Evidence Brief
Making The Case for Peace in Our Cities:
Halving Urban Violence by 2030

Over half a million people die violently every year, both within and beyond conflict zones. This will increase to 660,000 people killed violently in 2030 if we don't significantly shift the status quo according to Small Arms Survey.[1]

Roughly 18 percent of all violent deaths take place in conflict zones – meaning that armed conflict accounts for less than one in five victims of all lethal violence worldwide. The remaining 82 percent victims of lethal violence are killed in homes, towns, cities and countries that are ostensibly "at peace."

"Since October 2001 over four hundred people have died in domestic terrorist attacks and over five hundred have died in mass shootings. During that same period, at least one hundred thousand lost their lives to urban violence." (US data)

There does not exist international consensus on the number of violent deaths that take place in urban areas. Recent work done in the United States shows that urban violence constitutes roughly 88 percent of all lethal violence annually [see text box].[2] While this data is instructive it cannot be extrapolated globally. At this time, the proportion of all lethal violence globally that can be characterized as "urban" remains unknown.

The lack of precise data is not a reason for inaction. In the health sector, the outbreak of an unknown virus doesn't prompt people to look the other way. Rather it prompts investment to better understand the vectors of the disease. Similarly, knowing that a significant proportion of overall violence takes place in urban areas must be enough to propel us to better understand dynamic conditions and apply the knowledge we do know to save lives and advance peaceful societies in the near term.

And we know a lot. We know that in many countries in the world, urban violence is responsible for the highest percentage of overall lethal violence.[3] We know that 44 percent of residents of cities between the size of 250,000-500,000 people face epidemic levels of violence, defined as a homicide rate greater than 10/100,000 people.[4] We know that urban violence tends to concentrate among specific people and places, cementing areas of chronic deprivation and under-development. We know that these pockets of urban violence will prevent achievement of broader

[1] Gergely Hideg and Anna Alvazzi del Frate, Small Arms Survey, Darkening Horizons: Global Violent Deaths Scenarios. May 2019.
[2] Abt, Thomas. *Bleeding out: the Devastating Consequences of Urban Violence--and a Bold New Plan for Peace in the Streets*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2019.
[3] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global Study on Homicide: Homicide, development and the Sustainable Development Goals. 2019.
[4] Small Arms Survey. "Urban Violence or Urban Peace: Why Are Some Cities Safer than Others?" Medium, January 12, 2018. https://medium.com/@SmallArmsSurvey/urban-violence-or-urban-peace-why-are-some-cities-safer-than-others-8626435dd5c7

development goals. "If you are not safe, nothing else matters."[5] And we know that the unprecedented pace of urbanization will put our ability to prevent an escalation of violence in urban areas to the test.

Luckily, we also know a lot about how to prevent and reduce urban violence. This short evidence brief will provide an overview of the existing opportunities to address violence and the underlying trends facilitating urban violence.

It's important noting up front that most robust evidence concerning urban violence of the type we are discussing here comes from the US and Western Europe. That said, there is increasing investment in testing various approaches outside the US and in doing better about integrating learning across different countries. The investments being made to strengthen the evidence base of urban violence prevention around the world should be applauded and continued.[6]

Defining our Terms

Violence in cities takes on many forms. It is important to be both clear about the type of violence this evidence brief is discussing, while also acknowledging that different forms of violence can and typically are connected in multifaceted ways. There's compelling evidence, for example, that those who witness or experience abuse as a child are at an increased risk of perpetrating abuse later in life.[7] And many countries with a history of conflict experience forms of urban violence that are no longer characterized as conflict, but where conflict's residual impacts reinforce dynamics that facilitate emerging forms of violence [see text box].[8]

According to the World Bank, "Today's most violent situations are linked to gang warfare, organized or drug-related crime, state brutality, murders by non-state actors, and heightened levels of interpersonal

> "During much of five decades of civil war, Buenaventura was considered the most dangerous city in Colombia – notorious for particularly gruesome killings as the FARC rebel group, Colombian paramilitaries, and narco-traffickers fought to control the main maritime cocaine-smuggling route.
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> A landmark 2016 peace deal was supposed to have changed all that, but for many residents of Buenaventura and surrounding areas in the state of Valle de Cauca – cut off geographically from the rest of Colombia by the Andes mountains – the war never ended.
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> 'The peace is two steps forward and one step back,' said Oney Bedoya, an international security consultant and Colombian army veteran. 'Our entire culture suffers from post-traumatic stress. It creates an inability to trust, a lack of social cohesion, and damaged people lashing out – generations who grew up in violence.'"

[5] Haugen, Gary A., and Victor Boutros. *The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

[6] IPA and J-PAL, Governance, crime, and conflict initiative: Lessons from randomized evaluations on managing and preventing crime, violence, and conflict, July 2019. https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/documents/gcci-evidence-review-web-july-2019.pdf

[7] Waller, Irvin. *Science and Secrets of Ending Violent Crime*. Lanham; Boulder; New York; London: Rowman et Littlefield, 2019. And, UNICEF, "Violence in the City: Understanding and Supporting Community Responses to Urban Violence." April 2011. https://www.unicef.org/protection/Violence_in_the_City.pdf.

[8] Collins, Joshua. "The Colombian City Forgotten by Peace." The New Humanitarian, October 1, 2019. http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/10/01/colombian-city-forgotten-peace

violence. These situations are at the core of fragility and are very often protracted."[9] Some of this violence has roots in political conflict in the near term (i.e. Colombia, Afghanistan) while some of this violence is less directly connected to a political conflict, but does concern contestations over power and/or exclusion of certain segments of society (i.e. Brazil, Cape Town).

The real world is messy and violence does not always present itself in ways that are easily categorized. Further, our efforts to define violence can often lead to an overly simplified narrative of what is really happening "on the ground." It is also true that in order to engage evidence effectively it is often necessary to narrow our terms and scope – to be specific about particular conditions, causes and effects. For the purposes of this brief, we are simplifying complex and multi-faceted manifestations of violence by looking only at one form of urban violence.

Specifically, this evidence brief will focus on the type of violence that is typically characterized as group, gang or criminal. This is what Abt and Winship refer to as "community violence" - a category that exists between war on one end and domestic or intimate partner violence on the other."[10] The Alliance for Peacebuilding has defined community violence as "the use of force/violence by one group in a community to assert power over or intimidate another group within the community, or interpersonal violence which has a demonstrable effect on community cohesion."[11]

This brief excludes violence that is an extension of ongoing, acute conflict. To be clear, it is essential to better understand, prevent and reduce this type of violence. According to ICRC, for example, urban offenses in Iraq and Syria accounted for 78 percent of all civilian loss of life.[12] A future evidence brief will aim to discuss this form of violence and, potentially, how to best think about the intersections of urban conflict violence and high levels of urban community violence.

Reasons for Optimism

In 2014 the first Global Violence Reduction Conference held at Cambridge University concluded that if policy makers harness the power of scientific evidence of what works, a global reduction

[9] World Bank, Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence 2020-2025 Concept Note. 2019.

[10] Thomas Abt and Christopher Winship, What Works in Reducing Community Violence: A Meta-Review and Field Study for the Northern Triangle. February 2016.

[11] Alliance for Peacebuilding, Violence Reduction Subsector Review and Evidence Evaluation, 2019. Helpfully, AFP has elaborated further on the limitations of our current frame: "Our current paradigm doesn't allow for gun violence in Chicago to be defined as violent conflict, nor for its acuteness to be measured, yet this violence threatens the social fabric of the city in similar ways to traditional warfare. Our current paradigm further does not reflect the reality of complex crises like Syria and Yemen, where warring parties attempt to make gains not through victory in combat, but through the deprivation and brutalization of citizens. Clearly, an expanded conception of armed violence is not enough: other forms of violence, which are becoming increasingly more commonplace, also have dire security implications."

[12] International Committee of the Red Cross, "New Research Shows Urban Warfare 8 Times More Deadly for Civilians in Syria and Iraq." February 27, 2019. https://www.icrc.org/en/document/new-research-shows-urban-warfare-eight-times-more-deadly-civilians-syria-iraq

of 50 percent of interpersonal violence is possible within three decades.[13] Indeed, since the 1990s homicide rates have fallen by 70 percent in many regions of the world – presenting a strong case for optimism.[14]

The conference used as its primary frame the Public Health approach to thinking about both risks and protective factors, analysis of which is then used to develop interventions that target specific dynamics associated with violence along primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Further, the outcome document of the conference reinforced that achieving high ambition targets will require a focus on the biggest problem areas first, including hot spots and the world's most violent cities.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has cited United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) data providing a case for optimism based on analysis of 25 countries that have reduced their homicide rates by at least 30 percent in 12 years. The report cautions, however, that because violence tends to concentrate on the least powerful within society, making meaningful reductions will require changes to the security and justice experience of those historically most marginalized. This requires significant political will in addition to technical capacity and evidence-based investments.[15]

Igarapé Institute and the Inter-American Development Bank have proposed that Latin America – home to 47 of the world's 50 most violence cities – could bring its murder rate down by 50 percent in just ten years, estimating this would save 413,000 lives.[16] Such reductions would require the use of evidence-based strategies that are comprehensive in nature, engaging data-driven law enforcement together with enhanced access to justice and targeted social and economic programs.

Systematic reviews primarily from the US has demonstrated rapid reductions in violence through proactive engagement with the police and other civic partners to enhance legitimacy and build social cohesion.[17] In some cases, the fall in homicides has exceeded 50 percent.[18]

Finally, according to UNODC, major cities have been more successful in decreasing their violence levels than their respective countries.[19] "Thus, over the period 2005-2016, homicide rates decreased by 34 percent overall in a sample of 68 cities, compared with a decrease of only

[13] Maria Krisch, Manuel Eisner, Christopher Mikton, and Alexander Butchart. "Global strategies to reduce violence by 50% in 30 Years: Findings from the WHO and University of Cambridge Global Violence Reduction Conference 2014. Technical Report." University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK. Available from: http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/30156
[14] Eisner, Manuel, Amy Nivette, Aja Louise Murray, and Maria Krisch. "Achieving Population-Level Violence Declines: Implications of the International Crime Drop for Prevention Programming." *Journal of Public Health Policy* 37, no. S1 (2016): 66–80. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41271-016-0004-5.
[15] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions, OECD Publishing, Paris. 2015. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264227699-en
[16] AmerQuarterly. "Latin America Could Cut Its Murder Rate By 50 Percent. Here's How." October 4, 2016. https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/latin-america-could-cut-its-murder-rate-50-percent-heres-how.
[17] David Weisburd, David P Farrington Charlotte Gill (eds), What Works in Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation - lessons from systematic reviews. New York: Springer, 2016.
[18] Anthony A Braga and David L Weisburd, "Pulling Levers: Focused Deterrence Strategies to Prevent Crime," *No. 6 of Crime Prevention Research Review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2012.
[19] UNODC, Global Study on Homicide.

16 percent in the respective countries."[20] What this tells us is that cities hold vast power and potential for positive reductions in violence. While it's essential to hold national governments to account, so must we also be looking to city partners.

From Optimism to Action: Specific Approaches

Approaches with the most significant evidence tend to have a few areas of commonality. In a 2016 meta-analysis of what works to address community violence (what we refer to as urban violence) commission by USAID, the authors identified the following 6 areas of effectiveness: Specificity, Proactivity, Legitimacy, Capacity, Theory, and Partnership.[21]

Specificity:
Violence is "sticky" – it tends to concentrate among particular places and even among particular people – a phenomenon that is witnessed from the United States to Mexico City to Cape Town.[22] Recent analysis from the United States has found that on average fewer than one percent of a city's overall population is connected to over half of that city's violence.[23] That means in a city of 100,000 people – even a city considered extremely violent – fewer than 1,000 people are actually causing the majority of serious community violence. In Latin America's large and medium-sized cities roughly 80 percent of the murders are concentrated in less than 2 percent of the street addresses.[24]

Interventions that demonstrate the most positive impact tend to focus on the specific individuals at highest risk of being both victim and perpetrators of violence. Because violence concentrates with certain people and places, the transmission of violence can be effectively mapped and highly effective interventions scaled to interrupt transmission.

Proactivity:
Decades ago the dominant theory in policing was that homicide was not something that could be prevented in the same way police believed larceny or property crimes could be. Only in the relatively recent past has it come to be recognized that there are steps that can be taken to reduce the occurrence of homicide. This has come as police have invested more in the science of serious crime, but also as other communities, such as criminology and public health, have advanced understanding of the transmission of violence.

Further, two UN resolutions in 1995 and again in 2002 emphasized stopping violent crime by preventing it before it takes place. These resolutions reinforced addressing the multiple causes of

[20] UNODC. Global Study on Homicide.
[21] Abt and Winship, What Works in Reducing Community Violence.
[22] James Cockayne, Louise Bosetti, Nazia Hussain. "Preventing Violent Urban Conflict: A Thematic Paper for the United Nations - World Bank Study on Conflict Prevention." United Nations University Centre for Policy Research Conflict Prevention Series: No. 2. August 2017.
[23] Stephen Lurie, Alexis Acevedo, and Kyle Ott, National Network for Safe Communities. "The Less Than 1%: Groups and the Extreme Concentration of Urban Violence." American Society for Criminology, November 2018.
[24] AmerQuarterly. "Latin America Could Cut Its Murder Rate By 50 Percent. Here's How."

serious crime, including considerations of social development local solutions and international cooperation.[25]

When combined, principles of specificity and proactivity guide action towards engaging with the most high-risk populations while also investing in efforts to support other categories of at-risk populations to influence violence more upstream. Such upstream work can stem the tide of reinforcing cycles of trauma and patterns of transmission that place more people in the highest-risk category unnecessarily.

Legitimacy:

As stated above, violence tends to concentrate in places where people have the least political influence, have historically been the most marginalized from positions of power and have limited access to resources.[26] Most residents in these areas have also been exposed to multiple stressors and risk factors, including deep levels of trauma and exposure to violence. For this reason, in many of the areas where violence concentrates, where the vast majority of the population is peaceful, getting sufficient attention to properly address the problem is difficult.

In the most violent countries of Central America, overall male life expectancy has decreased by three years as a result of lethal violence. From birth, boys can expect fewer years on earth as a direct consequence of violence. In the United States, firearm violence is the leading cause of death for black men and boys ages 15-34.

It is critical to understand that such deprivation is typically intentional – the result of a political process that excludes certain groups and classes of people. Addressing violence requires, therefore, addressing individual and group needs, but also addressing the power dynamics that facilitate the continued process of deprivation. Only by seeing these phenomena in relation to one another can we prevent the use of narratives of "law and order" or "crime control" to further repress certain groups within society that have historically suffered exclusion and discrimination at the hands of the elite. [see text box][27]

Having strong security and justice systems that operate within a framework of respect for human rights is essential in this regard. Strong institutions that disregard human rights – that round up entire groups of people, uses torture to extract confessions, engages in extra-judicial practices – do not support violence reduction, but rather very often facilitate an increase in crime and violence.[28]

Capacity:

In order to effectively operationalize good practice, strategies need to be well understood, sufficiently staffed and funded. Examples abound from Boston to Brazil of successful efforts being undermined and trends being reversed as a result of a shift in policy leaning or a result of under-resourcing.

[25] Irvin Waller, Ending Violent Crime, 2019.
[26] UNICEF, "Violence in the City: Understanding and Supporting Community Responses to Urban Violence." April 2011. https://www.unicef.org/protection/Violence_in_the_City.pdf.
and Survey, Small Arms. "Urban Violence or Urban Peace: Why Are Some Cities Safer than Others?"
[27] UNODC, Global Study on Homicide; and Garen J. Wintemute, "The Epidemiology of Firearm Violence in the Twenty-First Century United States." Annual Review of Public Health 2015 36: 1.
[28] UNODC, Global Study on Homicide.

Because the best interventions are those that engage a spectrum of partners, capacity must be spread across a range of essential areas of practice. As Irvin Waller has noted, "Governments…have resolved that implementing effective violence prevention solutions requires particular 'essentials,' four of the most important being: (1) a permanent authority; (2) adequate and sustained funding, (3) being informed by violence prevention science, and (4) being managed by skilled and capable people."[29]

Theory:
As the Alliance for Peacebuilding has made clear, defining your scope, vision and purpose is essential for both good design and collaboration, but also for good measurement and learning.[30] Having a strong theory of change is even more essential because there has been to date a plethora of confusing and non-specific narratives about what drives violence. A common misperception used to be that economic opportunity – jobs – were what was needed to stop violence [see text box][31]. We now know it is much more complicated. Economic opportunity is important, but only when paired with other investments. Having a theory of change based on solid evidence and a strong formulation of measurement is required to advance the field.

> "'Nothing stops a bullet like a job,' Father Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries…used to say. But Father Boyle no longer believes his own famous line. 'When somebody introduces me somewhere and they say that, it almost feels creepy,' Boyle said in an interview. 'I would find somebody a job, sometimes even a career. But then a monkey wrench would get thrown and…next thing you know, he was back in the neighborhood and then returned to prison.' It is easy to assume that employment can directly reduce violence, and there is a correlation between more jobs and less crime, but the track record for stand-along vocational, employment and work programs when it comes to preventing violent crime is decidedly mixed."

Partnerships:
As stated above, the vast majority of people in nearly every area suffering high levels of violence are not engaged in violence. Rather areas where violence appears to be rampant are typically host to a small number of individuals that drive the vast majority of violence.[32] Approaches that repress entire communities tend to observe negative outcomes over time as law enforcement is brought – often unjustly – against individuals not actively involved in violent activities but rather assumed so by association.

Further, even individuals who are involved in actively driving violence are brothers, husbands, fathers, mothers, daughters, etc. They are often – although not always – deeply embedded in communities and have often themselves been victim of violence. Partnerships – with community actors, with social service agencies, with various parts of the government's law enforcement machine – are required in order to bring the right capacities to bear at the right time in a meaningful way.

[29] Irvin Waller, Ending Violent Crime, 2019.
[30] Alliance for Peacebuilding, Violence Reduction Subsector Review and Evidence Evaluation, 2019.
[31] Abt, Bleeding Out, 2019.
[32] This finding does not necessarily map onto broader patterns of abuse within the home, for example intimate partner or domestic violence, but does map to the type of urban violence we are discussing.

Important Questions

1) Size and Region Matter – But How??
According to analysis done by Small Arms Survey, two-thirds of cities had higher homicide rates than their country's corresponding national homicide rate.[33] This same analysis showed that large cities (over 500,000 people) tended to have lower homicide rates than small towns or small cities, but that cities between 250,000-500,000 people tend to have demonstrate the highest risk of lethal violence.

Both Small Arms and UNODC have demonstrated variation in these numbers regionally. For example, Central America appears consistent with this finding, whereas in South America the larger cities have higher homicide rates than any other category (i.e. small town, small city, big city, large city).

We cannot, therefore, make a causal statement about the size of cities and violence. As cities continue to grow, we cannot assume this will bring higher levels of violence. This brings us to the next trend.

2) Urbanization's unprecedented pace may matter...or not
"The future of violent conflict is urban – because the future of humanity is urban."[34] The UN Secretary General has implored us to see that because humanity is urbanizing all aspects of life must be better understood in their urban context. Between 2015 and 2030 cities will absorb one billion additional people. This trend is not contested.

What is questioned, is the relationship between this level of rapid urbanization and violence. As the data presented above indicates, larger cities tend to have lower levels of violence (regionally differentiated) than smaller cities, so perhaps the rise in urbanization will result in safer cities. Yet there is no evidence to suggest we take this as given. Further, the relationship between inequality and violence and the extreme rise in urban inequality is sufficient incentive to be concerned about whether our increasingly large urban areas can grow in such ways that are safe and peaceful for all.

3) Income Matters, but not in Obvious Ways
According to the World Bank, nine of ten of the countries with the highest homicide rates are middle income. This corresponds to fragility rates; "In 2016 ,75 percent of people in fragile settings lived in MICs, which also counted more than twice as many conflicts than LICs."[35]

This indicates addressing violence is not a financing challenge alone. Other factors – such as inequality and decisions about how resources are spent – are as or more important to overall funding levels. Which leads to the next trend.

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[33] Survey, Small Arms. "Urban Violence or Urban Peace: Why Are Some Cities Safer than Others?"
[34] Cockayne, Bosetti, Hussain. Preventing Violent Urban Conflict.
[35] World Bank, Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence 2020-2025 Concept Note. 2019.

4) Inequality Matters...in obvious ways
According to research done by United Nations University (UNU) cities with lower individual income inequality seem to demonstrate lower crime rates. Meanwhile, research suggests that social relationships are stressed when spending disparities are proximate to one another, including in such ways that lead to violent crime.[36] As they rightly clarify, income is often proxy for a range of other factors, including race, ethnicity, historical in-group/out-group variation, and more. It is not, therefore, merely a matter of income inequality, but a matter of inequality in proximity and of social cleavages more broadly.

Given that 75 percent of cities globally have higher levels of income inequality today than they did 20 years ago, understanding the relationship between inequality and violence should be high on our agendas.[37]

5) Data, data, data
There are vast challenges in obtaining a data point on overall lethal violence in cities. Homicide data is not consistently or rigorously collected in many countries, leaving aside collection of data on other forms of serious violence (assault, sexual violence). This lack of quality homicide data is not only in lower income countries; it is not only a financial capacity challenge.

Further, there are different definitions of what constitutes a "city." Not only is this a size threshold question, but other factors complicate a classification. Does a city include peri-urban areas? Illegal settlements on the outskirts? Refugee or displaced person settlements? These definitional challenges can result in both inflated and deflated numbers.

Finally, many places do not count "legal killings" as homicide. The shooting of a suspect by police, for example, would not be counted as a homicide. Why does this matter? According to Small Arms Survey, "…the 920 killings by police in Rio de Janeiro resulted in a police-inflicted death rate of over 14.5 per 100,000. This rate is higher than the total violent death rate in 185 of the 222 countries worldwide."[38] As police in countries around the world are increasingly being provided with "shoot to kill orders," understanding how this type of data may or may not be included is essential.[39] [see text box next page] [40]

We must continue to watch this space to make sure that the presentation of violence – and progress in addressing it – is not manipulated through the use of messy data while simultaneously building up an international consensus to help hold us to collective account.

[36] Cockayne, Bosetti, Hussain. Preventing Violent Urban Conflict.
[37] Survey, Small Arms. "Urban Violence or Urban Peace: Why Are Some Cities Safer than Others?".
[38] Ibid.
[39] "Uproar Over Nigeria Shoot to Kill Policy." CAJ News Africa, August 23, 2019. https://cajnewsafrica.com/2019/08/23/uproar-over-nigeria-shoot-to-kill-policy/.
[40] Achim Wennmann, "Urban Diplomacy Key to Preventing Conflict in Cities." IISS. Accessed October 11, 2019. https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2019/09/csdp-urban-diplomacy-and-preventing-conflict-in-cities.

"In Brazil, populist politics have brought heavy-handed approaches back into mainstream politics. Wilson Witzel, the governor of Rio de Janeiro, has advocated a 'shoot and kill' strategy to address violent crime. As a result, police killings rose by nearly 50% in July 2019 in comparison to the same period last year, according to the Brazilian Institute for Public Security." Given the evidence of effectiveness, these types of strategies are more likely to undermine public safety and violence prevention in the long term as they disregard human rights and are likely to disrupt the relationship between communities and their public sector institutions.

Gaps from Diagnostics to Action

While there is great knowledge in the international community around how to address varying manifestations of urban violence, there is limited mandate for international engagement in urban violence. This is because this type of violence typically is seen as a domestic issue and specifically a law and order issue, rather than one that requires an integrated approach or one that would benefit from being seen through the lens of international peace and security priorities.

In order to overcome these barriers it's important to continue to be clear that we have a great deal of knowledge on strategies and approaches. But it's also important to foster, maintain and enhance collaboration and information across cities. Peace in Our Cities aims to advance both these objectives.

Annex 1 provides a brief snapshot of various cities that have successfully lowered their violence levels to serve as points of inspiration.

Annex 1: Examples of Successful Violence Reduction Efforts

Glasgow, Scotland
Between 2004 and 2005 there were 137 homicides in Scotland, 40 of which took place in Glasgow. In 2005, Scotland's Reduction Unit (VRU) was created to address the issue of knife crime. The message the VRU implemented was that the crimes occurring were not only a policing issue but a public health issue. By 2016/2017 the number of homicides reduced to 62 and in 2018 it went down to 59.

The VRU addressed Glasgow's gang culture by launching the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) in 2009. CIRV was set up to help provide alternatives to engaging in violent group-oriented behavior. This help included youth clubs, work and training. But it also included engaging the medical community at the frontlines of treating victims of violence, schools and peer mentors. By 2011 the CIRV resulted in a 50% violence reduction. The VRU's integrated approach, engaging actors across law enforcement, medical, school, community and other sectors, while remaining focused on particular behaviors and actions, is credited in large part for the success of the intervention.

Ciudad Juarez, Mexico
Mexico has seen a sharp escalation in violence and homicide in the last decade. While imprecise, estimates place the number of people killed by violence from 2006 – 2016 was over 100,000. In 2011 the most violence state was Chihuahua, with the northern border city of Ciudad Juarez primarily responsible for the spike in violence. From 2009-2011 the homicide rate averaged 271/100,000, as Juarez took the mantle of the most violent city in the world.

In 2010 *Todos Somos Juarez* ("We are all Juarez") was launched. The strategy was multi-sectoral, emphasized public participation, and involved federal, state and municipal government. Regular reports were made directly to the President's office on progress and a *Mesa de Seguridad* (Security Table) was established to prioritize risks and responses, as well as oversight by citizen councils that included, critically, leaders from the private sector. Between October 2010 and October 2012 the homicide rate in Juarez dropped by 89 percent. This cannot all be attributed to *Todos Somos Juarez*. However, a high level, multi-agency, population involved effort is credited with contributing significantly to the reductions, moving Juarez in a short period of time out of the being the most homicidal city in the world.

Oakland, California, USA
Long considered one of the most dangerous cities in the United States, from 2012 to today, homicides and non-fatal shootings have been cut nearly in half in the city of Oakland, CA. In 2012 the city launched Oakland Ceasefire. One of the first steps was to conduct an analysis of violent incidents and trends, which demonstrated that—contrary to narratives of a city lost to violence—it was just 400 individuals, or 0.1 percent of the total city population, at highest risk for engaging in serious violence.

These same individuals came from long under-served communities, representing minority populations that have borne the costs associated with intergenerational poverty, segregation and a negative history with law enforcement. By getting specific with the individuals driving

violence and better understanding the context within which violence was occurring, Oakland was able to direct specific, targeted interventions that addressed immediate incidents of violence and began to seriously tackle embedded structures of discrimination and inequality.