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# SUCCESSFUL MODELS AND APPROACHES ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND CRIME PREVENTION

**A CONFERENCE ON CITIZEN SECURITY – JUNE 28, 2011**

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USAID, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the U.S. Department of State sponsored a conference on citizen security to highlight the importance of prevention efforts in stemming crime and violence in the Americas and around the world. Held on June 28, 2011, with approximately 350 people in attendance, the conference was organized through USAID's Central American Regional Security Initiative Technical Support Technical Support Services project and featured discussions on effective approaches to: community policing, public-private sector partnerships on crime prevention, juvenile justice reform, and media and youth movements.

## **A. Introduction**

Arturo Valenzuela, assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs at the U.S. Department of State, opened the event. Underscoring the importance of youth development and crime prevention in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Mr. Arturo stressed that practitioners and policy makers must ensure that the region's young people have economic and social opportunities. Research shows that youth often engage in criminal activity due to poverty and lack of education and are more likely to be the victims and perpetrators of violent crime, creating a cycle of violence and putting youth at a higher risk of joining gangs. Youth violence has negative effects on the economy, and investing in youth can have a positive impact on the future of the Americas. Demonstrating the effect that reducing youth violence has on the economy, Mr. Arturo noted that according to the World Bank, enrolling all youth in secondary school could result in an increase of two percentage points in gross domestic profit. Crime can be prevented by focusing on root causes such as poverty and lack of education, and by involving communities whenever possible. It is also critical to develop strategies addressing the issues that face women and girls, such as gender discrimination in the workplace and the education system, domestic violence, and trafficking. These problems can be addressed by implementing programs that build the confidence of young women and by working with men and boys to foster a culture of respect. The U.S. government has taken steps to address issues facing women and girls by cultivating young leaders through the Youth Ambassadors Program.

Mark Feierstein, assistant administrator of USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, pointed out that if security problems in LAC are not solved, it will be difficult to solve other development issues in the region. Security is a priority for USAID, and the agency's current goals are to strengthen judicial systems, train local police forces on community policing, and provide productive and positive alternatives for vulnerable youth. As President Barack Obama recently noted, practitioners and policy makers need to reach at-risk youth before they turn to drugs and crime. Although success in crime prevention depends largely on national governments, civil society and the private sector have a vibrant role to play. For example, in El Salvador a nine-member consortium of private sector foundations is being formed, with USAID support, to work in high-risk communities. In Jamaica, USAID is working with a local organization that agreed to match USAID's contribution to help vulnerable youth. Several countries have implemented a security tax, and as Hillary Clinton stated in a recent speech, businesses and the wealthy must pay taxes and become fully involved in preventing youth violence. In closing, Mr. Feierstein mentioned a USAID-supported center in Guatemala where

youth are taught to speak English and use computers. The youth at these centers are overcoming tough situations; if these types of programs succeed, youth will be productive members of society in the future.

Jose Miguel, Secretary General of OAS, noted that while democracies in LAC are improving, there are still many large obstacles to face, such as violence and inequality (which strike youth hardest), an aging world population, and LAC's high percentage of youth. Completing primary and secondary school remains a challenge in rural areas, and youth are often affected by the poor quality of education. Impoverished youths are the main protagonists in street fights and the most frequent victims of violence. Young men in LAC are 30 times more likely to be shot than young men in Europe, and a growing number of women and girls are joining gangs. Factors that put youth at risk for participation in crime include exclusion, lack of access to social services, few employment opportunities, lack of hope, and insecurity. It is therefore important to provide at-risk youth with opportunities for education and training, leisure activities, and work. Youth who have fallen into crime need opportunities to correct their behavior and reintegrate into society. They should not be jailed with adult criminals, many of whom are heads of criminal organizations. Instead, they should receive education and be placed in rehabilitation centers. The OAS has undertaken several initiatives to address youth violence, such as developing a new strategy against drugs that emphasizes training and prevention methods, creating dialogues with youth, and providing better support to incarcerated youth. Mr. Miguel stressed that youths need to be included in such initiatives, and that all members of society — government, politicians, civil society organizations, and youth themselves — must work to solve the problem of youth violence.

## **B. Community Policing**

The first roundtable discussion was moderated by Andy Michels. Mr. Michels is the senior civilian advisor for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Pentagon, and a former USAID democracy and governance officer. The panelists included Gerard Martin, senior security sector reform specialist; Ray Campos, NAS program manager at the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala; John Buchanan, deputy director for operations of ICITAP at the U.S. Department of Justice; Jim Isenberg, Youth-Police Initiative; Helen Mack, Presidential Commission for Police Reform in Guatemala; Antonio Roberto C. de Sá, Federal Police for the State Secretariat for Public Security in Rio de Janeiro; and Abby Cordova, research associate at Vanderbilt University and director of the Central American Regional Security Initiative Impact Evaluation.

Mr. Martin spoke about the recent USAID report on community-based policing he wrote in collaboration with Mr. Buchanan. The report focused on the question, "How can the U.S. government best support community-based policing?" Mr. Martin addressed the importance of police-community relations, noting that most crimes are prevented or solved by citizen information. The community-based policing approach can result in increased trust between citizens and the police, leading to better information sharing. Community-based policing includes prevention, law enforcement, and maintenance of

order. As a holistic approach that involves all aspects of police work, community-based policing is more comprehensive than community-oriented policing and community-based prevention. Practitioners and policy makers should be careful not to confuse these terms when discussing programs. LAC faces specific challenges that make police reform difficult in comparison to the United States. For example, police reforms are implemented on a national level rather than a local level, meaning that real reform requires buy-in from the national government. Problems such as widespread corruption are deeply entrenched in organizational culture, and high-level political will is necessary to institute change. Additionally, fear of retaliation often makes citizens leery of cooperating with police. Based on these factors, the U.S. government can best support community-based policing by enhancing synergy among actors in the field and by prioritizing and supporting national initiatives related to community-based policing. Mr. Buchanan added that in the United States one result of community-based policing is that police officers think differently about their roles and realize they need the community as much as the community needs them. However, we must keep in mind that in the United States, community-based policing was introduced to organizations with a high level of institutional capacity. It is significantly more difficult to introduce community-based policing in LAC, because practitioners are usually building institutional capacity while simultaneously trying to build community-based policing into the organization.

Using Guatemala as an example, Ms. Mack pointed out that, in many cases, changing police behavior must be done by policy and doctrine and may take at least five years. Many mayors and authority figures believe that the authoritarian approach works best, and those engaged in police reform need to debunk the myth that only the army can provide security. Civilians should be included in security discussions, and police need to have the power to define their role. Ms. Mack believes in a regional approach that focuses not only on problems such as drugs, but also on solutions such as training. If practitioners take the approach that citizens can relay information to the police, then the police need to be trained to establish rapport with citizens. It is also crucial for all actors, including municipal police, churches, and schools, to coordinate with regard to prevention. Political will is vital to reform, and citizens need to pressure leaders to change. Advocacy is an important tool.

Mr. Isenberg remarked that the issue of leadership is fundamental to reform. Given his experience in Eastern Europe and Rio de Janeiro, he is very interested in what it means to be a police leader in a democracy. What is the vision for police reform? What are the norms and as a leader how do you change these norms? In Rio de Janeiro he worked in 18 cities to bring police together with youth, encouraging dialogue to build trust and understanding between the two groups. Leadership and dialogue are important because it is not possible for police to arrest every young person who commits an illegal act.

Based on his own experience in Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Roberto de Sá agreed that arresting criminals is not sufficient. In 2007 he helped develop a program to address the high levels of violence that existed in shanty towns. The remote locations of these *favelas* made them an attractive safe haven for many criminals, and police officers were often attacked while on duty. For Mr. Roberto de Sá, the most important question was how to create an

environment where police were viewed by citizens as friends, not enemies. Historically, police would suppress demonstrations instead of providing security for demonstrators. This reality needed to be changed. Starting in areas with little to no state presence, Mr. Roberto de Sá's team installed foot patrols and tried to replicate community policing techniques. The project chose areas with no presence of state institutions and avoided asking permission of the drug traffickers that controlled many areas across the country. During the pilot project in a selected *favela*, the community came to know the police officer by name, and attacks on police decreased. The project helped to create "the uniform police officer," and now youth want to be police officers instead of drug dealers. The police are active in society, playing sports with youths and attending community events. It is now difficult for criminals to find safe-houses in the *favelas* where the project operated, and when criminals are present it is easier for police to find them, because the patrol car is now seen as a vehicle that brings peace.

According to Abby Cordova, community policing is a two-sided coin consisting of police institutions and citizens. For her, the most important question is how to bring actors together to make community policing work. She shared findings from USAID-funded surveys that focused on the citizen side of the coin. In general, the surveys showed that citizen trust in the police is an important ingredient for a community policing program. Ms. Cordova found it interesting that the most trusted institution in El Salvador and Guatemala is the army, and noted that there has been some coordination between the army and the police in Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. In El Salvador, a survey of 71 neighborhoods found little evidence of community policing. Trust in the police is low in these neighborhoods, mainly because people do not know the police and hear negative coverage of police actions in the media. The survey showed that there is hope of increasing the level of trust in police, suggesting that trust can be built by bringing police officers closer to citizens and that the community policing model can be successful even in areas where there is low trust in the police.

Mr. Campos commented on the model precinct program established in Guatemala, which aims to improve citizen relations with the police and reduce crime by changing the way the local police station operates. The program involves selecting, vetting, training, and supervising the police, and allows community members to participate in the officer selection process and interview potential police station personnel. The selling points of this model are that it creates a setting in which the police work with the people. In Guatemala, the model precinct developed an anti-gang unit and participated in safe schools programs. However, this model requires a lot of funding and is labor-intensive for technical advisors. To ensure sustainability, there needs to be a greater number of trained personnel to implement the model in other precincts. For the model to be truly successful, local staff need to take over leadership of the program.

During the question-and-answer period, one participant noted the problem of rotating officers in Guatemala. These officers are brought to the United States for training, but then are often transferred to another community shortly after returning. Mr. Martin underscored the importance of trust, noting that it depends on the police, local governments, and community organizations. The police alone cannot attain trust. In El

Salvador, USAID implementers are working with mayors to build citizen trust in the police. Mr. Buchanan recommended that officers should be placed in communities for a minimum of two to three years. He agreed that when officials are transferred shortly after trust is built, there is a negative impact on the community policing project.

### **C. Public-Private Alliances in Crime Prevention**

The second roundtable discussion was moderated by Gerardo Tablas, the senior public-private alliance advisor at the USAID mission in El Salvador. The panelists included Joseph M. Matalon, from the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica; Arturo Sagrera, director general of Programa Empresarial Superate; Tim Cross, president of Youthbuild International; Steve Vetter, president of Partners of the Americas; and Ruben Gonzales, senior advisor for the Center for the Study of Social Policy and coordinator of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Revitalization Workgroup.

The panelists initially discussed the public-private alliances' focus on health and education. Mr. Gonzales stressed that it is important to talk about the definition of violence — anything that promotes deprivation — and how, therefore, public-private alliances must address economic and social structures, including health. Mr. Vetter commented that it is not an either-or proposition for businesses. The private sector is not only interested in partnerships focused on health and education. In LAC, the focus is on school and how far a young person has progressed. Are the basic health needs of youth met? Has a young person been a victim of violence? What paths lead to economic opportunities? Practitioners need to present the key drivers of violence and provide examples of how the private sector can intervene. Mr. Sagrera remarked that the resources of the private sector must be taken into account when looking at complex issues such as youth violence. Mr. Matalon pointed out that Jamaica suffers from an extraordinarily high crime rate, and that there are many uninvolved youth outside programs and the formal education system.

Mr. Tablas noted that a baseline exists for public-private alliances, and asked about the specific contributions from public and private sectors. Does everything revolve around funding? Mr. Vetter stressed the importance of connections between public-private partnerships, schools, NGOs, and community groups. The Private Sector Organization of Jamaica is a business association that realized it could not do business if the violence problem went unsolved. The association funded inner city *rasta* youth groups, providing technical training, mentoring, and guidance so that youth could create their own employment. Although successful at first, the program's achievements have declined due to the decreasing quality of Jamaica's education system. Mr. Vetter believes that USAID, other international donors, and NGOs all play a key role in creating hope for impoverished people. Getting youth back in school is not necessarily the answer if schools are poorly organized and teachers are not focused on the needs of youth. To successfully engage youth, it is crucial to find their passion (for example, sports) and organize the education curriculum around that passion. Recruit, train, and mentor youth to participate in the private sector and use partnerships to gain traction.

Mr. Tablas asked panelists what factors are involved in attracting the private sector to work more closely with youth development and crime prevention initiatives. According to Mr. Cross, whether a corporation has a branch dedicated to nonprofit work makes a difference, but although it is often easier to work with these corporations, it is important to involve the corporate and the nonprofit side. To engage corporations, remember their interests and goals. Most businesses see 16- to 24-year-olds as an untapped market they would like to reach. Global firms want people to feel good about their brand. Businesses are dealing with an insecure investment environment and want to see tangible results. Mr. Matalon agreed that the 16- to 24-year-old age group is a very important cohort to corporations. Youth development programs can help stabilize development and, as demonstrated in Jamaica, the economy will benefit if crime decreases.

Mr. Gonzales noted that, in Los Angeles, public and private foundations contribute to community development, focusing on safety, economic opportunities, and mental and physical health. By working together, these foundations maximize the impact of limited funding. The private sector is innovative, but the innovations can only be sustained by public sector institutions adopting certain practices and adapting them to communities. Mr. Vetter pointed out that there is a disconnect on the issue of resources and private sector involvement. The wealth exists, but it is often difficult to get corporations involved because the word “nonprofit” carries a certain connotation. Mr. Vetter suggested presenting the cost of crime in relation to the cost of development programs. It costs much more to incarcerate someone than to educate someone. What does it cost El Salvador to provide protection? In Guatemala City, young people are sent to the mall with body guards. How much does that cost? The question is how do you take a “scary kid” and turn him or her into someone whose productivity benefits society? Practitioners can get the private sector involved by bringing up the question of value; however, do not assume that the state or the private sector alone will address education.

Focusing on sustainability, Mr. Tablas asked panelists how public-private alliances will be sustainable when donor funding ceases. Mr. Matalon believes private companies have the ability to sustain activities by leveraging resources and acting as catalysts for change. Although assistance is delivered by NGOs and public agencies, the private sector can engage youth beneficiaries and play a significant role in programs by looking at governance practices to ensure money is used productively. Mr. Sagrera highlighted the importance of capacity building to ensure growth in organizations.

Mr. Cross noted that the public sector is critical to sustaining youth development and crime prevention programs. For example, because Youthbuild is funded by seven federal agencies, political interests often translate into public policy, which is then implemented in communities. The question is how to influence the national agenda to get funding. In Guatemala and El Salvador, there is distrust between public and private institutions. One way to mitigate this distrust is to take programming risks at the local level, allowing corporations to make minimal investments and evaluating each program before it becomes a large-scale operation. Another way to address distrust is to hold dialogues in each country to talk about how the public and private sectors view each other and find common goals through program activities (for example, youth participation in an

internship program could reduce the number of youths involved in gang violence and, ultimately, increase corporations' ability of to do business). Mr. Gonzales pointed out that practitioners and policy makers sometimes sustain efforts that have not demonstrated results. It is therefore crucial to assess the activities we hope to sustain. Sustainability has to do with strengthening young people's capacity to make good decisions. Many philanthropic partners see themselves as innovators and not as role models. Mr. Vetter stressed the importance of metrics. The private sector does not want to be involved in a project that does not produce results, so it is important to present businesses with figures that demonstrate why an intervention will work and what the cost will be if it fails.

Mr. Tablas asked panelists how the government, private sectors, NGOs, and donors can work together. Mr. Matalon recommended concentrating youth-related issues in a single ministry to ensure coordination between programs for at-risk youth. He also suggested allocating funding to build NGO capacity so the private sector can work with a trusted NGO. Mr. Sagrera argued for simplicity. Mr. Gonzales stressed the need to create a platform that maximizes integration among all actors. Mr. Cross talked about his experience with a construction company that issued low-interest loans to help impoverished Mexican families in neighboring communities add rooms to their homes. There was little discussion of how the program could be redesigned to reach poor young people in other communities, and the government was not involved. Mr. Cross noted that innovators in the private sector and government officials experience very different cultures and need to find common points of interest. For example, in Rio de Janeiro he is working with NGOs to adapt Youthbuild to *favelas*. USAID could play a role in facilitating collaboration between the public and private sectors. Mr. Vetter mentioned a meeting where nonprofit leaders came together to discuss tools needed to better serve the community. This helped to break down rivalries and is a method that should be used to build social capital among nonprofit organizations, corporations, and the public.

Turning the discussion to beneficiaries, Mr. Tablas asked how practitioners and policy makers can engage communities to foster ownership. All panelists agreed that community engagement in program design is critical. Mr. Matalon shared his experience designing a youth development program, noting that the program had to be data-driven and that communities proved to be the best informers for the design process. Involving a broad cross-section of the community is key to keeping the wider community involved in program activities. Mr. Sagrera recommended having local groups take the lead on activities (for example, adult community members can supervise youth soccer games) allows communities to see how they benefit from programs in their area. Mr. Cross described how at Youthbuild 2002, communities were given a program design to adapt, assess, and implement. This method resulted in programs that emerged out of a community-run development process and created local ownership. It is practical to involve the community in this way, because outsiders have an inaccurate picture of what goes on in communities. This method also supports youth involvement: practitioners can invite marginalized youths to take part in the planning process. Mr. Vetter agreed that this is an organic way to engage the community. Letting a young person know that he or she can change his or her life and make a difference is huge. Youths can go through a program, get a job, and then volunteer to give back to the community. Mr. Vetter

underscored the importance of simplicity, remarking that Habitat for Humanity has been successful largely because it has a simple and flexible program design.

During the question-and-answer session, one participant asked if youth development programs lead to more low-paid labor, and asked how to identify the government departments to be entrusted with youth affairs. Referring to an earlier example in which youth served as interns on a construction site, Mr. Cross noted that the site was used to train youth on “soft” skills, not to set up youth for a career in construction. The purpose of these programs is to give youths basic workplace skills so they are eligible for internships in the private sector and can learn technical skills that are in high demand. Additionally, allowing youths to work on construction sites demonstrates that the young people are productive members of society who can give back to the community.

Another participant asked about the importance monitoring and evaluation has on future interventions. Mr. Vetter replied that he takes monitoring and evaluation very seriously, but recognizes that there are time and resource costs. Programs cannot be designed without monitoring and evaluation, and he believes donors should put more money into this area. It would also be helpful if there was a way to measure cost per person served. The field of youth development seems to have concluded that the best program models are comprehensive and of longer duration, but this is more expensive; it would be helpful to see a breakdown of what programs spend on each individual served.

Michael McCabe from Creative Associates in Panama asked what organizations do to overcome the fact that the private sector often overlooks the need to strengthen NGOs’ institutional capacity. Mr. Sagraera said that USAID helped strengthen his organization through the Global Development Alliance, and that institutional capacity building was crucial to the organization’s success. Mr. Vetter encouraged looking at a young person’s entire life cycle, noting that between birth and college the culture of violence is strong and it is important to take every step to get youth to college. Mr. Gonzales noted that by actively engaging a young person, crime can be prevented that day. There needs to be awareness of the benefits of investing in youth (versus incarceration).

#### **D. Juvenile Justice Reform**

Leila Mooney, director of Latin America programs for Partners for Democratic Change, moderated the panel on Juvenile Justice Reform. Panelists included Victor Herrero, juvenile justice expert from Terres des Hommes in Spain; Orietta Zumbado, juvenile justice expert for the USAID Regional Alliance Program in Costa Rica; Juan Carlos Galocha, juvenile justice coordinator for the European Community Children Rights Consortium Program in Afghanistan; Mary Beloff, juvenile justice expert from Argentina; and Heather Johnson, a member of the CARICOM Secretariat.

The purpose of the panel was to examine the initiatives, dimensions, and definitions of juvenile justice reform. Ms. Mooney began by asking panelists for their thoughts on the restorative justice approach versus the retributive justice approach. Several panelists made the point that although criminal laws in LAC include a rehabilitative aspect, the

major response is retributive justice. The restorative approach can take different forms, and is often seen by its opponents as a “soft” approach to criminal justice. This happens due to a lack of understanding about what restorative justice means and how it applies to the justice system. It is important to overcome the action-reaction dialogue, in which the reaction occurs after a crime is committed. Under restorative justice, the juvenile is forced to take responsibility for his or her crime, with the goal of reintegrating the individual into society. When incarceration is the only punishment, the prison system becomes a university for crime, because perpetrators are not rehabilitated.

Next, the panelists were asked about the role of prevention. Mr. Galocha noted that one of the most important responses to crime is prevention, the chief purpose of which is to keep youth out of the justice system. This has been overlooked in LAC, so efforts have been limited to addressing the crime after the fact. When dealing with crime, it is unlikely that interventions will be successful after a crime is committed. The fact that perpetrators are generally from the same segment of society shows we have not progressed. Innovative approaches are used throughout LAC, but they are not sustainable in the current system. It is also important to recognize that not everything can be prevented. International cooperation is crucial when creating juvenile justice programs. Laws are often a step ahead of social change; due to lack of services, most youths are invisible until they enter the justice system.

Ms. Johnson noted that one major challenge to reform is the negative perception of youth that exists in many societies. Vicious and senseless crimes are on the rise, and although practitioners believe that a number of perpetrators are young people, there is little evidence to prove it. Governments are aware that violence has a negative impact on the economy and increases state expenditures. Intervention involves education and changing mindsets, and it is critical to identify the factors underlying the upsurge in crime.

Ms. Zumbado stressed the importance of allocating resources to help children and give them access to education and health services. Prevention calls for the appropriate allocation of resources and a good national policy. Additionally, the criminal justice system needs bolstering so interventions do not occur in isolation. The main difference between restorative and retributive justice is that restorative justice involves the community, whereas retributive justice focuses on just three aspects: the prosecutor, the judge, and the sentence. A restorative justice system allows a problem to be dealt with before it becomes a criminal justice matter, and it is important to work with all those involved to find what caused that problem. Oversight and vigilance will help community members feel more secure. Children often live in squalor or have abusive parents. Is there a program to help them? Identifying the root cause is critical, so practitioners can understand the real issues.

Ms. Beloff commented that neither restorative nor retributive justice may be the right approach. Do practitioners and policy makers move on to another system if restorative justice fails? Ms. Beloff does not see the two approaches as conflicting, pointing out that policy is not a cure for criminal activity. Government officials need to uphold the rules they agree to and uphold rights of at-risk youth according to international treaties. She

cautioned that approaches must take the big picture into account (for example, funding a sports facility may also provide an ideal place for drug dealers to attract youth).

Mr. Galocha highlighted the failure of the “eye for an eye” retribution system, pointing out that U.S. jails are filled and yet violence continues. Many members of the public realize that systematic repression and jailing of youth has a negative impact on both the individual and society. Ms. Zumbado agreed, suggesting that programs should be created to give judges to option to take a progressive route. Mr. Herrero underscored the importance of psychology, noting that psychological reports are one way to really understand what youth are thinking. Alternative measures are failing because no one is paying attention to them or strengthening coping mechanisms. Additionally, public opinion is often swayed by published opinion, so it is crucial to leverage well-rounded media sources. Ms. Johnson stressed that beneficiaries must be included in decision-making. Public education is critical, and everyone needs to be involved.

Ms. Beloff pointed out that practitioners and policy makers are concerned with perpetrators, but then forget about them. Judges sentence youths to community work, but there is no structure to the program and youths come back with increased commitment to crime. Mr. Herrero remarked that in Costa Rica, institutions support the law, but police cannot enforce laws because they do not have the resources. This shows a disconnect between practice and capacity. Ms. Johnson pointed out that although the focus tends to be on disadvantaged youth, technology has allowed crime to emerge among affluent youths who have the means to avoid prosecution. How does that factor into juvenile justice reform? Mr. Galocha suggested that we rethink what we mean by “victim.” The focus should be on youth who are perpetrators *and* victims. It is also necessary to investigate and work more extensively with young victims of international organized crime. Ms. Zumbado added that programs should be tailored to individuals and incorporated into the law. Individuals may need time to comply with a program, or they may want to go to school but cannot afford supplies. Youth need time to work things out, and programs need to give content to different steps and sanctions along the way.

Ms. Mooney remarked that the conversation reveals the complexity of juvenile justice reform. Programs cannot focus on one young person independently or create single structures. Justice often starts when individuals leave the courtroom — through public or published opinion or the “eye for an eye” policy. Public opinion has had significant influence in supporting zero-tolerance policies throughout LAC. Practitioners and policy makers often focus on the justice system and overlook other avenues for juvenile justice reform. We need to rethink avenues for reform and consider strategies that encompass all aspects of juvenile justice.

Mr. Herrero suggested using the media to work toward zero tolerance and preserve laws. Ms. Zumbado noted that media and press coverage influences public opinion, and that practitioners can use the media to debunk myths and provide factual examples of juvenile justice reform programming. If youths are given second chances, it is important to make full use of the opportunity to rehabilitate them with concrete programs. Individual success stories should be shared and facts and figures provided to show how many youths come out of a given program and are able to reintegrate into society. Practitioners also

need to think through what happens if an individual goes into the justice system as a child and is transferred to the adult system. How does that individual then reintegrate? Mr. Herrero noted that in the Northern Triangle there are increasing arrests and harsher prison sentences; the process has backfired. Policy makers sometimes desire a “quick fix,” so alternative measures are not used because the status quo has been strengthened. Criminal laws in Central America have changed, but the new laws are not implemented. Ms. Johnson brought up the importance of gender, noting that guns are often associated with masculinity. What role does culture play? Data should be disaggregated by gender.

During the question-and-answer session, participants asked about the role of families and local government. They asked what CARICOM and regional actors such as the OAS and World Bank were doing to address juvenile justice reform. Fernando Riveras from Let’s Walk Together commented that what is absent from this forum are youth themselves. He also pointed out that indigenous communities have their own rules with which to reconcile differences and address crime. How can this be incorporated into policies?

Ms. Johnson explained that CARICOM is working on a regional policy in conjunction with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. She suggested that practitioners and policy makers include youth in focus groups to get perceptions on the issue of vulnerability to risk. Youths want to see action; therefore, it is important to put their recommendations into practice. We often raise expectations by talking to youth, so it is critical to respond to their needs and ideas. Ms. Beloff commented on regional organizations, noting that their view of these issues is often piecemeal and fragmented. Fifteen years ago, LAC changed laws to make legal standards for training lawyers more rigorous, creating a system that now has society under its heel. All actors need to come together to look at the gang problem holistically so that the outcome is not a “Band-Aid” approach. Ms. Zumbado stressed the importance of having people in the community who can make the relationship between restorative and retributive justice work. There should be alternative means to channel individuals out of the court system. Recognizing that indigenous groups have their own justice systems and traditions, public policy needs to account for different cultural ideas and experiences.

Mr. Galocha asked about the role of municipal governments. Can they take the lead? He pointed out that we assume that youths prefer restorative justice. However, many young people who have committed crimes prefer six months in jail to community therapy, because in jail they are with their friends. To exemplify regional differences, Mayan communities can apply local justice, and their traditional legal system takes precedence over the national judicial system. In Belize, youths are not given defense lawyers unless they are accused of murder, and corporate punishment is allowed. Mr. Herrero highlighted the importance of defining each community and identifying resources.

## **E. Media and Youth Movements**

Erin Mazursky, special assistant youth advisor at USAID, moderated the discussion on Media and Youth Movements. The panelists included Harold Sibaja, director of USAID Alianza Joven Regional; Juanita Uribe, director of Armando Paz/OAS; Jorge Carreon,

RED Juvenil; Jessica Reeves, marketing and partnership manager for Voto Latino; and Erick Esteban Escobar, from the Youth Movement Against Violence in Guatemala.

This session refocused the discussion from strengthening different types of systems to a focus on communities. Ms. Mazursky noted that it is impossible to incarcerate everyone, so change has to start with the community. Media is a tool to reach youth.

Mr. Sibaja stressed the importance of involving youth to work against crime. Youths are often the perpetrators and victims of crime, and they need a venue to talk about the issues they are facing. The Youth Movement Against Violence in Guatemala uses media to sensitize the population to the fact that crime and violence in Central America affects everyone. There are many risk factors that lead youth toward a life of crime and violence, and we need to understand how to deal with these problems in the midst of challenges such as poor education and lack of community values. The solution has to go beyond justice and security enforcement, and policy is a key element. He mentioned the 90 Minutes against Violence campaign, in which youths played soccer for 90 minutes to show that every 90 minutes someone dies of a violent crime. Mr. Escobar noted that 55 to 70 percent of perpetrators in Guatemala are youths. An assessment was completed so practitioners could see what was happening in Guatemala. Areas facilitated by the government include education and civics, and Mr. Escobar's organization worked with the government to leverage impact. Public policies need to be practiced in public areas.

The organization Armando Paz uses the media to reach youth and the community, most notably in Nicaragua, Panama, and El Salvador. Ms. Uribe noted that not all youth participate in gangs, and that these youth can constitute an engine for growth. Armando Paz teaches organizations how to use media in the most effective way. They hold workshops on how different activities can be created using radio, television, cell phones, and other common media. Organizations need to know how to seduce audiences in order to successfully broadcast a message. Armando Paz reached out to youth in four countries and received approximately 700 project ideas. The problem is that in addition to gangs, youth lack education, access to health care, employment opportunities, family support, and civic values. Practitioners should encourage youths to share their ideas and help to make them realities. This is the healthiest way to craft public policy.

Ms. Mazursky asked whether panelists had seen media reach youths successfully. If so, what change did that spur? Mr. Carreon noted that in Juarez, his organization started using social media around election time because it was not possible to use local television stations. Using Facebook and MySpace, his organization reached different neighborhoods and social groups, gathering 13,000 people together at a music festival. These networking sites are great tools for interfacing with the population and brainstorming programs to implement. From a U.S. perspective, Ms. Reeves encouraged practitioners to reach young people through music, movies, and other forms of popular culture. These venues can be used to provide information about politics and show youth that they have a voice in the political process. Websites and social media outlets can collect information and share it in a digestible (and interesting) format. Social media is about creating a conversation — putting information out there and seeing what people have to say.

Given that media has proven to be a successful mode of outreach, Ms. Mazursky asked panelists where to go next. How do we continue to engage people and grow a grassroots movement and effort to fight crime? Mr. Escobar said that Youth Movement Against Violence worked with the police and an advertising agency to raise awareness and inform the public about activities. The organization provided youths with tools to help mitigate crime in any location, and channeled their volunteer spirit by asking what they liked and directing them to organizations that would get them involved with specific activities. This practice became self-sustaining, and Youth Movement Against Violence was able to engage many young people through Twitter and Facebook, sharing names with other organizations and enabling youths to participate in society by volunteering. Ms. Uribe said that Armando Paz used cell phones so that people could send their ideas from any location. Social networks made it possible to advertise on a small budget. Mr. Sibaja commented on the video from Alianza Joven Regional showed at the beginning of the discussion. The video had reached many homes and young people, and mothers are able to tell Alianza Joven Regional what problems they are facing with their children.

Ms. Mazursky noted that many people where we work do not have access to social media. What is social media's role, and how can it be used to reach a broader group? Ms. Reeves replied that Latino culture is very community focused, so the social networking phenomenon translates easily. Although some individuals may not have Internet access, word of mouth travels quickly and helps inform community members who cannot use social media. In response to anti-immigration legislation, Voto Latino used social media to mobilize individuals to call senators and send e-mails. Those individuals engaged their relatives and community members, and the group grew substantially. Social media is not the only answer, but it is part of everything we do. Mr. Carreon agreed, noting that cell phones are the type of media used most often by youth (especially for text messaging). In rural neighborhoods, youths are unlikely to have access to computers, but most have cell phones. He was able to reach a wide audience by sending a YouTube video to community leaders, underscoring the role entertainment can play in message distribution.

During the question-and-answer session, one participant asked how social media can broaden the focus on youth, remarking that we only hear about youth when they are sports stars or criminals. Mr. Escobar said that his organization wanted a campaign to make Guatemala shake up its youth. They used social media to reach the community, and youth responded that they would like to be members and join activities.

## **F. Conclusion**

Carmen Lucía de la Pava, chief of staff of OAS's Assistant Secretary General, provided closing remarks written by Assistant Secretary General Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin. Ms. Lucía de la Pava recognized the valuable information and approaches shared during the conference, suggesting that the complex issue of youth violence must be addressed in a more comprehensive fashion. Community policing, health, rehabilitation, and reintegration are integral elements. The private sector's role is undeniable, and public-private synergy should be reinforced to increase security and provide opportunities for young people. The media also plays a major role in preventing crime and violence, and must exhibit social responsibility and ensure coverage and analyze problems seriously.