator. The day-to-day work is to support implementation of projects and research activities, as well as to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs.[472]

The spread of COVID-19 intersected with the central risk environment of ethnic division, political violence, and the problem of foreign fighters. Kumanovo's CAT fulfilled a critical function of implementing a national strategy at the local level by countering the increased polarization that emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic. Disinformation arose along prior faultlines – tropes blaming "Muslims because of Iftar" or "Christians because of Easter" or "Albanians because they are rule-breakers." Many leaders on the CAT turned their attention to the divisive narratives being used throughout the pandemic, taking pandemic response into the daily work of the body.

Case 2: Chicago, United States

U.S. cities encounter divergent expectations flowing from various national agencies to local governments. In the area of violence prevention, hundreds of programs exist – capacity-building grants, incubators, training, curriculum and other initiatives – each housed within one of many departments at the national level.[473] Cities need a framework to ensure that programs fit into the local context. Without such coordination, cities are left with numerous suggestions and mandates to counter violence of all types, stretching their bandwidth beyond realistic capacity.

Chicago's coordinating plan is a useful model for confronting these challenges. *Our City, Our Safety*, utilizes a framework identifying points of risk and resilience within the city specifically related to street violence. Mayor Lightfoot has established a dedicated public safety team along with a new Office of Violence Reduction (OVR), both of which are overseen by the Deputy Mayor of Public Safety. This central figure coordinates various municipal, state and federal programs through a consistent set of principles, goals and objectives for reducing violence. According to the *Our City, Our Safety* plan, the coordination hurdle was a critical issue to overcome: "efforts have largely remained siloed and uncoordinated, foregoing the benefit that can be achieved through improved coordination to minimize duplication and maximize impact."[474] To address this need, Chicago's strategy identified several measurable goals, specifically creating goals to facilitate coordination within Chicago's internal departments and regional agencies to drive data-based decision-making, while also standardizing baseline coordination among local and federal partners. Each of

these goals were then divided into deliverables with short-term and long-term agendas, each overseen by the Deputy Mayor.

Battling gun crime in the midst of a pandemic adds complicating layers onto the coordination problem. 2020 proved to be the deadliest year on record in Chicago for gun-related homicides.[475] The poorest African-American neighborhoods have been hit disproportionally hard by both COVID-19 and gun violence. The coordination problem is also similar between local public health agencies and the federal government. Ideally, lessons learned from coordinating the pandemic response, including after-action reports and reviews, can be integrated into the *Our City, Our Safety* plan to inform violence prevention initiatives going forward.

II. Competition

The challenge of competition (e.g. among levels of bureaucracy, between political parties) presents an opportunity for cities to innovate with alternative programs as well as expand their allies around the world. This local-global bookending of national governments can effectively constrain national agendas while amplifying the work of cities.

Case 3: Medellín, Colombia

Historically high levels of violence in Latin American cities are often associated with drug and gang problems. Compounding these dynamics, repressive "iron fist" policing strategies implemented by national governments result in persistently high levels of violence. Acknowledging the connections between built environment and violent crime,[476] cities have spearheaded innovative approaches to violence reduction that encourage pro-social behavior by building more inclusive and resilient cities. On the other hand, national governments, led by more conservative parties have pursued stringent "law and order" and enforcement heavy strategies. The contrast between the two approaches bore out in the data.

Medellín, Colombia, has come a long way since the 1990s, when it was considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world and the epicenter of the global drug war.[477] In contrast to the national government's repressive law enforcement policies, the city implemented an integrated and multi-sector approach to violence reduction that couples violence prevention programs with a commitment to building an inclusive city.[478] The city adopted a public health approach to the treatment of violence, similar to that already adopted in Cali, focusing on prevention and the provision of basic services such as schools and libraries to address the violence.[479]

In addition to these data-driven and research-based approaches to violence prevention, well known among public health professionals, the municipal authorities also invested in a public transit system to connect isolated low-income neighborhoods to the city's urban center, providing these communities with better access to opportunities and more fully integrating them into the life of the city.[480] The transit investment

was accompanied by municipal investment in neighborhood infrastructure, such as schools and libraries, which correlated with reduced levels of violence in the neighborhood.[481] The combination of community-led violence prevention and improved mobility helped cut the homicide rate from 380 per 100,000 in 1991 to 20 per 100,000 in 2015.[482] The work culminated in Medellín's inclusion in the *100 Resilient Cities Initiative*, along with a city-wide strategy for deeply integrating equity and inclusion into violence prevention efforts called *Resilient Medellín.*[483]

While Medellín saw multi-year declines in violence, recent upticks combined with COVID-19 restrictions resulted in serious friction with the national government's heavy-handed response which went back on years of success. Protesters in the fall of 2020 experienced a disproportionate military-led response, and the Ministry of Defense was accused of violating human rights.[484] The right-leaning national government's continued emphasis on "iron fist" strategies threaten to pull Medellín away from the progress it has made as a city. In response, Medellín Mayor Quintero has proposed inclusive alternatives to the national approach, which were almost immediately supported by the United Nations.[485]

Case 4: Barcelona, Spain

The migrant crisis in Europe presents a challenging case of competition. National priorities have emphasized resource constraints and at times echoed xenophobic right-wing rejection of migrant humanitarianism. The integration and protection of refugees is at the heart of the human security challenge of protecting vulnerable communities, especially those who are targets of historical patterns of violence.[486] To protect refugees, cities have become increasingly entrepreneurial in searching for partners who will help them challenge the national policy narratives, leapfrogging national restrictions by soliciting the coordination of transnational actors and international organizations.

In direct competition with the conservative Spanish policy on centrally managing (and restricting) migrant flows in 2017, the socialist-led city of Barcelona introduced a program to welcome refugees: *City of Refuge.*[487] The plan was both internal capacity-building in direct defiance of national policy as well as external diplomatic coordination with other cities throughout Europe. As articulated by the mayors of Barcelona, Lampedusa and Lesbos, "The lack of sensitivity shown by Europe's states goes in stark contrast to local initiatives. While governments haggle over quotas, we the cities are building contingency and awareness-raising plans [...] [W]e the local authorities are networking to establish agreements, such as the one between Lesbos, Lampedusa and Barcelona, under which we can share our knowledge, resources and solidarity."

Internally, the city established a new department, with devoted budget and personnel. The added bureaucratic infrastructure resulted in a five-fold increase in refugee resettlement, with 80 percent of clients becoming partially or fully independent.[488] The effort was coordinated by the City Council's Technical Director and the Mayor's office, charged with working across both government and civil society. The budget for the work totaled just over six million euros, meager by some standards, but a sizable portion of the municipal budget.[489] Under the *City of Refuge* framework, the city published a register of all families in the region with resources and willingness to help refugees with their personal wealth. Employment and housing programs also rose to meet basic needs.[490] The city also ramped up rhetorical pressure on their national government. They even installed a "shame counter" – a public display with a running total of migrant deaths.[491]

Barcelona's mayor engaged in city diplomacy around the world to build momentum behind the movement.[492] As members of *Solidarity Cities*, a EuroCities initiative, cities like Barcelona worked transnationally to "counter repressive European border regimes and foster access to rights for non-citizens and cultural pluralism on a local level."[493] Operating in this network, Barcelona officials exchanged information, directed funding in opposition to state programs, engaged in technical assistance, and coordinated relocation efforts among member cities.[494]

Implementing *City of Refuge* seems to have proven a test case for a much broader challenge: the COVID-19 pandemic. Barcelona used a similar model to pursue a municipalist agenda that diverted over 90 million euros to fund social services for refugees, as well as houseless and unemployed people. The same officials who contributed to the refugee response even launched a campaign to enroll undocumented migrants as official residents to enable people without papers access to COVID-19 relief.[495]

III. Capacity

Even when perfectly coordinated and without competition, lack of capacity remains a constant tug of war between local and national jurisdictions. The allocation and development of new resources enables cities to bypass national inaction or supplement an inadequate response.

Case 5: Buenos Aires, Argentina

The national COVID-19 response and lockdown in Argentina – one of the toughest in South America – has amplified prior existing faultlines of violence and divergent approaches between local and national governments. Federal police have come under extreme criticism for repressive tactics enforcing the lockdown.[496] Evidence shows that lockdown orders have amplified a "shadow pandemic" of gender-based violence, and national police have largely sat idly by in the face of rising femicide.[497] The national government has failed to respond strongly to the growing violence, leaving governments the responsibility of pursuing supplemental capacity.

Public health orders to isolate and stay at home have resulted in a surge in violence against women – reaching a 10-year high during the lockdown.[498] This is staggering, considering that the local government's review of their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) found that "58.5% of women over 18 years old reported to have suffered some violence by a current or previous partner."[499] Research from the Inter-American Development Bank conducted a survey of women impacted by lockdown orders and those unaffected by them, finding a correlation between health measures and violence.[500]

The challenge for the City of Buenos Aires has become addressing institutional violence and violence against women in the context of a federal government focused on virus prevention and providing little resources toward other priorities. Considering that the spike in gender-based violence has coincided with a noticeable

drop in reports to the police, the city government saw the need for alternative, non-law enforcement means for addressing the issue. To fill this capacity gap, the municipal government leaned into promoting "Lina137," a non-law enforcement tip line, which saw success as a reporting substitute. The city also set up a WhatsApp Channel, "Boti," where residents can contact help lines without having to make a call.

The municipal leadership is well positioned to consider the disproportionate impact and escalatory nature of COVID-19 measures because they have already done the work to map systemic vulnerabilities. In 2019, the city adopted a "Gender Indicators System of Buenos Aires," which mapped with data visualization the disparities between men and women. The data provides the city with an evidence-based set of indicators, equipping them to respond to the secondary effects of lockdown policies on women.[501]

Case 6: Cape Town, South Africa

In Cape Town, South Africa, the ravages of gang-driven knife crime are the focal point for the capacity/resource debate between cities and the national government. Chasing resources has been a decade-long enterprise, especially since the police, prosecution and judiciary are all nationally governed, with very little formal authority for localities. After years of violence escalation, in 2013, the Cape Town Mayor and Western Cape Premier sent an urgent communication to the President, arguing that more resources were needed and that the "communities that are most affected by crime and violence are the ones that have a shortage of officers. According to information from [the South Africa Police Service], the most concerning neighborhoods have a ratio of officers to population [that] is three times less than the provincial norm (1:800)."[502]

In an effort to bring systematic changes to resource allocation from the national to the local, the mayor and other local officials launched a series of oversight mechanisms to "intervene" in the policing work being done on gang activity.[503] The intervention initiatives created an oversight body to recommend priorities to the national government, track implementation, and conduct training. More directly, the leaders lobbied for the creation of specialized police units and deployment of the armed forces.[504] While both of these requests were met with initial resistance due to the poor track record of armed forces in quelling violence, continued local advocacy resulted in more direct national engagement.

As recently as March 2021, local officials reiterated the strategy that former leaders deployed in 2013, asking the national government to redeploy a newly created unit – Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP) officers – throughout five gang hot spot locations.[505] This follows the murder of several police

officers and a reignited conversation about the national government's jurisdiction over crime hampering the ability of local governments to prosecute.[506]

The Cape Town example shows that solving the resource allocation and capacity problem, especially when legal frameworks hamper local authority to fill the gaps themselves, requires leaders committed to innovation and advocacy. Local leaders have an obligation to create institutional pressure with feedback loops to their national bodies, as Cape Town did in relation to the Zuma Presidency. Such formal feedback supplements the personal advocacy and lobbying of mayors and councilmembers taking their case to the national level.

At the same time that national police and the South Africa National Defense Force have been deployed to respond to gang activity at the request of Cape authorities, they have also been deployed to enforce COVID-19 regulations.[507] The militarization of COVID-19 response has been concentrated in areas most underdeveloped during apartheid, risking a criminalization of the most vulnerable, especially highly impoverished workers who cannot adhere to lockdown regulations. Such nationally driven dynamics in COVID-19 response may have a short-term secondary outcome of addressing knife crime, as local authorities have requested, but very well could result in a longer-term intensification of structural violence and systemic deprivation.

Civil Society, Feedback Loops & Accountability

In recent decades, cities have emerged as influential actors coalescing around transnational advocacy networks that interact with each other, states and international organizations.[508] As part of an "urban turn" in International Relations, scholars are increasingly recognizing what urbanists like Jane Jacobs argued decades ago – that power is best measured not by the aggregated nation-state but by the cities located within it.[509] Cities are expanding their diplomatic connections, while also engaging in multiple levels of governance and norm elaboration around best practices in city-building, resulting in a form of regime-building.

These city networks are far-reaching in their advocacy and activism, as they operate across nations, and their impact reaches beyond policy change to advocate for and instigate change in institutional interactions between various levels of governance.[510] There are an estimated 300 such networks through which cities cooperate with each other and their national governments on a range of key policy issues such as climate change, public safety, human rights, food insecurity, migration and so on.[511] Engagement in climate change policy provides a powerful example demonstrating cities' role in creating feedback loops with relevant national-level actors by preparing climate change action plans and strategies that address local mitigation and adaptation measures.[512] *Peace in Our Cities* is another organizing body creating evidence-based platforms that make progress toward SDG16+, with an initial focus on SDG16.1 (to significantly reduce all forms of violence).[513]

An important avenue through which city transnational actors advocate for change in institutional interaction is through synthesizing and disseminating knowledge on local-level policy issues, as well as functioning as a platform for public and non-public city actors to convene and exchange concerns, information, needs and measures.[514] For example, *C40*, a global network of cities committed to bold climate action, provides a platform for cities to showcase their climate action solutions and inspire their city peers.[515] In violence prevention, the *Strong Cities Network* provides a similar diplomatic platform.

Cities and other subnational governments also engage in international relations via city diplomacy and paradiplomacy.[516] Such was the case in Barcelona, where the city, as a member of *Solidarity Cities*, worked beyond the nation-state boundary to coordinate with other member cities. At times, cities challenge the official foreign policy of their national governments by regularly promoting the subnational government's interests.

Multilateral entities also play an important role in elevating the role of cities on the international stage, hence shaping new local-national dynamics. While there is still hesitation by most multilateral institutions to formally recognize cities in their infrastructure, agendas and projects, there are United Nations (UN) agencies that increasingly incorporate urban concerns and urban agency in their frameworks. For example, UN Habitat, the UN's program working towards a better urban future, collaborates with partners to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities.[517] Other UN agencies, recognizing the critical role cities play, have explicit urban units that bypass national governments in their frameworks and theories of change.[518] For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Framework for the Urban Food Agenda illustrates how the UN agency is strengthening the focus on urbanization in its support to member states.[519] More broadly, SDG11 focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.[520]

Academia and thought leadership also have a role to play in shaping new local-national dynamics by scaling multilateral frameworks to match cities' agency and roles where cities are not acknowledged. For instance, in an effort to localize SDGs to cities, *SDGs Cities Challenge* at the University of Melbourne develops solutions through a collaborative process that brings together academia,[521] local government and the private sector[522] and draws on their knowledge and practical expertise. [523]

COVID-19 Contexts and New Local-National Innovations

The crises posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed many city actors to take action either by stepping in to fill a void left by national leadership or by exploring new avenues to overcome the local-national constraints discussed above that might have hampered effective response to the pandemic. Cities are innovating in the context of COVID-19.[524]

A Shifting Mandate for Transnational Actors

In the face of threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, many transnational networks have pivoted their original mandates to address the spread of COVID-19 and the emerging challenges at the city level. An important contribution of these networks has been the availability of established platforms for mayors to convene to share information, ideas, concerns and best practices for addressing the spread of COVID-19. For instance, *C40* cities groups have pivoted from climate policy coordination to action to address the emerging threats from the pandemic by hosting regular virtual meetings of mayors and city officials to share best practices representing hundreds of millions of residents from all parts of the globe.[525]

National Cities League (NCL)

is another platform that is composed of city, town and village leaders concerned with improving the quality of life for citizens by focusing on advancement of local governments. With a membership of over 2,000 cities across the United States, NCL has leveraged their established infrastructure and methodology to map, analyze and disseminate COVID-19 response resources for local leaders by tracking local initiatives. The NLC COVID Action Tracker is the most complete collection of municipal responses to COVID-19 in the United States.[526]

Complementary Infrastructure

Prior infrastructure to respond to violence has also been used to address pandemic needs. Throughout the United States, law enforcement fusion centers, emergency operation centers in cities, and task forces to deal with violence turned their attention to COVID-19 enforcement and prevention.[527] Note that the case of Kumanovo also indicates that prior structures – combating FTFs, ethnic divisions and polarization in this case – were central in mitigating COVID-19 disinformation. On the other hand, as the South Africa and Chicago cases suggest, the deepening of law enforcement resources in the pandemic may not have a positive effect on violence prevention (Chicago) or may exacerbate disparities causing violence (South Africa). Complementary infrastructure should be carefully tailored to local needs with the sort of local control and innovation displayed by the Barcelona case.

New Urban Funding Mechanisms

National governments can expand and broaden their funding schemes that reflect growing urbanization as well as emerging urban needs. For instance, acknowledging the wide-ranging implications national budgets have for cities, India's national budget has developed enhanced provisions for physical and social infrastructure of cities,[528] tackling water supply, hygiene, air pollution and transportation issues. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the new budget has also announced a centrally sponsored scheme designed to develop the capacities of health care systems, strengthen existing national institutions, and create new institutions to detect and cure new and emerging diseases.[529]

New Data for Broader Purposes

Piecemeal – or sometimes even absent – national government responses to the COVID-19 crisis have forced many cities to build their own capacities and implement public health measures. In many countries, connections between city authorities, universities and tech corporations have enhanced data observatory, information platforms and mapping capacities, as well as rapid infusion of digital platforms across many aspects of urban life including COVID-19 response.

Building new data is a key component of Kampala's response to lack of capacity from the national government.[530] Facing a very dire socio-economic and health situation, local leaders adapted a data-based and equity-based approach to the COVID-19 crisis to assess the susceptibility of local communities to the impact of the virus, as well as to guide decision-making and use of limited resources. By measuring exposure in transport hubs, shopping centers and transactional offices, the city developed a vulnerability framework. The resulting COVID-19 vulnerability index displays COVID vulnerability in an interactive map, which allows decision-makers to take into consideration available resources in relation to the vulnerability of households in the community, including food security, level of income, and access to healthcare.[531] The most important aspect of this data-driven approach is addressing existing inequalities as well as new threats to the most vulnerable posed by the pandemic.

But Kampala is not alone. In South Africa, Gauteng has created heat maps of underlying causal variables that fuel transmission, such as unsanitary and overcrowded conditions.[532] Such data has the potential for future use, as variables that fuel transmission of the virus may also at least partially determine violence patterns as well.

Crowdsourcing Mechanisms

Cities have embraced crowdsourcing mechanisms as a way to leverage collective intelligence as well as to devolve governance expertise from traditional sources of authority. For instance, in thinking about post-pandemic recovery, New York City has launched a new initiative called *Challenge to Connect* that seeks to crowdsource ideas to save businesses impacted by COVID-19.[533] Other crowdsourcing mechanisms prior to the pandemic include *Ushahidi*, which was developed in Kenya after the post-election violence in 2008 to map reports of violence.[534] Similarly, in Indian cities, *Safecity* empowers communities, police and city government to prevent violence in public and private spaces by collecting and analyzing reports of violent crime.[535] And in Rio, Brazil, *Fogo Cruzado* is a smartphone app that empowers citizens to navigate dangerous areas by collecting gun violence data.[536] The growing embrace of crowdsourcing mechanisms and other open-source projects brings new opportunities as well as models for urban violence prevention.

Opportunities for Risk Environment Reset

The enhanced enforcement tools under the urgency of COVID-19 bring new opportunities for treating urban violence. In the Northern Triangle, for example, gang activity has unraveled communities, devastated human rights, and resulted in losses of over 6.5 percent of GDP.[537] Governments have responded with police, security and surveillance, and have struggled to provide basic services to residents without much success in curtailing crime. Yet, under conditions of COVID-19, gang activity has slowed. As new research suggests, "The global COVID-19 pandemic has changed the context within which gangs interact with governments."[538] Government responses to the pandemic far and above the status quo have created problems for gangs: newly imposed border closures, checkpoints, curfews and increased police presence have all impeded trafficking. While business has plummeted and gangs are weak, they have also turned to providing public services to win over constituents.[539] This moment of heightened lock-down, and relative pause, could present an opening for government and illicit actors to forge dialogue and working relationships. COVID-19 presents an off-ramp of activity, a reset, where mutual de-escalation can take hold and follow a similar pattern seen in Colombia during Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) reintegration.[540]

Transparent and Accountable Technology Adoption

The concern about police state powers that expanded under COVID-19 is also well warranted.[541] The pandemic has bolstered command and control measures – surveillance and forced isolation – previously anathema to western liberal democracies. Geographic Information System (GIS) contact-tracing technologies, thermal imaging, credit card purchase-tracing, cell tower-locating technologies, and networks of surveillance cameras have truly introduced new tools for state oversight.[542] Such expansive police powers can escalate violence by deepening community resentment and grievances against the state. As capacity increases with public health tools, cities must be careful to adopt frameworks that make the permanent adoption of new technology transparent and accountable.

Lessons for the Future

The work of bridging local-national divides is about both strategically internationalizing issues and situating global responses at the neighborhood level. As the local and global bookend national inaction or competition, several lessons emerge to guide policymakers:

Relational conditions amplify drivers of conflict. The relationship between local and national governments sets the conditions where drivers of conflict take shape. Coordination, competition and capacity each constitute the context where factors like deprivation, access to weapons and war spillover are navigated. Cities should map not only the drivers of violence but also the relational contexts in which they are nested in order to appropriately plan for action.

Entrepreneurship breeds followers. A week after the Barcelona declaration on accepting refugees, 55 other Spanish cities joined the effort. Cities can take risks launching new, innovative programs and policies, especially in a world where global networks of peers can offer assistance and support, amplifying

individual contributions of a city. Municipalities can be entrepreneurial, producing novel stopgaps and programs, while seeking global linkages to shore up capacity. In other words, *friends matter* in overcoming national-local dynamics.

"Glocal" leadership is the future of violence prevention. The cases above indicate that even in relationships of conflict with national governments, cities can have transnational impact. Every city can have a platform, through city diplomacy and global linkages, to share their story around the world. The ability to bypass, complement or sideline national governments by the strategic use of global networks means that, as laboratories of policy, cities can experiment with what others are doing, applying others' innovations in a local context.

Persistence and planning solve structural gaps. Chicago and Cape Town illustrate how change in local-national dynamics occurs over time and can go through several iterations. Cities should be persistent in addressing systematic and relational-level gaps while engaging in specific violence prevention activities, not losing focus on solving underlying structural problems.

Violence is an intersectional problem that requires an intersectional prevention strategy. COVID-19 offers an opportunity to build on what the violence prevention field has consistently argued: variables that drive violence also impact other areas of public policy. Violence is an intersectional problem, interfacing with deprivation, poverty, access to weapons, mental health, and ideology and identity grievances. COVID-19 shows that the regulatory innovations, new data collection efforts, and collaboration across global networks can be reassigned to other social scourges at the intersection of public health, inequity and resource scarcity. Violence prevention efforts should further explore how tools in other fields intersect and potentially complement such programs.

CONCLUSION

PEACE
IN OUR CITIES

UKaid
from the British people

The COVID-19 pandemic placed huge strain on individuals, communities, and countries. Hundreds of thousands have died from the virus itself, many thousands more from its knock-on effects. It has led to what the World Bank predicts will be the worst global recession in 80 years, with economic impacts being felt in highly inequitable ways both within and across countries. It has led to food shortages and starvation, has strained already challenged relationships between police and communities, has reinforced xenophobia and identity-based animosity, and caused a massive spike in violence against women and girls. Yet with all of these negative effects, the demonstration of humanity in the face of calamity has been massive, measurable and laudable.

The chapters of this compendium present in stark relief the various ways that the pandemic has influenced violence dynamics confronting cities. But rather than only describing the challenges, each chapter has gone to great length to demonstrate the varied ways in which individuals, institutions and newly stitched together organizations have taken deliberate and immediate action to prevent violence. In this way, the series aims to move us to a place of action, with concrete activities deserving of resourcing, learning from and replicating.

From re-zoning initiatives in Pittsburgh, United States, helping urban dwellers farm in the city to reduce food insecurity, to automatic extensions of emergency protection orders in Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil, protecting those at high risk of harm from specifically identified individuals, to Twitter campaigns aimed at reducing hate by celebrating diversity in Vancouver and Mexico City, to confronting corruption through the use of information access laws to ensure pandemic support gets to the right people in Patzicia, Guatemala, this series shows us what is possible from city governments and partners.

The direct, immediate action taken by city governments, city residents and their partners all around the world has protected lives and reinforced peaceful communities.

As we pass the one-year mark of global lockdowns, our world remains one that is rife with inequality, but also rife with opportunity. For centuries, cities have been places of innovation; the space where people come together to share ideas, foster creative collaboration and advance new ways of living. The capacity of the collective spirit housed within urban environments is immense, particularly when oriented around pro-social, safety-reinforcing priorities that emphasize our common humanity. The chapters here demonstrate how city residents have worked together under dire circumstances to do just that – protect one another, confront institutional weaknesses and push back against hate.

As the introduction to this brief makes clear, urban violence is complex. What is not complex is the unequivocal fact that responding to violence by inflicting more violence does not work. Not if the goal is more peaceful, just societies for all. Rather, responses to violence that are grounded in addressing structural drivers, that are respectful of every person's humanity, and that are informed by evidence demonstrate effectiveness time and again. The chapters presented here make that clear. Taken together they provide a roadmap for change, putting life into the aspiration of Sustainable Development Goal 16 to promote more just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

ANNEX 1:
MEMBERS OF PEACE IN OUR CITIES

Facilitators:

Impact:Peace at the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, Kroc School at University of San Diego
+Peace Coalition
Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies at NYU's Center on International Cooperation

City members:

Abeokuta, Nigeria
Amman, Jordan
Bangui, Central African Republic
Cali, Colombia
Chaguanas, Trinidad & Tobago
Colombo, Sri Lanka
Dayton, Ohio, USA
Durban, South Africa
Edmonton, Canada
Escobedo, Mexico
Guadalajara, Mexico
Hargeisa, Somalia
Kano, Nigeria
Kumanovo, North Macedonia
Mechelen, Belgium
Nairobi Municipality, Kenya
Oakland, California, USA
Palmira, Colombia
Tripoli, Lebanon

Organizational members:

American Friends Service Committee
California Violence Prevention Network
Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention
Conciliation Resources
Creative Associates
Dayton Peace Museum
European Forum for Urban Security
Fight for Peace
Fundación Alvaralice
Generations for Peace
Global Parliament of Mayors
Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
Life & Peace Institute
PartnersGlobal
Peace Direct
Peace Initiative Network
REACH Edmonton
Red Dot Foundation
Search for Common Ground
Somaliland SDG16+ Coalition
Stanley Center for Peace and Security
Strong Cities
United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN Habitat)
United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)
United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC)
University of Dayton Human Rights Center

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