

GLOBAL EXPERT GROUP MEETING URBAN SAFETY MONITOR



CONCEPT NOTE Barcelona, 15-16 May 2014

Launching in 2014, the Urban Safety Monitor will harness the power of open data to strengthen evidence-based policy and practice in reducing urban violence and insecurity. Barcelona, a pioneer in the use of urban safety indicators, will host a high-level Global Experts Meeting in May to set the project's course for years to come.

From 15-16 May 2014, UN-Habitat, in collaboration with Barcelona City Council, will convene a meeting of experts and practitioners to push forward a signature global initiative, the Urban Safety Monitor. Once launched, the Urban Safety Monitor will drive informed public policymaking and enhance local government accountability by tracking and analyzing indicators of safety and security in multiple cities. Illuminating the interplay between urban risk and resilience factors reflected in its reservoir of data, it will expand the stock of knowledge on what makes cities safer. The meeting will review existing urban safety indicators and surveillance systems, and iteratively produce an Urban Safety Monitor prototype for field-testing in a pilot phase.

For over 25 years, Barcelona 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. As such, Barcelona is the ideal host city for the Global Experts Meeting: Urban Safety Monitor.

With the collaboration of:



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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 on 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 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 to account 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 success¹.

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, to characterize 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 highly contextualized set of indicators to be more useful. Concerns were also raised about profound regional variation and the effect on 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

¹ See, for example, Muggah (2012) and Gilgen, E. & Tracey, L. (2011), "Contributing evidence to programming: Armed violence monitoring systems." Geneva and New York: Geneva Declaration Secretariat and UNDP.

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 a first Expert Group Meeting in Paris, France, in December 2012, and received positively. The first Expert Group provided additional clarification on scope and methodology, project timelines, selection criteria for cities in the research network, and determination of indicators.

1.2 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 production 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 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. 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.

1.3 Global Experts Meeting and pilot phase

The Global Experts Meeting will represent 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 is hosted 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.

Building on the experiences of the SVB and ESPC, and tapping the wealth of technical expertise in Barcelona and Catalonia, the Global Experts Meeting will review existing urban safety indicators and surveillance systems, and iteratively produce an Urban Safety Monitor prototype.

Development of indicators for the Urban Safety Monitor will seek to balance the urgent need for reliable, comparable, time-series data from multiple sites with deference to the specificity and singularity of security issues at city and sub-city level. Reaching unanimity on what to monitor and how will be an early and critical challenge for the project. Representatives appointed by each city participating in the pilot phase will gather with world-class technical experts for an iterative, in-person process of indicator development and refinement, as well as to scan existing datasets and indicators generated by credible international actors.

Indicators will be clustered as outcome indicators, on the incidence, prevalence, perception, and distribution of (in)security; and determinant indicators, on the more distal social, economic, and environmental phenomena 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 in to 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 world conditions, providing deeper insights into each indicator, generating data to improve the quality and loading of sub-indices, and assess the overall credibility of the tool. Pilot cities will be expected to collect and document data for as many short-listed indicators as possible, and then complete an evaluation checklist evaluating indicators on the basis of ease of collection, universality, relevance, and credibility.

The mission of the Urban Safety Monitor is not only to generate data, but to disseminate and make sense of it. As such, the Global Experts Meeting will also consider potential open-data and web platform solutions—both to clarify the understanding of participants of how the Monitor will be operationalized for users and the general public alike, and do narrow down options for eventual approval by UN-Habitat.

UN-Habitat will present the Urban Safety Monitor project document and a brief summary of existing initiatives on measuring crime and violence in cities, proposing criteria for the identification of indicators and surveillance methodologies. Barcelona and Catalonia will complement this material with a review of the rich metropolitan and regional experiences (a relevant field visit may also be organized). These elements will serve as the basis for conceptual and technical “uploading” of key aspects of indicator design and surveillance practice; a structured exchange between city representatives and international technical experts; and a facilitated, iterative, multi-disciplinary design process (conducted in plenary and city-focused breakout groups) that will produce an Urban Security Monitor prototype for adaptation at in the pilot phase. A strong emphasis on reflective practice will enable the EGM to validate concepts and tools as these emerge. The outcome of the EGM will be a report describing the Urban Safety Monitor prototype, including specific city and common indicators and surveillance methodology.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE GLOBAL EXPERT MEETING

2.1 General objectives

- (1) Review existing urban safety indicators and surveillance systems, including those of Barcelona and Catalonia.
- (2) Develop indicator selection criteria for the Urban Safety Monitor.
- (3) Produce an Urban Safety Monitor prototype, including indicators and surveillance methodology.

2.2 Specific objectives

Other objectives of the meeting include:

- Review open-data and web platform solutions
- Foster initial development of a community of practice to support design and implementation of the Urban Safety Monitor, in the pilot phase and beyond
- Promote strengthened communication and knowledge-sharing among pilot cities
- Facilitate joint learning to be documented by UN-Habitat
- Build consensus on good practice in urban safety policy and programming

3. PARTNERS

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Key partners for the Global Experts Meeting include:

- UN-Habitat (especially the Urban Land, Legislation and Governance Branch and the Monitoring and Research Division)
- City Council of Barcelona
- Local authorities selected to participate in the pilot phase
- Technical experts
- UNDP-BCPR, IDB, and other interested stakeholders

4. AGENDA

See attached document.

5. PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

In addition to process and technical facilitators (2-3 people) and a range of invited guests from Barcelona and Catalonia, the EGM will comprise two main groups of participants:

- *Technical experts (10-12 people).* In order to promote utilization of established best practices and ensure the scientific legitimacy of the project, UN-Habitat will invite eminent international, national, and local academic and statistical specialists to provide technical advice and counsel to project partners at the Global Experts Meeting.
- *Urban Safety Monitor Data Coordinators.* In early 2014, UN-Habitat will select 3-4 cities to participate in the pilot phase; each selected city will appoint a representative to serve as the Monitor's main interlocutor. The Barcelona EGM will be an opportunity for city representatives to meet one another, and to co-produce indicators specific to their city with world-class experts.