Reducing Urban Violence:
A Common Vision for the Western Hemisphere

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Executive summary

For over a decade now, the Americas have had the highest rates of lethal violence in the world, making violent crime part of the daily life of millions of citizens across the region. In 2017, 47 of the 50 most violent cities in the world were located in the Western Hemisphere. Reducing crime and violence in urban centers has become a top priority for citizens and governments of the United States and Latin American countries alike. Rather than attempting to tackle these challenges on their own, cities across the Americas should learn from one another, exchange experiences and best practices that work, and understand the contexts in which certain strategies are effective.

To discuss a regional vision for reducing urban violence in the Western Hemisphere, a group of experts came together in Chicago in June 2018. More than 30 representatives from Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States explored the opportunities and risks of a common agenda. Chicago was a natural choice for this strategic meeting, given the prevalence of urban violence in the city and, more importantly, its concerted and interdisciplinary efforts to address it. This report reflects the highlights of the session.

A multitude of existing and past network efforts address urban violence, yet none have taken a Western Hemispheric approach for coordination and exchange. Cities throughout the Americas are implementing promising intervention initiatives from which other cities can learn. By providing cities a platform to learn about how different systems have approached the same problem and sharing the best evidence and promising innovations being implemented throughout the region, cities from different contexts can improve their efforts to reduce urban violence.

A coordinated effort should have clear leadership and a common regional vision and mission; identify specific, practical goals; focus on collecting and sharing research and evidence, frameworks, and tools; promote convening; build capacity; and foster effective evaluation of interventions.

In a region where crime and violence are so pervasive, public safety must be a top priority for every government. But governments should not have to develop solutions alone. Urban violence is a regional problem that demands a regional response. A common vision for the hemisphere will guide the region to a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Introduction

Violent crime is part of the daily life of millions of citizens across the Americas.[1] Indeed, for over a decade the Americas have had the highest rates of lethal violence in the world—and if trends remain as they are today, this will continue to be the case (see Figure 1). In 2017, 47 of the 50 most violent cities in the world were located in the Western Hemisphere, according to an annual ranking by Mexican nongovernmental organization (NGO) Seguridad, Justicia y Paz.[2] Of this total, 42 are Latin American cities, including 17 in Brazil, 12 in Mexico, and five in Venezuela. The United States is the only developed country on the list, with four cities—St. Louis (13th), Baltimore (21st), New Orleans (41st), and Detroit (42nd)—among the 50 most violent in the world.

Latin America, in particular, is considered the most violent region in the world. With less than 9 percent of the world's population, Latin America experiences roughly one-third of all homicides worldwide.[3] From 2004 to 2014, Latin America had an average annual homicide rate of more than 22 per 100,000 inhabitants.[4] The United States, for its part, stands out as one of the most violent among all industrialized nations; according to one study, the 2010 US homicide rate was 5.3 per 100,000, significantly higher than that of Canada (1.5), Australia (1.1), Spain (0.7), Germany (0.6), and the United Kingdom (0.3). With more than two-thirds of the homicides in the United States being committed by firearms, the US gun-related murder rate is 25 times higher than those of the 22 other high-income nations covered in the study.[5]

Of course, these national- and city-level trends mask important heterogeneity across the Americas. While national homicide rates are particularly high in some countries (El Salvador had 103 per 100,000 in 2015), others have very few homicides (Chile's rate was only 3.5 per 100,000 in 2017). The

Figure 1

Projected regional and global homicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants, 2000–30

■ Africa ■ Americas ■ Asia ■ Europa ■ Oceania ■ Global
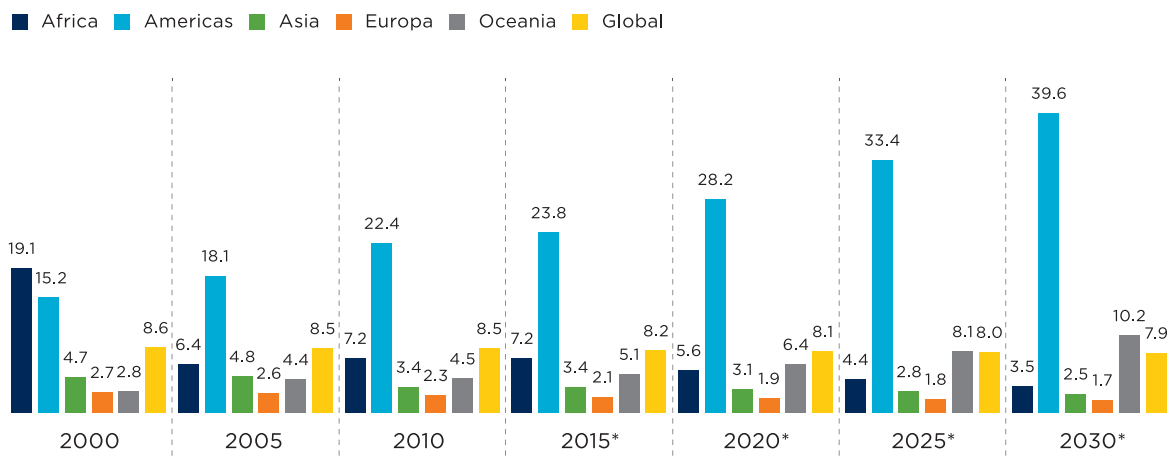
*Estimated

Source: Robert Muggah and Katherine Aguirre Tobón, "Citizen security in Latin America: Facts and Figures," April 2018, https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Citizen-Security-in-Latin-America-Facts-and-Figures.pdf.

subnational and local levels show similar variations; while Venezuela's capital, Caracas, had a rate of 75 per 100,000 in 2016, Mérida, another city in the country, had a rate of 15.1 per 100,000 in the same year;[6] the same variance applied for US cities (see Figure 2).

Violence in the Americas

Despite differences in city and country homicide rates across the Americas, as well as differences in social and economic contexts, local-level violence dynamics and driving factors can be quite similar from one place to another. The lack of a strong law enforcement presence in low-income and marginalized areas, where the relationship between the police and communities is marked by little trust and excessive use of force, is one key feature that characterizes violence in the Americas. In Latin America, specifically, violence is also in large part driven by drug trafficking and organized crime. Political instability, institutional weaknesses, overall social vulnerabilities, and easy availability of guns contribute to the root causes of the problem.

To be sure, many other cities around the world also have these attributes, yet they—with a few exceptions—do not face the same rates of homicide and violence seen in cities in the Americas. Many extremely complicated factors may explain the concentration in the Western Hemisphere. Some governments employ measures that are unconventional in other countries to keep their societies safe. Methods of collecting data on violence can expose or mask realities around the world. Historical experiences, social constructs, and cultures play a role. The issue is incredibly

Figure 2

Homicide rates in select US cities, 1985–2017
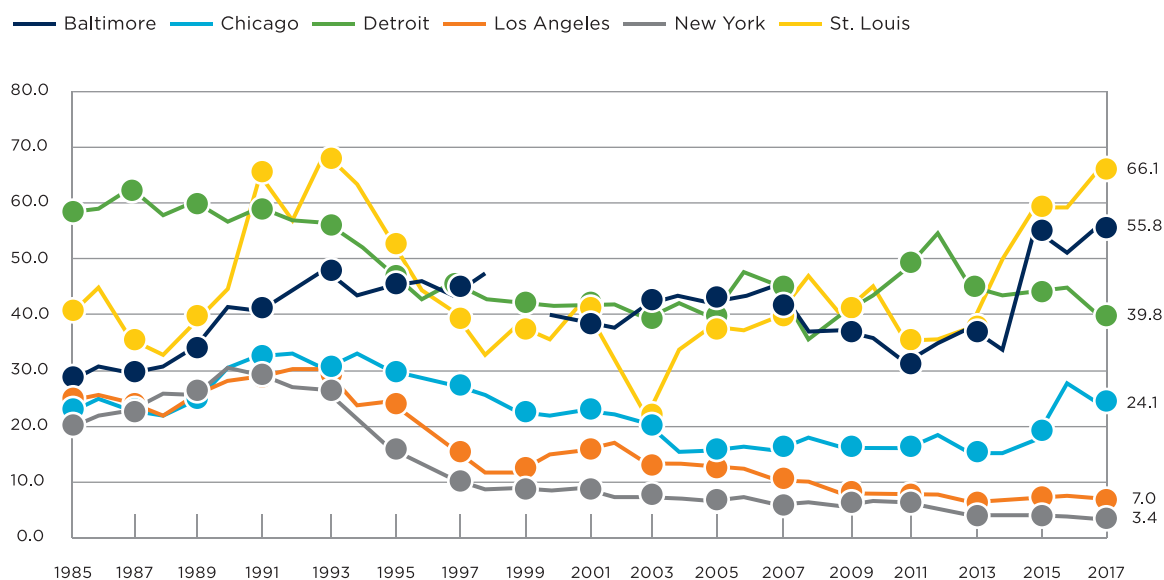
Source: University of Chicago Crime Lab analysis of FBI Uniform Crime Reporting data.

complex, and global solutions are beyond the scope of this report; as such, this report focuses instead on the urgency to develop solutions for challenges specific to the Americas.

Common features across contexts

The similarities in driving factors behind urban violence across the region also reflect analogous characteristics of crime and violence across the Americas. First, crime and violence are concentrated in specific places (neighborhoods and even street segments) and populations. For example, in 2016, 2.2 percent of municipalities accounted for half of all homicides in Brazil; and in these cities, half of all homicides occurred in around 10 percent of neighborhoods.[7] The geographic concentration of crime also coincides with the concentration of several economic and social vulnerabilities. Poverty, low educational attainment, high dropout rates, and inequality tend to be common features of high-crime areas across the Americas.

The face of the vast majority of victims is also similar everywhere: young men. According to the United Nations, "more than one in seven of all homicide victims globally is a young male aged 15–29 living in the Americas."[8] When race and ethnicity are added to this equation, parallels persist: in Brazil, one of the few countries in Latin America where crime data disaggregated by race is available, the homicide rate for the whole country was 26.7 per 100,000 in 2015, but 40.2 per 100,000 among Afro descendants and 86.3 per 100,000 among Afro-descendant youth—2.7 times the homicide rate of 31.9 among white youth. In fact, 75 percent of the more than 63,000 known murder victims in the country in 2017 were of Afro descent.[9] In Chicago, a similar trend is found: the homicide rate per 100,000 for males aged 15–24 in the city in 2016 was 14.1 for whites, 79.2 among Hispanics, and a staggering 388.7 among African Americans.[10]

This regional problem requires a regional solution. Fighting violence in urban centers has become a top priority for citizens and governments of the United States and Latin American countries alike.

The role of cities

Over the past several decades, given their position at the front lines of violent crime, local governments in the Americas have increasingly asserted their voices in the dialogue about urban violence prevention, and they have gained recognition as sources of important policy innovations. With a deeper understanding of their local context, city authorities are in many ways closer to their citizens than federal authorities are, and, when sufficiently empowered and resourced to design and implement prevention policies, they can make effective use of public resources by identifying and targeting geographic areas and populations at higher risk.[11] Cities—in particular throughout Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States—have long been studying the complex factors driving violence and identifying effective interventions to reduce homicide rates. They are also increasingly relying on evidence-based research and evaluation to inform policies and actions, and a number of them have stepped up efforts and managed to bring down violent crime dramatically in relatively short time periods.

In the 1990s, US cities such as Boston, Los Angeles, and New York adopted comprehensive crime- and violence-reduction strategies with significant results. Latin American cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo implemented lessons learned from those strategies as well as additional innovations, resulting in significant homicide declines throughout the 2000s.

The time to act

The data show that, although levels and dynamics of violence as well as specific contexts (such as institutional response capacity) might differ from one place to another and between the poorest and the most developed countries in the Americas, the driving risk factors and features of crime and violence are quite similar. The challenges to addressing urban violence affect virtually every nation and most major cities across the Western Hemisphere.[12]

It was in this context that a group of experts came together in Chicago in June 2018 to discuss a regional vision for reducing urban violence in the Western Hemisphere and to explore the development of a common agenda. The meeting brought together more than 30 representatives from cities in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States. The meeting was the result of a series of knowledge exchanges and action tours hosted by Cali, Chicago, and Medellín over the previous two years. An initially informal network quickly validated the need for a systematized, joint call to action on reducing urban violence in the Americas. Building on the University of Chicago's evidence-based approach, other international organizations and partners, civil society representatives, and researchers from different countries began to informally connect and explore practices that could be exchanged and adapted.

Chicago was, therefore, a natural choice for the strategic meeting. In addition to the work of the University of Chicago Crime Lab, the city is also home to a series of programs, initiatives, and organizations that promote urban violence prevention, such as Cure Violence, Chicago CRED, Becoming-a-Man (BAM), Heartland Alliance's READI Chicago, and the Fund for Safe and Peaceful Communities, a collaboration of more than 35 philanthropic organizations. Chicago faces both the tragic realities of urban violence and a deep commitment from leaders to develop solutions that target the root causes of violence. The city itself is an urban laboratory for developing concrete solutions to this challenge.

This regional problem requires a regional solution. Fighting violence in urban centers has become a top priority for citizens and governments of the United States and Latin American countries alike. Given that some of the drivers and risk factors found among all the different contexts in the region are analogous, so could be the solutions. This potential is why countries and cities across the Americas can and should learn from one another, exchanging experiences and practices to prevent and reduce urban violence.

Part I: The breadth and depth of initiatives

Cities and organizations in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States have pursued a vast number of initiatives aimed at reducing urban violence. Led by different actors—from local governments to grassroots organizations and on-the-ground practitioners to foundations and multilateral entities—and employing a diverse array of networks, strategies, and interventions, these initiatives offer important lessons.[13]

Building a sustainable network

Networks at the regional, country, and global levels are working to improve knowledge, capacity, and, ultimately, results related to urban violence. These efforts have taken a variety of approaches, including advocacy, technical assistance, capacity building, peer-to-peer exchanges, and funding of specific interventions. Some have been more ad hoc—with specific, sometimes short-term goals—while others have become mainstay institutional bodies that still drive the agenda in some places. A few successful network examples are offered in the following

pages. For examples of face-to-face meetings that have enabled cities and organizations to exchange ideas and reinforce their relationships, see Box 1, "Policy implementation outcomes from previous learning exchanges."

National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. Created in 2010 by President Barack Obama, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention included several methodologies that are key to ensure a successful network. Inspired by the California Cities Gang Prevention Network, the forum focused on increasing awareness, driving action, and building the capacity of cities to address youth and gang violence through comprehensive planning. It was a multidisciplinary effort that brought together different agencies at the federal level—including law enforcement, justice, education, human services, and housing and urban development departments, among others—to support municipal governments in designing local violence-prevention plans.

The network started with six cities and grew to 15 by 2018, with additional partners such as federal agencies, faith-based and community organizations, youth and family groups, and leaders from the business and philanthropic communities also participating. Its efforts included peer-to-peer learning, training, and technical assistance on how to implement evidence-based, multidisciplinary

strategies to reduce and prevent violence. By bringing people together to share the challenges they were facing and what they were doing to address them, the forum created a healthy dialogue that led to increasing political commitment to this issue. As a result, cities got considerable press, attracted additional funding for interventions, and, in general, improved the way they were dealing with violence. The peer-to-peer exchanges also enabled and facilitated relationships among local officials beyond the forum itself.

California Cities Violence Prevention Network. Despite the positive outcomes, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention was difficult to scale, largely due to prohibitively expensive travel costs for partners. Furthermore, the group's energy and political will (given regular changes in administrations) were difficult to sustain. Having gone through this experience, some of the forum's participants created the California Cities Violence Prevention Network, a geography-based network that helped to overcome the distance challenge. This new network also started assessing cities' capacity to join the network to ensure continuity.

Cities United. Another US effort is Cities United, a national movement created in 2011 to address violence related specifically to African American men and boys in American cities. The 92 mayors participating in the movement have partnered with

community leaders, families, youth, philanthropic organizations, government officials, and other stakeholders to commit to reducing homicides in their cities by 50 percent by the year 2025 (over the 2011 baseline). The organization assists with the planning and implementation of solutions by providing resources, sharing best practices, and promoting innovative approaches.

Movement towards Violence as a Health Issue. The Movement towards Violence as a Health Issue consists of more than 500 individuals representing more than 150 organizations across the United States, with new members joining from Europe and Latin America. The initiative is dedicated to activating the health and community response to violence through language training, mobilizing spokespersons, inserting new policies and practices, and overall health system development.

Brazilian Forum of Public Safety. In Latin America, the Brazilian Forum of Public Safety is perhaps the best example of a network that has become a permanent space for debate and technical cooperation for public security in the country. Created in 2006, the Brazilian Forum has more than 300 associates, including police forces, academics, civilian representatives, and high-profile public officials. Formed to not only bring together the different sectors and actors that work on security but also promote data generation, transparency, and accountability in the field, the Brazilian Forum has become one of the main data sources for violence indicators in the country; its Public Safety Annual Report systematizes data from all Brazilian states. In 2011, the Brazilian federal government determined that all municipalities would follow the Brazilian Forum's methodology to collect and analyze crime data. The Brazilian Forum was one of the many organizations that joined the Instinct for Life Campaign, a short-term campaign supported by the Open Society Foundations in 2017 to raise awareness of and commitment to homicide reduction in Latin America, generate data about homicide in the region, and produce evidence in the region about best practices.

Common features of a successful network

Drawing from the insights of these other networks and initiatives, a successful framework on violence reduction and prevention for a regional city or network must do the following:

- Have a clear vision and plan.

- Count on strong leadership of mayors, meaning it would need to have the right mechanisms and incentives in place to ensure sustained political will.

- Help create a new generation of leaders, building long-term capacity.

- Be multisector and bring different stakeholders, from law enforcement to human and health services, to the table.

- Be participatory, allowing for the direct engagement and representation of citizens who will benefit from the promoted policies.

- Focus on generating and sharing data and promoting exchanges about evidence-based policies; fostering a culture of monitoring and evaluation that could allow for better use of public resources; and adapting shared practices and policies to the specific contexts.

- Include, among its methodologies, systematic peer-to-peer learning that goes beyond previous efforts that didn't allow for continuous exchanges, such as video and teleconferences.

- Prioritize communication, specifically to cities about why and how they could work together.

BOX 1

Policy implementation outcomes from previous learning exchanges

Face-to-face meetings in the field illustrate opportunities for participants to implement or adapt new ideas at home.

The Medellín Living Lab and the Cali Living Lab were important exchanges carried out by a group that met in Chicago in 2016. Both labs were supported by the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative, which aims to help cities endure and overcome obstacles. Urban violence has become one of the key issues being discussed among Resilient Cities, including Cali and Medellín. The labs included an intense agenda of site visits to the areas of the two cities most affected by and vulnerable to violence, as well as discussions with government officials, community residents, and on-the-ground practitioners who implemented a wide range of interventions in different sectors, from education (school-based programs at the primary and secondary levels) to culture, sports, health, and transport. The labs also included spaces for participants to exchange their own experiences. The Cali Living Lab ended with a session in which participants provided feedback to the mayor and his entire cabinet—which participants agreed was a methodology that could be followed in future exchanges.

Cali representatives learned about the Cure Violence model during previous exchanges and is now piloting the program in two areas of the city. The Safe Cities Institute is designing local plans for different cities in Brazil based on direct lessons its members learned at previous exchanges—including virtual ones—that the group carried out over the course of a year. Such plans have the United States as a reference and only include programs that have been rigorously evaluated, such as the youth programs monitored and analyzed by the University of Chicago Crime Lab. International organizations are financing the adaptation of Chicago's Becoming-a-Man (BAM) program in countries such as Brazil and Mexico.

Adapting effective and promising intervention initiatives

The most important opportunity provided by international exchanges, as well as formal and information networks, is the ability to share practices, results, and implementation challenges and to discuss methodologies, processes, and possibilities for adaptation. At the program level, most examples share common features: they target places and people, such as youth, at higher risk; they provide a multidisciplinary package of services that range from psychological support to income opportunities to skills learning and education support; and they engage several actors and partners, including schools, health services, community members, and law enforcement.

Several examples of such intervention initiatives are offered in the pages that follow. See Box 2, "Successful innovations from Latin America," for the story of three Latin American cities that have been particularly successful in reducing urban violence.

Strategic Decision Support Centers. With high levels of both youth and gun violence, Chicago is one of the US cities at the forefront of innovative intervention. The city also provides a good model for Latin America for using data to fight violent crime, with organizations such as the University of Chicago Crime Lab investing in applied research by deeply engaging academics with on-the-ground practitioners to be more responsive to the city's needs. Since 2017, the lab has supported the

Strategic Decision Support Centers, a program jointly implemented with the Chicago Police Department in the most violent districts of Chicago. These centers are equipped with advanced technology, available to both district leadership and civilian analysts from the lab, to help police commanders commit their resources to the right places at the right times. Partly as a result of these efforts, in 2017 Chicago experienced 15.7 percent fewer homicides than in 2016 (the number of murders fell from 771 to 650 over that period) and 21.5 percent fewer shootings (a drop from 3,550 to 2,785 over the same period).[14]

READI Chicago. Implemented by the Heartland Alliance in partnership with six other organizations on the South and West sides of Chicago, READI Chicago was designed as a response to the high rates of gun violence in the city. The program uses predictive analytics to identify and engage people most affected by gun violence and offers them "paid transitional jobs, cognitive behavioral therapy, and wraparound support services." The ultimate goal is to provide these individuals with the opportunity for a new life path. The program is investing in community-based outreach services to enroll 500 participants in the program by spring 2019. The University of Chicago Crime Lab is conducting an evaluation of the effort using randomized controlled trials. According to the lab, as of the end of September 2018, there were 373 participants engaged in the program, 275 of whom (74 percent) had been connected to transitional jobs.

Chicago CRED (Creating Real Economic Destiny). Chicago CRED employs a research-based intervention strategy to provide social, emotional, and job-readiness support to place participants in permanent, full-time jobs with private employers. The program provides at-risk youth with skills training, transitional jobs at minimum wage, and a network of support systems, such as life coaching and therapy.

Cure Violence. The public-health model Cure Violence—which uses disease-control strategies to detect and interrupt conflict before it occurs—provides support to high-risk individuals and training at the community and individual levels to change behavior and social norms, resulting in reductions in violence of up to 70 percent. The program, which has been extensively evaluated, is now operating with more than 100 organizations in more than 40 cities in several countries, including El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico. One reason for the program's reach is its adaptability to the local context; in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, for example, community outreach workers were assigned to work with violence interrupters daily to facilitate the adaptation process. Interrupters live in the community and are trusted by people at higher risk of victimization or perpetration of violence; often, they also have been involved with gang activities before and have spent time in prison.[15]

Inclusion and Opportunities Territories. Cali, the third-largest city in Colombia, has efforts targeted at high-risk youth. Its Integral Gang Treatment Initiative works with 1,200 young gang members who commit to develop individual plans and personal goals. Caseworkers provide participants with psychological support, education, pathways into employment, and drug abuse recovery support. Participants are also connected with people from the community who become their mentors and interact with them on a day-to-day basis; with social workers; and with a community police officer who interacts with young people in the area. Those who complete the program are then offered the opportunity to join the Managers for Peace program, which employs people from vulnerable areas to carry out part-time activities with the municipality on environmental and civic engagement projects. Participants in Managers for Peace also receive psychological support as well as soft skills and technical training. Both programs are being implemented under the auspices of the Inclusion

and Opportunities Territories program, a territorial approach aimed at promoting social and economic development in the 10 most violent neighborhoods in the city.

Safe Cities Institute. Brazil's Safe Cities Institute is working on the design and implementation of the Pelotas Pact for Peace program. This comprehensive and multisector plan was developed with the government of the southern city of Pelotas, which saw a 488 percent increase in the number of homicides between 2002 and 2015, with the homicide rate per 100,000 rising from 5.2 to 29.2 over the same period.[16] The plan is structured around three dimensions: policing that prioritizes areas with high violent-crime rates (known as hot-spot policing); social prevention, including through social and emotional learning, restorative justice, and a program aimed at at-risk youth that provides individualized plans to be carried out by public social services; and urbanism. The institute has partnered with the Federal University of Pelotas to conduct randomized controlled trials of most interventions promoted by the plan.

Common features of a successful intervention initiative
Certain points overlap across these specific interventions:

- Context matters, but drivers of violence are similar—thus the solutions can be too. At the same time, sufficiently flexible solutions can be adapted to different contexts.

- Data are key to identifying and targeting people and populations at higher risk of victimization and perpetration of crime and employing public resources more effectively.

- Partnerships between local governments and academic centers are a great way to start implementing rigorous evaluations of policies and programs, especially in Latin America.

- Sustainability and scaling of interventions is still a challenge across contexts and geographies.

Part II: What is still needed

There is no shortage of initiatives and collaborative efforts to reduce violence in the Americas, and there is much that cities across the Americas can learn from one another. However, several gaps still need to be filled.

Connecting research and prior experience to program design and implementation
First, there is a need to build a stronger connection between research and practice. Academics, local government representatives, and on-the-ground practitioners agree that translating evidence into actions in the field is still difficult. Politics and contextual differences certainly influence the ability to design and implement programs based on data and best practices. But a lack of knowledge or capacity to implement is too often also a factor, which reinforces the need for exchanges among the different cities and stakeholders. A common vision and framework for the Americas, aimed at creating the right incentives for political leaders and other stakeholders to translate and disseminate knowledge, could help overcome such barriers.

Focusing on implementation
Existing and previous regional networks focused on reducing violence have tended to fall short on becoming actionable partnerships and exchanging practical advice. Thus, there is a need to focus on the science of implementation as well as for a space where detailed methodologies of evidence-based practices can be shared.

BOX 2

Successful innovations from Latin America

The persistent high rates of violence in Latin America have made room for innovations to address them. Since the 1990s, several cities in the region have been able to cut down homicide rates substantially (see Figure 3). Although some achievements have proven more sustainable than others, the successes share several common features, including strong mayoral leadership; engagement of several actors, including the police, civil society, academics, and the private sector; investment in information systems that provide data to guide policymaking; interventions aimed at high-risk people and places; and citizen engagement and government accountability.

Figure 3

Homicide rates per 100,000 people in Cali, Medellín, and Ciudad Juárez, 1990–2014
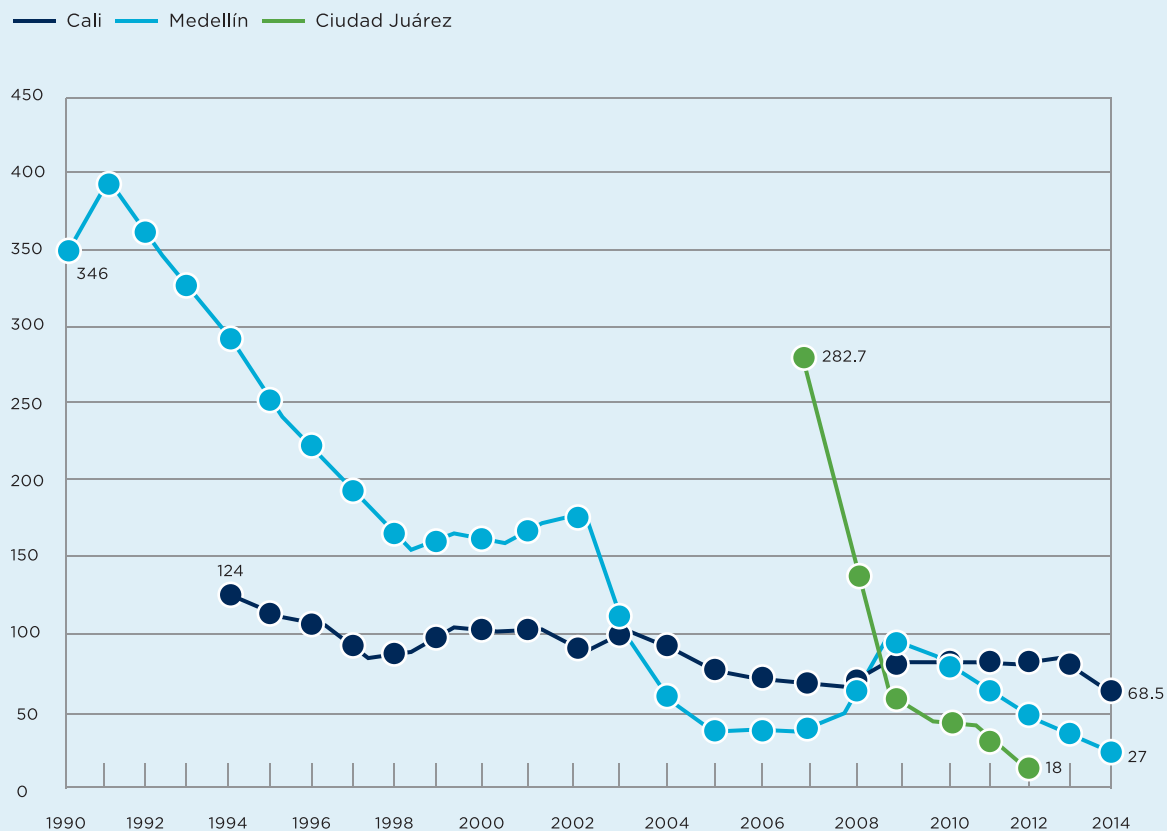
Note: Data unavailable for some cities some years.

Source: Flávia Carbonari, Renato Sérgio de Lima, and Alys Willman, "Learning from Latin America: Policy Trends of Crime Decline in 10 Cities Across the Region" (background paper, *Ending Violence in Childhood Global Report 2017,* New Delhi, India: Know Violence in Childhood, 2017).

Three of these cases, described below, were originally published in Flávia Carbonari, Renato Sérgio de Lima, and Alys Willman, "Learning from Latin America: Policy Trends of Crime Decline in 10 Cities Across the Region" (background paper, *Ending Violence in Childhood Global Report 2017*, New Delhi, India: Know Violence in Childhood, 2017).

Cali's epidemiological and data-driven approach. Cali, Colombia, is considered a pioneer in the use of data to prevent violence. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the city suffered a surge in violent crime, with homicide rates per 100,000 jumping from 23 in 1983 to 104 in 1993. This trend started to change when a new mayor created an injury surveillance system (which would later be replicated throughout Latin America) to identify the societal risk factors linked to violent behavior. The collected data led to the design of preventative policies—such as curfews on bars to help control alcohol consumption in public spaces and bans on the use of firearms in public spaces—as well as to the development of a broad, multisector program that includes interventions focused on youth, families, schools, and justice. By 1997, homicide rates had fallen to 86 per 100,000. Since then, the homicide rate has fluctuated, but it has remained lower than the peak of the early 1990s.

Social urbanism in Medellín. In the early 1990s, the Colombian city of Medellín was considered the most violent in the world, with homicide rates near 400 per 100,000 inhabitants. In the following decade, however, the city became a model for violence prevention in Latin America. The approach of promoting social inclusion through infrastructure improvements and citizen empowerment and ownership, which would become known as *social urbanism*, allowed the city to reappropriate territories dominated by gangs and other violent groups. One of the main expressions of social urbanism was the implementation of Integral Urban Projects, a series of individual and tailored neighborhood interventions characterized by multisector participation and a strong information-management system. The model contributed to improving the well-being of socially excluded families, promoted positive social behavior, and increased confidence and community integration in high-risk neighborhoods by reducing opportunities and incentives for criminal acts. The strategy was combined with other policing interventions and included a wide range of public and private actors. By 2004, homicide rates had been cut in half compared with the early 1990s; by 2007, the homicide rate fell to 37 per 100,000; and by 2014, it hit a new low of 27 per 100,000.

Ciudad Juárez's multisector and participatory effort. In 2010, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, was known as the world's most violent city. With a homicide rate of 282 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, the city called for an emergency response. The federal, state, and municipal governments put together a quick-impact socioeconomic package—*Todos Somos Juárez* ("We Are All Juárez")—consisting of a comprehensive and integrated social- and urban-development program focused on security, health, education, culture, sports, social development, and income generation. The strategy included participatory mechanisms for coordination and monitoring, such as citizen boards for each key area of action composed of federal and local government officials and other stakeholders. By 2015, homicide rates had dropped to 18 per 100,000.

Measuring the impact of collaboration

The effective impact of peer-to-peer learning needs to be measurable. More systematic engagement, which requires consistent coordination among the different stakeholders, and constant provision of feedback could help assess and document results on a more permanent basis.

Focusing on scaling and sustainability

At the program level, scaling and sustainability are two of the key challenges for any violence-reduction intervention. Chicago and Cali, for example, have seen homicide rates fluctuate despite all the investments in prevention over the past several decades; Medellín and Ciudad Juárez still have high rates, despite significant declines. Understanding how to make the impact of evidence-based interventions sustainable over time is crucial. Political will and leadership of mayors are also crucial to ensure sustainability, as the history of Medellín, for example, has shown.

Improving data quality

Ensuring that interventions are data driven and rigorously evaluated is also quite challenging—particularly in Latin America, where countries still lack a culture of monitoring and evaluation, quality data, and the resources to improve that data. In this sense, more exchanges and capacity building on data collection and evaluation are also needed. Improving evaluations will also help to generate more evidence that can be disseminated and, in turn, demonstrate results to create more political incentives.

Engendering a common purpose

Imperative to success is a comprehensive view of the Western Hemisphere. Despite contextual differences, key problems related to violent crime faced by most cities in the Americas are the same.

Differences lie in the capacity of the solution and the political environments—hence the need for exchanges, adaptation, and analysis.

Part III: A call to action for a regional agenda

It is time to define a common vision in the hemisphere for reducing violent crime in the Americas. There is a strong consensus that a regional problem requires a regional response with multisector solutions.

Defining a common vision begins by clarifying the focus of efforts. Given that the Americas account for more urban homicides than any other region in the world, the focus should be on lethal violence, in particular gun violence. The vision should also acknowledge that the concentration of violence in specific places and populations requires a special focus.

The vision should also demonstrate some basic shared principles:

- Embrace a public-safety paradigm in which prevention and enforcement strategies are balanced and coordinated.

- Recognize the value of partnerships that are multidisciplinary and community based.

- Maintain long-term continuity and political commitment.

- Apply data and evidence to inform efforts.

- Base peer interactions on transparency, candor, and humility.

- Emphasize values of equity, fairness, and justice. While the goal is to reduce homicides, the means matter.

A structure for the vision

Promoting such a vision depends on an accountability structure, such as a regional network focused on violence reduction and prevention among urban youth. Despite existing efforts, a new and intentional regional collaboration could address some of the previously discussed gaps by helping to reduce and prevent violence across different contexts through evidence sharing and generation. It could also support exchanges among different cities on how, exactly, implementation and processes worked or did not work. By allowing cities across the Americas to learn about different systems' approaches to the same problem, a collaboration would help fill the knowledge gap by sharing the best evidence and promising innovations being implemented throughout the region. Any such collaboration should include the following characteristics:

Common regional vision and mission

Urban violence is a regional problem that calls for regional responses and multisector solutions. The mission should be to build safe, peaceful, and resilient cities.

Specific, practical goals

Beyond its ultimate objective of reducing urban youth violence in cities throughout the Americas, a collaboration should have specific practical goals, such as promoting peer-to-peer learning with a strong focus on evidence and data, disseminating not only practices but also processes as well as

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costs and time needed for implementation and results, and providing technical assistance during adaptation and implementation.

Ultimately, cities strive to reduce urban youth violence by increasing the capacity and effectiveness of stakeholder efforts while preserving justice, fairness, and legitimacy. However, at a more immediate and practical level, they should make the following efforts:

- *Collect and share* research and evidence; frameworks; tools for planning, implementation, scaling, and evaluation; best practices and processes; communications tools and strategies; and systems for data collection and recording.

- *Convene* leaders at different instances, and connect with other networks. One large annual meeting, for example, would include high-level officials (such as mayors themselves), and smaller, more frequent meetings, action tours, calls, and webinars would target more technical and lower-ranking staff.

- *Build capacity* by providing technical assistance (to allow vetoing of low-quality programs and projects) and promoting peer-to-peer exchanges and joint projects (in which key actors enable and facilitate the adoption and adaptation of evidence-based policies and programs).

- *Evaluate* the specific interventions being carried out by participating cities—for example, by having partner cities adopt a comprehensive approach based on similar metrics.

Clear target audience

A specific target audience is needed. Because local government leaders would be the chief drivers of intervention efforts, they should be the most important audience. Secondary audiences would include researchers; representatives from multilaterals, foundations, businesses, and other

networks; and community beneficiaries (including youth) and faith leaders. To serve these varied stakeholders and gain their attention, network participation should offer clear incentives. If a mayor is to commit time and human or even financial resources to join such efforts, it is necessary to make it clear what his or her city will be getting in return.

Participation criteria
Clear criteria for participation need to be outlined, such as commitment to share data (beyond a letter of intent) and readiness (for example, by including cities that already have carried out some efforts or have a minimum structure to invest in violence prevention).

Oversight and governance
Collaboration should be braced by distinct leadership and support roles. High-level duties might include assembling best or promising practices and processes or helping translate the evidence being generated by researchers into specific implementation methodologies that are digestible to local governments. Operational tasks could involve anything from ensuring coordination and day-to-day functionality to creating a system for informal interstakeholder communication.

Conclusion

In a region where crime and violence are so pervasive, public safety must be a top priority for every government. Placing this topic at the center of the political agenda is necessary to ensure that citizens live in safe spaces that allow them the freedom to prosper and develop as individuals and communities. Nevertheless, as the experiences shared so far have shown, governments cannot act alone; we all have a role to play, collectively. Urban violence is such a complex and persistent social phenomenon that responding to it requires multisector and multiactor solutions. While context and location matter, prevalent issues and driving factors such as social exclusion transcend them. Evidence and promising practices can therefore be adapted accordingly. Building a regional collaboration that can collect and share research, evidence, and tools—as well as contributing to the necessary capacity to implement such practices and to evaluate them—could be a vital step toward a more peaceful future. ■

About the author
Flávia Carbonari is a senior social-development and citizen-security specialist. She is a consultant with the World Bank, where she has been working on the design and implementation of operational and research projects on social inclusion, citizen security, and social accountability. She has also provided technical assistance and capacity building to governments since 2007, mostly in Latin America and East Asia. Additionally, Carbonari worked as a consultant for the Ministry of Security of Argentina and NGOs in Brazil, with different think tanks in the Washington, DC, area, and as a journalist covering international politics and economics. Carbonari holds an MA in Latin American studies from Georgetown University and a BA in international relations as well as journalism from Pontifícea Universidade Católica of São Paulo.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix I: Mapping networks working on urban violence

The following is an initial inventory of networks, compiled by the World Bank from June to September 2018, currently working on addressing the issue of urban violence at a national, regional, or global level. This exercise was conducted to explore opportunities for collaboration and identify gaps in existing initiatives. This list only includes publicly available information that is descriptive, not analytical or normative. Networks listed include those focusing on urban violence as well as those working on both narrower agendas (such as youth violence and initiatives against extremism) and broader agendas that include but are not limited to urban violence (such as 100 Resilient Cities). Information not shown is missing because it is not available online. Networks identified after the World Bank's mapping exercise are denoted with an asterisk (*); these networks are not included in the analysis in Appendix II. This list is not exhaustive; any oversights are inadvertent and unintentional. Please contact the Chicago Council on Global Affairs or the World Bank to be included in future summaries of such efforts.

100 Resilient Cities
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2013
https://www.100resilientcities.org/

Alliance of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice of NGOs
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 1972
https://cpcjalliance.org/

Brazilian Forum of Public Safety
Geographic focus: Brazil
Founded in 2006
http://www.forumseguranca.org.br/

Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention
Geographic focus: Canada
Founded in 2006
http://safercities.ca/home

Cities United
Geographic focus: United States
Founded in 2011
http://citiesunited.org/

Cure Violence*
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2000
http://cureviolence.org

European Crime Prevention Network
Geographic focus: Europe
Founded in 2001
https://eucpn.org/

Global Alliance on Armed Violence
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2012
http://allianceonarmedviolence.org/

Global Campaign for Violence Prevention
Geographic focus: Global
http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/

Global Network on Safer Cities
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2012
https://unhabitat.org/urban-initiatives/networks/global-network-on-safer-cities/

Global Partnership Initiative on Safer Cities
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2016
http://nuaimplementation.org/commitments/global-partnership-initiative-on-safer-cities/

Injury and Violence Prevention Network (Safe States Alliance)
Geographic focus: United States
https://www.safestates.org/?IVPN

Inter-American Coalition for the Prevention of Violence
Geographic focus: Americas
http://www.oas.org/dsp/IACPV/ingles/cpo_declaracion.asp

IPA Peace & Recovery Program*
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2017
https://www.poverty-action.org/program-area/peace-and-recovery

J-PAL Crime and Violence Initiative*
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2017
https://povertyactionlab.org/crime-violence-conflict

Movement towards Violence as a Health Issue*
Geographic focus: United States, expanding internationally
Founded in 2015
http://violenceepidemic.com

National Crime Prevention Network Association
Geographic focus: Malaysia
Founded in 2013
https://ncpna.weebly.com/about.html

National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention
Geographic focus: United States
Founded in 2010
https://youth.gov/collaboration-profiles/national-forum-youth-violence-prevention

National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College
Geographic focus: United States, expanding internationally
Founded in 2009
https://nnscommunities.org/

National Network of Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs
Geographic focus: United States
Founded in 2009
http://nnhvip.org/mission/

National Violence Prevention Network
Geographic focus: United States
Founded in 2007
http://www.preventviolence.net/

Nordic Safe Cities
Geographic focus: Nordic states
Founded in 2016
https://nordicsafecities.org/about/

Prevention of Violence Canada
Geographic focus: Canada
Founded in 2005
http://povc.zimsoft.ca/

Resolve Network
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2015
https://www.resolvenet.org/global-network/

Sahel Network on Preventing Violent Extremism
Geographic focus: Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal
http://snpve.org/

Strong Cities Network
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2015
https://strongcitiesnetwork.org/about-the-scn/

Violence Prevention Alliance
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2004
http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/en/

Violence Prevention Network
Geographic focus: Global
Founded in 2004
http://www.violence-prevention-network.de/en/

Appendix II: Analysis of networks working on urban violence

The following provides a summary and examination of results generated from the World Bank's mapping exercise to identify networks in place to reduce or prevent urban violence, anywhere in the world.[17] The purpose of this analysis is to understand to what extent a new network to reduce or prevent violence in the Americas could be beneficial on its own or in combination with existing networks doing work that complements or catalyzes existing efforts.

This analysis was prepared by staff at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) under contract to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Latin America and the Caribbean Youth Violence Project funded under the YouthPower Task Order, contract no. AID-OAA-I-15-00007.

Results. Twenty-four networks[18] working in urban violence reduction or prevention were identified using publicly available information (e.g., websites and published reports). Each network was described according to a wide range of characteristics to include the following:

- Mission, vision, and objectives

- Headquarters and leadership

- History

- Membership profile, including inclusion criteria

- Partners

- Management and governance structure

- Financial profile and source(s) of support

- Geographic focus (city or municipal, state, country, regional, global)

- Thematic focus service types (e.g., peer learning; evidence building, including monitoring and evaluation; capacity development)

The average age of the networks is nine years, but one network, the Alliance of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice of NGOs (the Alliance), is more than 45 years old, having been founded in 1972. There are 371 different cities associated with these 24 networks, with many cities participating in multiple networks. The cities are in a broad range of countries on multiple continents, including Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North and Central America, and South America.

Membership in these networks is diverse and includes municipal, state, federal, or national government agencies (e.g., mayors, law enforcement, public health), nongovernmental organizations, researchers and universities, and multilateral entities (e.g., UNESCO, USAID, WHO). There is some involvement by faith-based groups and community members (e.g., parents, teachers, youth) in these networks, but these audiences are not as heavily involved as are professionals whose work intersects with issues of urban violence.

Member locations

(N = 371 distinct locations)

Africa	Asia	Oceania[1]	Caribbean	Central America	Europe	Middle East	North America[2]	South America
20 (5%)	23 (6%)	5 (1.5%)	5 (1.5%)	21 (6%)	82 (22%)	12 (3%)	147 (40%)	55 (15%)

[1] Includes three locations in Australia and two in New Zealand

[2] Includes nine locations in Mexico

Only two networks have publicly available information on their budgets supporting network operations and activities. The Global Partnership Initiative on Safer Cities (implemented through the Quito Implementation Platform of the United Nations) reported an annual budget of $200,000, and the Violence Prevention Network (headquartered in Berlin) reported an annual budget of $2 million. Despite minimal publicly available information on individual network budgets, funding sources are documented for most of the 24 networks. This information indicates that most networks receive their funding from philanthropic sources (e.g., foundations, individual donations), followed by state or country sponsorships, and to a lesser extent fees paid directly from network members who benefit from or receive services through the network.
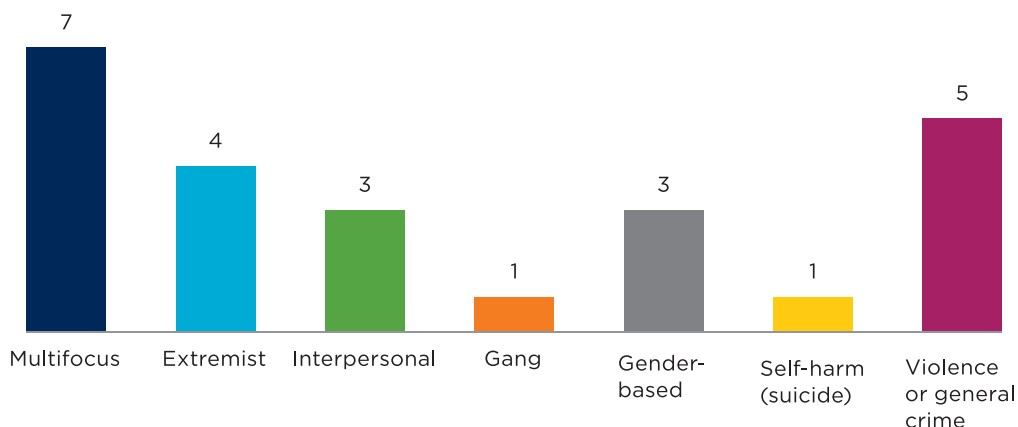
The governance structure of many networks includes a series of volunteer committees and advisers who provide guidance on network priorities, help coordinate activities of members across the network, and oversee the implementation of network activities. Some of these committee volunteers may be appointed through membership privileges, where members receive a seat on committees for a prescribed term of one to three years. In other cases, the mechanism of committee participation appears to come from preexisting relationships among on-the-ground practitioners, researchers, or policymakers who have been influential as thought or practice leaders in the violence-prevention field where these networks operate. There is very little publicly available information on the actual operational details of how each network functions on a day-to-day basis, and what staffing or infrastructure supports this work.

The thematic focus of the networks is wide-ranging, with several networks including violent extremism as their primary focus area (25 percent), but rarely (less than 1 percent) do any networks explicitly focus on gang violence or self-inflicted violence (i.e., suicide). Almost half (45 percent) of the networks focus on multiple types of violence, including interpersonal violence, community violence, gang violence, and youth violence. Several networks (e.g., 100 Resilient Cities) focus on additional topical areas (e.g., environmental protection) related to improving community well-being or strengthening civil society supports.

Violence focus areas

(# of networks)

7	4	3	1	3	1	5
Multifocus	Extremist	Interpersonal	Gang	Gender-based	Self-harm (suicide)	Violence or general crime

Network activities or services provided to members

(% of networks)

Category	Value
Research and assessment	45
Technical assistance	45
Peer-to-peer learning	42
Advocacy	38
Capacity development	25

Only two of the 24 networks (8 percent), both situated in and focused on European communities, include a focus on drug-related violence. Network activities most commonly focus on evidence building and technical assistance (54 percent of networks include both activities), whereas only a quarter of networks, or fewer, offer support for direct management of violence prevention or intervention programs (20 percent) or capacity development (25 percent), categorized as distinct from technical assistance but not defined further. Only two networks, Resolve and Nordic Safe Cities, limit their activities to one type; these are research and peer learning, respectively.

Discussion. More than half (62.5 percent) of those participating in violence-prevention networks emanate from the Americas and the Caribbean, and the majority of participants (64.0 percent) hail from the Northern Hemisphere. Among the members coming from these regions, their specific municipal locations represent the most violent places in each respective country, meaning that the places that may need the most violence-prevention supports are theoretically related to some resources to aid their efforts. The quality or uptake of these resources and supports, what is valued the most or least, and any violence prevention–related outcomes attributed to network participation are not reported in publicly available sources. Further, the public information available about these networks is not precise enough to match locations with all the networks to which they may be connected, so it is likely that this analysis may be underestimating the resources available to, or being accessed by, communities in the region.

What is clear is that almost all networks serve as hubs for addressing multiple types of urban violence issues through multiple supports from peer learning to research and technical assistance. Single-issue or single-support networks are rare, perhaps indicating lack of demand from the market or support from funders. Although the genesis of networks may spring from broad intergovernmental and multilateral agreements or through a single nongovernmental entity funded to act as a backbone organization for the network, there appears to be a heavy emphasis on network members volunteering to serve on committees on a rotating, time-limited basis to set the course for the network's priorities, create policies to govern external network functions with network members, provide expertise designing and implementing network activities, and develop funding and sustainability strategies to maintain and expand the network's presence.

Endnotes

1 Most of the homicide data in this report are from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which is the most reliable and complete source for international comparison. That said, the data are self-reported by the countries, and not all countries provide data for every year. Researchers have endeavored to collect the most recent and complete data available.

2 Seguridad, Justicia y Paz, *Metodología del ranking (2017) de las 50 ciudades más violentas del mundo*, March 2018.

3 Homicide Monitor, Igarapé Institute, accessed February 7, 2016, http://homicide.igarape.org.br/.

4 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data*, March 2014, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/GSH2013/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf.

5 Erin Grinshteyn and David Hemenway, "Violent Death Rates: The US Compared with Other High-income OECD Countries, 2010," *American Journal of Medicine* 129, no. 3 (March 2016): 266–73, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2015.10.025.

6 Homicide Monitor (for Caracas, Venezuela, 2016; Bogotá, Colombia, 2017), accessed July 31, 2018, http://homicide.igarape.org.br/.

7 Instituto de Pesquisas Econômicas Aplicadas and Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, *Atlas da Violência 2018*, Políticas Públicas e Retratos dos Municípios Brasileiros, June 2018, http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/relatorio_institucional/180614_atlas_2018_retratos_dos_municipios.pdf.

8 United Nations, *Global Study*.

9 Secretaria de Governo da Presidência da República, Secretaria Nacional de Juventude e Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, *Índice de vulnerabilidade juvenil à violência 2017: Desigualdade racial, municípios com mais de 100 mil habitants*, 2017, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002606/260661por.pdf.

10 Crime Lab analysis of CPD records, US Census Bureau, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention WISQARS, and National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS).

11 Flávia Carbonari, Renato Sérgio de Lima, and Alys Willman, "Learning from Latin America: Policy Trends of Crime Decline in 10 Cities Across the Region" (background paper, *Ending Violence in Childhood Global Report 2017*, New Delhi, India: Know Violence in Childhood, 2017).

12 The meaningful parallel between the level of violence in Latin America and the United States, and the common distinctive features of violence across the two contexts are well documented by Laura Chioda in *Stop the Violence in Latin America: A Look at Prevention from Cradle to Adulthood*, Latin American Development Forum Series (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017).

13 The examples mentioned in this paper refer only to networks and interventions in which participants present at the meeting had been somehow engaged.

14 Chicago Police Department, *Annual Report 2017*, October 2018, https://home.chicagopolice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2017-Annual-Report.pdf.

15 For more information on evaluations of Cure Violence, please see http://cureviolence.org/results/impactworldregions/

16 Paula Mascarenhas, *Seminário Pacto Pelotas pela Paz – Texto Base,* November 2017, http://yedacrusius.com.br/pacto-pelotas-pela-paz/. More information available in Portuguese at http://www.pelotas.rs.gov.br/pacto/#.

17 The network mapping output was produced by the Stability, Peace, & Security team in the Social, Urban, Rural, & Resilience Group managed by Lead Social Development Specialist Laura E. Bailey, who is the global lead for the Stability, Peace, & Security team at the World Bank.

18 Networks identified through the mapping exercise are listed in Appendix I.

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