

Global
Experts
Group
Meeting



URBAN SAFETY MONITOR

Barcelona, 15-16 May 2014



UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

With the collaboration of:



**Ajuntament
de Barcelona**

Global Experts Group Meeting

“URBAN SAFETY MONITOR”



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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 THE URBAN SAFETY MONITOR IN CONTEXT

Cities are important sites of opportunity and engines of human development, but they also face myriad challenges. In many cities in low- and middle-income countries, high levels of violence and insecurity are associated with rapid urbanization, inequality, and weak governance. In response, new knowledge of the scope, intensity, distribution, and trends of violence and insecurity at the sub-national level is needed to shape evidence-based interventions—as well as an effective means of translating knowledge into practical action by local government and other stakeholders.

Effective prevention and reduction of urban violence and insecurity requires routine and reliable data generation and analysis, yet there is a paucity of comparable, time-series data on safety and security, frustrating empirical measurement and testing. The international community's emerging preoccupation with urban violence and insecurity has not been matched with commensurate investment in research. The lack of reliable data hinders the ability of local governments to set concrete targets for improved performance, and likewise the means by which civil society and other urban stakeholders can hold them accountable for progress or reversals. Moreover, the long-term effects of urban violence prevention and reduction interventions are not well understood. The emergence of a normative framework for the preventive approach to urban violence and insecurity depends on generating an authoritative and empirical evidence base of success.

Recognizing that the lack of valid, comparable data on urban safety and security not only militates against public accountability at the local level, but undermines international efforts to advance evidence-based policy and programming, UN-Habitat embarked on a process to develop a set of viable urban safety and security metrics within the context of its Safer Cities Programme's 2012-16 strategic planning framework. This process intensified with preparation of an "Urban Safety Index" concept note in May 2012, and the presentation and review of that note at a workshop during the 6th World Urban Forum in Naples, Italy, in September 2012.

The workshop discussion focused on the initial proposal for a global composite index, modelled on the Human Development Index, which characterizes urban safety and security at city level. Participants questioned whether such a model would have added value, for whom, and for what purpose. While a globally comparable summary index might be effective in influencing international and national priorities and drawing media attention, local policymakers and practitioners might find a higher contextualized set of indicators to be more useful. Concerns were also raised about profound

regional variation and the effect on the local political will of a city's low ranking on the global "league table." Participants fed back extensively on the conceptual and statistical limitations of a unitary summary index, noting that it would likely fail to capture meaningful contextual factors at city level. The comparability of the metrics, the inclusion of specific indicators, their sensitivity to issues of gender and relevance to local governments, and the conflation of safety outcomes and safety determinants were points of further contention.

Subsequent to the workshop, UN-Habitat reformulated the proposal and reframed its end-product as the Urban Safety Monitor. Given the limitations of a unitary global urban safety index, strong consideration was given to possible alternatives. These included a localized index that could be comparable within regions or countries; a global index comprised of standardized domains, but exchangeable or adaptable indicators; and / or selective use of existing urban indicators for global comparisons of cities. A combination of these approaches was presented to, first, at an Experts Group Meeting in Paris, France, in December 2012, and received positively. The initial presentation provided additional clarification on the scope and methodology, project timelines, selection criteria for cities in the research network and determination of indicators.

1.2 THE URBAN SAFETY MONITOR SNAPSHOT

As currently designed, the Urban Safety Monitor hypothesizes that well-crafted indicators have the potential to set in motion high-impact change processes in urban policy and programming. Policymakers and citizens alike will be empowered to press for evidence-based policies and programming by a tool that promotes benchmarking, transparency, and accountability. Moreover, the Urban Safety Monitor will seek to discover the most important drivers of urban violence and the policy implications for cities, and the most effective interventions to tackle the problem of urban violence. Thus, the underlying logic of the project is to influence the quality of policy and programming, and strengthen political will, mainly in cities in low- and middle-income countries, that contributes to the generation of a safe city.

The Monitor will devise and track urban safety indicators in low- and middle-income cities around the world, generating a reservoir of spatially and temporally diverse data and making it freely available. At the city level, indicators will drive informed public policymaking and enhance local government accountability by enabling policymakers and civil society to benchmark the progress of cities toward equitable delivery of safety and security. At global level, the Monitor will expand the authoritative evidence base on what makes cities safer, by illuminating and documenting the interplay

between urban risk and resilience factors. The knowledge produced by the Monitor will be disseminated through an annual flagship report featuring rigorous and original analysis of policy and programming; and an accessible web-based platform with an informative public interface, as well as a comprehensive data mine for use by researchers. Prescriptive, actionable policy advice based on the Monitor's findings will be incorporated into a global action agenda, advocating a local government-led, preventive approach to making cities safer.

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1.3 GLOBAL EXPERTS MEETING AND PILOT PHASE

The Global Experts Meeting provided an opportunity for technical specialists and city-based practitioners to come together to devise and approve Urban Safety Monitor indicators to be field-tested during a pilot phase. The meeting was by Barcelona, a city which for over 25 years has been a pioneer in the use of indicators to understand and respond to the dynamics of urban safety. First with the Barcelona victimization surveys (SVB), and later as part of the Catalan Crime Victimization Survey (ESPC), the city has demonstrated the value of time-series urban safety data both to policymakers and the broader public. Barcelona's use of data on public perception, rather than relying only on official statistics, has been especially innovative. A world-class knowledge hub has developed to support public policy in this area.

that directly or indirectly influence safety and security, including resilience factors (variables with a robust negative correlation with violence) and risk factors, or variables with a robust positive correlation with violence). In addition, indicators proposed by the Global Experts Meeting will be organized either in a limited set of common indicators to be applied across all participating cities to facilitate inter-urban and cross-national comparisons, or in a broader set of tailored single-site city indicators.

Due to the extent and intensity of variation across cities, countries, and regions, the simpler common indicators will rely mainly on official statistics (from police and justice institutions, census bureaux, etc.) and other sources of quantitative data (such as hospital-based injury and mortality surveillance systems), though perception surveys may also feed into the common indicators. These standardized indicators will focus primarily on macro-level safety and security outcomes, and allow for comparison across the universe of cities involved in the project, against each other and the mean. Data harvested for the Global City Indicators Facility and UN-Habitat's Global Urban Indicators and City Prosperity Index will be invaluable. It may also be practical to promote integration of surveillance activities with aspects of existing international initiatives like the City Prosperity Index, the World Homicide Survey, the UNODC-led UN Surveys on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, DHS and MICS and the World Values Survey.

With a greater tolerance for specificity and complexity, city indicators will focus on both determinants and outcomes and are likelier to utilize more qualitative data sources like safety audits and household, street, and victimization surveys. Analysis of the relationships between proxy indicators based on quantitative and qualitative data will be especially valuable in generating useful insights.

UN-Habitat will field-test and evaluate the indicators developed at the Global Experts Meeting under real

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