Analysis on innovation in citizen security and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean

A perspective from the public policies and institutional management

UNDP

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Executive summary

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is a region that has been impacted by criminal violence (chronic violence) like no other. For many years, it has had the highest rates of violent crime globally, such as in homicides and gender-based violence. The public's perception of insecurity is comparable to that of countries with armed conflicts; and the institutions responsible for addressing the issue experience low levels of trust among the population. For decades, security problems have hindered the sustainable development of the countries in this region and have affected their democratic governance. It is therefore understandable that citizen security has become a priority issue for the regional agenda and one of the main challenges for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which will increase in light of the consequences of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

> The progress that has been made in LAC in the area of security and human rights cannot be taken for granted, in view of the risks associated with the latent presence of positions inspired by punitive populism that still persist in the region, and which could re-emerge due to a combination of factors such as: the worsening of economic and social conditions generated by COVID-19, the growth of fear and social unrest, and leaderships that seek to take advantage of these circumstances in the run-up to an electoral cycle that is about to begin in the region.

Despite the dimensions of the problem, important transformations have been taking place in the treatment of this issue for almost two decades. In terms of doctrine, a notion of citizen security has been established from a human rights perspective, of a multi-causal nature, whose condition as a public good, demands the observance of democratic and participatory standards. In response to these notions, reforms have been promoted at the level of legal systems, institutional designs, policy formulation and personnel training processes; all of which have had positive effects on the management of the security sector. Finally, there is a significant body

of experience in all countries aimed at the prevention and control of various forms of violence and crime, both at the national and subnational levels, inspired by the aforementioned approaches and with promising results; some of these experiences have been associated with reductions in crime, as shown in the cases selected for analysis in this report.

However, efforts to reform and improve the institutional management of the citizen security sector must be intensified in order to accelerate progress towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda, and to generate the positive impacts that the Latin American population demands in terms of security, well-being and quality of life. The main objective of this study is to analyze institutional management and public policies in the area of citizen security in LAC, identifying good practices that contribute to nurturing the processes of reform and strengthening of the citizen security sector from a democratic and human rights perspective.

Although the study includes a general analysis of security in the region, the cornerstone of the study is the analysis of cases. Five experiences on issues related to citizen security that took place in five different countries (Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico and Uruguay) were selected based on considerations such as: the appropriateness of the approach used, the relevance of the problem for the region, the effectiveness of the response provided, the diversity in the type of intervention carried out, and the availability of information for the analysis. The analysis of the cases highlights those conditions that tend to improve the quality, effectiveness and strength of public policies in the public safety sector, such as: rigor, comprehensiveness, multisectoralism, sustainability and innovation. For each of the cases, contributions and innovations were identified, and at the end of the study, the conclusions presented below were consolidated.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The drop in violent crime in various regions and countries of LAC is an encouraging sign, but the associated causes need to be analysed more rigorously and in depth in order to adjust strategies and sustain efforts.

2. Violent crime continues to target young people, women and girls, which makes it necessary to concentrate intervention efforts on these segments of the population.

3. Undeniable progress has been made in institutional management and in the design and implementation of public policies that respond to the

citizen security paradigm, but the process must be accelerated in order to protect improvements and avoid backsliding, given the complex conditions posed by the crisis caused by COVID-19.

4. The legal and regulatory framework governing the security sector in the region has been reflecting the most important advances in international human rights doctrine, but it is insufficient to ensure prompt, compliant and guaranteed justice. This is especially true in the area of violence against women.

5. The security sector today has higher standards of rigor in the production and management of information, as well as in the evaluation of processes and subsequent evaluation of results, but there is a lack of impact analysis and cost/benefit studies.

6. The incorporation of innovation processes in public policies has accelerated and the importance of ICTs in security sector management has grown, but their incorporation does not always produce the expected results, generating high costs and questionable benefits.

7. The territorial management of security is displacing, with good results, the generic and nationally induced responses, but the institutional structures and processes are weak and require additional shielding.

8. Civil society has gained prominence and relevance in the security sector and its actions have become more professional, but there is room to expand and improve the quality and nature of its participation.

9. The gender-sensitive approach has been mainstreamed in some security strategies and the levels of citizen alert on the issue are growing, but the levels of violence against women are still unacceptably high and women continue to be underrepresented in security institutions.

10. The security sector has not escaped the impact of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, through the reconfiguration of security and public order scenarios and the impact on key institutions of the sector, including the police and prisons. The progress achieved could be put at risk and there could be a resurgence of tendencies towards punitive populism.

Based on the results of the analysis and in the context of the scope of this study, the following main recommendations should nourish UNDP's reflection towards a better fulfillment of its mission to support the governments and sectors of the region in their efforts to guarantee peaceful coexistence and citizen security for the inhabitants in accordance with democratic standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To shift the efforts made so far in the development of indicators and data and information management to the development of impact analyses and cost/benefit studies.

2. Focus support to the sector on improving results-based management processes and on the design of public policies with minimum standards.

3. Make participatory management a priority in the institutional transformation processes of the security sector.

4. Improve the processes, mechanisms and instances of security management with a territorial approach.

5. Promote a greater and more effective convergence of strategies, policies and actions between the social and citizen security sectors.

6. Readjust profiles and develop capacities for security management with a comprehensive and integral vision.

7. Convert information into action, through practices that positively impact the operational level of institutional management.

8. Design an institutional architecture for innovation and strategies for change management.

9. Identify mechanisms for the financial sustainability of citizen security policies that involve both revenue and expenditure efforts.

10. Expand efforts to promote gender-sensitive security policies so that they cover the entire public policy cycle, and encompass the composition of decision-making bodies and the operational level of the security sector.