



## Good Governance and Human Rights

# Safer Cities: Preventing urban violence

### The challenge

Rapid urbanisation is leading to rising levels of violence and insecurity in many countries. Mega-cities in Latin America, Africa and Asia are particularly affected, but industrialised countries are also facing the problems of urban violence and high levels of crime. More than half the world's population now lives in cities, and while the majority are able to benefit from the wide range of opportunities provided in cities, many people face obstacles in gaining access to education, the labour market, political inclusion and cultural expression. Social injustice, a lack of prospects, as well as the marginalisation and discrimination of entire sections of the population reinforce structural poverty. This creates an environment in which violence can flourish, especially where there is few opportunities for socio-economic advancement. This results in increasing segregation within urban areas, with gated communities contrasting sharply with informal settlements, slums and poor areas. In many towns and cities, safety is no longer a public good but – as the state's monopoly on the use of force is increasingly eroded – is becoming affordable only for those with sufficient means.

Such conditions enable criminal networks and violence to flourish, especially where – as in many places – they are compounded by inadequate basic public services. Young men in particular are often lured by prospects of success and social inclusion that criminal gangs appear to offer, while women frequently fall victim to domestic, sexual and physical violence. Violence, especially armed violence, drastically reduces the effectiveness of national and local governance and exacerbates the collapse of the state monopoly on the use of force, particularly in fragile and volatile contexts.

More than 500,000 people die each year as a result of armed violence, over half of them outside the context of war or armed conflict. Thus, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between politically motivated violence and criminally motivated violence.

High levels of urban violence also frequently hamper countries' ability for action. Where this occurs in conjunction with global economies of violence, such as

the drugs trade that flourishes in urban areas, there is little prospect of implementing government programmes to combat poverty and, therefore, of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

### Our approach

Systemic prevention of violence is a development policy approach adopted by German development cooperation. The causes of violence are complex and multi-faceted, and preventive interventions must be firmly rooted at both local and national level and adapted to the local situation.

Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitute the main framework for our objectives and activities in this area. GIZ's approach to preventing urban violence focuses on an inclusive, cross-sectoral and multi-level approach. Partner governments are supported in developing strategies to prevent and reduce violence, and measures are developed and implemented jointly with partners at local level. This boosts the relevance and acceptance of prevention measures.

Measures to prevent violence combine elements from the key sectors of urban governance – education, employment, health, physical urban development, the advancement of women and young people, security, law and justice, and infrastructure. A situational analysis, development of options for action at local level with mayors, municipal councils and the police, and work with and for women, children and young people are particularly important. Civil society groups and local businesses are also involved. Further measures designed to prevent violence include arrangements to protect and promote vulnerable population groups, peace education, and urban upgrading programmes as part of an integrated urban development policy. The aim of these measures is to minimise the risk factors in the urban environment that make violence more likely and strengthen the factors that boost safety and service provision, and to improve the infrastructure in informal settlements and slums. Within urban settings, local bodies and mayors are taking the lead. This local approach is also supported by community policing and small arms control.



## Our services

- We advise partner governments on developing national strategies for preventing urban violence.
- We bring state and civil society organisations together and support them in jointly identifying and implementing situational, institutional and social approaches to preventing urban violence.
- Promoting and protecting women, children and young people are central to the prevention of violence. We therefore advise governments and support civil society institutions in designing and implementing measures in this field.
- As part of urban programmes on inclusive development, hot spots for violence are identified and counter-measures developed jointly with the population. These range from street lighting and police stations to mixed-use urban development, leisure-time facilities and the improvement of infrastructure and services in marginalised areas.

## The benefits

Inclusive prevention of violence improves safety in towns, cities and urban areas but also opens up opportunities for the local population to access, influence and participate in urban life. GIZ helps to create a framework for sustainable poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Experiences from past programmes are assessed regularly and the lessons inform the implementation of current programmes and the design of new approaches and methodologies. This enables GIZ to make a major contribution to the international debate on preventing urban violence.

## An example from the field

Levels of violence and crime in South Africa are among the highest in the world. For many South Africans, violence in its many forms is an everyday occurrence. To promote the implementation of a national strategy to reduce crime and violence, GIZ is implementing a programme 'Inclusive violence and crime prevention for safe public spaces'.

The aim of this BMZ-funded programme is to create an environment that enables public, civil society and local organisations to work together to increase the safety of particularly vulnerable groups. It promotes existing violence prevention structures and supports collaboration between public and civil society organisations at national, provincial and local level.

One key area in which the project works is the training of actors from a range of professional backgrounds, including police officers, urban planners and government representatives from sectors such as youth work or urban development. Local government institutions are being supported to bring together the various actors and to ensure they work together to improve the safety of local communities. Youth-focused activities are designed to increase young people's social engagement and employability. This is having a positive impact on social cohesion in local communities and makes effective and sustainable use of young people's potential to prevent violence.

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