

Policy brief

Peace and conflict dynamics in Latin America

The Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention consultation series seeks to bring together expert civil society practitioners, academics and Government of Canada officials to generate up-to-date information and analysis, as well as policy and programming options to respond to developments and emerging trends in peacebuilding.

Other subjects in the series include:
Women's political participation in post-conflict transitions *
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Future directions for translating the norms of the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions into operational standards within the UN system *
The changing nature of non-governmental peacebuilding *

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Peacebuild, in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) convened the third in a series of six workshops on peacebuilding and conflict prevention policy issues on 31st May 2011 in the CANDEM conference room in Ottawa. The purpose of the workshop series is to exchange current information and analysis among expert civil society practitioners, academics and Government of Canada officials aimed at developing policy and programming options to respond to new developments and emerging trends.

Irvin Waller teaches in the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa and is Vice-President of the International Organization for Victim Assistance. He has an MA in Economics and a Ph.D. in Law from Cambridge University. He is author of *Less Law, More Order: The Truth about Reducing Crime* and a consultant to a number of governments and other bodies on crime prevention issues.

Sophia Koutsoyannis specializes in modern Mexican history, gender and urban studies and holds a Ph.D. in History from York University. Her thesis looks at commercial sex, leisure culture and every day life in Mexico City in the 20th century.

Rebecca Bartel is a Ph.D student at the University of Toronto's Department for the Study of Religion and Center for Diaspora and Transnational Studies. She holds an M.A. in Political Science from the Universidad de los Andes in Colombia, as well as a specialization in Armed Conflict Resolution from the same university. Ms. Bartel lived, worked and studied in Colombia from 2002-2010. The last four years of her time in Colombia, she worked as Political Analyst and Advocacy Coordinator for the Region of Latin America and the Caribbean with the Mennonite Central Committee.

This workshop examined the dynamics of peace and conflict, including drug violence and crime, in Latin America. This policy brief provides a synopsis of the findings and analysis from discussion and the papers presented during the event, highlighting key recommendations to improve prevention and responses to conflict and crime that emerged from the workshop.

BACKGROUND AND APPROACH

Workshop participants were invited to explore a broad range of issues related to peace and security in the Latin American context, exchanging views on how to contribute to improved Canadian and international responses to conflict and crime and identifying effective policy and programming options. To initiate and stimulate discussion, two issue papers were prepared and circulated to participants in advance.

The first paper, by Sophia Koutsoyannis, *Femicide in Ciudad Juárez: Ever-Present and Worsening*, investigated the killing of women by men in Mexico within the context of drug-related violence and subsequent government responses to underscore the major impediments facing civil society organizations working on this issue. Rebecca Bartel carried out research for the second commissioned paper, *The Economics of War and Peace in Colombia: Some Current Perspectives*, which examined the economic dynamics of the armed conflict in Colombia, focusing on the drug trade and extractive industries and considering the implications of the current situation for peacebuilding initiatives.¹

The workshop was organized with presentations from Irvin Waller and Sophia Koutsoyannis on crime prevention and victim protection in the morning, followed by a discussion and exchange of experiences among participants. Rebecca Bartel's presentation on war economies in Colombia launched the afternoon with two respondents offering comments on the themes of the presentation. Participants then discussed options for new approaches to policy and programming in light of the evidence and analysis generated and shared during the workshop.

¹ Both papers will be posted on the Peacebuild website: www.peacebuild.ca

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Irvin Waller argued in his presentation on *Reforming Crime Policies in Latin America* that we currently have the knowledge and the ability to prevent and transform Mexican violence, but are lacking the political leadership. Canada's Tough on Crime agenda favours a retributive approach to crime, funding more incarceration, training police and judicial officials and ignoring the causes of criminal behaviour. Meanwhile, significant evidence-based research exists to support the effectiveness of shifting from a focus on enforcement to a victim protection/crime prevention strategy, for example in Bogotá, Chicago and the province of Alberta. Dr. Waller stated that effective prevention requires an integrated, multi-sector approach across government ministries and within communities, including looking at ways to align appropriate programs, services and funding. He suggested that mapping crime levels and diagnosing its roots are critical to developing programming to address prevention. Successful programming has included municipal, regional and national strategies and a focus on parenting education, the development of life skills in children, reduced access to alcohol and guns, empowering women, changing cultural and social norms that support violence, and attention to victim care, safety and justice. Finally, Dr. Waller proposed that Canadian priorities should include championing prevention, leveraging special opportunities to work with likeminded groups such as the World Health Organization (WHO), UN Habitat, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UN Crime Congress, supporting demonstration projects such as fellowships, training programs and research, and engaging the public in the prevention of crime.

Sophia Koutsoyannis identified the unprecedented level of violence resulting from the de-escalation of the Mexican Drug War as responsible for both an increase in femicide and a decrease in the media coverage of gender-based murders, since press coverage has shifted to drug-related violence. Dr. Koutsoyannis argued that structural inequalities such as government corruption, a weak judicial system, intensified neoliberal economic policies that have increased the number of poor and feminized cheap labour, and gender-based structural inequalities that are widespread and naturalized, account for public and private violence against women. In order to support efforts to combat femicide in Mexico, Dr. Koutsoyannis concluded that media attention and advocacy must be maintained in this area, and longer-term, education and community building projects have been effective in changing male attitudes towards women. Strengthening of the judicial system is also required to support justice for victims and victims' families affected by gender-based violence. Further research is needed into the role safety audits can have in increasing women's security.



Rebecca Bartel outlined four prominent aspects of the Colombian context that should inform peacebuilding work: the armed conflict is changing, not necessarily improving; the drug economy fuels a significant portion of the violence ravaging the country; without directed investment in social infrastructure, greater trade liberalization may drive more small-scale farmers towards coca production and/or participation in armed groups; and human security is one of the greatest challenges facing Colombia, as a result of the continued armed conflict, massive internal displacement and ongoing structural violence. She argued that President Juan Manuel Santos’ new policy shift from “democratic security” to “citizen security” holds some promise, as it focuses on greater investment in development and social programming; land return and reform; and more public discourse on human rights in the country. However, its implementation and long-term sustainability have not yet been tested.

Ms. Bartel identified the importance of considering human rights’ and environmental impacts and developing local, social infrastructure when foreign companies invest in Colombia’s extractive sector. She concluded with a call for Canada to adopt a whole-of-government approach focused on improving overall human security in Colombia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the morning and afternoon sessions focused on different themes, the recommendations are organized under the issues they address. Recommendations were discussed within the large group and, while certain ideas were contested, there was general agreement on a number of points, as outlined below.



Crime Prevention and Femicide

Participants had a number of questions and concerns regarding how to best address crime in Latin America, starting with the lack of existing Government of Canada policies for directing aid to Mexico. Not only is Mexico not a priority country for the Canadian International Development Agency, but there were concerns about the Mexican government's reaction to being considered an aid recipient by Canada.

The need for rule of law programming and training of police in evidence gathering and procedures was identified as important to democratic development and participants did not believe that funding should be stopped in this area. Moreover, it was acknowledged that crime levels are volatile and evidence points to the fact that decreasing crime levels are not necessarily attributable to particular policies and strategies in crime prevention.

Participants explored programming options to support victims of femicide and gender-based violence in Mexico, such as training more female police officers and establishing all female police stations, as exists in Brazil. There was general agreement that all-female service provision can result in the "ghettoization" of gender issues, as well as letting men "off the hook", both in regard to understanding and responding to gender-based crime, and to transforming patriarchal and discriminatory norms that oppress women. This was perceived as an area of interest, but requiring further study and reflection. It was also agreed that better research into femicide was required to understand causes – are murders attributable to gender-based violence or related to drug violence?

Finally, participants wondered how effective crime prevention approaches could be in countries where economic and structural conditions keep unemployment high, limit educational and vocational opportunities for youth and maintain high levels of poverty among populations. If crime prevention programming focuses on education and employment opportunities where there are none, how is criminal activity transformed? It

was mentioned that working on secondary levels of crime prevention has been linked to increased security, followed by increased GDP.²

Policy Recommendations:

Increase funding for crime prevention in Latin America.

Evidence supports that tackling risk factors is effective in preventing crime by 60-70%, whereas funding policing enforcement has had a negligible effect on reducing crime rates. It is recommended that the Government of Canada balance its support of rule of law with support for victim protection and crime prevention.

Be creative in seeking policy frameworks and institutions to support crime prevention in Latin America and, in particular, Mexico.

While there is no explicit mandate to support Mexico through CIDA and DFAIT has limited funds to support urban violence initiatives, there are opportunities to champion this cause through the Government of Canada's multilateral programs, which support the WHO, UN Habitat, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and UNODC, among others. The Government of Canada can contribute to a reframing of crime prevention from one of law enforcement to a health and social issue. It is also worth exploring whether Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security has applicability in the context of femicide in Mexico.

Develop a multi-sector, integrated strategic framework to respond to the risk factors that lead to crime.

Effective crime prevention requires the coordination and integration of government strategies in areas such as Health, Justice, Public Security, Education, Children and Youth Services, Housing and Urban Affairs and Municipal Affairs. The Government of Canada can enlist the expertise of its various departments working on these issues domestically and adopt a policy to encourage and support multi-sector, integrated approaches to crime prevention.

Sustain the leadership in gender analysis and commitment to gender-stratified data, particularly with respect to crime trend analysis.

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of gendered analysis in understanding the impact of crime and structural inequality on women and girls and should continue to champion and advocate for the inclusion of gender variables in evidence-based research into crime.

² Daudelin, Jean. *Drugs and Violence in the Americas: Background and Overview of Canada's Options*, Centre for Security and Defense Studies and The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University: April 2011

Programming Recommendations

Conduct thorough baseline research and evidence-based analysis before designing and developing programs and projects.

Diagnosis should be based on multiple and reliable sources of data which include gender indicators. A deep understanding of specific conditions on the ground, coupled with analysis of the risk factors and causes of crime, is a necessary precondition for work in the field. There are numerous academic institutions, research organizations, international and regional governmental institutions and nongovernmental organizations, both international and local, that produce reliable information, but since crime trends can change quickly, it is important to rely on the most up-to-date research to design and evaluate programs and projects.

Extend programming commitments.

Crime prevention programming duration is often insufficient to increase the security of communities and transform norms that support violence. Longer cycles will yield more meaningful programs and outcomes.

Increase accountability and sustainability through multi-sectoral partnerships with national and local governments and civil society organizations.

In terms of crime prevention, it is essential to form local partnerships at the city or municipal levels affected by crime because this is the level at which conditions contribute to or mitigate criminal activity. Programs should be developed in conjunction with stakeholders in health, education, justice, public safety, youth and child services, community development and municipal affairs to maximize their impact and contribute to their sustainability.

Engage the public.

Experience shows that there is considerable public support for crime prevention initiatives. Public consultation and participation in the development of strategies and programs to mitigate risks and prevent crime strengthens citizen engagement and ownership in community security.



Peace and Conflict in Colombia

Participants were in agreement on a number of recommendations listed below and shared similar analysis on how best to address the conflict in Colombia. The respondents to the Colombia presentation launched a robust discussion on the economics of war and peace; corporate social accountability and the conflict around extractive industries; the potential for a political negotiated solution to the conflict and the need for reparations, reconciliation and community-based peacebuilding.

In response to why the armed conflict has persisted for 45 years, participants identified numerous contributing factors, including the lack of any reconciliation processes, the failure of DDR programming, the lack of progress in institutional development, the involvement of security forces in illicit (coca production, manufacturing and distribution) economic activities; the continued existence of paramilitary forces that protect economic interests without regard for human rights; and a pervasive culture of violence. Despite the Government of Colombia's talk of a political solution to the conflict, Colombians are skeptical that the time is right and report that the guerillas have no interest in dialogue at this juncture.

The Santos' government has recently passed a Victims and Land Restitution bill to address the displacement and restitution of over four million Colombian people. This bill is held out as an example for other countries, however, it has not yet been implemented and will need to be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness.

With respect to conflicts around the extractive industry in Colombia, it was noted that over 25% of all land in Colombia has indigenous ancestry and much of the resource-rich land is indigenous. There are ecologically-sensitive areas, known as "no-go" or exclusion zones which are not receiving protection from exploration. Unequal land distribution and the displacement from the civil war further fuel conflicts over resources. Social leaders are regularly threatened if they are perceived as anti-development or anti-mining. In this context, over 52% of the companies actively exploring resources in Colombia are Canadian, which makes it imperative that Canada become involved.

In October 2010, the Government of Canada established an Ombudsman and office to look into complaints against Canadian mining companies operating abroad, but she is

only mandated to act/investigate when invited by the company. Bill C300, introduced by Liberal MP John McKay, aimed at addressing human rights' violations by Canadian companies operating abroad through sanctions, was defeated by Parliament. The Government of Colombia has not been reliable at upholding and protecting the rights of its people when violations occur by foreign companies.

Policy Recommendations:

Support community capacity-building equitably.

The Government of Canada should adopt a policy whereby communities in Colombia not yet targeted for resource exploration receive the same programming as those targeted on capacity building to protect their rights and ensure sharing of profits produced from their land. This policy is in line with the government's conflict-sensitive approaches to development in fragile and failing states.

Develop a policy to address "no-go" zones.

A commitment to environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility on the part of the Canadian government should extend to policy surrounding Canadian companies who explore and extract resources on foreign soil, particularly in ecologically-sensitive and protected areas.

Build in systematic consultation with those conducting credible research.

The value of reliable baseline data and analytical research cannot be understated where a profound understanding of contexts is required prior to policy and program development. Currently, consultation with Canadian, international and locally-based research communities is ad hoc and needs to be more systematic.

Programming Recommendations:

Support a process in Colombia that leads to an innovative new Mining Code.

The Government of Canada was involved in the last process to revise the Colombian Mining Code. The Code is due to expire again and Canada can contribute to a review process that includes extensive public consultation and innovative policies and practices.

Explore alternative economic growth strategies to mining.

There are alternative means to mining investments in order to develop the economic viability of communities in Colombia. These have not been explored adequately to date, but may offer more environmentally sustainable and equitable income-generating options for Colombians.

Develop and use consistent terminology in reporting on resource conflicts.

Standards for identifying human rights' violations must be developed and used consistently in reports related to resource conflicts. Without common terminology that is

shared among civil society organizations, academic institutions and the Government of Canada, data cannot be relied upon to accurately record conditions in communities where Canadian companies are operating, which has an impact on effective advocacy.

Do no more harm.

The Government of Canada and Canadian civil society organizations have sufficient knowledge to ensure that no more harm is done to communities that have already experienced adverse effects through mining investments and communities that have yet to work with the extractive industry. Tools such as the Human Rights Impact Assessment and the Environmental Impact Assessment should be applied to all major investments, trade agreements and development projects undertaken by Canadians.

Extend programming benefits to communities without Canadian investment.

When the Government of Canada offers development and capacity-building programs to Colombian communities that host Canadian extractive industries, the perception is that the Canadian government rewards those who do business, at whatever cost, with Canadian companies. To balance this perception, equivalent investments in development and capacity-building should be made in communities that have not been targeted for resource exploration by Canadian companies.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The group ran into time constraints in its consideration of these numerous issues and, as a consequence, was unable to deliberate on options for responding to the following:

- Improving corporate social responsibility and accountability of Canadian companies operating in resource exploration and extraction;
- Systematic exchanges of relevant research among government officials, academics and NGOs in Canada;
- Best practices to assist Latin American governments to implement good legislation on crime prevention, gender equality, land reform and restitution, reconciliation and justice;
- Linking reliable, locally-based civil society organizations with Canadian government officials on an ad hoc basis to inform policy and programming; and
- Ongoing contact among the workshop participants to exchange knowledge and experience in the future.

SELECTED READINGS

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