YOUTH, IDENTITY AND SECURITY

SYNTHESIS REPORT

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU ON YOUTH AND URBAN VIOLENCE

The report recommends that EU institutions integrate the following elements into their strategies and action plans:

AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL

1. Encourage greater international debate to go beyond the dominant "war on violence" paradigm and replace it with **a preventive policy model**. It is essential that governments consider treating youth gangs not only as a public security issue, but also as a product of socio-economic and political reality;

2. When reviewing Country Strategy Papers and other EU regional programmes, it is important to bear in mind that **there is no direct relation between violence and poverty, and consider public security as a horizontal issue** in development cooperation instead. This is why it is important to **focus on a holistic multi-sectoral approach** to urban violence and to encourage cooperation between justice, public security, police and gender policies, as well as the education, employment and health sectors. In addition, there is a strong need to **elaborate regional responses** to tackle the regional dimensions of violence;

3. Encourage governments to **develop proper youth policies,** to integrate youth strategies into the work of their institutions, and to facilitate, once adopted, the support given by internal and external partners. It is therefore essential to promote a societal consensus on "rehabilitation" rather than "punishment" policies, including socio-educative programmes and a restorative model of justice which can be applied in communities. Encouraging national governments to adopt communitarian police models would be another step in this direction;

4. Promote, with all national governments, the importance of significant **dialogue between government and local civil society organisations (CSOs)**, and the capacity of civil society to participate in and monitor this dialogue.

AT THE PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL

5. **Strengthen CSO capacities to work on issues of youth, women and urban violence**, to more effectively participate in dialogue with governments on those topics and to monitor implementation;

6. Contribute to **gender mainstreaming by promoting a different gender model**, based on equity and opportunities, and by including a gender focus in all programmes and projects related to public security and youth, especially in those related to domestic violence and youth gangs;

7. **Promote and increase knowledge sharing and data collection** on key issues such as the involvement of girls and women in urban violence, and lessons learned on prevention strategies and tools;

8. Support institutions (local in particular) **working on arms control and legislation** (e.g. facilitating an integrated electronic firearms register and assisting in the harmonisation of laws on domestic violence and firearms laws).

9. Support organisations and institutions, particularly local ones, working on attention and support mechanisms aimed at the victims, survivors and perpetrators of urban violence.

10. Contribute **to increasing regional and international exchanges** on police and justice reform programmes, in particular between EU member states and the eight countries analysed. EU member states **should contribute to police reforms to support a more preventive and citizen-centred model**, particularly through training and capacity building.

11. Encourage initiatives aimed at **transforming public opinion on violence issues,** particularly activities targeting the role of the media (journalists' responsibility). These initiatives should **promote the understanding of challenges** and analysis of the origins of violence through participative mechanisms, **show youth in a positive light**, and **take into account the functioning of the state.**

INTRODUCTION

This cluster has dealt with diverse approaches towards youth and urban violence. Special attention has been paid to the role of youth (who represent up to 40 percent of the populations of the countries considered in this study), particularly women and girls. Focus has also been directed on the inter-generational and gender dynamics of urban violence. With regard to local responses to urban violence, the security sector has been at the heart of the debate, while structural reforms of the justice and prison systems and socio-economic measures have been scarce.

Empirical research was based on case studies in eight countries: Brazil, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Mozambique, and Venezuela. In most cities of this rather diverse group of countries, urban violence has been characterised by a "war of the poor against the poor". In some cases (Central America, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique), post-conflict instability or a "violent peace" highlighted the incomplete pacification processes and transition to democracy, while in others, drugs trafficking and/or multi-faceted violence led to a vicious circle of high homicide rates and militarised responses.

Violence is a primary mechanism for conflict resolution and a deeply-rooted practice, particularly in poor urban areas. The vicious circle of gender, youth and violence (30+ homicides per 100,000 inhabitants) characterises the largest cities of the eight countries considered in the cluster. Nearly half the crimes are committed using firearms, owned mainly by police officers, the military and young men[1]. In Central America, particularly El Salvador – the country with the highest global homicide rate and a youth murder rate of 92.3 per 100,000 inhabitants – 381 youth gangs pose a major threat to public security, while drugs trafficking is responsible for most of the homicides committed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

In all of these societies, guns and/or youth gang membership is related to expressions of violent masculinity, status, recognition and power. Hegemonic masculinity is endorsed by stereotypes imposed by the "classical" roles of men (protection) and women (care of children). Domestic violence, sexual abuse and femicide (El Salvador has the highest global rate) are further consequences of this traditional and often violent model of gender construction.

Although experiences have been different with regard to local and international responses, a series of commonalities can be identified. Based on concrete case studies, the cluster offered an in-depth analysis of the urbanisation of violence, the structural causes and impact of youth violence and its gender dimension, as well as an evaluation of local and international responses.

An important conclusion from this cluster is that the militarisation of public security, adopted by the governments of Latin American countries, as well as others, has not been successful. Therefore, the cluster recommendations concentrate on how to apply preventive policies, including programmes which emphasise gender policies and the social inclusion of youth, a civilian police model, arms control, and alternative justice systems closer to people in marginalised urban areas.

Due to limited resources and/or incapacity to tackle urban violence at the local level, there is an urgent need for international donors to engage in projects which link the social dimension of development to urban violence, paying special attention to gender differences and youth in the eight cities with high crime rates considered in this cluster: Bissau, Caracas, Ciudad de Guatemala, Maputo, Praia, Rio de Janeiro, San Salvador, and Tegucigalpa. So far, international responses, including the EU's, to urban violence have been rather limited; therefore, this cluster has concentrated on local approaches to combat urban violence, gender imbalances and youth discrimination.

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1   In Brazil and El Salvador, women represent around 10 percent of firearm homicides.

1. THE URBANISATION OF VIOLENCE

Today, rapid and unregulated urbanisation and chronic urban violence constitute some of the leading concerns of policy makers, academics, urban planners and development practitioners. Urban centres are home to half of the world's population and are expected to host almost all population growth over the next 25 years[2]. Some of the world's highest homicide rates occur in urban areas of countries which are not at war, but rather experiencing violence epidemics. This is particularly true in regions across the developing world – Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean – which account for an estimated 90 percent[3] of urban growth worldwide, and which are facing challenges linked to the integration of their growing populations. Some of these problems have translated into above-average levels of violence and insecurity, such as domestic violence, community violence, institutional violence, and violence perpetrated by organised armed groups with a criminal or political agenda.

Indeed, large and fast-growing cities, particularly those located in lower- and middle-income settings, appear to be particularly prone to endemic organised violence and insecurity. In some cases, these cities and their outskirts have witnessed epidemic rates of violence when compared to other urban centres; violence is often concentrated in densely populated slums and shanty towns, where it has reached a degree of intensity which is almost equivalent to warfare. Firearms play a significant role in urban violence, whether it be interpersonal, community, or collective/organised.

However, even though many large cities experience violence and insecurity problems, urban violence is highly heterogeneous across regions and even countries, and is not simply an inevitability. Similarly, large cities such as Bogotá and São Paolo have succeeded in reducing violent crime despite their large and growing populations. While the size and the pace of growth of cities have some correlation to violence, it is more accurate to say that many of today's fast-growing cities in fact witness a convergence of factors, which, if not properly addressed, can increase the risk of destabilising levels of violence.

In fact, in some large cities of these regions covered by the cluster, the combination of significant or growing social and economic asymmetries, low rates of development, high unemployment rates, unplanned city growth, the fragility of urban infrastructure quality, the availability of firearms, and the centrality of violent cultures in the construction of interpersonal and community relations, as well as widespread impunity, have given rise to a high concentration of armed violence in circumscribed urban territories within larger scenarios of institutionalised peace. In some cases, areas of these cities have become "no-go zones" as a result of high levels of violence between state and non-state armed groups, as well as among non-state armed groups themselves.

In most cases, those areas of a city most afflicted by violence are also the poorest[4], rendering their populations increasingly vulnerable. Globally, men are both the main direct casualties of urban violence and chief perpetrators of violence[5], while women are particularly vulnerable to sexual and domestic violence. The rates of non-fatal urban violence are less divisible by gender.

Violence and crime have significant costs on developing contexts, namely the retraction of investment (state and external); the diversion of resources from development and health and social services for victims towards law enforcement. As a result of stigmatisation and widespread fear, violence also generates serious social costs,

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2   UN-HABITAT (2007). *Global Report on Human Settlements 2007: Enhancing Urban* Safety and Security. London: Earthscan.
3   World Bank (2010). *Violence in the City. Understanding and supporting community responses to violence.* New York: World Bank.
4   C. Moser (2004). 'Urban Violence and Insecurity', *Urbanization and Geography*, 16 (2); R. Briceno-Leon and V. Zubillaga (2002). 'Violence and Globalization in Latin America', *Current Sociology*, 50 (1), pp.19–37.
5   WHO (2008). *Preventing Violence and Reducing Its Impact: How Development Agencies Can Help.* Geneva: WHO.

hindering mobility and access to educational and employment opportunities, eroding governance (ie. the ability and willingness to deliver public services, and provide security and welfare) and social capital. Changes in the physical landscape of cities resulting from violence, namely the creation of artificial divides between criminality-rife areas and wealthy neighbourhoods through the construction of walls and gated communities, further limit access to opportunities for inhabitants of high-crime areas, which reinforces exclusion and inequality, and can further trigger frustration and violence. In turn, residents of wealthier neighbourhoods, as a result of limited contact with other parts of the city, tend to isolate themselves, which reinforces their perceptions of insecurity.

As urban violence is neither confined to the gang phenomenon nor organised criminality, the cluster chose to focus on its inter-generational and gender dynamics and impacts.

2. YOUTH AND URBAN VIOLENCE

Despite being mainly depicted as perpetrators of violence worldwide, youth, especially the poor, living in contexts of marginalisation and inequality, is also the main victim of urban violence. Countries with high rates of urban violence, particularly Central and South America and Sub-Saharan Africa, frequently exacerbated by the persistence of violent illegal economies, also occupy the top spots in world rankings on youth homicide. In addition to this form of extreme violence, urban youths are also affected by family violence, assault and sexual violence – especially young females – as well as institutional violence, namely at the hands of the police and as a result of unemployment, social exclusion and the frustration which arises from the lack of opportunities for social advancement.

Youth has often been unfairly attributed negative or problematic aspects, as well as potential for violence and destabilisation in a myriad of contexts, neglecting the examination of resistance to violence or the resilience of youth and societies. In fact, most youths who are victims of the prolonged world economic and social crisis do not resort to violence as a means of overcoming this status, unless violence is organised towards a particular purpose, such as war or high-risk activities, for example, drugs and arms trafficking. Even in countries or urban areas where criminality is rife, it is usually only a small fraction of society or of youth which involves itself in violent activities.

Studying youth and violence, however, does not necessarily mean treating youth as a problematic group. The fear of stereotyping should not lead analysts to stop studying violence. Instead, the forms of social and political reproduction of violence should be contextualised, highlighting the "ordinary" in the study of both violent and non-violent youth, avoiding the logic of "positive cases" vs "negative cases", and stressing the individualisation of the causes of violence.

Over the last decade in particular, several youth anthropology studies have focused on the idea that youths are tactical, not necessarily strategic, actors, who find ways to cope with or overcome the obstacles imposed by unemployment, poverty, discrimination, social fragmentation or political violence, either through the exercise or non-exercise of violence.

As well as focusing on the violence perpetrated by youth, it is important to focus on the violence enmeshed in and produced by societies and specific political and economic systems. Direct expressions of urban violence, the main victims of which are the world's urban poor, are usually identified with violent economies, such as drugs trafficking, and/or the existence of violent groups, such as gangs, vigilantes, the police or institutional and gender violence. However, the normalisation of political violence and repression is extremely relevant to the examination of other violent patterns traditionally perceived as non-political.

In fact, the distinction between social and political violence is artificial. Political violence is insidious and becomes pervasive over time and in day-to-day life, thus contributing to the rooting and normalisation of what Scheper-Hughes defines as everyday violence: 'the implicit, legitimate, organized and routine violence of specific socio-political formations'[6]. The absence of declared armed conflict does not necessarily mean the absence of violence. Violence is a constant in war and peace, often revealing itself in a continuum or spirals, in which only scale, organisation levels and actors change.

The causes which drive young people to join violent groups have been widely analysed in sociological and anthropological studies in both the fields of urban violence and war. There is a significant resemblance between

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6   N. Scheper-Hughes (1997). 'Specificities: Peace-time crimes', *Social Identities*, Vol. 3, No. 3, p.471.

the causes for violent mobilisation of youth in both the contexts of war and urban violence: unemployment, the search for security and/or power, belief in a cause, vengeance and a sense of injustice are the most quoted causes in both scenarios.

As far as structural causes are concerned, if a chronic and persistent lack of "development" does not necessarily lead to widespread urban violence, a step back in progress achieved and the creation of new inequalities can do so. In this sense, contexts of a deterioration in living standards, as well as greater social inequality and exclusion, even amid settings of apparent economic progress (such as Praia, Rio, San Salvador), are possibly more favourable to the proliferation of violent forms of behaviour than contexts of persistent widespread poverty (such as Bissau).

It is, then, important to underline that it is not (under)development or poverty which promotes collective urban youth violence. The trigger for or against violent reactions is instead the distribution of gains and losses of development and of economic crises, as well as the notion of disempowerment. To a certain extent, then, the collective youth violence phenomena is related to the refusal to accept the structural and daily violence present in society.

Regarding young people's motivations to integrate into violent groups and activities, several studies have shown that economic appeal is not the most decisive cause. This is particularly true in Brazil, and specifically in the case of Rio de Janeiro, where the revenues from drugs sales have in fact been decreasing since the end of the 1990s. In San Salvador (El Salvador), only a few gang members have joined gangs as a way of acquiring financial resources. The most frequently cited reasons are *el vacil*,[7] family problems or a lack of understanding.

Therefore, more than the appeal of financial gain, one should look at the appeal of symbolic gains: the search for a valued social status and possibilities in contexts of adversity. Some authors claim that violence erupts as a result of the mismatch between expectations and possibilities.[8] However, this mismatch does not necessarily push people to adopt violent behaviours, as several accounts confirmed in Bissau. This is not only connected with individual agency and choices which mediate between structural and direct violence. It is also connected with society's ability to control violence and its cadets.

In spite of the fact that violence does not automatically result from this disconnection between expectations and possibilities, this idea remains of utmost importance when analysed along with other factors. One must pay attention to the ways youths react or position themselves when faced with the emergence of global youth cultures and the *mission civilizatrice* that, in the name of development, 'has been promising progress, consumption and a bright future to them, while simultaneously this bright future is severely compromised by the growing inequalities caused by neoliberal capitalism'[9].

In some contexts, mostly those marked by economic crisis, we witness the decreasing of possibilities for young men to assume socially-valued masculinity roles and models, such as being the provider of a family or having access to a prestigious job.

The existence and functioning of youth gangs have been widely analysed as expressions and instigation factors for the adoption of violent masculinities in order to overcome or contradict collective experiences of subordination and discrimination (racial, ethnic, economic, etc.) in a wider social context. Symbolic factors associated with involvement in drugs trafficking and other violent activities, and with the contact with firearms are thus decisive, namely the search for status, power and respect, and attracting recognition from their male and female peers. The adrenaline and danger which youth experiences through these activities are highly connected with gender constructions and expectations. Additionally, women and girls also intervene in support of armed and violent masculinity, either by acquiring a gun and/or participating directly in armed conflicts (albeit in far fewer numbers than men), by encouraging men and boys to participate in violence or by subtly endorsing the stereotypes that associate men and boys with violence and protection.

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7   Hanging out, having fun.
8   R. Briceño-León and V. Zubillaga (2002). 'Violence and globalization in Latin America', *Current Sociology*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp.19–37.
9   J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff (2000). 'Réfléxions sur la jeunese. Du passé à la postcolonie [Reflections on youth. From the past to the post-colony]', *Politique Africaine [African Politics]*, Vol. 89, pp.94–97.

Youth violence is frequently considered an internal matter of the state, of a social and economic or criminal nature, but not as an international or political issue. This perspective echoes the vision which dismisses processes of global marginalisation and securitisation as a form of violence in itself, which can produce more violence, either in spirals or in a continuum.

The analysis of youth violence centred around a problematic image of youth has ended up reinforcing securitisation policies and practices towards poor youths.[10] Different problem-solving models aimed at addressing these violence issues have emerged. Usually these models are based on a certain indifference towards the need to transform cultural, social and economic structures of inequality and marginalisation at the national or international level. Instead, these models prioritise the securitarian dimension of the state and international institutions. Their goal is to perpetuate the control and dominance of marginalised populations by the wealthier classes.[11]

Therefore, international policies are relevant and they do affect local contexts. Just like the "war on drugs", these policies have been characterised by a huge repressive component towards youth, as well as a lack of control concerning issues such as the arms trade. These types of policies tend to securitise poor youths from periphery countries by depoliticising violence and are aimed at controlling threats associated with youth. According to these policies, youths are only visible as specific target groups (not as mirroring society itself and the discriminatory state policies aimed at them) or as threats (namely potential migrants, criminals, drugs consumers or sellers, prostitutes and HIV/AIDS "carriers"). The infra-social forms of violence perpetrated by and against youth are, therefore, neglected. The structural conditions which determine the marginalisation of youth in terms of access to jobs and the ability to voice political demands are also dismissed.

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10   O. Wæver (1993). 'Securitization and desecuritization', *Arbejdspapir* 5 *[Working Paper 5]*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute; B. Buzan, O. Waever and J. de Wilde (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

11   M. Duffield (2001). *Global governance and the new wars: The merging of development and security*. London and New York: Zed Books; M. Duffield and N. Waddell (2006). 'Securing humans in a dangerous world', *International Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp.1–23; R. Martel (2006). 'Las maras salvadoreñas: nuevas formas de espanto y control social' [El Salvadoran gangs: new forms of social control], *Estudios Centroamericanos [Central American Studies]*, Vol. 61, No. 696, pp.957–78.

3. GENDER AND URBAN VIOLENCE: THE ROLE OF GUNS

Urban violence, specifically the functioning of non-state armed groups such as gangs, drug factions, and militia groups – and particularly small arms demand within these groups – is shaped by gender identities and relations. The human toll of urban violence, resulting from the dissemination and use of small arms in particular, has different effects on men, women, boys and girls within different contexts, and it is facilitated either by political and economic conflicts, organised crime (principally associated with drugs trafficking) and interpersonal violence. Gender expectations and roles in and outside these groups are a product of and are affected by gang gun-related violence.

Worldwide, many more men and boys are killed and wounded as a result of urban gun violence than women and girls. In fact, global statistics show that over 90 percent of homicide victims are men, and that men make up 88 percent of those people who committed suicide using a gun in 2010.[12] Violence is not only mainly perpetrated by men, but predominantly young men. A large proportion of young men end up killing or getting killed as a result of processes of affirmation of dominant and violent masculinities.

However, it is important to stress that only a small minority of young men becomes involved in urban gun violence. Many men and boys refuse to adhere to the violent version of masculinity or, after some life-changing experiences, decide to cease their involvement with gun violence. Many others have become active in anti-gun-violence campaigns, lobbying for more robust international small arms trade regulations and better legislation on firearms ownership, and have also joined campaigns to stop violence against women (eg. White Ribbon campaign and the MenEngage Alliance).

The dissemination of small arms facilitates and exacerbates violence and threats of violence against women and men in urban violence scenarios. In these contexts of formal peace, often several groups – police authorities, vigilante groups, gangs and organised crime groups – resort to gendered armed strategies, ranging from systematic sexual crimes, femicide and forced displacement, to the manipulation and perversion of the perceptions of the roles of women and men with bellicose aims.

Despite the statistical predominance of men as users and victims of urban violence, women are also agents, albeit in smaller numbers, and targets of certain types of urban violence as a result of their sex. Women also endure unique and specific effects of this type of violence (direct and indirect), and an understanding of these is key to effective intervention.

Where gender-disaggregated studies on firearms-related urban violence are available, evidence shows that guns play a significant role in the perpetration of violence against women, either at home or in public spaces. In San Salvador, capital of the country with the highest levels of femicide, most female victims of gun-related violence are killed in public spaces, often after sexual assault at gun point. In other settings, such as in Rio de Janeiro or Maputo, firearms are particularly dangerous to women if they are accessible at home to someone known to the victim, regardless of who owns the weapon or whether it was acquired as a form of protection. In addition to causing direct harm, often in cases of domestic violence, guns are used to threaten an intimate partner, especially women.

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12 IANSA Women's Network (2011). 'Voices of Survivors: the different faces of gun violence,' accessed 20th October 2011. Available at http://www.iansa-women.org/sites/default/files/newsviews/iansa_wn_voices_of_survivors_2011_web_0.pdf

Additionally, even when women are not directly targeted by urban gun violence, they often bear the brunt of its socio-economic and emotional impacts, and are left to pick up the pieces of lives and societies shattered by it. Groups of relatives of victims of gun violence in Rio de Janeiro, mostly made up of women, especially mothers, are an example of this.

While participation in collective urban violence, especially gun use, is intertwined with culturally endorsed expressions of masculinity in which guns are often associated with virility, some women and girls intervene actively and also unconsciously in support of armed and violent masculinity, either by acquiring a gun and/ or engaging directly in armed groups and armed conflicts, by encouraging men to participate in violence or by endorsing the stereotypes which associate men with violence and protection, namely through the glorification of firearms and seeking access to them as a way of obtaining goods and status.

The motivations cited for the involvement (primary and secondary) in collective urban violence differed between girls and women. In the case of girls, the search for social recognition (mirrored in the possibility of obtaining respect and having access to consumer goods and/or drugs), the feeling of belonging (faced with exclusion and family rupture and abuse scenarios), and adrenaline were the main motivations.

For women, motives often had to do with the attempt to fulfil basic needs and support their families, especially when they were unemployed. This classification did not intend to establish any sort of hierarchy between the mobilisation motivations of girls and women (considering the former more *superficial* and the latter more *legitimate*). Although different, these motivations are the result of power relations to which girls and women are exposed and of social expectations frequently imposed on both men and women as conditions to gain esteem within a certain social group.

Motherhood appeared both as a causal and explanatory factor for the continued involvement of women and girls in collective urban violence, as well as a factor for behavioural change.

When involved in collective urban violence such as vigilante groups, gangs and organised crime groups, women are both victims and aggressors. Strategies vary from group to group, but they are greatly similar to those of mobilisation to and training for war, and are a product of the reproduction of unequal power relations between men and women. Preconditions for being part of the group are related to male characteristics, such as strength, agility and quick reactions; however, women are expected to correspond to the same patterns. After entering the group, women are sometimes subjected to the "obligation" of providing sexual favours to the group's men.

In terms of labour division, women are frequently assigned support roles (e.g. surveillance duties, drug mules, hiding and transporting weapons, collecting extortion and conveying information by taking advantage of their innocent image), but can also be assigned direct ones. Thus these groups replicate and exacerbate the patriarchal model in which women are permanently controlled by men and are considered as dependent subjects.

Additionally, confrontation strategies between gangs and other organised non-state groups involve territorial domination which is also associated with the bodies of women from the rival group through rape. Other groups also frequently use the murder and torture of women as a way of instilling fear among civilian populations, creating an environment of terror and obtaining political benefits.

Despite this, prevention and combat policies and programmes have been aimed almost exclusively at men and boys, paying scant attention to the roles and impacts of gun violence on women and girls. In addition to this, many female former gang members continue to suffer discrimination for having belonged to these groups.

4. LOCAL RESPONSES TO URBAN VIOLENCE

Local responses to urban violence can be divided into two different approaches. While Central American countries have focused on heavy-handed policies and the militarisation of public security, police reform has been at the centre of official policies in Caracas, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Rio de Janeiro. Programmes for the control of small arms (estimated at 650 million worldwide) are being implemented in Maputo and Rio de Janeiro, and are currently under debate in Venezuela.

Besides government responses, in some countries – especially in Brazil and those in Central America – NGOs are actively involved in combating urban violence, implementing and advocating for structural preventive policies based on economic, social and cultural activities. In Caracas, Rio de Janeiro and Central America, NGOs have designed and implemented local responses to high levels of violence, whereas in the other countries covered by the cluster NGO impact has been rather limited.

In the special case of Venezuela, due to political polarisation between government and opposition, coordination between official and NGO responses is very weak. The relative passivity of the government is partly compensated for by the activities of an organised civil society. The opposite can be said for Praia, where local responses involving NGOs have been designed by the government, with civil society playing a rather weak role.

4.1 POLICE REFORM

In most of the eight countries covered by the cluster, the dominant model of policing is repressive and authoritarian. In Guatemala, Venezuela and Brazil, members of the police have been particularly involved in criminal activities and human rights violations. However, in other larger cities, police-led violations of human rights are also the norm rather than the exception. For example, the "war" against crime of the National Police in San Salvador was partly related to human rights abuses and extrajudicial executions. In most of the countries, the Doctrine of National Security still influences the military and the police involved in the "war against crime", accompanied by authoritarianism, repression and human rights abuses.

Nonetheless, the local governments of Rio de Janeiro and Maputo have begun to implement a different model of policing closer to the citizens of poor urban areas. In Rio, a pilot project created in 2008 and based on community police units (*Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora*) has already been implemented in 21 poor communities or favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Although the members of UPP are recruited by the repressive military police, they are younger and receive a special (although rather short) training on human rights and social work for their work in the *favelas*. The pilot programme is part of the National Programme on Public Security with Citizenship focused on conflict prevention and coordination between the different states of Brazil. Although results tend to be positive (community-police relationships have improved and homicide rates have declined), the *de facto* military occupation of poor communities, such as the *Complexo de Alemão*, has also been accompanied by imprisonment and renewed repression.

Following a restructuring of the police in 2005, the Government of Cape Verde approved the Law on Criminal Policies to strengthen criminal investigation and, five years later, the social reintegration of criminals. Among other measures, the strategy to pacify rival thugs and lower crime rates included the creation of an inter-ministry Commission to Combat Violence, aimed at establishing a social pact towards an integrated and holistic programme to tackle violence. Although the attempt to give a structural response to violence has not yet been successful (in terms of declining homicide rates), it has revealed the necessary political will to find alternative solutions to repression.

Since 2006, the Venezuelan Government has pushed for police reform, including the centralisation of police units and criminal investigations, and, among other initiatives, a new Bolivarian Police has been created in Caracas. Results are, however, still very limited: violence has not been reduced, and in Caracas the homicide rate has even risen to 120 per 100,000 inhabitants.

In the Venezuelan capital, the privatisation of security (there are 700,000 private security agents, double the number of police) has been a consequence of limited governmental responses to widespread and multi-causal violence. In Praia, the private security sector has, proportionally, increased even more: 2,500 guards, integrated into 13 larger companies, have "replaced" rather inefficient public police forces.

4.2 JUSTICE AND PRISON SYSTEMS

Mistrust in justice was a dominant concern in all case studies. On the one hand, the access of poor young men and women to justice is limited and, on the other, they are targeted and pursued by the police and the justice system itself. This stigmatisation or "criminalisation of the poor" by "zero tolerance policies" is equivalent to a denial of basic rights to poor people in marginalised urban areas.

In none of the eight countries were successful justice reforms undertaken. In most of the cities considered in this cluster, impunity rates are particularly high (more than 90 percent in Caracas and San Salvador), and prisons are both in bad condition and overcrowded. In the case of Caracas, the judicial system is highly politicised by the division between government-loyal *chavistas* and the opposition. In Guatemala, as a consequence of impunity, lynching by the community, extrajudicial executions and "social cleansing" have increased considerably.

In Brazil, where homicide and crime rates have fallen in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paolo as a result of successful social policies, public security investments and disarmament initiatives, as well as civil society participation, the justice system is still perceived as a repressive and selective instrument to target and imprison black and poor young men for drugs trafficking. Thus, in all cases, judicial reforms should be implemented to improve efficiency and access for the poor. Apart from moving closer to community models of alternative justice, an amnesty for young people involved in minor drugs trafficking should be considered.

4.3 LEGISLATION ON ARMS CONTROL, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND YOUTH GANGS

In 2003, Brazil – the second-largest small arms exporter in the Americas – approved the Disarmament Statute which is considered as one of the strictest in the world. Despite this, two years later, the attempt to prohibit the commercialisation of small arms through a referendum failed. Compared to Brazil, El Salvador has one of the weakest gun laws in the region. Nonetheless, a reform to increase the age to carrying a weapon and the number of gun-free zones in the country has recently been approved.

With regards to domestic violence, Brazil approved a law in 2006 to combat and prevent violence against women (*Lei Maria da Penha*). Three years later, Mozambique also created a new national legal framework on domestic violence; although, in contrast to the Brazilian legislation, the law does not recognise violence as the result of power imbalances between men and women.

Youth gangs like Mara Salvatrucha or the 18th Street Gang, originally created in California, are a shared problem for public security in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Although their links to organised crime have proved to be limited, the dominant response has been the criminalisation of youth gangs. El Salvador was one of the first Central American countries which approved an *anti-maras* law in 2003, which prohibited the membership to youth gangs and decreased the criminal age to 12 years. The law is part of a hard-line policy called *Plano Mano Dura* and *Super Mano Dura*, which includes the participation of the military in public security. By penalising youth gangs, the government in fact neglected the social and cultural roots of the problem.

Figures prove that this policy did not solve but instead aggravated violence and public insecurity by reinforcing the socially isolated *maras*. As an alternative (although incoherent) strategy, the government approved two programmes (*Mano Amiga* and *Mano Extendida*) to prevent violence in communities and to promote the rehabilitation of gang members. Nonetheless, there is still no integrated or holistic policy based on conflict prevention through social measures (such as education and employment).

4.4 SOCIAL POLICIES

In several cities special programmes (sports, cultural activities, health services, employment offices) have been implemented to address high levels of violence among young people living in marginalised areas.

For example, similar public policies have been implemented in Praia by the government in partnership with NGOs and international donors. In 2006, the government also approved a service of social reintegration and alternative sanctions to prison to combat youth delinquency. Brazil has also successfully implemented several programmes to improve social conditions in poor urban communities (50 million Brazilians have joined the middle class).

This trend marks a sharp contrast to Central America. In El Salvador, Guatemala (only 41 percent of pupils finished primary school and 22 percent are illiterate) and Honduras there is an urgent need for access to education, health and capacity building for young men and women.

5. (LIMITED) INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

The EU and the United States are the main external partners of the eight countries considered in this cluster. Even if the case studies concentrated on local policies to remedy urban violence, youth and gender imbalances, it should be stressed that there is a lack of coordinated international responses.

Neither the United States (the main external actor in Central America) nor the EU (the principal partner of Brazil, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Venezuela) has been particularly active on this topic. In general, the international donor community has been largely absent when it comes to tackling urban violence, youth gangs and gender models which contribute to high levels of insecurity, sexual abuse, femicide and domestic violence.

Despite cross-border crime of youth gangs operating between Central America and the United States, Washington's response to increasing levels of violence has been rather limited. Among others, USAID is implementing several local projects to strengthen the government's capacity to tackle crime. Limited responses contrast with a certain co-responsibility of the United States with regard to youth gangs in Central America and Praia. In fact, the massive deportation of young gang members in the United States to their countries of origin, mainly Central America and Cape Verde, has transferred the problem of violence to El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Cape Verde.

The role of the EU is different, and its activities concentrate on development cooperation. In the eight countries, social projects have been the main response of the EU to urban violence, gender imbalances and youth. In several countries, the EU is implementing projects which tackle the social roots of urban violence and the integration of young men and women living in marginalised urban areas into society. Moreover, gender is a horizontal issue in EU development cooperation. In Venezuela, the EU has offered support to human rights organisations and NGOs which are focusing on public security. Due to technical and political obstacles, however, no official cooperation with the government has been reached in this area. In other countries such as El Salvador and Honduras, the EU is also paying increasing attention to public security, particularly by strengthening the judicial system, the police and by improving prison conditions.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above, the EU can play a critical role in ensuring appropriate interventions in and support for the countries analysed within this cluster. This support should take place both at the political and programmatic level:

AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL

1. Encourage greater international debate to go beyond the dominant "war on violence" paradigm and to replace it with **a preventive policy model**. It is essential that governments consider treating youth gangs not only as a public security issue, but also as a product of socio-economic and political reality;

2. When reviewing Country Strategy Papers and other EU regional programmes, it is important to bear in mind that **there is no direct relation between violence and poverty, and consider public security as a horizontal issue** in development cooperation instead. This is why it is important to **focus on a holistic multi-sectoral approach** to urban violence and to encourage cooperation between justice, public security, police and gender policies, as well as the education, employment and health sectors. In addition, there is a strong need to **elaborate regional responses** to tackle the regional dimensions of violence;

3. Encourage governments to develop proper youth policies, to integrate youth strategies into the work of their institutions, and to facilitate, once adopted, the support given by internal and external partners. It is therefore essential to promote a societal consensus on "rehabilitation" rather than "punishment" policies, including socio-educative programmes and a restorative model of justice which can be applied in communities. Encouraging national governments to adopt communitarian police models would be another step in this direction;

4. Promote, with all national governments, the importance of significant **dialogue between government and local civil society organisations (CSOs)**, and the capacity of civil society to participate in and monitor this dialogue.

AT THE PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL

5. **Strengthen CSO capacities to work on issues of youth, women and urban violence**, to more effectively participate in dialogue with governments on those topics and to monitor implementation;

6. Contribute to **gender mainstreaming by promoting a different gender model**, based on equity and opportunities, and by including a gender focus in all programmes and projects related to public security and youth, especially in those related to domestic violence and youth gangs;

7. **Promote and increase knowledge sharing and data collection** on key issues such as the involvement of girls and women in urban violence, and lessons learned on prevention strategies and tools;

8. Support institutions (local in particular) **working on arms control and legislation** (e.g. facilitating an integrated electronic firearms register and assisting in the harmonisation of laws on domestic violence and firearms laws).

9. Support organisations and institutions, particularly local ones, working on attention and support mechanisms aimed at the victims, survivors and perpetrators of urban violence.

10. Contribute **to increasing regional and international exchanges** on police and justice reform programmes, in particular between EU member states and the eight countries analysed. EU member states **should contribute to police reforms to support a more preventive and citizen-centred model**, particularly through training and capacity building.

11. Encourage initiatives aimed at **transforming public opinion on violence issues,** particularly activities targeting the role of the media (journalists' responsibility). These initiatives should **promote the understanding of challenges** and analysis of the origins of violence through participative mechanisms, **show youth in a positive light**, and **take into account the functioning of the state.**

PARTNERS