

IDB FACT SHEET - CITIZEN SECURITY

Status of crime and violence in Central America

- The economic costs of violence in Central America are estimated to exceed \$6.5 billion, which represents about 8 percent of the region's GDP, according to a World Bank study. Of this total, approximately half (\$3.34 billion) consists of costs related to health; \$1.28 billion are expenditures for private security; \$1.13 billion are costs to institutions; and the remainder is the cost of loss of property.
- Insecurity and organized transnational crime have emerged as the main challenge to the development of democracies in Central America by undermining the rule of law, destabilizing institutions, and overwhelming the capacity of government to take effective action.
- In addition to diminishing the quality of life of people in Central America, and especially of youth and women, violence and crime have a direct impact on economic development by discouraging investors, affecting the business climate, increasing operating costs for the private sector, and imposing a fiscal burden on governments that could allocate prevention and enforcement resources to other priorities.
- According to the UNDP, Central America has a homicide rate of 33.3 per 100,000 persons—the highest in Latin America and the world. This figure exceeds the rate of 28.8 for the Caribbean, 24.8 for the Andean countries, and 10.9 for the Southern Cone. It is four times the world average of 8 per 100,000 persons. In 2009 there were 18,815 homicides in Central America, an average of 52 per day.
- The homicide rate per 100,000 persons for Central American youth between 15 and 24 years is 38.6, nearly five times the world average. Young people are both the main victims and the perpetrators of violence.
- It is estimated that high school dropouts have 3.5 times higher probability of being arrested over the course of their lives.
- Half of Central American women have been victims of violence during their adult life, nearly always at the hands of their male partners.

International Conference in Support of the Central American Security Strategy

- Given the magnitude of the problem, the Central American governments, through the Central American Integration System (SICA, for its initials in Spanish) and the international community, have worked together to develop a strategy for regional security.
- Heads of state of Central American countries, Mexico, and Colombia, along with high-level representatives of the international community, will participate in the International Conference in Support of the Central American Security Strategy in Guatemala June 20–23, 2011. The meeting will provide a platform for a high-level political dialogue on the strategy and for securing support for the skills and financial resources needed for its implementation.
- The IDB has been a key partner in this process, hosting several meetings of the Group of Friends, which is made up of donor countries and multilateral agencies committed to support Central America in this effort. The Bank has provided technical support in developing the strategy and an action plan, and has been an important interlocutor between governments and donor agencies in building consensus.
- This conference marks an unprecedented milestone for Central America. For the first time, the initiatives of governments, the international community, and civil society will be aligned with the priorities identified in the strategy. This will facilitate to utilize a regional perspective in integrating, complementing, and promoting the activities to be carried out, and to manage resources and capabilities more efficiently to achieve better results.

The IDB and citizen security in Central America

- The Bank is the pioneer multilateral agency in supporting citizen security programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its current portfolio for the region is more than \$580 million for

this purpose, more than any other multilateral agency.

- In response to the demand of the countries of the region, in the past year the Bank has quadrupled funding for the security sector, with a focus on the Central American region.
- The IDB has a portfolio in Central America of \$275 million for ongoing comprehensive security programs. These include initiatives to prevent youth and domestic violence, community programs, support for strengthening judicial systems, modernization of the police, and social reintegration. The Bank's Central American portfolio represents almost half of all IDB projects in the sector.
- IDB projects are being carried out in countries including Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The most recent is a program in Costa Rica for \$132 million approved in May, which will be a benchmark for the region by virtue of its size and innovative approach.

IDB projects in Central America

- **Belize.** The project aims to reduce youth participation in crime and violence by focusing attention on schools in low-income districts of Belize City and on government social rehabilitation institutions for young people.
- **Costa Rica.** The program will support the ministries of Justice and Peace and Public Security by providing academic training for civilian and police personnel. Included will be a New National Police Academy and the region's first Academy for Training Civil Servants in Violence Prevention. The program will focus on the at-risk population through social and situational prevention, and will develop ways to improve the social reintegration of people in conflict with the law and reduce recidivism at the national level.
- **El Salvador.** The Support for Urban Solidarity Communities program combines a successful conditional cash transfer initiative with a violence prevention component in low-income urban communities. The IDB is also supporting the preparation of the National Strategy for Social Prevention of Violence in Support of Municipalities.
- **Guatemala.** The IDB's Multilateral Investment Fund, along with the Asociación Grupo Ceiba, is carrying out a training project in information technology (IT) for at-risk youth and gang members. Some 4,500 youth have received training in Guatemala City, Chimaltenango, Quetzaltenango, Izabal, Escuintla, Petén, and 25 percent were placed in jobs. The project also created the first youth cooperative, which is owned by the youth themselves and offers comprehensive IT services.
- **Honduras.** A pilot program was initiated in the Juan Lindo colony of San Pedro Sula in 2010 to provide cell phones to police officers to improve reporting and description of crime scenes. The program made it possible to systematize and compare offenses and identify patterns of criminal activity in given areas. The process took only five months to implement, and its introduction to other areas of the city is being planned.
- **Panama.** A comprehensive security program is being developed in municipalities with the highest incidence of violence. A Rehabilitation Center for Youth in Conflict with Criminal Law is being constructed that includes a social rehabilitation program. A system for geo-referencing crimes has also been implemented.
- **Nicaragua.** The security program in this country is aimed at reducing the rate of domestic violence and the proliferation of youth gangs through strengthening preventive and community activities by the police.

Regional projects

- **Mapping of International and Non-Governmental Cooperation for Central American Security.** The IDB, in collaboration with the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), has conducted a first mapping exercise to quantify the amount of resources allocated by

multilateral and bilateral agencies and nongovernmental organizations. This mapping will facilitate the coordination of investment and the impact of citizen security interventions in Central America.

- **The Regional System of Standardized Security and Violence Prevention Indicators** aims to standardize the principal crime indicators in the region to support reliable and comparison-based monitoring and evaluation in 15 countries .
- **Border and customs security initiative.** This initiative includes several complementary programs, some in execution and others in preparation. An example is the International Transit of Goods program to monitor and trace commercial transactions and prevent crimes. The program has been carried out in land-based customs facilities in Central America's Pacific corridor; it will be extended to remaining land, sea, and air customs facilities. Another program is being planned to improve the security of borders maritime, land, and air to combat trafficking in drugs, arms, and people.
- An **impact assessment of public security policies** will advance knowledge about successful prevention measures as a means to help broaden their impact. Prevention measures may be improved through assessments and the dissemination of results of effective experiences.