



UN-HABITAT



CRIME & VIOLENCE *at a glance*

Institutional responses to crime and violence

The best institutional structures for implementing programmes to combat crime are those that succeed in getting the key players involved in ways that commit them to the programme. Local authorities will often be the most appropriate leaders of such structures. Local communities need to be fully involved in consultation, and also as generators and implementers of such initiatives.

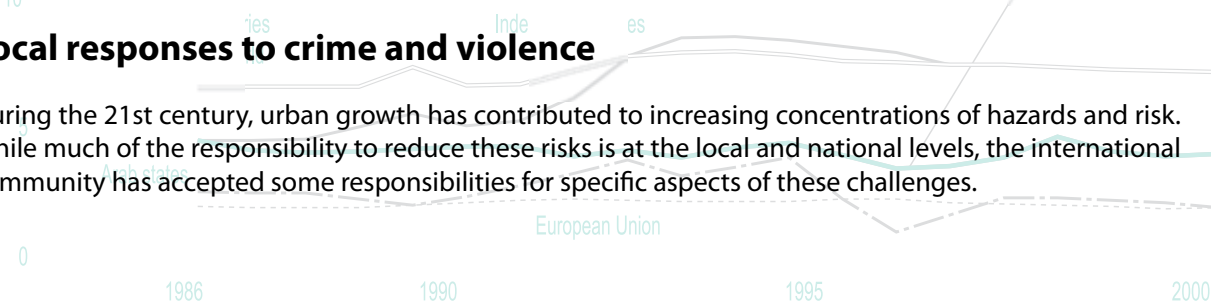
- **Zero Tolerance** is often considered a useful institutional method for reducing crime and violence. However, it can create social problems between the police and the community. Evidence suggests that crime prevention and monitoring strategies that integrate communities may be more successful in the long term.
- At the national level, there is a need to **strengthen the formal criminal justice and policing systems**. It is important that the police and the criminal justice systems are 'fit for purpose' and are seen as key contributors to the fight against crime. A vital issue is the need for public confidence that the police and criminal justice systems will play their part in this process effectively, and where this is not the case, the problems that give rise to this lack of confidence need to be vigorously addressed.
- Key elements of such action will include the **active participation of senior managers in police and criminal justice organizations, resources and political support**, and a willingness to try new approaches where existing approaches are not working.
- Programmes aimed at strengthening **the police**, particularly in developing countries, should also **address their welfare and poor conditions of service**. In many African countries, the police earn a pittance and often lack the necessary resources and equipment to perform their duties. Furthermore, in countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, South Africa and Kenya, members of the police force have not been spared from the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- **Prison reforms** are one of the key policy areas through which central governments can contribute to tackling crime. By improving prison conditions and placing more emphasis on rehabilitation, the situation where prisons become finishing schools or "universities" for criminals can be prevented. It is possible for re-offending, or recidivism, rates to be significantly reduced as a consequence of greater emphasis on rehabilitation.
- **Support at the international level** can help cities, particularly in developing and transitional countries, to improve their ability to implement measures effectively that address crime and violence. For example, assistance from the US has been a key factor in recent efforts at tackling crime and violence in Kingston (Jamaica). Likewise, Canada, the Netherlands and Sweden have contributed to Safer Cities projects in several African cities.

One particular example is the United Kingdom's support to strengthening Jamaica's police force, with Metropolitan Police officers working directly with and training their Jamaican counterparts.

Local responses to crime and violence

During the 21st century, urban growth has contributed to increasing concentrations of hazards and risk. While much of the responsibility to reduce these risks is at the local and national levels, the international community has accepted some responsibilities for specific aspects of these challenges.

Per 100,000 inhabitants



Policy initiatives at the local level to address issues of urban crime and violence have been grouped into six broad categories:

- **Enhancing urban safety and security through effective urban planning, design and governance** starts from the proposition that there is a relationship between the characteristics of the built environment and the opportunity to commit crime. It therefore seeks to manipulate the built environment in ways that are intended to reduce or even to eliminate the opportunity to commit crimes.
- **Community-based initiatives** cover a broad spectrum of approaches, including information-gathering, processes for determining policies and projects, implementation, and creating opportunities for communities to take initiatives themselves. The essence of these approaches is that initiatives to tackle crime and violence should be 'done with' local communities rather than 'done to' them. Central to this approach is the need to recognize that the people who are the intended beneficiaries of projects must contribute fully to shaping them, implementing them and, often, taking ownership of them.
- **Strengthening formal criminal justice systems and policing** have traditionally been the main tools for responding to crime and violence. However, corruption, inflexibility of response to changing criminal circumstances, limited resources and skills in relation to the needs of the job, and ineffective practices may hinder these responses. The problem of corruption in criminal justice systems and in the police is a particularly corrosive one in terms of public confidence since the public at large relies on these agencies to do their traditional jobs of apprehending and sentencing criminals.
- **Policy responses focusing on reducing risk factors** so far have concentrated on tackling violence against women and trying to prevent young people from drifting into a life of crime. An important part of work to tackle problems of violence against women is the need to fully engage families, households and local communities since in some instances violence against women seems to be deeply entrenched in local cultures. Strategies to prevent young people from drifting into a life of crime typically employ a wide range of initiatives, including employment creation.
- **The non-violent resolution of conflicts**, is a philosophy that recommends prevention as a response to crime. Beyond the strengthening of policing and the judicial system two specific responses have become increasingly common: the privatization of security and the role of community groups. Both of these responses come, in part, from the inadequacy of the police and criminal justice system to address these problems.
- Almost every city in the world has developed **private security companies** and forces. An estimate in 2000 indicated that the annual growth of private security was 30 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, in the developing and developed countries. One study of South Africa reported that the number of private security guards has increased by 150 per cent from 1997 to 2006, while the number of police decreased by 2.2 per cent in the same period. The question of the balance between public and private crime prevention is a major issue.
- Another form of "non-public" security is **community security**, where community groups decide to maintain security in their neighbourhoods. This process, involving what might be called 'community buy-in' or, more dramatically, 'vigilantism', in some countries has its roots in traditional culture and notions of justice.