

PEACE IN OUR CITIES

TWO YEARS IN REVIEW

THE PATH TO HALVING URBAN VIOLENCE





Photo: City of Nairobi, Kenya

PEACE IN OUR CITIES

Peace in Our Cities is a growing network of cities and community-based and international partners working together to champion the goal of halving urban violence by 2030. Our platform creates concrete, participatory, and evidence-based exchanges to reduce violence levels in member cities, while also building a global movement of urban violence reduction advocates, and demonstrating that progress is possible through community-centered, evidence-informed practice.

When we established the Peace in Our Cities network in 2019, we set out an ambitious goal: reduce levels of urban violence by 50% by 2030. As our network has grown, so has the scale of the challenge.

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated how fragile our lives and communities are to external shocks. Cities became focal points of the pandemic, microcosms that highlighted pre-existing fault-lines and vulnerabilities, from inequality and economic shocks to fraught community-police relations. But cities were also the centers of recovery and innovation and home to individuals working to overcome inequities and advance mutual wellbeing.

As we celebrate the second anniversary of Peace in Our Cities, we know that our initial mission has only become more ambitious, and the road to get there more complicated as world-wide we see budgets depleted, national governments at odds with the local authorities, trust among communities diminished, and urban challenges proliferating. Recognizing the herculean work done around the world in the midst of the crisis, we remain steadfast in our commitment to reduce urban violence by 50% by 2030 and determined that no-one should live a life plagued by fear of violence.



Peace in Our Cities works to:

AMPLIFY

We will amplify the knowledge of the scale of the urban violence problem and scale evidence-based solutions to save lives.

ACCOMPANY

We will accompany city leaders, community, and civil society partners to drive increased resourcing and create space for improved local-to-global campaigning on violence prevention.

ADVANCE

We will advance evidence-informed solutions and peacebuilding approaches to save lives and build more socially productive and peaceful cities.

With 20 cities and 30 organizations as of September 2021, Peace in Our Cities uses a three-pronged approach to urban violence prevention. We have seen cities reduce violence by remarkable amounts with the right policies, programs, partnerships, and investments. The network works to reinforce the centrality of human-centered responses that reduce violence in the short term and prevent it in the long term.

AMPLIFY

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM AND EMERGING SOLUTIONS

As we enter 2022, we are recommitted to amplifying the urgency of addressing urban violence in the multilateral space, and will continue to engage with members at high-level events and during specialized sessions.

GPM Resolution

Alongside the Global Parliament of Mayors, Peace in Our Cities presented the GPM Resolution on Reducing Violence in Cities to the United Nations General Assembly, receiving formal acknowledgement from the Secretary General in October 2020.

International Engagement

Among others, Peace in Our Cities was represented during Geneva Peace Week 2019 and 2021, the 2020 World Bank Fragility Forum, the 2020 World Urban Forum, the 2021 Commission on the Status of Women, the 2021 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development, the German Crime Congress, and the 2021 One Young World Summit.

Statement of Solidarity on COVID-19

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Peace in Our Cities members issued the "Advancing Health, Reinforcing Peace" statement of solidarity, calling on cities and urban areas to become leaders in efforts to reduce violence amidst COVID-19.

International Women's Day

On International Women's Day 2021, Peace in Our Cities members signed onto the Joint Statement calling on city leaders to continue advancing women's leadership and political participation to build peaceful, just and inclusive cities.

ACCOMPANY

NETWORK MEMBERS

As we enter 2022, we will continue to foster peer exchanges, create space for trainings, workshops, and engagement among our members and outside experts and partners, in both online and in-person formats.

Narrative summit

To engage members on cultural strategies and narrative shift tools that shift dominant structures, re-imagine public spaces, and foster more peaceful, just and inclusive societies.



Strategy Retreat

In February 2020 in Amman, Jordan, which gathered members together to create the Peace in Our Cities research agenda for 2020-2021, responsive to network member needs and violence priorities.



16 webinars

with mayors, city officials, city-based organizations, and partners working to share the best knowledge on violence prevention during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Topics covered included violence against women, police-community relations, and more.

SUPPORTING CITY LEADERS

During rising violence levels in Colombia in June 2021, Peace in Our Cities co-facilitators came together with city leaders in Palmira.

Peace in Our Cities' core purpose is to serve as a connector for city leaders and organizations who are exploring evidence-based solutions to reduce urban violence in their urban centers.

In June 2021, Peace in Our Cities co-facilitators organized an advisory meeting where thematic experts from across the network met with city officials from Palmira to identify recommendations that municipal leaders can use to improve and strengthen their violence prevention plan.

This advisory meeting served as a jumping off point for the city of Palmira, which has integrated the policy recommendations into their ongoing PAZOS violence prevention plan, and have begun work on a long term strategy alongside multilateral support.

Palmira is now collaborating with the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, alongside relevant key security actors on the diversion, trafficking, and misuse of ammunition in urban contexts.



Photo: City of Palmira, Colombia
Credits: John Marulanda

ADVANCE

EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTIONS

In February 2020, Peace in Our Cities members gathered to learn from each other and to create the 2020-2021 research agenda, which aimed to respond to localized city violence priorities during the year.

In April 2021, two months into the COVID-19 pandemic, we adapted the agenda to respond to the urgent knowledge needs facing city leaders. **Peace in Our Cities in a Time of Pandemic** was the result, a thematic report laying out interventions for 6 thematic areas: violence in informal settlements, violence against women, digital threats, violence from organized criminal groups, police-community relationships, and local-national government dynamics.

The research highlighted city-specific examples of interventions taken to reduce violence in the midst of the pandemic's worst effects.

Member Communication

Alongside relevant city-specific research, Peace in Our Cities members also engaged in blog posts and monthly newsletters, which brought to them best practices and research on urban violence prevention.

Research Compendium

The research compendium responded directly to the needs of city-based actors, providing them with concrete solutions to violence prevention amidst COVID-19 that could be applied to each city context.

Peace Incentive Fund

The research was accompanied by the launch of the Peace Incentive Fund, which grants funding to network members to explore evidence-based solutions to violence prevention during COVID-19 as presented in the research compendium.

BRINGING EVIDENCE TO ACTION: THE PEACE INCENTIVE FUND

In September 2020, we launched the Peace in Our Cities Incentive Fund. The Incentive Fund is aimed at supporting PiOC members as they pursue evidence-driven violence prevention strategies in the context of COVID-19. The Fund is made possible thanks to the financial commitment of co-facilitating partner, Impact:Peace.

In 2021, the Peace Incentive Fund is supporting 9 projects in 8 cities. At the end of each project, the facilitators will share their experiences and knowledge gained from the intervention with other members of the Peace in Our Cities network to facilitate cross-city learning.



**CITY OF MECHELEN,
BELGIUM**



**CITY OF PALMIRA,
COLOMBIA**



**LIFE & PEACE
INSTITUTE, NAIROBI,
KENYA**



**CITY OF CALI,
COLOMBIA**



**CITY OF ESCOBEDO,
MEXICO**



**PEACE INITIATIVE
NETWORK, KANO,
NIGERIA**



**FUNDACION
ALVARALICE, CALI
COLOMBIA**



**CITY OF
GUADALAJARA,
MEXICO**



**CENTER FOR SDGS,
HARGEISA,
SOMALILAND**



**PEACE INITIATIVE
NETWORK, KANO,
NIGERIA**

The focus of the program in Kano, Nigeria is to prevent youth and vulnerable populations from entering organized criminal groups. This is done through organized advocacy and educational sessions, interactive radio shows in Hausa, and the creation of an advisory group of local leaders.



**CITY OF ESCOBEDO,
MEXICO**

In Escobedo, Mexico, the city government is working alongside private investors and local advocacy organizations to provide housing, counseling, and employment for women and children who are affected by any type of interpersonal or societal violence.



**CITY OF MECHELEN,
BELGIUM**

Financing from the Peace Incentive Fund supports the City of Mechelen's research into how social media and peer-to-peer approaches can be used as a protective factor in regards to the prevention of urban violence and violent extremism. The City is working alongside a local research center and with local youth to test the research.



Photo: City of Bangui, Central African Republic

As we approach 2030, Peace in Our Cities will continue to:

- Scale-up opportunities for networking and knowledge exchange
- Connect city and city-based actors to expert advisors in specialized areas
- Offer practical support to cities on contextualized violence prevention
- Learn from and expand upon Peace Incentive Fund initiatives
- Commission research as prioritized by Peace in Our Cities members
- Expand the Peace in Our Cities network to new cities and city-based organizations committed to implementing evidence-based and innovative solutions to violence in cities.



LOOKING AHEAD

International Day of Peace—September 21, 2021—marks an important milestone for the network. Two years after our founding, we welcome the UN Secretary General's *Our Common Agenda*, which encompasses a plan to shape the future of global cooperation, and reinvigorate inclusive, networked multilateralism.

The time has never been more important for international efforts to look to cities and city-based organizations for leadership on violence prevention and peacebuilding, and we are proud to be part of these efforts. Reinvigorating multilateralism must include a platform for city participation and connection. As reflected in emerging consensus, multilateralism that does not center real peace and justice will fail.

The multilateral system cannot be fully inclusive, nor can it effectively address current and future challenges, while focusing solely on Member States. The international community must, rather, "use cities as a unit of analysis, ambition, and action to drive innovation." The world's overwhelming rates of urbanization, and the fact that violence predominates outside of traditionally understood zones of conflict, compels us to think and act in new ways.

Cities are best able to thrive when the people living within them are healthy and safe. For far too many people, safety remains an elusive goal, reserved for those with means or status. Moving into 2022 and beyond, **Peace in Our Cities** will remain committed to reducing urban violence by 50% by 2030, recognizing that very often solutions are right in front of us—among our neighbors, colleagues, and partners—if only people are galvanized to act alongside the best available evidence.