

SUMMARY

RESEARCHING THE URBAN DILEMMA: URBANIZATION, POVERTY AND VIOLENCE

Summary by Natalie Brender, based on the study by Robert Muggah

Abstract

The following summary highlights the key findings of the baseline study *Researching the Urban Dilemma: Urbanization, Poverty and Violence*. The study's goal was to review the state of evidence and theory on the connection between urban violence and poverty reduction, and on the impact and effectiveness of different interventions. The study finds that there is considerable engagement with issues of urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence by social scientists. Much is known on the scale and distribution of urban growth, as well as on the character of urban impoverishment and inequality. There is also considerable research being conducted on the real and perceived costs and consequences of urban violence across an array of low- and medium-income settings. However, the study also reveals that much of the research and debate continues to be segmented and compartmentalized within certain disciplines and geographic settings, and that there are major silences in relation to the interaction between urban poverty and urban violence. The summary highlights a sample of interventions designed to prevent and reduce urban violence, but notes that the effectiveness of many interventions designed to mitigate and reduce insecurity and poverty in medium- and lower-income cities has yet to be tested. The summary concludes with a review of key knowledge gaps and questions for future research.

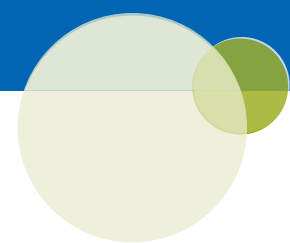


Photo: Paul Smith

About Safe and Inclusive Cities

Safe and Inclusive Cities is a jointly-funded research initiative aimed at building an evidence base on the connections between urban violence, poverty and inequalities. It also seeks to identify the most effective strategies for addressing these challenges. Safe and Inclusive Cities is managed by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), with support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID).

Learn more at www.idrc.ca/cities

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Preface

In 2007, the world became a predominantly urban society. Across the world, an estimated three quarters of economic production takes place in cities. Urbanization brings with it possibilities of improved access to jobs, goods and services for poor people in developing countries and beyond as globalization trends connect cities world-wide.

However, urbanization has also brought new challenges in terms of conflict, violence, poverty and inequalities. The World Bank's landmark *2011 World Development Report* highlighted the significance of violence as a development problem. It noted how violence is changing, becoming less structured around notions of civil war and conflict, and more focused around criminal violence, terrorism and civil unrest. The *Report* also underscored the close relationship between violence and poverty, stating that no low-income fragile or conflict-affected state has yet to achieve a single Millennium Development Goal.

The impacts of violence on human development are significant and varied. They can include direct costs such as death and injury, as well as indirect costs like psychological trauma, population displacement, and reduced economic growth. Today's cities are centres of multi-layered violence. Criminal and organized violence associated with the drug trade have in some countries become entwined with national politics. Gangs and militias have come to substitute for public authority, offering some protection to communities, but often at great cost. Social violence, including violence within the household, is also a significant problem, particularly for vulnerable youth and women living in these contexts.

In response to these challenges, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) have launched Safe and Inclusive Cities. This collaborative research initiative is aimed at generating an evidence base on the connections between urban violence, poverty and inequalities and on identifying the most effective strategies for addressing these challenges.

As a first step in this endeavour, a baseline study was commissioned to help inform the design and scope of the Safe and Inclusive Cities research initiative. Towards this end, the study set out to achieve four objectives:

1. Document what is known about the connections between violence, poverty and inequalities in urban centres and assess the strength of the knowledge base. Particular focus was given to assessing evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia;
2. Describe the state of theory on violence, urbanization and poverty reduction, and assess the extent to which they interact, and whether emerging evidence actually informs theoretical debates and assumptions guiding work in these fields;
3. Identify key evidence gaps that require further investigation; and
4. Map out key actors (researchers and research organizations) that are producing knowledge on these issues.

The outcome is a study that promotes an integrated and comprehensive approach to tackling the challenges posed by rapid urbanization, escalating violence, and increased poverty and inequalities. The present summary highlights the study's key findings.

The study and its summary represent a starting point for further investigation and action. The findings have helped to shape a research agenda that IDRC and DFID are committed to advancing so that together, and with other stakeholders, solutions to the central development challenges of today can tomorrow be realized.

I would like to thank Robert Muggah for undertaking the challenging endeavour of producing the study, and Natalie Brender for successfully capturing the study's key findings. I am also grateful to Markus Gottsbacher, Navsharan Singh, Ramata Thioune, Njeri Karuru, Véronique McKinnon and Charlotte Heath for their constructive input and feedback, as well as to the numerous experts who provided valuable input through key informant interviews.



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Introduction

There is growing awareness amongst policy makers and practitioners that the twenty-first century is witness to a crisis of urban violence. A considerable number of middle- and lower-income cities exhibit above-average rates violence, insecurity, inequality, and poverty. Urban violence is becoming more widespread and chronic in many of the world's fastest-growing cities – particularly in Latin America, the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa, but also increasingly in South and Central Asia as well. While affecting all socio-economic groups in myriad direct and indirect ways, the burden of such violence is especially heavy on the urban poor. Together, these facts raise concerns amongst security and aid experts about their implications for national and regional stability, and for human development more generally.

The “urban dilemma” refers to the double-edged nature of twenty-first century urbanization. On the one hand, it is a force for progressive pro-poor development. On the other, it increases risks for protracted insecurity amongst the urban poor. This “dark side” of urbanization threatens to erase its potential to stimulate growth, productivity and economic dividends. It is vital, therefore, to produce field-based and policy-oriented research on the intersections of urbanization, poverty, inequality and violence, and to define and evaluate interventions seeking to address both the risks and symptoms of urban violence.

Researching the Urban Dilemma: Urbanization, Poverty and Violence was carried out over two months in 2011 and 2012 by Robert Muggah. The study is based on a desk review of publicly available on-line and peer-reviewed literature in multiple languages, and is informed by consultations with scholars and practitioners in diverse fields. It surveys the current state of theories and evidence on the interrelations between urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence. It also presents an overview of the impacts of various types of interventions aimed at addressing development challenges posed by urban violence. Finally, it identifies critical knowledge gaps where more research is needed.

This summary of the baseline study presents its key findings. The first section describes the urban dilemma and its importance. In Section 2, highlights of the current state of theory and evidence are provided, followed by an overview of the risks and drivers of urban violence in Section 3. The fourth section briefly discusses citizen efforts at resistance and resilience, whereas



Photo: Sven Torfinn

Section 5 discusses interventions aimed at reducing urban poverty and increasing citizen security. In Section 6, an agenda for future research is outlined, followed by a brief conclusion.

1. The urban dilemma and why it's important

Section I examines the direct and indirect impacts of urban violence, particularly in relation to the urban poor. It reviews issues of fatal and non-fatal victimization, displacement, the erosion of social capital and cohesion, declines in socio-economic wellbeing, and implications for governance and security.

The speed and scale of global urbanization—and its association with extreme forms of poverty and violence—may at times seem overwhelming. Over half the world's population lives in cities, and in the next fifty years the proportion will increase to two-thirds. Whereas in 1950 there were 80 cities with populations exceeding one million, today there are 480.

In addition, one in three urban residents around the world lives below the poverty line. South Asia features the largest share of urban poor, followed by East Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. What's more, virtually all population growth in the coming decades will take place in low- and middle-income countries, and will be concentrated in marginal urban and surrounding areas, especially in slums – or informal settlements.

Tragically, the lives of many of these urban poor will be significantly affected by violence and insecurity. Particularly in regions such as Latin America, the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa – but also in North America

and across South and Central Asia – many cities and their neighborhoods are being convulsed by, and in some cases exporting, endemic violence. Urban dwellers—particularly in lower-income areas—tend to kill and be killed at rates higher than national averages. Victims, witnesses and perpetrators of direct violence in all its forms are psychologically affected in broad and long-lasting ways.

Direct manifestations of violence, such as homicide, assault and robbery, represent only the most visible faces of urban violence. Urban violence also has many indirect impacts. It has the potential to erode the social fabric of families and neighborhoods, restrict mobility or force displacement, and constrain access to jobs and education. It is part of a vicious cycle in which violence, poverty and inequality reinforce each other (Stewart 2008), dragging the poor ever lower in socio-economic standing and curbing macro- and micro-economic productivity. In terms of governance, urban violence undermines relationships between public authorities and citizens, and can spur policing policies that focus on repression rather than constructive engagement (Jutersonke et al. 2007).

Box 1. Impacts of Urban Violence and Poverty

- City homicide rates tend to be higher than national averages. The rates in Caracas, Cape Town and Port of Spain, for instance, are respectively 2.6, 1.77 and 1.72 times higher than in Venezuela, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago as a whole.
- Highly urbanized and poorer areas of cities present the highest risks of homicide, and homicide rates can be several times higher in low-income areas than in the rest of the city.
- At the global level, male homicide rates are roughly double female rates. At the national level in poor settings, the ratio can be even more extreme.
- Endemic urban violence has been shown to gradually transform relationships in ways that erode effective collective action which is essential for enabling predictable exchanges within political, market and social domains.
- Urban violence can have an impact on child and adolescent learning, undermining well-being as well as future earning and productive potential.

With the decline of major inter- and intra-state conflicts since the 1990s, combined with a rise in other forms of violence associated with networked armed groups and organized crime, many security analysts believe that future wars will be fought not on open battle fields but in urban settings. There is considerable concern amongst security experts that large-scale violence could emerge from cities that are unable to absorb fast-rising populations and which have dense pockets of inequity and deprivation.

2. The current state of theory and evidence

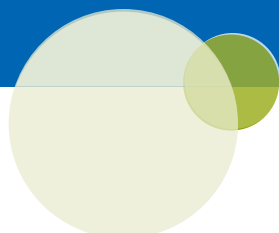
Section 2 highlights cities as a current focus for security and development policy makers. It considers the diverse and segmented nature of research communities working on urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence, and some of the assumptions shaping their work.

The section presents three types of researchers working on aspects of the urban dilemma: macro-researchers, micro-researchers and security-focussed researchers. It notes gaps in knowledge, and the importance of building, expanding and sharing datasets.

The section also reviews fundamental concepts and theories shaping research on urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence. It notes that considerable disagreement exists over basic terminology.

Social scientists have engaged widely with the distinct issues of urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence. There is a considerable literature on the scale and distribution of urban growth, the nature of urban impoverishment and inequality, and the impacts of urban violence across low- and medium-income settings. However, this body of research is of limited use for understanding the urban dilemma. Much of it is segmented and compartmentalized within disciplines, and covers limited geographic settings. Moreover, there has been scant engagement with the relationships between urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence. For example, although the World Bank's 2011 World Development Report stresses that violence has emerged as the central development challenge of our time, highlighting the two-way relationship between poverty and insecurity, it devotes but a single paragraph to urban violence.

Knowledge is particularly meager about the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce insecurity in medium- and lower-income cities. Experts agree that relatively little evidence exists to support conclusions



about the effectiveness of various interventions. While there is overwhelming support for the idea that the urban poor bear the brunt of urban violence, the causal mechanisms involved are poorly understood.

A fundamental challenge to research on the urban dilemma is the poor state of data about urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence. The paucity of reliable time-series data limits theory-building, and inhibits the design, implementation and monitoring of interventions aimed at reducing urban violence, inequality and poverty. The problem is compounded by the lack of long-term research on the effects of urban violence on individuals, families and communities. There is a particular deficit of research on these issues in Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia.

Despite these limitations, many researchers are making the link between inequalities and violence. Statistical modeling supports the notion that income inequality and the unequal distribution of economic opportunities across groups are believed to promote criminal violence. As living conditions of the urban poor become more precarious, the potential for conflict, crime or violence is likely to escalate. Such violence is widely assumed to emerge as a function of increasing political, social and economic marginalization.

i. Methods and theories

Social scientists working on different aspects of urbanization, urban violence and urban poverty can be broadly divided into three categories:

- **Macro-level researchers** tend to use quantitative methods to generate and study datasets, track general trends and predict the impacts of urbanization or population density on armed conflict or criminal violence.
- **Micro-level researchers** typically use qualitative and inductive methods to interpret various dimensions of urban violence in relation to the lived experiences of urban dwellers. They often review historical and cultural aspects of urban violence and explore experiences and attitudes, as well as inter-generational, spatial and structural conditions shaping urban violence in individuals' lives.
- **Security researchers** take a critical approach to urban security, spaces and governance, critiquing governments' use of quasi-military solutions to problems of urban welfare and social integration. They challenge the ongoing "securitization" of cities and their popula-

tions, and the expanding use of technologies of urban surveillance and control.

Many current approaches to the urban dilemma are rooted in theories that emerged in the early twentieth century to explain violence in cities and neighborhoods. For the most part, those theories were shaped by Western European and North American experiences. Today their assumptions and explanatory power are being tested by trends such as the rise of mega-cities and their slums in lower- and medium-income settings across Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

A number of theories have been developed to explain why violence emerges at the individual, community and societal levels. Theories that have informed violence-reduction initiatives include:

- **Social disorganization.** A sociological theory positing that economic disadvantage, ethnic heterogeneity and residential instability contribute to community disorganization and ultimately violence.
- **Broken window.** A criminological theory positing that urban disorder has symbolic and normative effects that contribute to crime and associated violence.
- **Ecological model.** A public health approach positing that violence can be prevented by addressing the interactions between individual, relationship, community and societal risk factors.
- **Social capital and social cohesion.** A behavioral and institutional economic perspective positing that interpersonal trust formation and binding social relations are critical determinants of violence.
- **Youth empowerment and employment.** A sociological and psychological approach positing that targeted interventions for at-risk youth – typically males – can prevent them from resorting to violent or anti-social behavior.

ii. Defining key concepts

A significant challenge to research on the urban dilemma stems from the diverse concepts and terminology used by researchers of different methodological and theoretical backgrounds. Key concepts central to hypothesis-building and testing – such as "cities," "slums," "urban poor" and "urban violence" – are variously defined and much contested.

Definitions of the "urban" differ widely among countries and cities, often including a demographic threshold and

an index of urban functions. Various scales of urbanity include recent notions such as “conurbations” and “agglomerations” of cities, with terms such as “hyper-” or “mega-cities” being used to describe intensely concentrated areas of population and activity. At the bottom of the scale, informal settlements described as “slums” are often defined by their poverty and informality, overlooking their internal complexity and potential.

Though no single definition of urban violence exists, it tends to be described in terms of five types of variables: direct and indirect characteristics; intensity and duration; spatial and social characteristics; intentionality; and context. Analysts generally agree that urban violence often features interconnected forms of insecurity, and thus require multi-dimensional frameworks of explanation. Security and military analysts view urban violence in “fragile” or “failed” cities as a potential precursor of large-scale security threats.

Urban poverty is understood to extend beyond monetary benchmarks into a wide range of vulnerabilities and risks, such as: health outcomes, malnutrition, education and illiteracy rates, weak access to key services and public infrastructure, high involvement in informal sector activities, marginal geographic location, insecure tenure, exposure to organized violence, and other characteristics.

3. Risks and drivers of urban violence

Section 3 appraises the risks and drivers of urban violence, including urbanization, urban density, poverty and inequality, youth bulges and unemployment, and wider governance failures. It finds considerable empirical support for a link with urbanization and inequality, but less conclusive evidence for other variables. It also finds that the potential for chronic urban violence is a factor of the cumulative effects of various risks.

There are virtually no hard-and-fast correlations between cities and violence. Many cities experience chronic urban violence, but not all cities are equally violent, and violence in cities is by no means inevitable. As well, cities are not always more violent than rural areas, nor are bigger and denser cities always more violent than smaller ones. While the rate of population growth in cities appears to be connected to violence, the connection is neither direct nor absolute. Nevertheless, it is true that an array of cities in certain regions appears to be consistently exposed to high levels of direct and indirect violence in recent decades.

Among the various theories developed to explain risk factors giving rise to violence, the ecological model is particularly salient. Rather than proposing a single cause, it identifies various risk factors shaping violence at the structural, institutional, interpersonal, and individual levels (Krug et al. 2002). It enables the assessment of interrelations amongst risks in order to craft complex interventions (Turpin & Kurtz 1997). Other approaches complementary to the ecological model assess structural causes of urban violence: inequality, poverty and societal influences such as patriarchy and gender norms (Pickup et al. 2001). They explore identity and agency together with underlying risk factors, and place a particular emphasis on the gendered dimensions of how violence is experienced (Moser & McIlwaine 2006). All of these related approaches view urban violence as being produced not by single drivers but by the cumulative and interacting effects of overlapping risks and diminished protective factors.

The following sections consider a range of variables that researchers have examined to explain urban violence: urbanization, urban density, poverty and inequality and youth bulges.

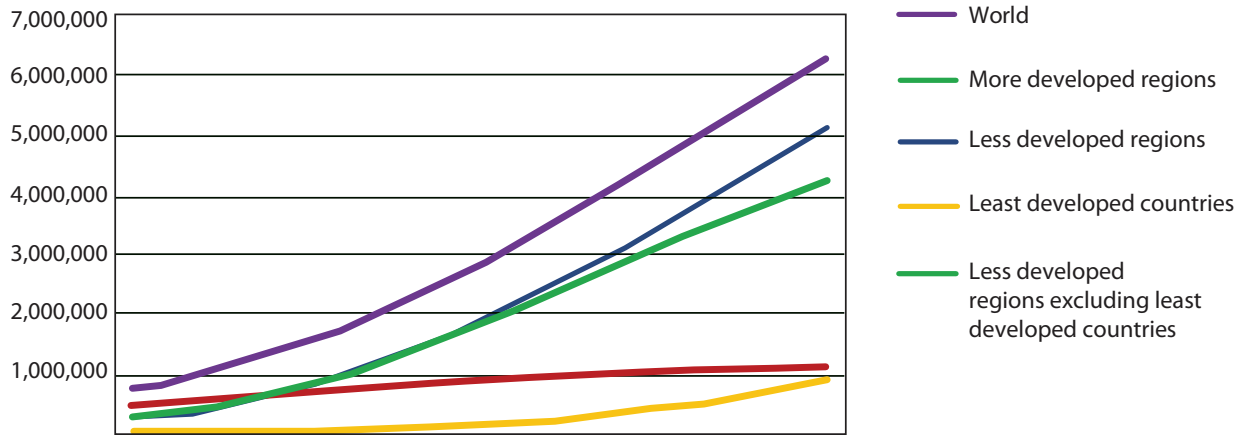
i. Urbanization and population growth

The pace and sheer scale of urbanization are likely to stress national and urban institutions in many developing countries to their breaking point. With few exceptions, the speed of urbanization is proceeding at a rate that exceeds the ability of city authorities and residents to respond.

Box 2. The unprecedented pace of urbanization

- It took New York approximately 150 years to grow to 8 million people, while Mexico and Sao Paulo generated the same interval of population growth in less than 15 years.
- In 1947, Karachi had a population of less than 500,000; by 2011, the metropolitan region included more than 18 million.
- Dhaka, Kinshasa, and Lagos today are each approximately forty times larger than they were in 1950.
- The number of cities of over 1 million people has increased more than fifteen-fold since 1950.
- Cities have absorbed nearly two-thirds of the global population explosion since 1950, and now add a million infants and migrants each week.

Figure 1: Urban population growth (thousands): 1950-2050



Statistics compiled from <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm>

The connections between urbanization and poverty have been much debated (Linn 1982; UNFPA 2007). According to a number of studies by the World Bank, urbanization has led to reductions in poverty by offering new opportunities for migrants and indirectly benefiting those staying in rural areas (WSP 2009a). Yet the pace in urban poverty reduction has been more gradual than the reductions in overall poverty and a failure to prepare for rapid urbanization is likely to exacerbate poverty and environmental degradation (Martine & McGranahan 2010).

So-called “turbo-urbanism” is routinely connected by politicians and researchers with escalating rates of crime, delinquency and urban violence (Rodgers 2010; Vockler 2008). However, many researchers have found that violence and related stresses on development are a function of the *pace* of urban growth rather than urbanization itself (World Bank 2010). That said, the causal impact of rapid urbanization on rates of violence is not clear-cut. There are instances of rapid urbanization with comparatively low impact on overall levels of crime and violence (UN-HABITAT 2007). Furthermore, many of the largest and fastest-urbanizing human settlements in the world today – such as Tokyo in Japan or Chongqing in China – have very low crime rates (UN-HABITAT 2011).

ii. Urban population density

Alongside urbanization, urban density is often singled out as a factor shaping a city’s vulnerability to various forms of violence. However, studies assessing the rela-

tionship between population density and violence yield mixed results (Hasan 2010). In countries such as Guatemala and Nepal, where the population is mostly rural, violence is heavily concentrated in cities (Jutersonke et al. 2007; World Bank 2010). Yet city size and density does not always correlate with excess rates of violence. The homicide rates of very large, dense cities such as Dhaka, Mumbai and Cairo, for instance, are below national averages (UNODC 2011). As well, researchers offer conflicting assessments of the correlation between urban violence and densely-packed slums. Shelter deprivations are believed to contribute to strained household and communal relations, and ultimately insecurity. However, a growing number of studies report complex forms of safety and resilience in large crowded slums (Jutersonke et al. 2007).

iii. Urban poverty and inequality

As cities have expanded in population size and geographic scale, so has the total spread of urban poverty and inequality (Baker 2008; Baker & Schuler 2004). That said, the extent to which urban violence correlates with poverty or inequality is debated (Fainzylber et al. 2002; Moser 2004; Neumayer 2005). Statistical modeling shows that inequality – and particularly income inequality – offers more explanatory power than poverty, and income inequality along with the unequal distribution of economic opportunities across groups are believed to promote criminal violence. Per capita income, by contrast, does not appear to have a clear effect on rates of violence (Fainzylber et al. 2002; Graham & Chaparro 2011).

Photo: Sven Torfinn



iv. Urban youth and unemployment

While politicians often link young, poorly-educated and unemployed males to delinquency and public disorder, pathways shaping youths' resort to violence are less often considered. Some research has examined how boys and adolescents are conditioned into violent behavior in U.S. inner cities (Dahlberg 1998; Shihadeh & Flynn 1996). More recent research has focused on youth membership in gangs (Hagedorn 2005; Small Arms Survey 2010). Military and development actors are seeking ways to address challenges presented by armed groups of young men, such as demobilized soldiers or former gang members.

Micro-researchers have found that male children who witness abuse in war and non-war settings are more likely to commit violence as adolescents or adults,

whether in homes or as part of organized groups (Volpe 1996). Macro-researchers have focused on relationships between the so-called "demographic youth bulge" and organized violence. As populations move from high to low fertility and mortality rates, they theorize, a large proportion of the youth population will lack employment opportunities and pursue social and economic advancement by joining an armed group. While the theory is intensely contested, there is some evidence that youth bulges, together with other factors, explain certain forms of organized violence.

Although gangs have existed across the world for generations, their recent regional growth and transnational influence is unprecedented. Some policy makers link gangs with rising urban violence in some countries of Latin America, the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa (Jutersonke et al. 2009; Muggah 2012b). However, there is no agreement on the nature of gangs, or the size and scale of gang membership. Whether committed by gang members or not, homicide and violent assault are overwhelmingly the acts of young male, whose victims are often their peers.

v. Failures in urban governance

A major factor shaping urban violence is the inability of state institutions to regulate and ultimately manage the legitimate use of force. In some cities, systems of law and order are dysfunctional and considered illegitimate by the citizens they are intended to serve. Formal security forces are often unable to deter organized violence and

Box 3: The connections between inequality and violence

- In urban contexts, inequality is a form of structural violence that often triggers more reactionary forms of violence. Inequalities can include not just income but lack of access to basic social services, lack of state protection, exposure to systematic corruption, and inefficiencies that most acutely affect the poor.
- Scholars have proposed that increased levels of urban violence are also closely tied to processes of globalization and structural adjustment, as well as political democratization. As the living conditions of the urban poor become more precarious – particularly relative to the wealthy – the potential for conflict, crime and violence escalates.
- In South Asia, certain urban centres and informal settlements in Pakistan and India experience sporadic outbursts of violence, often targeted against specific ethno-religious groups. Researchers widely view such violence as a function of progressive marginalization and the weakened position of labor.
- Often it is the transplanted and displaced working poor who are implicated in violent unrest. Underlying conditions of poverty and inequality appear to shape particular forms of urban violence, even if the relationships are neither necessary nor sufficient.



Box 4: Gendered risks and impacts of urban violence

- Across rural and urban settings, men are much more likely to kill or be killed. In urban settings, males are more likely to suffer physical assault and violent robbery. Women suffer much higher rates of sexual violence and domestic violence.
- Girls exposed to violence in the home may be predisposed to entering into abusive relationships. In a range of countries, women were twice as likely to report abuse by intimate partners if their own mothers had been abused.
- In contexts of gang violence and open warfare, sexual violence involving girls and women is often used as a form of coercion and intimidation, and as a way of defining rival groups.
- City design can influence gendered patterns of insecurity. Feminist critiques show that the physical and social spaces of cities reflect unequal gender relations in a given society. For instance, as suburbanization shaped patterns of labor and mobility to and from urban centres, public transportation designed for the needs of male workers paid less attention to women's safety.

may indeed be amongst the worst offenders. Legacies of armed conflict, political authoritarianism and repressive policing are also highly correlated with the onset and persistence of urban violence.

In areas where governance failures are persistent, political violence can form both overt and covert forms of coercion and control. In many cases, elected officials collude with supposedly non-partisan public institutions, including the security services. The results may include coercive forms of mobilization and rent extraction (Clunan & Trinhunas 2010; Renders & Terlinden 2010; Arias 2006), inter-group competition between patrons and parties over resources, and struggles to fill institutional power vacuums (Winton 2004). Indeed, where states are weak and lack the ability to exert control over the city, different groups may emerge including so-called "violence entrepreneurs." Many of them thrive on access to a ready pool of recruits, but also on the complicity of public institutions and powerful patronage networks as has been witnessed from Caribbean cities such as Port-of-Spain and Kingston to cities in Cambodia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste (Townsend 2009; Leslie 2010; Muggah 2010).

4. Resilience and resistance

Section 4 proposes the concept of resilience as a way of describing how formal and informal institutions in cities cope and adapt to stress, including chronic and acute forms of urban violence.

In chronically violent cities, such as Rio de Janeiro, Port-au-Prince, Beirut, Kingston and Johannesburg, informal institutions provide services through alternative channels where official ones are lacking, and residents adopt resourceful coping strategies. However, relatively little is known about how these and other factors enable fragile cities to cope with massive shocks or chronic forms of violence. The "resilience" of cities – the way in which they adapt to stress – is an important topic to pursue (Muggah & Jutersonke 2012). An emerging body of research is examining accumulated protective factors that may help keep urban residents secure. These factors include a reduction in children's exposure to violence, and exposure to positive family role models; peer groups and proactive community associations and schools; community networks; and productive employment opportunities (World Bank 2010; Bells et al. 2010).

Box 5: Residents of medium and small-sized cities face higher vulnerability to risks

Although in absolute terms more people face poverty and insecurity in large and mega-cities, residents of medium- and small-sized cities in the developing world are in many ways more vulnerable. Such cities are generally less well-resourced in terms of professional capacity, governance and finance. Their vulnerability is also greater because of more limited investment in infrastructure and urban services, such as water supply, solid waste management systems and health services. In addition, small and medium-sized cities have less experience working with humanitarian and development actors and other international agencies.



Photo: Teun Voeten

5. Intervening in the urban dilemma: what works

Section 5 offers an overview of different strategies for improving urban safety and security. Key interventions include pacification and policing, schemes focused on at-risk youth, urban renewal and slum upgrading, and urban governance.

The section highlights the dearth of reliable evaluations of urban safety and security activities. It nonetheless notes that interventions are more likely to be effective when they combine “hard” and “soft” strategies, promote local leadership and community involvement, and are routinely measured over time.

A wide range of initiatives have been designed to combat urban violence, particularly in low- and middle-income neighborhoods (Wilmann 2010). These can be loosely divided into “hard” (coercive) and “soft” (voluntary) interventions. Actors undertaking interventions may be “formal” public institutions or “informal” civil society actors, though many interventions feature collaborations across these two poles. In Figure 1, a range of interventions is set out on a schematic axis to show how they fall along these variables.

Even so, the evidence base for what works and what does not is extremely thin. Many interventions, while laden with theoretical assumptions about the relationships between urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence, have yet to be rigorously tested. The lack of time-series data and local analysis capacities in many low-income settings has also limited the ability of policy makers and practitioners to distinguish “successful” outcomes from those that are not. Nonetheless, a review of programs and initiatives finds that certain

forms of pacification and slum upgrading interventions in particular have yielded positive gains and that more narrowly constructed law and order actions and employment schemes produce less certain outcomes.

Below is an overview of some interventions that appear to be effective in improving urban safety, security and development, particularly in low-income areas.

Pacification and community policing. Urban pacification and policing interventions combine the reassertion of state authority with efforts to reinstall services in neglected areas. They include both police repression and socio-economic programs. A key component of such activities is ensuring that citizens are included in the process of prioritizing and reinforcing security promotion. More progressive interventions seek to bring together disconnected parts of the city through a combination of deterrents and incentives. According to anecdotal evidence, such interventions produce some positive results and a range of unintended consequences. They are credited with generating sharp reductions in real and perceived urban violence; with creating opportunities for the integration of formal and informal areas of the city; and with beginning a process of rebuilding the social contract. However, there are doubts as to their effectiveness and about their adverse economic effects on residents.

Enhancing protection and reducing risks facing youth. A wide spectrum of interventions aims to promote protective factors and reduce risk factors affecting youth. Many of these focus on family planning, parent-child relations, youth identity and belonging, youth education, after-school and recreational opportunities, and community resilience (UNDP 2010; WHO 2002). Such interventions are relatively common in upper-income urban settings but less so in poorer contexts, where interventions are typically more sporadic and project-oriented. In poor urban settings, a major priority for such interventions is to provide skills and wage-earning opportunities to young males. Because the type and quality of employment seems to shape its protective outcome, interventions that enhance social and life skills are as important as those that provide technical skills training (WSP 2009b; Fay 2005). Interventions most successful at reducing gang violence and recidivism use multi-faceted strategies. In addition to enforcement, they include activities oriented towards protection and risk reduction; community involvement in creating, validating, and implementing strategies; strong mayoral leadership; and reliable monitoring and evaluation capacities, as well as regular communication (Jutersonke et al. 2009).

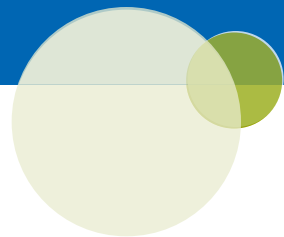
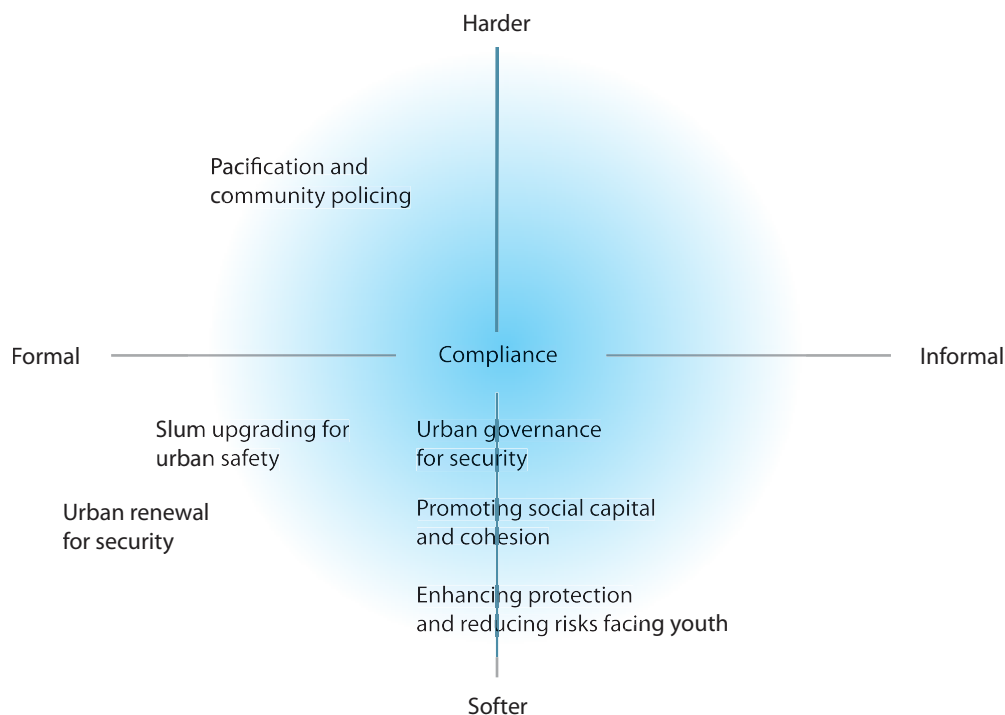


Figure 2. Characteristics of urban violence prevention and reduction interventions



Source: Muggah 2012a

Promoting social capital and social cohesion. Recent decades have seen renewed interest in social capital and cohesion as a means of preventing urban violence. Following the 2001 and 2011 London riots, for instance, reports undertaken by “community cohesion review teams” singled out the causal effect of deep ethnic and identity-based polarization. They called for more community cohesion based on contact between cultures and shared principles of citizenship, and a series of commissions recommended the launch of national debates with a focus on youth (Giddens 2011). Organizations such as the UNDP and the World Bank have started directing investment and programming toward the promotion of social capital and cohesion, including in societies emerging from armed conflict or at risk of outbreaks of violence (UNDP 2010; World Bank 2012).

Urban renewal for security. Historically, approaches adopted by municipal authorities to address urban poverty tended to adopt intensive social engineering. In many instances, low-income areas and in some cases the poor themselves were treated as a “blight” to be replaced with enhanced physical and social infrastructure and a new middle class. However, since the 1980s and 90s a number of governments in South Asia have identified innovative ways of working with private sector actors to

harness the unrealized potential of informal settlement – including investing in renewal and expansion of market access (Mukhija 2001). A range of national and metropolitan schemes have been pursued to revive decaying urban areas, including low interest loans and grants to rehabilitate houses, tax incentives to draw in business, social housing schemes, new deal regeneration funding packages, and environmental design efforts to bring disparate populations closer together.

Slum upgrading and urban safety. One of the hallmarks of urban planning in recent decades is a focus on slum upgrading through improvements in service delivery, better housing and employment policies. Outcomes of such efforts are contested. Some analysts find limited evidence of improvements, but see incremental gains with regard to service delivery, including security promotion. Assessments of the so-called “new generation” of slum development efforts in Latin America note perceptions of improved quality of life and violence reduction (Riley et al. 2001; Samper 2011). While focused predominantly on poverty reduction, a host of interventions seeking to improve living conditions in slums over the past two decades have indirectly or directly engaged with urban safety (Samper 2011; UN-HABITAT 2011). Analysts credit some recent Latin American projects with contributing

Box 6: Moving from theory to practice: A review of selected examples

Approaches	Assumptions	Applications	Actions*
Social disorganization	A sociological theory posits that economic disadvantage, ethnic heterogeneity and residential instability contribute to community disorganization and ultimately violence	Urban renewal and regeneration Urban gentrification Safer-cities Slum upgrading	Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (Dhaka) Kenya Slum Upgrading Program (Nairobi) Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading Program (Cape Town) Medellin Urban Integrated Project Consejo Nacional de la Vivienda (Buenos Aires) Favela Bairro (Rio de Janeiro)
Broken window	A criminological theory that posits that the norm signaling and symbolic effects of urban disorder can contribute to more crime and associated violence	Pacification Community and problem-oriented policing Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)	Zero tolerance (New York 1993) Safe Streets Program (various US cities) Operation Ceasefire (Boston) Pacification Police Units (UPP) (Rio de Janeiro 2008-2014)
Ecological model	A public health approach that considers the interactions between individual, relationship, community and societal risk factors to prevent violence	Early childhood visitations Intimate partner violence interventions Firearm legislation and regulation Temporary alcohol and drug prohibitions	Early Head Start (US 1990s) Alcohol regulation and rationing (Australia, US and Bogota) Mayors Against Illegal Guns (600 US cities)
Social capital and social cohesion	A behavioral and institutional economic perspective that assumes that interpersonal trust formation and binding capital are critical determinants for reducing violence	Participatory citizen planning and exchanges with public sector Public spaces for co-existence Local-level justice provision Leadership training, education and support Micro-enterprise development	Social capital for violence prevention (Metropolitan Area of San Salvador) DESEPAZ (Cali 1992-1994) HOPE VI and HOPE SF (US 2000s) UNDP community security and social cohesion projects (more than 13 countries)
Youth empowerment and employment	A sociological and psychological approach that supports targeted interventions for at-risk (and principally male) youth to prevent them from resorting to predatory or anti-social behavior	Parent and family support and home visits Social and conflict resolution skills Mentoring and peer-to-peer networks School and after-school interventions Interventions to stimulate training and apprenticeships for former gang members and child soldiers	Kenya Youth Empowerment and Employment Initiative (Nairobi) Youth empowerment and employment project (Honiara) Youth employment and empowerment (Freetown and Monrovia) Youth empowerment programs in Nigeria Safer Cities International Youth-led Urban Development Platform (DARUA)

*Most urban violence prevention efforts tend to integrate a range of approaches that borrow from various theoretical frameworks. The cases included here are for illustrative purposes only; they have not all been fully evaluated.

to major reductions in urban violence – though with less impact on urban poverty.

Urban governance for security. Governance, and in particular urban security sector governance, is a critical feature of violence prevention and reduction efforts in cities. Many initiatives to promote urban safety lack effective systems of urban governance. Decentralizing core functions to local governments has generated important safety dividends in cities with strong institutions, such as Bogotá, Medellín and Rio de Janeiro. However, in settings with weak structures and capacities, such as those found in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans or parts of Central and South Asia, these efforts have yielded uncertain outcomes (Vetters 2007). A key tenet of urban governance is promoting the interaction of local residents and associations with public institutions. This is important for ensuring local buy-in to action plans and the long-term success of interventions. Where such interaction is lacking, security-focused interventions can incite new violent outbursts due to poorly articulated strategies, badly managed interventions and unfulfilled expectations.

Box 6 on the page above highlights a number of interventions, connecting them to the theoretical approaches outlined in Section 2.

6. An agenda for future research

Although knowledge about the urban dilemma is slowly growing, there is still a dearth of applied research across most low-income settings in developing countries. Moderate engagement with the issues of urbanization, urban poverty and urban violence is ongoing in Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. However, scholarly assessments tend to be confined within particular disciplines, and sustained funding for long-term investigation is limited.

These conditions leave open an extensive agenda for future research directions and investments. Some major thematic areas suggested by the baseline study are:

Seeking conceptual and terminological clarity. Researchers approach ideas central to the urban dilemma – “city,” “poverty,” “inequality” and “violence” – in a wide array of ways. The resulting conceptual and terminological disagreements can have significant implications for the direction of research, the communication of policy, and the design, implementation and monitoring of programs. Macro-researchers require tight categories and



Photo: Teun Voeten

well-defined variables in order to generate valid correlations. Micro-researchers, by contrast, typically balance multiple definitions and interpretations, and often explore various meanings ascribed to concepts by different subjects. For these reasons, researchers should clarify the main concepts central to the urban dilemma in order to enable communication across disciplinary and methodological boundaries.

Data generation and analysis capable of supporting effective urban violence prevention and reduction. Because solid evidence and analysis are crucial for effective urban violence prevention and reduction, it is critical to invest in local and national data collection capacities, and to improve local authorities’ ability to manipulate and analyze data. There is a critical need for reliable, representative and disaggregated (by gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) time-series and geo-referenced data on urban violence in low-income settings of Central America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Central and South Asia. In particular, it is essential to invest in both public administrative and non-governmental data collection capacities in under-served areas.

The long-term effects of urban violence prevention and reduction efforts. Much greater attention should be devoted to assessing the real and perceived outcomes and impacts of urban violence prevention and reduction efforts in middle- and lower-income settings. Relatively little is known about the effectiveness of medium- to long-term interventions that are aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, or foster norms condemning urban violence. Researchers should be encouraged to work with policy makers and practitioners to assess interventions from the outset, including through randomization and experimental design measures. Research should incorporate a historical approach capturing longer-term changes, as well as qualitative methods to explore perceptions among intended beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The ways in which public and private authorities influence the nature of urban violence. Comparatively little research exists on the way in which public institutions shape the direction of urban violence and play a role in its growth, containment or reduction. While the cases of Cape Town, San Salvador, Karachi, Sao Paulo and a small number of other mega-cities are receiving much-needed attention, little is known about these issues in other cities and countries. Research is needed on collusion between formal nodes of authority and ostensibly illegal armed groups. More knowledge is also needed on ways in which development interventions targeting the poor can generate violent resistance.

How communities shape outcomes of urban violence prevention and reduction interventions. Although community participation and ownership is central to the effectiveness and longevity of interventions, development agencies struggle to find ways of identifying and empowering local communities and often they rely on intermediaries such as public institutions or local non-governmental entities. Research is needed on the legitimacy of these intermediate actors; on modes of community engagement; on political and social dynamics of cooperation; and on how intermediaries influence or are affected by urban violence. More research is also required on local strategies of cooperation, cooptation and resistance in relation to urban violence, particularly amongst the poor and marginalized, and on the role of women and youth as agents of change.

An over-the-horizon agenda on the urban dilemma. As specialists grapple with today's challenges, there is a risk that tomorrow's catastrophes may be ignored. Major risks confronting cities include pandemics, food insecurity and climate change, which in turn may lead

to increases in the pace of population displacement towards cities. These and other "stress bundles" call for research in years ahead. As new themes are explored, it will be imperative to invest in data collection in order to enable assessment and prediction of urban "hot spots" at risk of major crises.

Conclusion

The urgency of many of the problems associated with the urban dilemma is forcing policy makers and scholars to reach across disciplines to analyze and better understand the direct and indirect impacts of urban violence, poverty and inequality. Many governments and international agencies, however, are only very slowly recognizing the central place of cities in security and development. International financial institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the World Bank have made some modest inroads into supporting urban violence prevention and reduction. Internationally, the UN-HABITAT Safer Cities Program, the International Center for the Prevention of Crime and Violence, and the European Forum for Urban Safety, for example, are engaging more deeply with the urban dilemma. As well, international alliances have been formed to build a more solid knowledge base. These include associations of North American, Latin American and Western European mayors, the World Health Organization Violence Prevention Alliance, the International Network on Conflict and Fragility, and the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development.

Most importantly, cities themselves are starting to identify ways of collaborating across and within state borders. Since at least the 1970s, cities have launched collaborative initiatives to generate investment, identify new forms of employment and share strategies on urban safety promotion. At least 50 of Europe's largest cities have been involved in such arrangements since 1989, and more recently Asian cities have been doing likewise. Many of these networks have developed strategic plans to promote renewal and regeneration in conjunction with local governments, civic groups and the private sector.

Cities are an obvious entry point for developing pro-poor and anti-violence campaigns because they offer the potential for scalability in ways that more dispersed population settlements do not. More knowledge is needed on what works and why and how outsiders can support these efforts. It is hoped that this baseline study, the Safe and Inclusive Cities research initiative and the proposals it elicits, will generate far-reaching answers to these questions.



Box 7: Safe and Inclusive Cities research initiative

As a first step towards addressing the research gaps identified in the baseline study, the Safe and Inclusive Cities research initiative will explore – and seek to answer – some of the following questions:

1. What are the most important drivers of urban violence (social, cultural, political, economic, gender-based, etc.), and how are these both a cause and consequence of poverty and inequality? Why do communities that are comparable in terms of social and economic inequalities and exclusion suffer different levels of violence?
 - a. What role do socio-cultural factors play in violence prevention, particularly at community level?
 - b. What is the political economy behind urban violence and how do licit and illicit power structures (i.e. organized crime, gangs, and terrorist groups) and economies fuel and profit from this violence?
 - c. What are the direct and indirect economic costs of violence to urban areas, including the costs of armed violence and transnational organised crime and terrorism?
 - d. Why do communities that are comparable in terms of social and economic inequality show different levels of violence? Why do communities characterized by similarly high conditions of social exclusion exhibit different levels of resilience to violence and crime?
 - e. How do spatial issues affect violence in cities? How does the built environment impact on the security of different population groups (women, girls, young men, elderly people, those with disabilities)?
2. What are the most effective interventions (both formal and informal) for tackling the problems of urban violence, poverty and inequalities and why? How have these strategies improved the livelihoods and security of the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups, in particular those of women, girls and minorities? How have these strategies and interventions affected the legitimacy and accountability of public authorities whose responsibility it is to promote the safety and well-being of citizens?
 - a. In the face of chronic violence and unresponsive state institutions, what formal and informal strategies do citizens and communities use to increase their security? What resiliency strategies have they employed and how has this led to a reduction in violence? Have these strategies varied by group (i.e. women, youth, indigenous)? What are the implications of these strategies for poverty reduction?
 - b. What are the best ways of measuring the effectiveness of initiatives to reduce levels of urban violence (both in terms of process and indicators)?
 - c. What sort of interventions and innovative practices (by municipal authorities, civil society groups/ communities/citizens, security forces) have been successful in promoting citizen security and reducing poverty in urban areas experiencing high levels of conflict and violence?
 - d. What interventions or innovative practices (formal or informal) have been effective in addressing the particular challenges faced by women and girls? What do these interventions indicate about the links exist between violence against women and girls and wider violence?
 - e. What distinctions have been made by state and non-state actors to deal with “ordinary violence and crime” versus violence perpetrated by trans-national organized crime entities? What are the policy implications of these interventions for violence and poverty reduction?
 - f. What state responses to urban violence and conflict have been effective in establishing/restoring the legitimacy and accountability of public authorities?
 - g. What is the impact of alternative security arrangements (such as private security, private militias, vigilante

groups etc.) on the legitimacy and accountability of the state? What interventions have been most effective in demanding state and non-state actors accountability where these actors are implicated in the promotion of violence?

3. What conditions facilitate the development of effective policies and practices (both formal and informal) that promote security and protect the livelihoods of the most poor and vulnerable individuals and groups? How can incentives be framed to facilitate their development and to what extent - if at all - can these be replicated in other contexts?
 - a. Under what conditions are municipal authorities, civil society groups and/or communities and citizens able to develop effective policies and practices to promote citizen security and reduce poverty in urban areas experiencing high levels of conflict and violence?
 - b. What conditions enable or enhance citizen involvement in the development and implementation of effective strategies to combat violence and protect and promote the livelihoods of the poor in highly violent urban contexts?
 - c. What can we learn from existing work amongst urban planners on perceptions of security amongst low income communities, and from initiatives around the world to promote safer cities?
 - d. What conditions enable stakeholders to work together to address urban violence in environments of mutual distrust between the state and society?
 - e. Under what conditions are women, girls and youth empowered to engage and participate in the development and implementation of successful initiatives to promote the citizen security, and particularly that of women, girls and youth?
 - f. How have policies and strategies to prevent and reduce violence and crime adapted to different socio-cultural contexts at local level?
 - g. How does urban society make collective choices around goals, rights and resources?
 - h. What is the role of leaders, representatives, public opinion, and interest groups? What are their mandates and what checks and balances on power are in place? How is collective action implemented in these contexts?

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