Working paper

Urban Safety and Poverty in Asia and the Pacific

2009
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<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>AIDS</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
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PREFACE

While the Asia-Pacific region has always been considered as the world’s safest region, backed up by lowest reported crime rates, evidences suggest that safety is becoming an emerging issue in at least some pockets of the region. It is important to note that insecurity and the fear of insecurity may well deepen poverty, as they adversely affect the poor and the most vulnerable. Considering that urban safety is a comparatively new field for development cooperation, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, more in-depth analytical work is needed to increase understanding of the key trends of urban violence, regionally and locally, the drivers of crime, and the relationship with urban poverty. This report is an initial effort to address these gaps in analysis and understanding.

This report elaborates on the linkages between poverty and safety in three sub-regions: South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. It identifies a number of key themes such as linkages between insecurity and informal settlements, violence and poverty, safety and governance. The report presents a number of promising initiatives for the prevention of crime and illustrates issues and responses in a number of cities in the region through case studies. Furthermore, the report establishes an initial research agenda on safety and urban development in the region and identifies a number of areas where action is needed to prevent the spread of crime and increased insecurity.

This study is the result of cooperation between UN-HABITAT, through its Safer Cities Programme, and UN-ESCAP, to support research into the understanding of urban safety for the poor and most vulnerable urban groups in Asia and the Pacific. The study has the following key objectives: to understand the linkages between urban safety and poverty in the region’s cities; to identify and overview key initiatives which focus on prevention; and to identify effective practices which involve or stem from government, civil society, NGOs and donors alike.
Executive Summary

According to United Nations projections, by 2025 the majority of the population of Asia and the Pacific will live in urban areas. Some subregions will urbanize faster than others. East and South-East Asia are expected to reach the 50 per cent level before 2015, while in South-Central Asia this level is not expected to be reached by 2030. Even predominantly rural Pacific Island Countries (PICs) exhibit some of the fastest urban growth rates in the world, and face problems of access to land, the growth of informal settlements, poverty and, more recently, growing levels of crime and violence.

As outlined in this study, threats to safety and human security are becoming more pressing issues in the region. They range in scale and scope from organized crime (including terrorist attacks); public disturbances and riots (variously fuelled by ethnic, political or religious tensions); human trafficking; drug related crime; community and household violence, including acute or chronic problems of domestic abuse; physical and armed assaults; gang activity and the emergence of alternative power structures; and homicide. Considering that urban safety is a comparatively new field for development cooperation, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, more in-depth analytical work is needed to increase understanding of the key trends of urban violence, regionally and locally, the drivers of crime, and the relationship with urban poverty. This study is an initial effort to address these gaps in analysis and understanding.

Across such a large and diverse region there are broad trends which can be identified, but each city exhibits different dynamics. Crime and safety has universal tendencies but local characteristics.

Many of the case studies in this study are of the region’s largest cities, yet it is important to note that it is in smaller and medium sized urban centres where most urban growth occurs. Smaller sized urban centres do not escape problems of violence and poverty. Indeed there is no consistent correlation between levels of violence, crime and city size, pace of growth or levels of poverty throughout the developing world.

In the chapters and case studies that follow, a number of important observations and trends emerge regarding levels of violence and crime in the region’s cities, and the impacts on people’s sense of safety and security. Despite high rates of poverty and inequality the majority of Asian and Pacific cities have, to date, not faced problems of crime. Perceptions of safety have generally been higher than elsewhere in the developing world. However, while recorded crime rates may not be high, community experiences of social and institutional violence is. In almost all urban areas there are worsening perceptions of safety and more emphasis (and investment) given to ensuring personal and household security. Several cities demonstrate acute problems of violence and safety, most evidently Karachi and Port Moresby, which are both examined in the proceeding chapters. Reflecting on why there has been limited attention to urban safety and violence is addressed in each study, but includes the attitude that household violence is ‘private’; a concern not to widely and openly publicize and debate religious factors in violence; a lack of serious concern given to the impacts of crime on the poor and a corresponding capacity of the wealthy to insulate themselves from crime; and a widely held belief that ‘development’, or more often high economic growth, will result in the eradication of poverty and therefore crime.
Crime and levels of safety affect the functioning of cities. Violence, safety and security are unquestionably development issues as they shape the growth and spatial dynamics of cities, as well as the livelihoods and capital of their citizens. But cities can only act as engines of economic growth, democratization, and social prosperity if their inhabitants feel safe to take part in economic, social, political and cultural life. Given their significant global role in the 21st century, the functioning of cities in Asia has significance beyond the region itself. While Pacific cities are of less global significance, their (often solitary) role as centres of national finance, transportation and social services is no less critical to national economic health and prosperity. A number of examples in this study reiterate the interconnections of global, national and local forces in issues of urban development, violence and safety.

Sources of violence are manifold and vary across the region. There are undoubtedly increasing levels of conflict (though not always leading to violence) between governments and the urban poor in the development of infrastructure, housing, access to land and in environmental policy. With the substantial and rising cost of land, the strong integration of the region’s cities into the global economy (including as host to international events), and vibrant and emerging civil societies, tensions over development agendas will remain a continuing source of conflict. The implications of “failed” cities in the Asia-Pacific region then are profound, for urban populations, for national well-being, but also for the global economy. The stakes of urban development, or mal-development, in the Asia-Pacific region are great and are growing.

A number of key themes emerge in this study. Some of these resonate throughout the Asia-Pacific region (such as youth violence, unemployment, domestic violence and problems with policing), but an equal number are more specific in terms of their character and significance (such as acid throwing, trafficking, and religious conflict). Given constraints of space authors have illustrated key themes, but these should not be read as exclusive as they manifest themselves differently in each of the region’s cities. For example, while youth has been identified as one of the most pressing challenges facing the Pacific, problems of youth unemployment, poverty and child exploitation are no less important in Mumbai or Phnom Penh.

The study explores a number of perspectives to examine issues of urban safety. An important part of this research has been in exploring the relationships between crime, safety and poverty (the urban poor). Poverty, in itself, is not a cause of crime or violence. Even connections between poverty, gender and safety are tenuous. However, poverty becomes an important factor when it is coupled with other triggers, such as a lack of opportunity, inequality, exclusion, the availability of drugs and firearms, a breakdown in various forms of capital and so on. Understanding the dynamic between poverty, marginalisation and crime is complex and necessitates expanding approaches to poverty beyond income. The impact of crime and safety on people’s capabilities, livelihoods and sources of capital then becomes broader.

Policies and approaches to informal settlements are also an important facet in understanding the relationship between poverty, safety and insecurity. The continued illegality and insecurity of a growing proportion of urban inhabitants in the region’s cities means that infrastructure and services (including policing) is absent from a number of communities. Into this gap parallel structures of authority and security, especially gangs and various types of mafias, such as mastaaens in Dhaka’s informal settlements are emerging. This further reinforces marginality and poverty.
In the study, there are clear links between violence in the home, and wider experiences of urban poverty, violence and safety. Household tensions reflect but also radiate broader social conflict. Domestic violence for example has been linked to an increased number of homeless youth prone to violence and more likely to be associated with criminal gang activity. Domestic violence goes beyond being a ‘women’s issue’ but necessitates a gender perspective which addresses problems of male self-esteem and well-being in the household and beyond.

Youth is also an important part of this study, especially in the Pacific. There is little direct causality between young people, levels of violence and a lack of safety but what is clear is that when youth are denied opportunities and the ability to integrate into society, problems occur. The consequences for cities in not meeting the needs of a generation or more of inhabitants are serious, as are the implications for a number of cities in the development of youth gangs, prevalence of drug abuse, increasing numbers of street children, and associated health problems.

There is a consistent focus throughout this study on issues of policing. Police responses are unlikely to succeed in isolation and each study has indicated problems in solely police-based approaches. In many cities there is a significant gap of trust between communities, police and justice systems and this disjuncture is increasing. In particular, the police and criminal justice system are often viewed as corrupt and anti-poor (or pro-elite). Significantly though, in almost all examples addressed in this research urban inhabitants demonstrated a greater desire for more effective governing and policing of communities and cities.

Crime and safety also have important links to governance, and especially local governance. The research has highlighted that safety is often a local concern, especially at the level of the household and neighbourhood. Place-based responses which establish partnerships with communities and link them to institutions offer positive opportunities for institutional renewal and relevance. In many of the examples drawn upon in this study, communities associated local solutions and initiatives with an improved sense of safety and security. Responses tend to be more positive when initiatives were locally-owned and defined, and from which residents materially or psychologically benefited.

Though cities are often beyond the scope of ‘master planning’, planning and urban design has an important role to play. Rarely though does safety figure in decisions regarding housing, informal sector policy, land use, or use of public space. Quite contrary to these social goods, planning is increasingly having the effect of reinforcing spatial segregation and prioritising elite perspectives and exclusivity of the city.
1. Urban Safety and Poverty in Asia and the Pacific

1.1 An overview of the study

There will be an estimated two billion Asian \(^1\) urban citizens in 2020, and more than half the world’s megacities will be located in Asia. Almost all future national population growth in the region will take place in cities. Even predominantly rural Pacific Island Countries (PICs) exhibit some of the fastest urban growth rates in the world, and face problems of access to land, the growth of informal settlements, poverty and, more recently, growing levels of crime and violence.

Despite the region’s overall sound economic performance poverty and inequality bedevils much of urban Asia. Nowhere is this more evident as in the significant growth of urban informality, in employment, shelter, access to land and essential services. Asia has an estimated 554 million slum dwellers or 40 percent of the region’s 1.2 million urban inhabitants, which constitutes 60 percent of all slum dwellers worldwide. While economic transformation in several countries is providing more resources to address poverty, the benefits of such growth are unevenly distributed, resulting in serious and growing levels of inequality and emergent social tension in many of the region’s cities.

Although it has received comparatively less attention than in other regions, urban violence, crime and declining levels of safety are becoming more pressing issues (ADB 2007; UN-HABITAT 2005a) in Asia and the Pacific. As outlined in this study, threats to safety and human security range in scale and scope from organized crime (including terrorist attacks); public disturbances and riots (variously fuelled by ethnic, political or religious tensions); human trafficking; drug related crime; community and household violence, including acute or chronic problems of domestic abuse; physical and armed assaults; gang activity and the emergence of alternative power structures; and homicide. Considering that urban safety is a comparatively new field for development cooperation, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, more in-depth analytical work is needed to increase understanding of the key trends of urban

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\(^1\) In this context Asia also refers to the Pacific Islands. The term ‘Asia-Pacific’ is more broadly inclusive of the Asian region from Turkey to the Eastern Pacific. However, this study specific focuses on three sub-regions; South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands.
violence, regionally and locally, the drivers of crime, and the relationship with urban poverty. This study is an initial effort to address these gaps in analysis and understanding.

Across such a large and diverse region there are broad trends which can be identified, but each city exhibits different dynamics. Crime and safety has universal tendencies but local characteristics. Urban scale also plays a role. While many of the case studies in this study are of the region’s largest cities it is important to note that it is in smaller and medium sized urban centres where most urban growth occurs. Smaller sized urban centres do not escape problems of violence and poverty. Indeed there is no consistent correlation between levels of violence, crime and city size, pace of growth or levels of poverty throughout the developing world. Associations which have gained greater recognition include settlement density, the proportion of youth (especially young males who are unemployed), competition to access key services (such as water), inequality and degree of social exclusion. However whether these underlying pressures lead to disproportionate levels of violence and crime may depend upon social, cultural and other forms of capital and cohesion (Brennen-Galvin 2002). The capacity and effectiveness of institutions, especially policing is also important. While the diversity of urban experience across the region and even within national boundaries necessitates care with comparative analysis, the regional and city studies which follow illustrate a number of key issues and lessons learned, albeit with important variations and some qualifications.

This study is the result of UN-HABITAT, through its Safer Cities Programme, and UN-ESCAP, supporting research into understanding urban safety for the poor, focusing on the most vulnerable urban groups in Asia and the Pacific. The study has the following key objectives: to understand the linkages between urban safety and poverty in the region’s cities; to identify and overview key initiatives which focus on prevention; and to identify effective practices which involve or stem from government, civil society, NGOs and donors alike. The study seeks to initiate greater discussion of the causes and potential governance responses to violence and safety in the rapidly urbanising Asia-Pacific region.

An important theme in the regional and city studies which follow is the potential benefits in strengthening the capacities of local authorities and initiatives to address urban safety issues for the poor, through the identification and exchange of promising or good practices in

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The Asian Development Bank has recently commissioned research into urban safety issues in Asia, with a particular focus on Phnom Penh and Karachi (ADB 2007). Both cities are also addressed in this study.
partnership with communities. What has been evident in many parts of urban Asia and the Pacific is that, despite rapid growth, many cities do not have a reputation for being unsafe. The reasons for this are also important to explore and debate. This study highlights that certain urban dynamics, such as employment and economic opportunity; supportive and inclusive family structures, resilient cultural and social structures; and effective and inclusive governance and institutions can all contribute to safer cities. In almost all cases however institutional networks and social capital are being transformed and strained through urbanisation which is reshaping communities, economies and institutions at a rapid pace. Given that in much of the region urbanisation is still gathering pace it is therefore likely that the region will face enormous pressures on both institutional structures and social order in coming years.

1.2 Key terms used in the study

There are a number of competing definitions and approaches in use on the key terms used in this study, as will be evident in the chapters which follow. What is clear is that crime data and crime rates do not closely relate to levels of insecurity and safety. Safety may also be understood across scale. There may be individual, household, community and urban perceptions of safety (WHO 2002). Fear of others may relate to external and internal groups or individuals. What emerges in the studies is that for women and youth, the greater threats may be proximate.

Yet, communities may also face insecurity in the form of threatened demolition and forced resettlement. Often this is without compensation or alternative livelihood opportunities, thus reinforcing their poverty, geophysical marginalisation and political disempowerment. Linking institutional violence with crime and violence within cities is another area of analysis which sheds light on the interconnections and dimensions of insecurity and violence. In examining such broad and multifaceted threats and concerns institutions may be both a strategic partner, but also source of insecurity and persecution themselves.

This study does not attempt to redefine key terms on urban safety, violence and crime. Given the breadth of national laws, cultures and political systems, the authors of the study have given emphasis to particular experiences of safety and the causes behind forms of
vulnerability to crime and violence. What is adopted here is a choice of operational definitions, the meaning of which is explored in a range of settings. It is important to note that an interpretation of what is a crime and the seriousness of that crime is weighted differently by place but also over time. For example, some forms of assault, such as acid attacks are illegal in a number of countries, but not in others. Institutional violence (“sanctioned” violence by state institutions and agencies) may have clear legal limits or there may be very few. In Papua New Guinea, incidences of “pack rape” have been recorded by the number of perpetrators, but in other years by the number of victims, making data trends on rape highly volatile.

Nevertheless, definitions do remain important and each chapter has contributed valuable insights to the meaning of key terms in their context. The following summary is indicative of these discussions:

**Crime:** is most often defined as a breach of the law. This is not necessarily universal; it is related to different legal systems, values, and cultural norms. Crime data may be based on levels of conviction rather than recorded events and this makes comparing levels of crime over time and place difficult (UN-HABITAT 2007a). In some cities crime may be high but it does not necessarily threaten people’s sense of safety (if it is contained to an area, if it is directed against a minority social or ethnic group, if it is organized white collar crime etc). Data on crime is very uneven and often reliant upon one or two sources (such as conviction data, official crime reports, one-off surveys etc) which may lack reliability and validity. Though a range of other sources of information exist, such as victim surveys, donor and NGO funded research projects and so on, these are often one-off and rarely combined or sustained to construct a coherent story on patterns of crime in cities. Even where adequate information does exist, this does not necessarily translate into effective policy responses. Even good data and research may not be used in strategic decision-making, indicating a lack of capacity or willingness in interpreting and using information on crime for a number of reasons.

**Violence:** There are many types and categories of violence (Winton 2004). Violence is the undue and unlawful exercise of physical and emotional/psychological force. It may derive from personal assault to institutional and structural forms and is intended to cause or lead to injury or harm (WHO 2002). Violence may be organized and sustained (such as persecution) or it may be opportunistic (e.g. looting or violent theft). Recently more attention has been
paid to urban characteristics of violence and the particular impacts crime and violence has on urban environments and development (Brennan-Galvin 2002). It is important to note that people’s fear of violence may be greater than actual threat or number of attacks. Indeed, fear of potential violence is often very high, often much greater than actual recorded examples of violence.

Safety: People’s experience and sense of safety will differ. The research which follows indicates that people tend to respond to their sense of safety in relation to how they understand or experience crime and violence. This understanding, or sense of fear, shapes the social and economic functioning of cities and the nature of social interaction. We tend to know less about perceptions of safety, as this involves detailed community-based research which is rare. One person’s safety may not be shared by another (e.g. by location, gender, age, ability to react, prior experiences etc). Safety may be further mediated by a person’s or community’s sense of security. Security is defined as a condition where people enjoy a set of freedoms, from crime and violence, but also from poverty, social, political and cultural systems which affect people’s capabilities to live full lives (UN-HABITAT 2007a: 7-9).

1.3 The implications of urban crime and violence in Asia & the Pacific

In the following chapters and case studies a number of important observations and trends emerge regarding levels of violence and crime in the region’s cities, and the impacts on people’s sense of safety and security. Despite high rates of poverty and inequality the majority of Asian and Pacific cities have, to date, not faced problems of crime. Perceptions of safety have generally been higher than elsewhere in the developing world. However, while recorded crime rates may not be high, community experiences of social and institutional violence is. In almost all urban areas there are worsening perceptions of safety and more emphasis (and investment) given to ensuring personal and household security. Several cities demonstrate acute problems of violence and safety, most evidently Karachi and Port Moresby, which are both examined in the proceeding chapters. Reflecting on why there has been limited attention to urban safety and violence is addressed in each study, but includes the attitude that household violence is ‘private’; a concern not to widely and openly publicize and debate religious factors in violence; a lack of serious concern given to the impacts of crime on the poor and a corresponding capacity of the wealthy to insulate themselves from crime;
and a widely held belief that ‘development’, or more often high economic growth, will result in the eradication of poverty and therefore crime.

Crime and levels of safety affect the functioning of cities. Violence, safety and security are unquestionably development issues as they shape the growth and spatial dynamics of cities, as well as the livelihoods and capital of their citizens. But cities can only act as engines of economic growth, democratization, and social prosperity if their inhabitants feel safe to take part in economic, social, political and cultural life. Given their significant global role in the 21st century, the functioning of cities in Asia has significance beyond the region itself. While Pacific cities are of less global significance, their (often solitary) role as centres of national finance, transportation and social services is no less critical to national economic health and prosperity. A number of examples in this study reiterate the interconnections of global, national and local forces in issues of urban development, violence and safety.

Sources of violence are manifold and vary across the region. There are undoubtedly increasing levels of conflict (though not always leading to violence) between governments and the urban poor in the development of infrastructure, housing, access to land and in environmental policy. With the substantial and rising cost of land, the strong integration of the region’s cities into the global economy (including as host to international events), and vibrant and emerging civil societies, tensions over development agendas will remain a continuing source of conflict. The implications of “failed” cities in the Asia-Pacific region then are profound, for urban populations, for national well-being, but also for the global economy. The stakes of urban development, or mal-development, in the Asia-Pacific region are great and are growing.

1.4 Key themes of the study

A number of key themes emerge in this study. Some of these resonate throughout the Asia-Pacific region (such as youth violence, unemployment, domestic violence and problems with policing), but an equal number are more specific in terms of their character and significance (such as acid throwing, trafficking, and religious conflict). Given constraints of space authors have illustrated key themes, but these should not be read as exclusive as they manifest themselves differently in each of the region’s cities. For example, while youth has been
identified as one of the most pressing challenges facing the Pacific, problems of youth unemployment, poverty and child exploitation are no less important in Mumbai or Phnom Penh.

1.4.1 Violence, Crime, Safety and Urban Poverty

The relationships between crime, violence, safety and poverty belie straightforward cause and effect patterns. An important part of this research has been in exploring the relationships between crime, safety and poverty (the urban poor). Poverty, in itself, is not a cause of crime or violence. It also has no direct relationship to feelings of safety or fear. Levels of poverty, especially when narrowly measured by income, is a weak indicator when used to evaluate and predict levels of violence or concerns over safety.

What is clear from the research is that poverty becomes an important factor when it is coupled with other triggers, such as a lack of opportunity, inequality, exclusion, the availability of drugs and firearms, a breakdown in various forms of capital and so on. Even connections between poverty, gender and safety are tenuous. For example, many patriarchal and poor communities may be quite safe, while other more affluent communities exhibiting high levels of social mobility may not be. Understanding such dynamics is an important part of this study and future research.

There is an important economic cost, personally and collectively, when cities are unsafe. Understanding the dynamic between poverty, marginalisation and crime is complex and necessitates expanding approaches to poverty beyond income. The impact of crime and safety on people’s capabilities, livelihoods and sources of capital then becomes broader. In a number of cities vulnerability to crime is experienced by those who make their living in public spaces (informal sector, prostitution, street children) and lack social protection. Informal sector livelihoods can be negatively affected by the inability to work safely at night and in certain areas of the city, by petty corruption of local police officers, and by policies which seek to sanitise urban space through (occasionally violent) “clean-up” campaigns (Kusakabe 2006). Crime may therefore impede the development of capabilities and forms of capital (human, social, physical and natural) of the poor. The poor are also less likely to be able to insulate themselves from crime.
This study further illustrates that social exclusion and marginalisation both contribute to and result from crime. In many cities inequality may be the more important determinant and needs to be placed on the agenda (Fajnzylber and others 2002). Violence and crime results from inequality and marginalisation and acts to reinforce it. Concerns over safety means that it is less likely that vulnerable populations and groups will be able to access key services and resources, thus further perpetuating their marginalisation and vulnerability. In South Asia fear regarding certain spaces may preclude the use of public toilets and other basic amenities by women, thus affecting service delivery and utilisation but also female health and well being (WHO 2002).

The relationship between poverty, safety and development is not well understood in the Asia-Pacific region, as the studies show. Development manifests violence as well as being displaced by it. Violent cities and communities are barriers to investment and opportunity but these latter drivers of change do not necessarily create safer environments. As Winton has pointed out the relationships between development and violence is fraught with contradictions: ‘while violence is a considerable barrier to development, the development process itself has been instrumental in both producing and shaping new forms of urban violence in the South’ (Winton, 2004: 179). In re-shaping cities development creates new fault lines and social tensions which may in fact increase levels of insecurity and violence. Levels of socio-economic development appear to be correlated with levels of violence and safety, but this is not uniform across countries or within societies.

1.4.2 Informal settlements, Livelihoods and Crime

Policies and approaches to informal settlements are an important facet in understanding the relationship between poverty, safety and insecurity. The continued illegality and insecurity of a growing proportion of urban inhabitants in the region’s cities means that infrastructure and services (including policing) is absent from a number of communities. Into this gap parallel structures of authority and security, especially gangs and various types of mafias, such as mastaans in Dhaka’s informal settlements are emerging. This further reinforces marginality and poverty.
Threats of eviction perpetuate insecurity and hinder the build-up of capital assets as well as social networks. Resettlement policies and practices are therefore important. When eviction does occur it involves the threat or actual use of force, further alienating urban citizens from their institutions. Resettled communities are often left with worse services and infrastructure, and lose previous social and physical capital. New communities are further distanced from support institutions including policing, but also health care and services. Resettled communities are often uneasy social amalgams and competition may emerge over jobs, resources and land. The act of eviction is often buttressed by a level of force which in many cases is met by resistance, or withdrawal from urban life. Indeed, reactive violence is often a response of communities and individuals to structural violence, which includes the denial of access to services and infrastructure, land, rights and adequate and secure housing (Briceño-León and Zubillaga 2002). Many resettlement sites continue to be distant, poorly serviced and reinforce the fragmentation and isolation of communities. This increases family tensions and vulnerabilities. Children may also be denied education opportunities, or are less likely to attend school. Loss of shelter security subsequently has ripple effects into household income, health, education etc. Several authors in this study have pointed to a concerning trend of less interaction of people in urban society.

The rapid growth and transformation of cities in the Asia-Pacific region is creating its own tensions. In recent years violence has erupted over a lack of accessible and affordable services, threats of eviction, infrastructure projects and environmental clean-up campaigns. In several countries such conflict has become accepted as a process of institutions asserting control over less powerful social and political actors. The legacy is the normalization of violence by the State and its own institutions begetting a response of counter violence from communities and an acceptance of violence as an accepted method of action and achieving goals.

1.4.3 Youth, Gender and Household dynamics

In the studies which follow there are clear links between violence in the home, and wider experiences of urban poverty, violence and safety. While households can be defined in multifarious ways they remain a primary space of socialisation. When households become dysfunctional, due to the stresses of poverty but also as a result of domestic abuse it affects the development of youth; normalises violence inside and outside the household; negatively
affects the participation of women in economic and social life (and thus community and urban development), and contributes to family and community breakdown.

Household tensions reflect but also radiate broader social conflict. Domestic violence for example has been linked to an increased number of homeless youth prone to violence and more likely to be associated with criminal gang activity. Domestic violence goes beyond being a “women’s issue” but necessitates a gender perspective which addresses problems of male self-esteem and well-being in the household and beyond. Rapid social change in Asia and the Pacific, accelerated through urban lifestyles, has seen significant household shifts in responsibilities and power. Consequently, domestic violence in this study has been linked to traditional norms (e.g. the acceptance of violence against women in patriarchal social systems), but also to development and change, which concurrently opens up opportunities for women but also necessitates finding cash employment to meet basic household needs.

Effectively responding to domestic violence is hampered by values that accept and legitimise violence and treat such forms of abuse as essentially private. Such discrimination against women is justified as the business only of households and interpersonal relationships (Zaman, 1999). However, the costs of such violence, for society, the economy, and individuals are high (WHO 2004). As the studies show, violence against women also perpetuates female vulnerability and household poverty, by limiting income opportunities for women as well as their ability to leave violent relationships.

Youth is also an important part of this study, especially in the Pacific. A great number of the countries and cities covered in the research are characterised by youthful populations. It is important to reiterate that youthful cities are not necessarily dangerous ones - just as levels of poverty do not necessarily correlate to unsafe cities. Indeed there is little direct causality between young people, levels of violence and a lack of safety. What is more clear in the examples which follow is that cities do not generally meet many of the needs of young people, either in education, employment, recreational space, or in decision making (Shaw and Holtmann 2008). When youth are denied opportunities and the ability to integrate into society, problems occur. The consequences for cities in not meeting the needs of a generation or more of inhabitants are serious, as are the implications for a number of cities in the development of youth gangs, prevalence of drug abuse, increasing numbers of street children, and associated health problems (Jones 2008). Nevertheless, in the example of Papua New Guinea, some
lessons can be learned in more effectively meeting the needs and expectations of youth and here there have been inroads made into a youth gang crisis which many felt had spiralled beyond control.

Culture is an important consideration in any discussion on urbanisation, social change and violence and is addressed in each of the chapters. ‘Culture’ though is a difficult and amorphous concept which can be used to both account for resilience against violence (community governance and norms) as well as exposure to it (e.g. the tolerance of household violence in many societies in the region). While culture and social structure is sometimes used to explain a lack of violence through rich social capital, in others culture is often used to explain and even justify violence (e.g. many outside representations of Melanesia). It is an important task then to find the linkages between forms of culture, resilience to violence, and the enhancement of safety for all.

1.4.4 Policing

There is a consistent focus throughout this study on issues of policing. Police responses are unlikely to succeed in isolation and each study has indicated problems in solely police-based approaches. In many cities there is a significant gap of trust between communities, police and justice systems and this disjuncture is increasing. In particular, the police and criminal justice system are often viewed as corrupt and ‘anti-poor’ (or ‘pro-elite’).

Significantly though, in almost all examples addressed in this research urban inhabitants demonstrated a greater desire for more effective governing and policing of communities and cities. There are a number of examples of the opportunities which do exist for more positive, successful and innovative approaches to policing. Many of these can be drawn from and shared. These include a greater role for communities, and police forces which better reflect the values and demographics of communities they serve (e.g. panchayats and community police posts in India).

Reforming police-community relationships is essential. The gap in formal institutional responses has seen a proliferation in the privatisation of security. In some cities (such as Karachi, Davao, Port Moresby and Honiara for example) the police are but one player in
complex forms of authority and power. The studies which follow highlight the increasing use
and even dependence on private sources of security and policing. While private security
responses may secure individual or community safety, they reinforce spatial fragmentation
and social disunity (ironically resulting in less safe cities). In the diverse ethnic and religious
urban environments which characterise the Asia-Pacific region such developments can have
potentially devastating consequences.

1.4.5 Governance and Local Government

Crime and safety also have important links to governance, and especially local governance.
The research has highlighted that safety is often a local concern, especially at the level of the
household and neighbourhood. Place-based responses which establish partnerships with
communities and link them to institutions offer positive opportunities for institutional
renewal and relevance. In many of the examples drawn upon in this study, communities
associated local solutions and initiatives with an improved sense of safety and security.
Responses tend to be more positive when initiatives were locally-owned and defined, and
from which residents materially or psychologically benefited.

An important opportunity exists for local government, in terms of disseminating and
mobilising (as well as reflecting) principles and values of tolerance, equity, participation and
representation in developing conflict-resilient communities and cities (Canada 2006:4). As
several examples in the following pages illustrate, mobilising the poor may be the most
effective strategy in addressing violence and crime. A shift in perception from the poor as
being part of the problem to essential actors in solutions is an important and fundamentally
necessary step. It has been an important part of recent success in Port Moresby, as it has in
several Indian cities and in Bangladesh.

Weak governance is characterised by ineffective and isolated institutions. This creates
vacuums of authority and action in which parallel and competing structures emerge,
including within institutions themselves (such as the police). Community policing, restorative
justice and community urban courts are such examples where positive partnerships can be
built. Such examples though require more commitment to building relationships between
communities and institutions, an altogether rare occurrence. Good partnerships are
characteristically ‘organic’. They are owned locally but provide innovative linkages between
individuals, households and neighbourhood to the private sector, local government, NGOs, the justice system, and police. They can (and should) also scale up over time. For example, community panchayats in India which involve residents in community policing not only mobilise communities in governance but are also being seen as a model for building partnerships between communities and other government agencies in service delivery, infrastructure and health care (Roy and others, 2004: 138).

1.4.6 The importance of urban planning

Though cities are often beyond the scope of ‘master planning’, planning and urban design has an important role to play. Rarely though does safety figure in decisions regarding housing, informal sector policy, land use, or use of public space. Quite contrary to these social goods, planning is increasingly having the effect of reinforcing spatial segregation and prioritising elite perspectives and exclusivity of the city.

Corporate planning models may provide impressions of modernity, but they do not make ‘great’ cities or safe cities (Ng and Hills 2003). Many problems occur when communities are excluded from community and urban development processes and decisions. The use of space of the poor, for social bonds to develop, for livelihoods and so on is rarely considered in urban planning. Indeed, there are few avenues for communities, especially the poor, to participate in shaping the cities in which they live. And yet mixed use of space, and cities which bring together social classes are almost always safer places - in contrast to segregated cities and where singular uses of space predominate. Mixed use of public areas creates many eyes and ears. The case studies which follow provide a challenge to the direction of urban planning in the region through critiquing the impacts of spatial development on safety.

A core theme in this research, and which has also been acknowledged elsewhere, is the relationship between poverty, inequality, exclusion and violence (Vanderschueren 1996). These ‘exclusions’ are both generic across the region (youth, women, social and political minorities, ‘squatters’ etc) but also are quite specific (lower castes and access to services in India, the rights of non-custom landowners in Pacific cities, the use of identity cards in Indonesian cities etc). The degree of segregation is related to higher levels of urban violence, while cities with strong forms of social capital, interaction and trust have proved themselves resilient to, for example, ‘identity-based violence’. Two Indian cities cited in this regard are
Lucknow and Surat, which to date have avoided many of the inter-ethnic and religious tensions which have troubled other cities (Varshney 2002). Examining the relationship of poverty, violence, crime and safety with various forms of exclusion in the region’s cities is an important area for research and policy and goes to the heart of struggles to adapt concepts of urban citizenship, rights and social protection in rapidly growing, diverse and expanding cities and towns (Storey 2003).

In the absence of planning which creates inclusive cities there is an increasing trend, as is evident in cities in Latin America and South Africa, of self- and community-fortification, which is furthering the spatial and social division of cities. In South African cities an ‘architecture of fear’ (Lemanski 2004) has created enclaves, not based on race but by the ability to be able to secure one’s home. To date cities in the Asia-Pacific region have not seen such development on a significant scale, but there are examples of these trends. For many years Metro Manila has been characterised by ‘gated’ communities and such enclosed spaces are now evident in cities across the region, and even in smaller cities in the Pacific, notably Port Moresby and Suva. Urban planning can play a critical role in urban safety in the use of space, in the mixing of communities and in shaping social relations. However, the trend appears to be much more toward facilitating urban ‘apartheid’, driven by a fear of crime, but also by a desire to separate oneself from other urban communities. The significance of such trends in Asian and Pacific cities is the development of segregated, divided and dysfunctional urban spaces and ones that are inherently un governable (as a whole) and potentially more dangerous as a result.

1.4.7 Problems with data: an impediment to good policy?

Data collection in almost all countries is limited, either in its breadth or depth. Even where data collection on recorded crime may be strong, less is known about safety. This is an obvious impediment to effective responses. And yet even where systems are in place and data exists it is rarely used as the basis for evidence-based policy. Most crimes appear to go unreported, especially when they involve women, youth and the poor, thus furthering marginalisation and disempowerment of such communities and reinforcing people’s sense of insecurity. Still, urban populations are more likely to report crime than their rural counterparts.
At best, official data (and therefore data utilised by key agencies) provides a rough guide to levels and patterns of crime. At worst, however, data may misinform. Throughout the region data is biased towards certain crimes (such as property crime and attacks on the wealthy). Yet possibly 90 per cent of rape is not reported, but its impacts are great. Consequently when data exists it may not give an accurate picture of types of crime and who the victims are.

Finding trends and comparing data over place and time is no less difficult. Defining, reporting, coding and storage of data is uneven across the region. Urban data may not be disaggregated from regional or national reports, and there is even less reliability and information at the level of the neighbourhood or community. In this vacuum of information rumour and the press play an important though not always accurate role. Qualitative methodologies have given greater appreciation of rates and type of crime from the perspectives of victims and communities affected. Are people’s levels of insecurity an accurate and more useful reflection of crime and violence than official crime data? What comes through in these studies is the need for more triangulated data collection of crime and safety, which is both quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative data, when used, has provided a powerful personal and community source of information about the level of crime and violence as well as people’s response to it.

Nevertheless policy responses need not wait for improvements in data collection and analysis techniques. There are all sorts of ‘information pressures’ which can drive action. Civil society, where it plays an active role, has been an important source of both information and mobilisation through community maps, oral testimony and as actors in neighbourhood policing. Several examples of such initiatives, in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan are described here. Media can both portray a sensationalist and exaggerated approach to crime, which encourages short term populist responses, but media can also be a powerful tool though for positive change. In the case of Papua New Guinea, television advertisements and national newspaper ‘infomercials’ have been an important avenue of information for pro-safety campaigns.

1.5 Summary of Findings

Poverty and safety
• The relationship between poverty and crime/violence is complex and two-way, i.e. 
poverty may result in crime and crime may result in poverty. Violence and crime are 
related to inequality as much as poverty. Inequality may the more important determinant 
and needs to be placed on the agenda.

• Crime and lack of safety impede capabilities and capital of the poor. Vulnerability to 
crime is particularly experienced by those who make their living in public spaces 
(informal sector, prostitution, street children). Yet, the poor are less likely to be able to 
insulate themselves from crime and increased insecurity.

• Social exclusion and marginalisation contribute to and result from crime. A lack of safety 
affected the ability of (especially) weaker members of society (e.g. women, children, 
minority groups) to participate in urban life and subsequently reinforces their marginality.

Youth, gender and the household
• Youthful urban populations often lack opportunity, access to facilities and appropriate 
social ‘spaces’. Crime becomes more attractive to youth alienated from society

• Household tensions are a source of wider instability. Domestic violence has repercussions 
beyond the household. It affects women’s ability to generate income; it exposes youth to 
experiences of violence and normalises violence.

• Domestic violence connects with community and family breakdown, increasing the 
number of homeless youth prone to violence and likely to be vulnerable to and engage in 
crime.

Urban planning and management
• Planning and design has an important role to play in ensuring safe places within the city 
but rarely does safety figure. Efforts to create ‘world class’ or model cities often exclude 
the public’s need for housing, livelihoods and public space. Current planning approaches 
are having the effect of reinforcing spatial segregation and creating spaces of exclusion. 
Yet ‘vacant’ spaces are more unsafe: mixed use of public areas creates many eyes and 
ears.

• Informal settlements and insecure tenure denies infrastructure and services (including 
policing), thus further reinforcing marginality and poverty. Eviction and insecurity
destroys social networks and opens opportunities for corruption and criminal networks to emerge. It hinders the build up of capital assets (economic, social, natural etc).

- Fragmentation and isolation of communities creates its own problems, especially in cities of diversity and rapid change. Less interaction of people in urban society negatively affects efforts of consensus and a sense of responsibility and belonging.

**Policing and governance**

- Police responses are unlikely to succeed in isolation. Communities have a greater desire for more effective governing/policing of spaces. Innovations to policing are needed that include a greater role for communities, and police forces which better reflect the values and demographics of communities they serve. Community policing, restorative justice and community dispute resolution may offer effective responses and build more positive relationships between police and society.

- Safety is often a local concern, especially at the level of the household and neighbourhood. Local place-based responses can establish partnerships with communities and link them to institutions, policing and livelihoods thus offering positive alternatives.

- Peri-urbanism is reshaping cities spatially but governance systems have been slow to respond to this. New institutions and relationships need to emerge which are inclusive of the diverse populations and cultures of urbanising regions, where a single institutional model has limited capacity to effectively govern.

- Greater capacity to respond to and prevent crime and violence is important, and can be developed in a number of innovative ways. This study demonstrates that police responses which engage and learn from communities (including the business sector and NGOs) are more likely to be effective and inclusive. Building the capacity of communities is an effective strategy in both reducing poverty as well as building safer and stronger neighbourhoods and ultimately cities.

**Data on crime and safety**

- There are limits to the relevance and use of much existing data. Under-reporting seems to be widespread with crimes affecting women and the poor less likely to be reported. This is unlikely to change until vulnerable groups are given greater opportunity to safely voice
their experiences and concerns. Comparison of crime data is problematic due to differences in definitions, reporting process and storage of data.

- Media can sensationalise crime which decreases people’s perception of safety but media can equally be used to highlight progress, inform communities and develop partnerships which increase awareness and levels of safety. The media can be a powerful tool in enhancing urban safety.

1.6 Recommendations and conclusions

This study establishes an initial research agenda for cities in the Asia-Pacific region. The chapters and city case studies which follow highlight a number of generic and specific issues, but in many cases more work needs to be done on identifying key trends. This includes cities previously or commonly considered safe but which are undergoing dramatic and rapid change. Exploring why and how cities are safe (what are the causal factors of safety and safe cities?) is also important. A number of positive initiatives are evident in even the region’s more notorious cities, which should be shared and learned from. The research also identified several areas for change based on the case studies of good practices.

Just as there are no universal underlying causes and triggers to crime across the region’s cities, successful and effective responses need to be embedded in and targeted towards special local and national environments. Much can be learned across the region in developing ‘conflict-resilient cities’ – cities in which community-centred partnerships can provide valuable conflict prevention opportunities (Canada 2006:3). The chapters which follow exemplify this approach in identifying a number of progressive responses to crime, violence and urban safety, with a specific focus on local level initiatives but which build partnerships beyond communities. Drawing generic recommendations from such a rich collection is hazardous but nonetheless useful. While clear caveats apply the following core suggestions can be found throughout the regional and city case studies, and especially the identified ‘good practices’. The research calls for:

- Models of urban development, planning and design that create safe, inclusive cities and spaces of interaction;
• More innovative approaches to land management that increase people’s security of tenure and recognise rights;
• Reforming policing and criminal justice systems to increase public confidence and participation;
• Place-based solutions that strengthen communities and local capacities;
• Addressing the rights of women in the household, in the workforce, and as social actors;
• More effectively addressing the needs of youth, and hearing their voices in decision-making;
• Creating innovative partnerships for change, including with communities and the private sector;
• Creating cities and institutions that embrace diversity and reflect this in models of urban governance.
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