

***The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime
and the International Report
on Crime Prevention and Community Safety***

by

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From: Marc Coester and Erich Marks (Eds.):
International Perspectives of Crime Prevention 2
Contributions from the 2nd Annual International Forum 2008
Forum Verlag Godesberg GmbH 2009, Page 33-42

ISBN 978-3-936999-60-0

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The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime and the International Report on Crime Prevention and Community Safety

I. The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime: an Observatory on Crime Prevention and Community Safety

The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC), created in 1994 and based in Montreal, Canada, is the only non-profit international organisation dedicated exclusively to crime prevention and community safety. It was established to facilitate the emerging consensus on the role of governments, and particularly cities, in ensuring the safety of citizens, by implementing effective and sustainable preventive policies and programmes. ICPC promotes the active participation of national and local governments in coordinated strategies to prevent crime. A wide variety of public and private stakeholders take part in such collaborative strategies, including actors from social, economic, community and academic sectors, as well as civil society organisations.

ICPC was created and developed in close partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), and particularly its *Safer Cities Programme*, as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), both of which are members of the Centre. It is a member of the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme Network, participates actively in the sessions of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, has been involved in an expert capacity in the development of the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (ECOSOC Res. 2002/13), and organised workshops on crime prevention and urban governance issues at the 10th and 11th UN Congress on Crime Prevention & Criminal Justice in 2000 and 2005¹.

A central part of ICPC's activities is also to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience in crime prevention. Since its inception, ICPC has collated, analysed and disseminated information on effective and innovative crime prevention policies and practices, and published a number of compendiums of good practice². It has also undertaken a number of comparative studies on specific issues, such as the role of local authorities, the police and the private sector in crime prevention, the emergence

¹ See: Shaw Margaret, Travers Kathryn (Eds.) (2007), *Strategies and Best Practices in Crime Prevention*, in particular in relation to Urban Areas and Youth at Risk, Proceedings of the Workshop held at the 11th UN Congress, Bangkok, 18-25th April 2005. Montreal: ICPC.

² Eg. Sansfaçon Daniel, Welsh Brandon (1999), *Crime Prevention Digest II: Comparative Analysis of Successful Community Safety*. Montreal: ICPC; Gauthier Lily-Ann, Hicks David, Sansfaçon Daniel, Saleh Leanne (1999), *100 Crime Prevention Programs to Inspire Action Across the World*. Montreal: International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (2008), *International Compendium of Crime Prevention Practices to Inspire Action Across the World*. Montreal: ICPC.

of new professions in the field, youth and women's safety in urban areas, and the management of public space. It has just completed a three year city exchange programme involving the cities of Montreal, Quebec, Liege, Belgium and Bordeaux, France, which resulted in the development of a toolkit for cities to respond to incivilities associated with drugs and prostitution³.

ICPC regularly organises national and international seminars⁴, and an Annual Colloquium aimed at promoting the exchange of knowledge and tools for crime prevention⁵. It offers training sessions, and participates in a variety of international technical assistance programmes, in collaboration with national and international organisations including the Inter-American Development Bank, UNODC, UN-HABITAT and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

ICPC now benefits from a large network of members and partners, and plays a significant role in disseminating crime prevention resources through different national and international networks, and through its web-site and on-line electronic bulletin on crime prevention⁶.

Building on all this knowledge and these activities, ICPC has officially launched on September 9th, 2008 its first *International Report on Crime Prevention and Community Safety: Trends and Perspectives* and the *International Compendium of Crime Prevention Practices to inspire action across the world*. Both the International Report and the Compendium of Practices intend to contribute to a better understanding of prevention on a global scale and to the development and the implementation of effective and sustainable prevention policies.

II. The International Report on Crime Prevention and Community Safety: a summary

1. Introduction

This International Report presents, for the first time, an overview of the main problems linked to crime, safety, and victimisation in the world, and the types of prevention responses they elicit. It is intended to be published every two years, to provide a basis for tracking evolving issues, and emerging trends in prevention and community safety. The 2010 Report will be presented at the 12th United Nations Congress on

³ Savignac Julie, Lelandais Isabelle, Sagant Valérie (2007), Nuisances publiques liées aux drogues et à la prostitution : Manuel pratique pour l'action locale. Montréal : CIPC.

⁴ For example, an international seminar on crime trend observatories organised in Paris, France, December 11-12th 2007. To access the Proceedings of the first International Meeting on crime observatories: http://www.crime-prevention-intl.org/menu_item.php?code=other_icpc_.

⁵ The ICPC Annual Colloquium is hosted by a different member country each year, on a specific topic, and brings together some 250-300 policy makers, practitioners and researchers. Recent colloquia have focused on the role of the private sector (Santiago, Chile, 2005), communities and crime prevention (Canberra, Australia, 2006), the role of the police (Oslo, Norway 2007) and Women's safety (Queretaro, Mexico, 2008).

⁶ See: www.crime-prevention-intl.org

Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in Salvador, Brazil, from April 12 to 19, 2010.

Who should read the report?

The report is primarily intended for decision-makers in different jurisdictions, cities, regions, provinces and states and countries, as well as professionals, specialised practitioners, non governmental organisations, and members of civil society engaged in crime prevention. It provides an overall analysis of crime prevention and community safety around the world and looks at innovations, promising practices, and emerging issues in these fields. It hopes to instigate reflection on prevention strategies and evaluation. The report will also be of relevance to international organisations, United Nations agencies, development banks, and other regional organisations. It offers a unique set of information exclusively dedicated to prevention, to assist with examination of normative standards, cooperation, and technical assistance needs. Finally, it provides a considerable amount of international material likely to be useful for specialised researchers.

Methodology, structure and content

This first 2008 International Report was developed by the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime between May 2007 and June 2008. It is based on an analysis of international reports and information produced by intergovernmental organisations and specialised networks, and publicly available data from different levels of government, and non governmental organisations dealing with crime prevention and community safety. It also draws on relevant scientific literature. ICPC has privileged material in English, French and Spanish published after the adoption of the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime in 2002. This first edition focuses on the work of countries in North America, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Oceania. The next edition will cover all regions of the world and additional themes.

Based on the broad and multidisciplinary definition of crime prevention adopted in the 2002 UN Guidelines, the 2008 report has two main sections: a thematic analysis of the main crime and community safety problems, chosen on the basis of their relevance and importance in current debates on crime prevention and community safety; and comparative analysis of evolving trends in policies and in the implementation of prevention practices. A general overview introduces each section. Section one begins with a review of the evolution of crime trends internationally and section two with a review of international trends in prevention, six years after the adoption of the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime.

Each chapter includes boxes which provide accounts of a concept, public service, tool, evaluation, or reference in the field of crime prevention. They deal, for example, with the impacts of video surveillance, the emergence of gated communities, or a campaign to prevent violence against immigrant women.

The report benefits from a series of contributions by international experts, who shed light on specific themes such as exploratory walks, interventions with youth gangs, public-private partnerships, or the role of municipal police in urban safety.

Finally, many of the topics presented in this report are illustrated by practical examples in the accompanying International Compendium which presents good and promising practices initiated by national or local governments, public authorities, or non governmental organisations.

2. Issues in community safety: A thematic analysis

Crime: context and international trends

Comparing international crime trends is particularly difficult for a number of reasons, including the lack of reliable and comparable data in some world regions, the absence of standardised data collection practices, and differences in definition of criminal behaviour, which can be considerable. Notwithstanding these limitations, review of information drawn from official statistics, comparative international analyses, and national or international victimisation surveys, suggests a **global trend toward the stabilisation of crime**. Despite marked regional disparities, this trend is evident worldwide with regard to property and drug offences. There are, however, some striking disparities with regard to violent offences (homicide, robbery). Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean still experience very high levels of these types of crime.

Numerous complex factors explain such disparities: **no single factor alone determines crime**. Crime is more prevalent in urban and disadvantaged areas. Urbanisation, poverty, and especially wide income disparities are at issue, not just in themselves, but because they limit access to education, training, employment, and overall services that facilitate personal, economic and social development. Other factors, such as access to firearms, or the use of drugs or alcohol, can also “facilitate” criminal behaviour.

Finally, this brief panorama emphasises issues related to the fear of crime which, while not directly linked to actual crime levels, must be taken into account when developing strategies for promoting community safety.

Women’s safety

As with other forms of crime, the extent of violence against women is difficult to measure worldwide. Nevertheless an international victimisation survey suggests that, in the countries included, **between one-third and two-thirds of women claim to have been victims of violence**.

In the face of this persistent problem, women’s safety has been the subject of **large-scale international mobilisation**. Nearly all international organisations, whether thematic or geographic, have turned their attention to women’s safety, variously developing awareness campaigns, adopting normative standards, or funding technical assistance programmes which aim to change attitudes and behaviour. At a national

level, numerous governments on all continents have established national action plans, and some municipal governments have begun to use an integrated approach that takes account of all aspects of women's safety.

Beyond certain individual factors, women's safety is linked to recognition of their status, their autonomy, their education, and to the equality of the sexes. Empowering them to become more involved in social, political and economic life is central to promoting their safety in numerous regions around the world. In many cases, the role of women in conflict management and in reinforcing community capacity, for example, has allowed them to move from a status of 'victim', or "vulnerable population," to becoming fully participating members of the community.

Youth safety

The notion of "youth" varies considerably from one region of the world to another, but young men of 15 to 24 are the age group with the **highest rate of offending and victimisation** worldwide. Youth offending and victimisation is a very prominent issue in the crime debate. The debate has traditionally been informed by two complementary and often contradictory positions that view youth, on the one hand, as young people who are developing and need protection and on the other, as responsible individuals who must answer for their actions.

These differences are clearly evident in the approaches recommended by international organisations and many of the observed national responses. International organisations emphasise the importance of education, employment and social conditions when analysing youth offending and victimisation. In contrast, for the past fifteen years, public policies at the national level, especially in developed countries, have tended to place greater stress on individual and parental responsibilities.

Nevertheless, **participative approaches** are increasingly being recognised and in numerous regions of the world such approaches have been found to be effective in developing young people's capacities for independence, decision-making, and social integration.

School safety

Encompassing both between concerns about "youth" and issues of safety in public spaces, school safety continues to be an **important issue, especially in developed countries**. This is partly because of the heightened attention given to aggressive student behaviour, especially "bullying", and public and media interest in serious, albeit isolated, school shootings. **In other countries, the provision of education is also a major issue.** Countless children and youth still have only limited access to school and are, therefore, at risk of becoming involved in violence and crime on the streets, but may also experience high risk of violence or sexual assault at school.

The first response to school safety is often a punitive one, targeting “trouble-makers,” but other factors are progressively being considered. The overall **climate** of a school, for example, particularly in terms of the quality of supervision, available resources, and the style of administration, is now more widely acknowledged as an important factor in school safety.

In all countries, regardless of wealth, the most innovative prevention and intervention strategies are those which are comprehensive in including not just the school community, but wider **community partnerships that favour initiatives also involving local actors**. These approaches place school at the centre of the community, and assess the needs of all parties, highlighting everyone’s role in the functioning of a safe school.

Safety in public spaces and at large-scale sporting events

Disorder and “anti-social behaviour” in public spaces cover a wide variety of behaviours and can increase levels of insecurity beyond the likely incidence of crime, but are of common concern in many regions of the world. In all cases the issue is one of **tensions created by conflicts in, or by the use of, public space**, and the coexistence of a variety of users. There can be misunderstandings, as well as criminal activities or public nuisances. In an increasing number of countries, conflict or insecurity can arise from “informal trading”, the activities of sex trade workers, drug traffickers and users, or street children, among others.

Opposing intervention approaches can be clearly distinguished in terms of the use of **inclusive or exclusive approaches and procedures**. The latter aim is to eliminate a problem, or at least make it less visible, by the displacement of populations perceived as, or actually, “disruptive.” The former approach seeks to mediate relations and conflicts between different community members without, a priori, excluding any of them. These approaches use a broad range of social and supportive actions as well as urban planning. They also generally rely on strong partnerships, since responsibility for public spaces often lies with a range of practitioners and individuals.

In the past few decades safety in public spaces, stadiums and other sporting event venues has also become a major issue. This includes Europe with the development of football hooliganism, but also Latin America and Africa, and more sporadically in other regions during major sporting events.

The scale of violence and damage committed during soccer matches, for example, has resulted in the implementation of policies aimed at **containing** outbursts and impeding the mobility and capacity of the main instigators to make trouble. For the past few years there have been attempts to use more positive approaches, such as reclaiming the **celebratory nature of these events** by increasing the variety and type of social and civil interaction. Once again those strategies which use a comprehensive and integrated approach, based on local community resources, appear to be the most successful in terms of promoting safety.

3. Crime prevention: Emerging trends

A marked trend towards knowledge-based prevention

For a number of years there has been an increasing use of prevention approaches which have a strong scientific basis. While progress is uneven, the **evaluation of prevention programmes** in some areas has made it possible to identify “what works”, what is less effective, and why this is the case. Dissemination of such information, and especially its use by national and local decision-makers, does not always appear to have progressed equally. Greater use of evaluation depends on the willingness of numerous actors to base public policies on rigorous analyses and methodologies; some public policies are still determined by budgetary and political orientations.

At an international level progress is evident, nonetheless, in the sense that **prevention policies are now likely to be based on more reliable data, including that collected and analysed by independent authorities**. Concern about the measurement of crime, resource allocation, or the needs of practitioners involved in prevention and safety, have led to the development of a number of data collection and analysis tools, such as safety audits and observatories on crime and social problems.

Unequal involvement of public authorities

While there is still some resistance, efforts to persuade public authorities in the criminal justice field to integrate prevention more clearly into their working methods, are showing signs of success. **Although the role of the police is not clearly defined, they continue to be perceived as the dominant actors in prevention**. In the past few decades, many reforms of policing services have had positive impacts on prevention, even if this has not been their primary purpose. It appears that police visibility and presence needs to be enhanced, as well as their problem-solving activities, but their precise role in prevention remains somewhat vague. In addition, working with multiple prevention practitioners and partnerships can be difficult to harmonise with the operational goals of police services.

The criminal justice system is less obviously concerned with prevention, even though its formal role is recognised. In many regions, there is a demand for local justice, to make it geographically and financially accessible, as well as intelligible in terms of its procedures and mechanisms. Local justice seems to favour community safety. Likewise, legal interventions tend to privilege **conflict management and dialogue between perpetrators and victims of crime**. Several forms of “*maison de justice*” have been developed in various parts of the world, and the restoration and use of traditional mediation and restorative justice processes is increasingly favoured.

“New” community support services

Public authorities, particularly at a local level, encounter many challenges in dealing with prevention and community safety. A number of innovative approaches have been developed which help to increase safety and a sense of security either through

supporting institutions traditionally assigned to this task (such as the police) or by providing additional social control and mediation services. A number of **innovative approaches** have been developed, such as Community Support Officers, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, “*correspondants de nuit*”, fan stewards, Neighbourhood wardens, “*Gestores locales de seguridad*,” and specialised social mediators.

All these initiatives aim to **improve services to the population** by being more available locally, increasing human presence in the evenings and at night, and promoting understanding and dialogue with authorities.

Local actors want to reinforce their role

The role of local authorities and community actors including the private sector is now more frequently recognised by international and national organisations than in the past. Yet, **actual progress in this area does not appear to live up to the stated goals.**

While local authorities are best placed to be able to identify the needs and potential of the local population, their legal status and financial resources are still largely limited. The participation and involvement of residents and community groups is still often restricted to more or less informal consultation, and is hindered by instability and a lack of sustainable resources. Finally, public sector commitments are often in conflict with the need to integrate non-economic partnerships.

Nevertheless, an **abundance of initiatives** can be seen at a local level, and their role is progressively being consolidated in both international and national work.

4. Conclusions

a) There is marked progress in international crime measurement and prevention standards and norms

International crime data is improving. Significant efforts have been undertaken in recent years to track the evolution of crime in terms of standardising, matching, and comparing data. Despite the absence of shared definitions for offences, the development of “international standards” helps to overcome some of the cultural and legal differences in measuring certain types of crime. However, the lack of reliable data is striking in some regions around the world, and does not enable a precise picture of the international situation to be drawn. At an international level and in each country, further development of new data collection and analysis tools is necessary.

Prevention benefits from a set of international standards and norms and recent normative and practical tools have helped their dissemination (eg. through guides, manuals, compendiums). An examination of prevention policies worldwide clearly suggests that these standards are being applied and are inspiring national prevention strategies. Political, economic, cultural, and social evolution, plus the transition of countries toward democracy, particularly in Latin America and Eastern Europe, has led several governments to develop integrated prevention policies based on these principles, at least with regard to their goals.

An increasing number of **international exchange networks** now highlight innovative prevention policies and programmes from around the world. These various networks are dedicated to observing and analysing crime trends and prevention approaches, or developing evaluation methodologies. They are important platforms for the dissemination and adaptation of good strategies in terms of their **transferability between different contexts**.

b) The criminalisation of behaviours contrasts with international principles

The criminalisation of behaviours is observed in several areas and responds to a strictly criminal justice approach to community safety. There are increasing penalties for violence against women, and creation of specific offences intended to draw attention to the problem although there are some attempts to integrate gender more clearly into crime prevention strategies. In relation to children and youth, there has been an increasing tendency to label behaviour as “disruptive” or “antisocial” and little consideration tends to be given to the fact that only a small minority are involved in serious offending. Disciplinary problems at school can too easily be criminalised, while groups of youth are easily labelled as criminal gangs, and subject to severe sanctions. Finally, in public space, “incivilities” are more frequently considered regulatory and criminal, and subject to police action; yet increased regulations multiply the possibilities for breaking the law. Finally, marginalisation is increasingly treated as a “nuisance” that needs to be managed.

This development **contradicts international standards and norms** that favour a more social and educational approach to deviant behaviour and crime based on their causes, and which advocate more nuanced and diversified responses.

c) The development of integrated or “comprehensive” prevention approaches is based on concrete experience, but remains fragile

The development of integrated approaches to prevention appears limited, in part because such approaches entail a **method rather than a model**. Integrated prevention favours audits, partnerships, and a multidisciplinary analysis of crime. It cannot impose or prescribe a list of adoptable measures valid in all parts of the world. On the other hand, **prevention remains a fragile conceptual notion**: research findings are often contradictory and fragmented, national strategies are often a collection of ill-assorted measures, rather than a well articulated plan, and partnerships can be difficult to develop and sustain, bringing together very different actors with different agendas and whose respective roles are not always well defined.

Yet, this approach has delivered **results in terms of improving community safety and reinforcing the capacities of local actors. It has mobilised communities and favoured collective development.** Supported by police services, urban development agencies, and numerous local actors and components of civil society, the cities of Chicago, Bogotá or Durban have all obtained very significant and successful results from integrated prevention strategies.

For the future, integrated prevention can be implemented with **well developed and tested tools.** Partnerships can now draw on three decades of local prevention and safety council experience (such as local coalitions, local round tables). Safety audit tools are enhanced by victimisation surveys, observatories, and innovative participatory tools such as exploratory walks, and by technology such as geocoding. Evaluation approaches have diversified, and include more pragmatic action-research methods, and process evaluations.

d) Prevention is increasingly a condition for sustainable development

Crime prevention is essential to sustainable development, as is the prevention of problems linked to poverty, health, education, and urban development. In fact, **vibrant communities** are not possible without safety and social cohesion. This link was been acknowledged more recently by a number of international and donor organisations, and crime prevention is now seen as an integral part of human security.

It is now recognised that crime prevention involves not only the search for a permanent balance between approaches and actions privileged at different government levels, but also takes account of the specific characteristics of each particular context.

This first edition presents a contrasting portrait of crime prevention in the world. We now have more knowledge and tools to develop integrated strategies for prevention. Some countries will use them, while others will continue to rely on tough criminal justice responses. However, a solid foundation has been established at an international level on which new policies can be built. Crime prevention has been the object of numerous innovations in terms of professional practices and citizen mobilisation at community level. Going far beyond a single response to crime, these approaches also contribute to strengthening the rule of law and democratic processes, and promoting human rights, and in so doing place prevention at the heart of issues of governance and development.

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