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Community Policing and Youth Violence Prevention Approaches and Implementation in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua

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DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

PROJECT DATA[1]

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In Brief

- **Development Challenge:** Violence and street crime, especially by youth, negatively affect the quality of life in Central America. Traditional policing has not been effective in reducing crime and preventing violence.

- **Program Solution:** Community policing programs have been instituted nationally in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Community policing emphasizes crime prevention and improved relations between the police and the citizenry.

- **Program Results:** Data show a decrease in dangerous crimes and a positive change of attitude among police toward young people. Some observations suggest increased trust in the police when the community policing approach is applied. However, police reform does not exist in a vacuum, and takes place within the context of broader efforts to fight corruption, to address weaknesses in the institutional structure that undermine the rule of law, and to build a more secure society.

1 See GIZ (2014). *Preventing Youth Violence in Central America (Prevenir)*. Website: https://www.giz.de/expertise /downloads/giz2014-en-faltblatt-26-ueberregional.pdf.

Executive Summary

This case study analyzes the implementation of the community policing (COP) model in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Citizen security is a major concern in Central America. Murder rates are among the highest in the world. An unacceptably high rate of other crimes seriously affects the quality of citizens' lives. Youth are both easily drawn to criminal activities and the main victims of violence. In the early 2000s, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras adopted a hard-line, repressive approach (*mano dura* or "iron fist"). Incarcerating youth for illicit association and increasing sentences for gang membership and gang-related crimes resulted in round-ups of large numbers of suspected gang members. In the last few years, Central American governments have recognized that the *mano dura* approach has not achieved its goals, but has instead worsened public security. Consequently, they are starting to implement more prevention-oriented policies.

Violence and street crime committed by and against young people are one of six principal threats to citizen security in Central America. Youth are most affected by criminality and violence and, at the same time, most commonly responsible for intentional violence and for committing crimes. However, not all youth face the same level of risk of violence. Some are more vulnerable and more socially disadvantaged than others. Large numbers of youth in the region are at risk due to social exclusion, which can cause one risk factor to lead to others. Understanding the multifaceted characteristics and dynamics of youth violence, therefore, is essential for designing and implementing effective violence prevention and reduction strategies.

Since the 1990s, every proclamation for police reform in Latin America has led to the launch of a COP program designed to improve police-community relations. COP can improve citizen security by expanding the conventional police mandate from fighting crime to forming partnerships with the citizenry and encouraging the police and citizens to become partners in controlling crime and preventing violence. COP requires, however, a clear understanding among police, community members, and local government of their respective responsibilities.

Many factors have made it difficult for Central American governments to control youth violence. The large service gap at the local level is caused by repressive approaches to crime control; poor coordination among municipal governments, national government institutions, and the police; lack of public trust in the police; and the tendency of the police to stigmatize young people.

The change from a repressive policing approach to a preventive model of policing can be made in more than one way. The prevention approach of COP focuses on (1) improving public safety through situational crime prevention, (2) preventing violence against women, children, and adolescents, and (3) increasing opportunities for youth. The precinct approach of COP seeks to make police work operationally and administratively more efficient and focuses mainly, but not exclusively, on crime control and law enforcement. The precinct approach is usually implemented in a geographically defined area according to the organizational structure of the police department, such as precincts or police stations. The key actors of the precinct approach are the police department and the police officer.

COP can also be implemented nationally, or through the use of local pilot projects, or both. In Nicaragua, COP was introduced at both the national and local levels. El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras used the precinct approach locally.

Community involvement is crucial. Community involvement is crucial for implementing a preventive model of policing at the local level. This is the most important lesson learned from comparing the Central American experiences. COP includes residents, local government officials, schools, church groups, and the private sector, and it relies on gaining their trust. Responses to the problem of youth violence range from repressive measures to prevention-oriented approaches. The police, the local government, and the communities must understand their respective roles in COP. Problems that are highly relevant to the community, such as security in the schools and the security of women, youth, and children must be made a priority. Without guidance from local governments and the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders at the local level, COP often reverts to concentrating only on crime control. Attempts to bypass the local government by establishing pilot projects directly with implementing institutions or organizations at the local level were problematic.

Social accountability mechanisms must be strengthened. Strengthening social accountability mechanisms will help increase confidence in the reliability and fairness of police action among citizens and particularly among young people. A transparent

and fair human resources policy is also necessary for the successful implementation of COP.

The role of the police officer must change. Officers are a key element of COP. In addition to traditional police skills, police staff must acquire new skills in addition to classical police skills, for example, skills in communication, managing social processes, attending to victims of violence, mediating conflict, and in cooperating with other institutions. Moreover, orientation toward prevention also requires dedicated training in areas with different competencies and specializations such as youth and gender specialists. Self-assessment, peer coaching, and supervision are key elements for improving and maintaining the quality of services delivered.

The results of COP have been generally positive. Data show a decrease in dangerous crimes and a positive change of attitude among police toward young people. Some observations suggest increased trust in the police. But it should be noted here that the country case studies cover experiences in implementing COP approaches up to the year 2013. Recently, the homicide rates in El Salvador shows a 57 percent increase in 2014 from the previous year and decreased in Guatemala and Honduras (Gagne 2015). Moreover, many of the root causes of the region's violence are transnational—the international trade in drugs, guns, and other contraband being only the most obvious example. Though COP has shown to be effetive on the local level, but only large-scale, national programs can effectively address national-level problems with corruption or the quality of the legal system.

Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders included the Central American Integration System; the National Civil Police of El Salvador, the National Police of Honduras, the National Police of Guatemala and the National Police of Nicaragua; local government in the four countries studied; the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development; the (GIZ) Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH; and the citizens of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

Introduction

Citizen security is a major concern in Central America. Insecurity has become one of the principal threats to the development potential of Central American countries.

Indicators for insecurity show how dramatically criminal groups affect the most vulnerable states. Murder rates are among the highest in the world. An unacceptably high rate of other crimes seriously affects the quality of citizens' lives. Youth are both easily drawn to criminal activities and the main victims of violence.

Over the past 15 years, governments throughout the region have attempted to improve citizens' security and are increasingly experimenting with new policies. In the early 2000s, the "northern triangle" (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) adopted a hard-line, repressive approach (*mano dura* or "iron fist"). Incarcerating youth for illicit association and increasing sentences for gang membership and gang-related crimes resulted in round-ups of large numbers of suspected gang members (Meyer and Seelke 2014). Other Central American governments, Nicaragua for example, have emphasized prevention activities, such as programs that focus on strengthening families of at-risk youth and initiatives addressing domestic and gender-based violence. Additionally, Central American nations have sought to improve regional security cooperation, recognizing the transnational nature of the threats they face, particularly from drug trafficking and organized crime.

Central American governments have recognized that the *mano dura* approach has not achieved its goals but has instead worsened public security (PNUD 2013). Consequently, they are starting to implement more prevention-oriented policies.

Since the 1990s, every proclamation for police reform in Latin America has led to the launch of a COP program designed to improve police-community relations. COP implies a change from the conventional model of policing to a more citizen-oriented model, responding to the increasing demand for citizen security at the local level and prioritizing preventive measures. However, program implementation was weakened in countries that opted for more repressive approaches in the 2000s. It was only recently that COP has been revived. However, putting into practice all of the institutional, technical, organizational, and cultural aspects of COP has been as challenging in the region as elsewhere. It is not always easy to foster community participation, to establish a solid relationship between the police and local residents, to prioritize the diverse and often contradictory demands of citizens, or to collaborate with various public and private stakeholders at the local level.

Most COP initiatives began as pilot programs in urban areas that were heavily affected by violence and crime. They were initiated either by the police institutions themselves or by mayors of municipalities or major cities. They were supported by the International Development Bank, bilateral donors such as the Department for International Development (UK), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and were also part of the Central American Security Strategy adopted in 2011 (SICA 2011).

Strengthening the institutional capacity of Central American police forces and preventing youth violence are two components of the Central American Security Strategy. COP is an important initiative for improving citizen security and for preventing youth violence. Until now, the experiences of implementing COP in Central America have not been systematically analyzed. To contribute to a more systematic and evidence-based assessment of recent experiences, the Central American Integration System and GIZ, together with the police forces of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, began reviewing the implementation of COP. This case study reconstructs the process of introducing and scaling up COP over the last 15 years in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, with a specific focus on youth violence.

Methodology of the Case Study Approach

This case study is a contribution to the partnership between the World Bank and GIZ on the science of delivery. The case study follows the Global Delivery Initiative–Delivery Case Study Guidelines (World Bank 2014). The key objective of the case study is to learn from the Central American experience how to scale up COP at the regional level. The Central American Integration System and, particularly, the Commission of Police Chiefs and Directors of Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Colombia organized this process of systematization. The case study compares the experiences of four Central American countries to:

- Understand the specific problems of citizen security caused by increasing youth violence at the local level and how COP responded to these problems

- Explore the institutional and organizational changes required at the national level to strengthen and scale up COP.
- Analyze the similarities and differences of the COP approaches in these countries.

The case study process was organized as follows. First, GIZ organized a conceptual workshop with representatives from the COP units of the four countries in May 2013. A conceptual framework to analyze the implementation experience was drawn up, followed by the collection and analysis of secondary information. Then experts from the four countries' police institutions selected cases for further analysis. Primary data were collected between June and September 2013. Police staff of all ranks, neighbors, local leaders, mayors, youth, schools, and NGOs were interviewed, and crime statistics and socioeconomic data at the local level were analyzed. The collected data were validated between January and March 2014. The country reports on the implementation experiences were finished in April 2014. Based on the country reports, GIZ carried out a comparative analysis of the country experiences. This analysis was discussed at a regional conference organized in Nicaragua in May 2014, with the participation of police institutions, mayors, community leaders, and civil society organizations from eight countries.[2] The comparative analysis has been updated for this case study by a desk review of recently published documents.

Violence as a Development Issue

Between 2005 and 2011, homicide rates in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras increased drastically (see figure 1). The rates stabilized in Honduras and decreased in El Salvador after a truce in 2012 among the country's largest gangs (Seelke 2014). However, homicide rates in Nicaragua and Costa Rica remain at between 10 and 15 homicides per 100,000 population. Figure 2 demonstrates that violence and crime are the number one concern of citizens in most countries of the region.

At the national level, the economic situation, as measured by gross national product per capita, does

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2   For conference documents, see GIZ 2014d. "PREVENIR e instituciones policiales de Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras organizan Conferencia Regional sobre Policía Comunitaria." http://www.gizprevenir.com/biblioteca.

Figure 1 Homicide Rates in Central America Per 100,000 Population, 2005–13
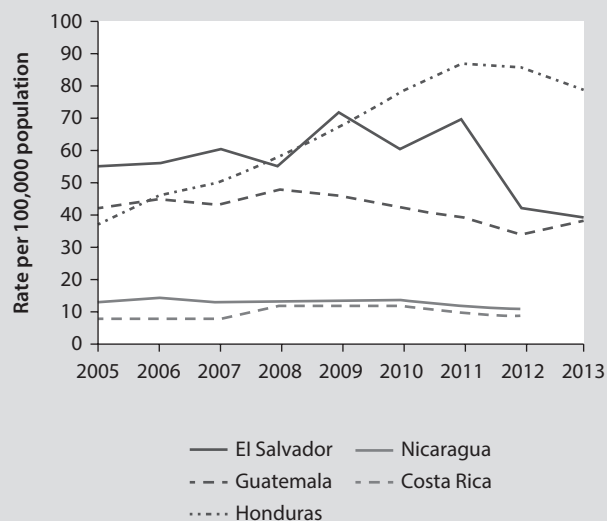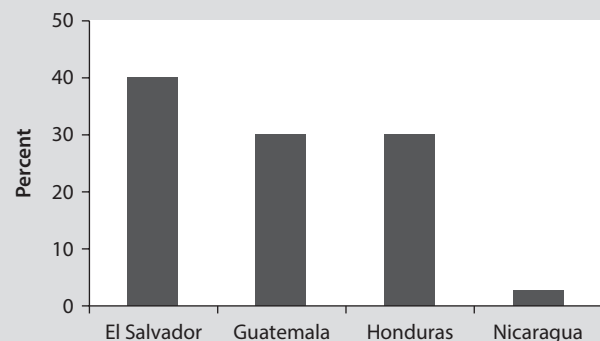

Source: RESDAL 2013; GIZ 2014a.

Figure 3 Gross National Product Per Capita
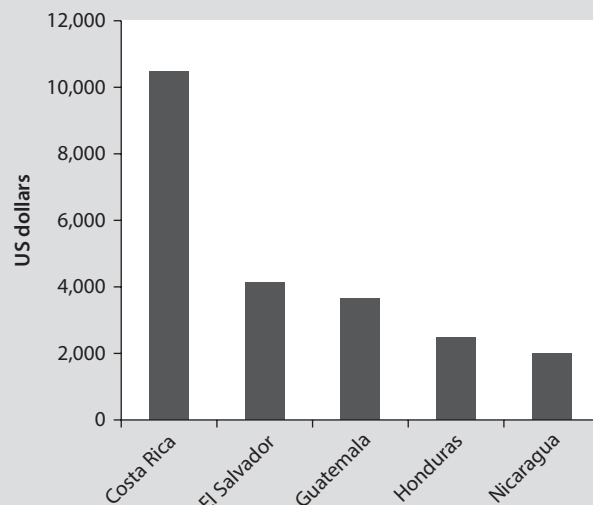
Source: World Bank Data Collection.

Figure 2 Percentage of Respondents in Four Central American Countries in Which Violence/Crime Is the Most Important Problem

Source: Corporación Latinobarómetro 2011.

Table 1 Male Homicide Victims 15–24 Years of Age

Country	Percentage of general population	Percentage of intentional homicide victims
El Salvador (2008)	9.5	28
Guatemala (2010)	10	23
Nicaragua (2008)	11	21

Source: OAS 2012.

not appear to adequately explain the relative levels of insecurity. Although Nicaragua and Honduras have almost the same socioeconomic indicators, Nicaragua is safer than Honduras, which is the most violent country in the region (compare figures 1 and 3).

Obviously, no single cause or factor can satisfactorily explain the increasing level of violence. According to the analysis of the United Nations Devlopment Programme (UNDP 2013, 7), there are some significant vulnerabilities: the increase in single-parent families, the high number of school dropouts, and problems of employability, particularly for young men. The continuing marginalization of broad sectors of the urban population has weakened the mechanisms for control and protection.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD 2013, 81), violence and street crime committed by and against young people are one of six principal threats to citizen security in Central America. Youth are most affected by criminality and violence and, at the same time, most commonly responsible for intentional violence and for committing crimes. The homicide rate of young men in the 15–30 years old age group in the northern triangle is the highest worldwide (UNODC 2014, 22). Table 1 shows that the percentage of male homicide victims ages 15–24 years exceeds by far

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what would be expected based on their proportion of the general population.

Awareness of the effect of increasing youth violence on development has become a serious issue in Latin America and worldwide. It is no longer questioned that youth violence has a detrimental effect on the growth potential of many countries, not least as it puts a strain on government budgets, deters investment, and contributes to the deterioration of norms and morals that societies have traditionally used to hold the social fabric together and guide young people to adulthood. The economic impact of violence containment to the Central American economies is significant. It was estimated in 2012 to be 17.5 percent of GDP in Honduras, 13.8 percent in El Salvador, 8.2 percent in Guatemala, but only 5.2 percent in Nicaragua (Institute for Economic and Peace 2014, 7).

Not all youth face the same level of risk of violence. Some are more vulnerable and more socially disadvantaged than others. Large numbers of youth in the region are at risk due to social exclusion, which can cause one risk factor to lead to others. Understanding the multifaceted characteristics and dynamics of youth violence, therefore, is essential for designing and implementing effective violence prevention and reduction strategies.

Police forces are often not well prepared to respond appropriately to these challenges. They often have limited experience in the use of the holistic approaches to prevention that are part of a public security policy linking COP with situational and social crime prevention strategies.

Delivery Challenges Faced by Implementers

Police forces have not been able to prevent youth violence and respond effectively to the demands of citizens for public security because:

- Police often stigmatize young people as criminals.
- There is little confidence in the capacity of the police to protect children and young people against violence (Kennedy 2014; UNHCR 2014).
- Preventing youth violence at the local level requires approaches different from those used to prevent violence and organized crime by adults.
- The iron-fist policies that were designed to combat gangs (*maras*) in El Salvador and Honduras have fueled a rise in violence by and against youth.

Lethal violence remained high and intensified in all three countries, particularly between 2005 and 2011 (UNODC 2014). In addition, the prison population increased by about 112 percent (El Salvador), 154 perent (Guatemala), and 46 percent (Honduras), between 2006 and 2015. The highest occupancy rate of prisons based on official capacity has been reported for El Salvador (325 percent), followed by Guatemala (270 percent) and Honduras (90 percent) (WPB 2015; Smutt 2013).

- Community members, particularly young people, tend to be deeply suspicious of the police.
- The conventional model of policing characterized by top-down hierarchical structures with management styles focused on command and control had only limited effect in solving the security problems of communities in Central America.
- Confidence in the performance of police forces varies significantly. According to the survey of Corporación Latinobarómetro (2011) (see figure 4), confidence in police performance is relatively low in Guatemala, followed by Honduras and El Salvador. The most confidence is reported in Nicaragua.

The delivery challenges can be summarized as follows: The prevention of youth violence at the local level is hampered by repressive approaches to crime control; poor coordination among municipal governments, national government institutions, and the police; lack of public trust in the police; and the tendency among police to stigmatize young people.

Figure 4 Public Trust in the Police
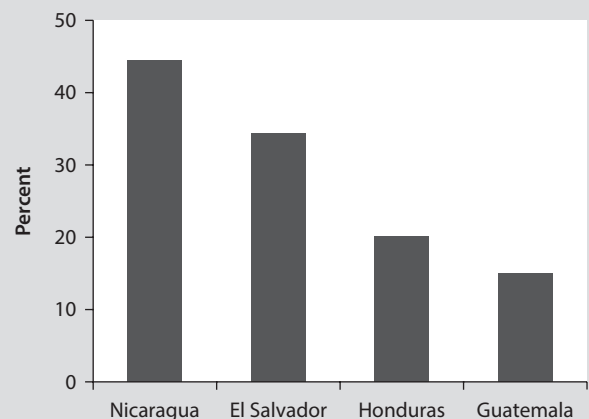
Source: Corporación Latinobarómetro 2011.

Research Questions of the Case Study

The comparative analysis presented here focuses on the following questions:

- What can be learned from the implementation and scaling-up process of COP in the four countries reviewed for a regional approach to preventing youth violence?
- What lessons can be drawn from the different approaches to COP at the local level?
- How has the perception of citizens with regard to citizen security changed after introducing or expanding COP?

Contextual Conditions

COP was introduced in Central America in the late 1990s as an international best practice. It was perceived not only as a promising model, but also as an important contribution toward rebuilding trust in local police forces. At the outset, the implementation of COP depended very much on donor support, both financial and in the use of successful western models. Little consideration, however, was given to the issues of institutional weakness, high levels of community crime and violence, and the problem of organized crime. Furthermore, changes in government and in public policy often interrupted the implementation of COP approaches.

Nevertheless, governments in Central America are taking a more comprehensive and integrated approach to dealing with violence, particularly youth violence. COP expands the conventional police mandate from fighting crime to forming partnerships with the citizenry. COP encourages the police and citizens to become partners in controlling crime and preventing violence. COP requires a clear understanding among police, community members, and local government of their respective responsibilities.

COP initiatives in Central America have several common elements:

- COP builds ties with community members through community associations or municipal crime prevention committees. Police officers build positive relationships with citizens and understand better the local policing and community context.
- Domestic violence, underperformance in school, the presence of gangs in the community, the lack of open spaces for recreational activities, low quality of public services, and unemployment make the lives of young people difficult and risky. Social crime prevention attempts to protect youth against these risks and to allow individuals to resist criminal and violent behavior (GIZ 2014b).
- Situational crime prevention emphasizes the physical and environmental conditions that generate opportunities for committing crime, such as dark streets, lack of surveillance, and abandoned lots. Because crime is typically concentrated in particular municipalities and neighborhoods, interventions seek to improve the physical conditions of particular locations, both lowering the opportunities for, as well as increasing the risks of, committing a crime.
- The community should be geographically compact enough to enable foot patrols. Police officers should be able to get to know the children, youth, women, and men of the community within a reasonable time and should, in turn, be known and accepted by them. An atmosphere of trust, devoid of both anonymity and animosity or stigmatization, is necessary.
- COP is often supplemented by restructuring departments to increase police-citizen interaction, such as giving more autonomy to neighborhood police commissioners.
- COP emphasizes local accountability to community needs (GIZ 2014b).
- In COP, a police officer is a public servant and manager of social processes: law enforcer and conflict mediator, armed symbol of authority, and part-time social worker. The police's responsibilities include conflict resolution, victim assistance, and reducing the fear of insecurity, violence, and crime. Police personnel are planners, problem solvers, and community organizers.
- The police and representatives from various governmental and municipal institutions conduct careful analyses to assess underlying issues. The police then tailor their operational strategies to local security problems and, most important, coordinate well with local governments and national public institutions.

Implementation of these elements requires changes in police procedures, an increase in coordination with local governments and public institutions, and the improvement of transparency and social accountability of police services at the local level. COP also requires cultural, institutional, and organizational changes in police forces at national level.

Tracing the Implementation Process

This section summarizes the process of introducing COP in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The description of the implementation process is organized around the following key processes:

- *The change from a repressive policing approach to a preventive model of policing:* Why did this change take place, and how was it effectuated? Did it result in a more integrated and differentiated view of youth violence? Which institutional, organizational, and cultural changes supported this process?
- *The strengthening of social accountability mechanisms*: Did the introduction of accountability mechanisms increase confidence in the reliability and fairness of police action among citizens and, particularly, young people?
- *The changing role of police officers and agents*: What were the enabling conditions and limitations of introducing COP?

From Reactive-Incident Policing to a Preventive Model of Policing

The process of moving from reactive policing to a preventive model of policing is explained here, using the approaches toward youth violence as an example. Two different approaches were applied:

- *The prevention approach of COP:* This approach focuses on (1) improving public safety through situational crime prevention; (2) preventing violence against women, children, and adolescents; and (3) increasing opportunities for youth. Except in Nicaragua, the main actor here is the local government.
- *The precinct approach of COP:* This approach makes police work operationally and administratively more efficient by focusing mainly, but not exclusively, on crime control and law enforcement. Youth violence was considered a problem of public security, not prevention. When the police participate in community councils or local development associations, they can identify dangerous and problematic public areas and crime hotspots. Working closely with public institutions, and particularly with the local judiciary, could minimize impunity. This approach is usually implemented in a geographically defined area, such as a precinct, according to the organizational

structure of the police department. The key actors in the precinct approach are the police department and its officers.

Nicaragua is discussed first, where the police applied both COP approaches at the national and local levels. Then, we compare various initiatives from local governments in Nicaragua to establish the prevention approach of COP in coordination with police forces. Finally, we summarize results of applying the precinct approach in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Nicaragua: "Más Vale Prevenir Que Reprimir"[3]

The first voices critical of the hard-line approach in dealing with youth violence in Central America appeared in the late 1990s. Research supported by universities and NGOs played a crucial role in questioning the effectiveness of the conventional reactive model of policing in dealing with this problem.

Of the Central American police institutions, the Nicaraguan police were the first to address the difficulties of a predominantly repressive approach toward youth violence in 2001. During this process, a comparison of police strategies in two Nicaraguan cities played a crucial role.

In Managua, the police had implemented a reactive approach in 1999, called *Plan de Pandillas* (Antigangs Plan), responding to the emerging problem of youth gangs. Antiriot police teams were deployed to those suburban areas of Managua that were most affected by youth violence and youth gang activities. Valle Martínez summarizes the experience with the *Plan de Pandillas* as follows: "It was carried out at night and in the early mornings. Hotspots of violence were identified on a daily basis. Antigang control and intensive patrolling and surveillance measures were carried out by specialized antiriot teams for three months" (Valle Martínez 2007, 571). Although the results of the *Plan de Pandillas* were deemed successful in terms of reducing youth violence, some within the police questioned the sustainability and legitimacy of a reactive approach to policing. It was argued that the *Plan de Pandillas* would not resolve the underlying causes of youth violence. On the contrary, the reactive approach could turn the majority of young,

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3   "Prevention is better than repression" was the slogan of the Nicaraguan police for promoting the prevention approach of policing (Cordero 2006, 13).

and predominantly male, adolescents into threats to security. Gang members could prepare themselves for confrontations with antiriot police teams by strengthening their internal structures and arming themselves. Although antiriot police teams would be able to reestablish public security for some days or weeks, the local police forces would have had to bear the consequences of the vicious cycle of violence, of stigmatizing young people living in "dangerous" areas, and of increased criminalization. This in turn would undermine every option for a more preventive and constructive way of dealing with the problem of youth violence in the long term. Increasing confrontation with police and social conflict within the communities would be the consequence.

In Masaya, however, the local government implemented a different and more active approach, combining measures of crime control with prevention activities: A Municipal Citizens Security Council was established, together with subcommittees for specific subjects such as crime and security, local resources, risk zones and groups, citizen security education, family violence, and traffic education. The police intensified control over the use of registered and nonregistered firearms and over businesses where alcoholic beverages and unopened liquor were sold in violation of the law. The police organized meetings with students, parents, and community leaders, raising awareness and providing information on penal legislation, crime control, prevention, and citizen security. The police and the community held regular meetings on citizen security and organized regular meetings with gang members who expressed their intention of changing their violent behavior.

The Masaya experience focused on primary prevention (through civic orientation, education, and vocational training for youth), secondary prevention (intensifying patrols, arms control, and control of alcohol and drug abuse), and tertiary prevention (activities with youth at risk of becoming gang members). Later, this approach was replicated in other Nicaraguan municipalities such as Jinotepe and Leon with sustainable results in improving citizen security (Espinoza and Herrera 2010).

As a result of these experiences, the Nicaraguan police implemented a new strategy of dealing with youth violence through (1) an approach targeted to the criteria of different risk groups, (2) home visits to families with young adolescents in risk groups, (3) organizing civic work for youth at risk, and (4) prevention activities at the community level.

Moreover, the police established a Directorate of Youth Affairs in 2003 at the national and departmental levels. The Directorate of Youth Affairs, using a risk-oriented approach, created a practical tool that differentiates two groups of adolescents: (1) those with high social risk of becoming gang members, and (2) those already linked to gangs or who have previously been incarcerated. For both groups, differentiated action guidelines were put in place. The strategy seeks to change the attitudes and values of these young people, increase their bonds with the local community, and create opportunities for them to reintegrate into society. Youth gang members committed themselves to change and handed over their weapons. They received psychological support to deal with their personal problems, such as low self-esteem or problems with their personal identity. Violence is becoming increasingly embedded into particular types of social relationships that are determined by a logic of power and revenge. This is particularly true of young men living in poor urban areas, in which risking their own life, terminating the lives of others, and dying is a constant possibility. The exercise of violence allow them to obtain recognition and self-realization as a gang member, a protector, and a dealer. It is therefore important to support young men in changing this lifestyle of violent life by alternative, nonviolent lifestyles. Training and education programs were provided through private and public scholarships, as well as through the national police's Centre of Youth Training and Development, through which they gained skills to assist them in finding employment, and that contributed to the development of their community. Former gang members also engaged in community leisure and social activities and were encouraged to find work. Consequently, the number of gangs recorded in Managua had decreased from over 118 in 2002 to approximately 34 in 2005 (Rocha 2006, 114). The National Police estimate the existence of 42 gangs throughout the country in February 2012 (RESDAL 2013, 123).

COP was strengthened by the addition of programs for (1) crime prevention at the community level with a specific focus on youth and (2) the continuing education of police officers, particularly in human rights, ethics, and quality of service delivery. In addition, communities established crime prevention committees. In 2007, a more detailed model of COP was introduced, focusing even more on a prevention approach at the community level (SIDA 2011).

Box 1 Information and Prevention Campaign in the Jorge Dimitrov District of Managua, Nicaragua

Jorge Dimitrov was one of the most insecure districts in Managua, with a population of approximately 20,000 inhabitants, 60 percent of whom are younger than 18 years of age. The district is located in an extremely isolated area characterized by high levels of crime and youth violence, with little police presence. In late 2012, a conflict between youth gangs resulted in the murder of three citizens. An integrated plan for preventing violence was prepared under the guidance of the Nicaraguan police and implemented in 2013.

Police officers identified youth gang members and youth at risk of becoming gang members. A program of reconciliation between gangs began, which included communal work activities. Moreover, a program of integration into the local economy was established with the cooperation of the local business sector. Students of psychology and social work from the University of Managua implemented a program of improving self-esteem and social behavior. The Managua Health Department implemented a program for youth health. In addition to these prevention activities, the police implemented targeted activities for crime control.

The following activities and outcomes occurred during this prevention campaign in 2013:

Prevention Activities
- Door-to-door visits to 11,500 families
- Specific attention and counseling for 158 parents with children at risk
- Meetings with 1,900 residents and community leaders
- Information on the impact of alcohol and drug abuse for 2,000 residents and students
- Program for internship placements for young people organized by the local business sector
- Training in conflict mediation
- Communal work program for young people

Control of Crime
- Arrest of 337 persons
- Gun control
- Control of alcohol and drug abuse
- Control of areas with high levels of crime
- Control of car thefts

Participating Institutions
- Training of 10 police officers in youth and gender, arms control, and investigation
- Public sector (education, health)
- NGOs, churches, community organizations
- Local business sector
- University of Managua

Results of the Campaign
- Decrease in homicides
- Decrease in other serious crimes
- Vocational training for 42 young people

Source: GIZ 2014b.

However, it is worth noticing that even though the prevention strategy of the Nicaraguan police has been applied widely, the challenge of youth violence is ongoing. The Jorge Dimitrov district of Managua serves as an example. The information and prevention campaign that was applied in this district is described in detail in box 1.

The Nicaraguan experience demonstrates that a sustainable improvement in citizen security can be achieved by mobilizing local governments; line ministries such as ministries of health, education, family and children and so forth; the local business community; civil society organizations; and the church. A strong commitment into organizing, coordinating, and monitoring this process is necessary, a role, that the Nicaraguan police has have directly assumed. Another important element was to identify the different situations and causes of insecurity and violence and to respond to these situations with a broad range of activities covering primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention measures.

El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras: Searching for a Better Strategy of Prevention

In contrast to Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras pursued a two-pronged strategy (1) an iron-fist approach emphasizing crime control and law enforcement at the national level and (2) community-oriented pilot programs combining crime control and violence prevention at the local level.

With urban violence on the upswing, local pilot projects to improve citizen security were implemented by municipal governments in Santa Tecla, El Salvador; by civil society organizations in Villa Nueva, Guatemala, together with the police; and by the Honduran government in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, always with the support of international donors.

El Salvador

The urban municipality of Santa Tecla, in El Salvador, undertook long-term plans that prioritized human and

social development, citizen security, building capacity, and coordination among local government agencies—all with a strong emphasis on citizen participation. In 2005, the municipal government established the Municipal Policy for Crime Prevention and Citizen Security. A local observatory for the prevention of crime was established to gather data on crime and violence, such as homicides, robberies, traffic accidents, and intrafamily violence. The data are coordinated with other information such as location, time, age, gender, and weapon used. The observatory has been an important tool in fine-tuning local decision making, based on standardized evidence and information. In 2006, after it was determined that nearly 80 percent of homicides were carried out using firearms, a municipal order prohibited the carrying of firearms in public spaces. Prevention-based COP also began in 2005, including joint patrols between the National Civilian Police and the Body of Municipal Agents, the latter under the direct control of the mayor's office. In 2008, two municipal coordination mechanisms were inaugurated to coordinate violence prevention activities. First, a Civil Council for Local Development was established, mobilizing more than 70 local committees. Second, the initiatives of the municipal government were coordinated with sectoral departments at the national level. Under this umbrella, specific coordination units were established for gender, youth, and citizen security. Another important initiative was the introduction of a participatory medium-term budgetary planning process that resulted in a strategic plan covering 10 years. As part of this plan, a fund for specific pilot programs was proposed and administered by the local councils. As a result, the homicide rate fell more than 60 percent between 2005 and 2013 (Interpeace 2014). The focus on prevention, community coexistence, and the reclaiming of public spaces—all in consultation with civil society—has been very popular among citizens.

Citizen participation was achieved through a well established system of district and neighborhood councils. The municipal government successfully promoted the active participation of young people in the planning and implementation processes. Santa Tecla has invested US$1 million per year in youth-specific projects and supported the active participation of young leaders in local development processes. A specific unit for children, adolescents, and youth was established in 2006. The round table for youth was transformed into a local youth council in 2008. Prevention of youth violence is one of the three

priority areas of the local policy of violence prevention. A risk-oriented approach is applied (as in Nicaragua) with primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention activities (Enríquez Villacorta and Rodriguez 2009).

Guatemala

Villa Nueva, a suburb of Guatemala City known for its rampant public insecurity, crime, and youth violence, implemented a pilot COP project in 1999. The pilot project started with the same mix of prevention activities as the pilot program in Masaya, Nicaragua. In addition to these activities, however, arrested gang members participared in a round table at the youth detention center in Villa Nueva. A rehabilitation program for gang members was begun in close cooperation with the police and public institutions. The police department also dismissed officers who were involved in drug trafficking. In 2002, however, a new police director abruptly ended the rehabilitation initiative. The officers who had previously been dismissed returned, and the extreme hard-line approach to policing was reinstated. Violence increased, and 18 gang members who were participating in the rehabilitation program were killed. Cooperation with the police stopped, and the initiative to promote the rehabilitation of gang members ended in 2003 (CCPVJ 2007).

In 2004, the new local government began a prevention approach at the local level. With USAID's support, an additional local council of prevention was established, integrating representatives of public institutions, civil society, the private sector, and the police. Based on an analysis of different aspects of insecurity, a prevention action plan was formulated, focusing on primary and secondary prevention initiatives. Advisors from the Narcotics Affairs Section–Law Enforcement Development Unit, a U.S. State Department program, were also active in Villa Nueva, focusing their support on short-term crime control measures. While USAID supported a community-based prevention approach, these advisors promoted a precinct approach to COP (USAID 2011) in the form of *Juntas Locales de Seguridad*, which had been established by the police in 1999 but were critically viewed by civil society organizations because of frequent abuses of power (PDH 2014; UNHCR 2013, 8). The operation of two programs at once caused confusion and hindered the coordination of approaches necessary to improve capacity for crime control and expand existing youth violence prevention initiatives. USAID's

report on the implementation experiences in Villa Nueva summarizes the key challenges (USAID 2011, 14):

- The concept of COP is open to multiple interpretations
- Identification of the precinct approach with iron-fist policing rather than with COP
- The Guatemalan police resisted combining the approaches
- Rapid turnover of police officers and deficient internal controls on corruption hindered the creation of trust among police, civil society, and the private sector
- Local government and public institutions failed to improve coordination and allocate responsibility for citizen security

Honduras

In Honduras, the implementation of COP started in 2002 with the Safer Community Program (Programa *Comunidad más Segura*), a pilot project in the seven cities with the highest crime rates. It had three basic components: improving police-community relations by assigning police officers to foot patrols, implementing special programs and educational seminars in communities, and organizing meetings and local committees. When the financial support of the Spanish government ended, the program converted to a more reactive approach to crime control (GIZ 2014b, 107). A new strategy, Citizen Security Councils, started in 2006, with the arrival of a new government and became effective only at the local level. In December 2008, the government started a program of introducing COP at the local level supported by Japan (GIZ 2014b). However, the strategy was abandoned following a coup d'état in 2009. Yet, there was continued interest in the COP project, and it became the central element of the Safer Municipalities Program that began in 2013.

Precinct-Based Approach: A First Step Toward Improving Citizen Security

Local COP in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras combines the Japanese *koban* model, which focuses on a limited geographic area, with home and school visits. Police services have been improved through investments in equipment and human resources, monitoring and accountability mechanisms, an emphasis on social initiatives, and planning and management. Its challenge is to change the poor image of the police, reducing citizens' fear of them, by creating the new role of "friend of the citizen" and enabling citizens to become allies in preventing crime.

In Honduras, the model has benchmarks for community activities, operating activities (such as patrols and door-to-door visits), and crime statistics that are permanently monitored. Using the prevention approach of COP, the police work independently within their territory of responsibility, with limited resources and minimal coordination, with other specialized units of the national police, other institutions, and the local governments.

Increased Trust in the Police by Improving Social Participation and Social Accountability

Fostering citizen participation in COP prevention initiatives at the local level requires confidence in the transparent, fair, and unbiased treatment of citizens by the police. Experience with COP suggests that when citizens see the police as legitimate, they are more likely to comply with the law and police directives and to cooperate with and assist the police. Citizens want to be treated politely and with dignity and respect. Citizens want to have a voice on security problems in their communities and how to resolve them (Fischer 2014). "We are also part of community policing, for the fact that if we see something suspicious, immediately we speak to the police officer to report on the problem," said a member of the community council of San Lucas in El Salvador (GIZ 2014b, 61). The role of the police in preventing future conflicts was mentioned, particularly in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

The starting point was to build trust. "Sometimes It was even easier to convince the community to trust in community policing, than the police itself," said a chief of a police station in San Pedro Sula, Honduras (GIZ 2014b, 27). Due to problematic experiences with the authoritarian attitudes of police officers, trust will be gained slowly from the attention to citizens' problems. For instance, a citizen of Las Palmas, Honduras, whose young son urgently needed transport to the hospital, got no response from the ambulance services. "I looked for the phone number of our police officer, told him my situation, and in a few minutes police agents were in my house, because they knew where I was living and also of the difficult conditions of my son, so they transported him very quickly to the hospital and saved his life" (GIZ 2014b, 29).

These and other experiences reported in the country studies reflect the changing perceptions of citizens who have realized that police officers under COP have a different vision, culture, and attitude toward their work. However, this process needs time. In the words of a Honduran police officer, "We have to understand this as a gradual process of building trust" (GIZ 2014b, 27).

Although it is important for the police to work closely with the community during this process of trust building, the roles of the police, local government, and civil society must also be clarified. COP should focus on safety problems. As explained by the Police Chief of Managua: "Police officers cannot attend and solve all the problems of the people. We cannot take charge of children who escape from school, illegal dumps, or take a woman in childbirth to hospital; if we do this: how are we going to chase the thieves?" (GIZ 2014b, 32).

It is often difficult to distinguish among safety problems that should be resolved jointly by the police and the local government, problems that should be resolved primarily by public institutions, and crime control problems that should be exclusively dealt with by police forces. Each actor's role must be clearly defined, and strategies must be in place for the guidance of the process by local government. The extent to which this responsibility is effectively implemented also depends on the legal framework of each country. Regrettably, there have been cases in Central America in which citizens in local security initiatives assume functions beyond their scope, which has led to abuse, vigilantism, and the law being taken into people's own hands (Vásquez de León 2009; GIZ 2014b; PDH 2014, 53; UNHCR 2013, 8).

Community participation is indeed essential for COP. However, it should not be a substitute for the state's fundamental responsibility to guarantee its citizens' safety. In a historical and social context characterized by conflict and the states' limited capacity to respond to it, as in Central America, it is essential to strengthen existing institutional mechanisms instead of by-passing them.

The introduction of social accountability mechanisms as a key element of COP had a significant impact on improving police legitimacy. These mechanisms have been established in all four Central American countries: from the start in Nicaragua, as a nationwide strategy in El Salvador, by scaling up social accountability mechanisms from pilot projects in some larger communities to the national level in Honduras, and as part of the pilot stage of the new community approach in Guatemala.

"Police accountability is the most important and effective mechanism to create changes in police behavior. Because those who can actually supervise police behavior are the very citizens the police is dealing with. Who do police agents ask bribes from? It is from the citizens. Who are the victims of police abuse? It is the adolescents and citizens. Therefore, citizens and young people of a community can easily detect police misbehavior."

—Commissioner of the National Police of El Salvador

Different schemes of social accountability have been established at the community and national levels. In El Salvador, a social accountability mechanism is (1) part of the national strategy of implementing COP, (2) the responsibility of police management staff at the department level, and (3) part of the established mechanisms of internal control. Most of the experience in social accountability is at the local level. Police service centers have been established at the departmental and local levels to facilitate the filing of complaints by citizens against the police. Social accountability mechanisms were also established in Nicaragua starting in 2002, as part of the process of improving the relationship between the police and communities. Here, the police have to present their results at least three times a year to the local crime prevention commissions (GIZ 2014b).

In addition to social accountability mechanisms, academia and civil society play a crucial role in monitoring and observing police reform. They are always part of the consultation process. NGOs in El Salvador and Guatemala and a university in Honduras are organizing observatories to monitor citizen security and police reform. Observatories are also part of municipal crime prevention policies. They provide a public forum for the discussion of citizen security issues and the results of security policies.

Improved citizen perception of police behavior and increased satisfaction with police performance were also confirmed by a recent impact evaluation conducted in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama by USAID's Community-Based Crime and Violence Prevention Approach in Central America (USAID 2014).

From Special Community Policing Units to Scaled Up Community Policing

With the exception of Nicaragua, COP has always been introduced at the local level. Because COP was an initiative that was supported at the outset almost exclusively by donors, the common approach was to start with pilot projects. This strategy was often criticized for developing stand-alone projects that were not integrated into national policy. It was probably the only viable option, however, for implementing police reform in the medium term under conditions of changing political commitment and a tendency toward "punitive populism" (Wood 2014), when public support for more severe criminal policies like *mano dura* had become a primary driver of public security policy. Despite the obstacles, all the countries of the northern triangle maintained a fragile hold on their local programs, and their ups and downs didn't totally disrupt the learning process. Despite the tendency toward punitive populism at the national level, some of the very successful experiences at the local level were consolidated throughout periods of more than 10 years. Examples include Santa Tecla in El Salvador (Argueta 2011) and Villa Nueva and Mixco in Guatemala (USAID 2015). In each case local leadership and the compliance of the relevant actors were the crucial success factors.

Based on the experiences at the local level, there was a demand for expansion, for scaling up, and for developing a more integrated approach on the national level. As a result, the implementation process now generally includes the scaling up of COP within police forces and the training of police officers and agents at all levels in COP.

Scaling Up the Community Policing Approach

Each of the four Central American countries scaled up COP in its own way. In El Salvador, COP and the establishment of local violence prevention committees have become key elements of the National Policy of Justice, Public Security and Social Cohesion. According to the strategic plan of the Salvadoran police, COP is the most important initiative to be scaled up. Donor support is increasingly used for scaling up programs at different levels. In Guatemala, the process of scaling up started at the national level with the National

Agreement for Improvement of Public Security and Justice in 2009, followed by the establishment of the National Commission of Police Reform in 2010. This commission started as a consultative body at the level of the presidency, and is charged with recommending and monitoring government initiatives to clean up and modernise the police force, though little progress has been made since its inception (ISSAT 2015).

Honduras instituted a new approach to police reform in 2012. The National Congress created a promising Public Security Reform Commission to lead the security sector reform process. Nevertheless, the same Congress that created the Commission dissolved it in January 2014, after the government failed to consider the legal reforms the Commission had proposed and drafted. The Commission's failure led to widespread criticism of its work and suggests that security and justice reform in Honduras is politically divisive and ultimately will be extraordinarily difficult (Korthuis 2015).

Nicaragua's COP model was developed through a process of continuous reform through the identification of good police practices. What began as a routine focus on community relations in 2002 has developed into the current model of active COP (PNN 2011), characterized by broad and close relations between the community and the police. This model guides the structure, organization, deployment, and philosophy of the police force. The COP perspective has been institutionalized at the national level in all norms and regulations, in the selection of young police officers, and in the training and internal control mechanisms.

Training of Police Officers and Agents

Training is a critical factor in changing the paradigm from control, authority, and distance of the police from the community to a new way of working closely with citizens on prevention. Police and community representatives must be trained in new procedures, policies, and practices. Training alone, however, will not change behavior unless the values and skills imparted through training are reinforced by practice. In some areas, COP training in Central America has moved away from students' receiving all of their training at a police academy from police instructors or from providing specialized training only to COP officers. The training in COP focuses more on developing each officer's learning capacity, leadership ability, and problem-solving skills,

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rather than on traditional police training methods that emphasize mechanical skills and routine reporting.

To move from a model of policing based mainly on repression to a model based on prevention requires a new relationship between the police and the community characterized by transparency, dialogue, and cooperation.

The challenges of the training have been:

- Integration of local experiences in the training design
- Discrepancies between the theory taught to the police and the practice on the street
- Education on human rights
- Attention on women, children, and youth
- Building communication skills
- Financing as well as monitoring to ensure that the training meets the objectives of prevention and security
- The willingness of officers at the senior levels to receive training in prevention (GIZ 2014b)

To date, Nicaragua and El Salvador are the most advanced in integrating COP into their training programs. Based on the whole-school model (*Escuela Total*), training in COP in Nicaragua consists of three levels: (1) training for aspiring professionals; (2) training for active police officers and support staff to provide skills that help them perform better in their specialties; and (3) continuous on-the-job training. Active and interactive methods—where students "learn by doing"—combined with simulation exercises and case studies have yielded positive results both in the degree of student satisfaction and in the application of new knowledge in the field.

The training in COP in El Salvador comprises a 10-day training session for all police officers. The training program, developed by National Academy of Public Security, emphasizes the changes in approach required by the perspective of prevention. Police officers and agents should be able to understand the causes of violence, respond appropriately to its different forms, and react adequately to different types of public disorder and criminal activity. Community police officers are usually confronted with very diverse and often contradictory attitudes, perceptions, and expectations toward citizen security and must often engage in conflict mediation (Arévalo Herrera 2011). The training process has been organized by the National Academy of Public Security, which integrated the model into its curriculum in 2012. A formal training-for-trainers program is located in police stations to provide practical training on an operational basis.

Honduras and Guatemala have seen some positive developments in training for all police officers and agents. In Honduras, about 12 percent of police officers have been trained in COP (APJ 2014). When the Community Policing Manual was implemented in 2011, the training lasted 40 hours. It has since been increased to 100 hours and includes a visit to COP stations, where station chiefs share their experiences and lessons for the implementation of the model. Before 2012, training on community relationships had not been part of the standard police training program in Guatemala. Recently, significant changes have been implemented, including the establishment in 2014 of a degree in police science with a major in COP (GIZ 2014b).

Similarities and Differences in the Implementation Process of Community Policing

Table 2 compares the implementation of COP in the four countries covered by this case study. Significant findings from the comparison include the following:

- All countries have developed a specific model of COP based on the study of international experience and supported by bilateral donors that have applied their experience to Central America
- COP was initially implemented in urban areas that had high levels of insecurity and violence
- During the implementation process in El Salvador and Guatemala, COP initiatives were increasingly financed through public funds, reducing donor dependency. Honduras still shows a high dependency on donor funding. In Nicaragua, public budgets finance the scaling up of COP.
- Mechanisms of internal control have been improved, at least at the organizational level. However, their effectiveness varies considerably. Although the effectiveness of internal control mechanisms has improved in Guatemala and El Salvador, civil society organizations and external observers express their doubts about the internal control mechanisms in Honduras.
- Recently, there has been considerable progress in conducting training in COP, particularly in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Training for police officers at all levels is becoming an integral element of the implementation process.
- In El Salvador and Nicaragua, steady progress has been made in integrating COP into strategic plans and police doctrine.

Table 2 Similarities and Differences in the Implementation of Community Policing in Central America

	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua
Model	Created own model from studying various international good practices	Chilean model of COP (Plan Cuadrante)	Combination of Japanese model and Chilean model of COP (Plan Cuadrante)	Created own model from studying various international good practices
Accountability of police included in model and practice	✓	✓	✓	✓
Current COP implementation	26 municipalities (=12% of all municipalities)	Pilot projects	10 community police stations	National
Intended up scaling of COP	National	Definition in process	In urban areas	Already national; focus on improvement of police services (access, quality, accountability)
Donor dependence at onset of COP	High	High	High	Medium
Donor dependence at present	Medium	Medium	High	Low
COP training	75% of police staff from all areas and ranks	Only police staff from Department of Prevention	12% of police staff from all areas and ranks	100% of police staff
Documentation of COP methodology	✓	—	✓	✓
COP included in police doctrine	✓	—	—	✓
COP included in policies and strategies	✓	In process	—	✓
Coordination - predominant mechanism	• Violence-prevention committees at local level • Development committees at local level	Development committees at local level	• Local water committees • Local development committees	• Violence prevention committees at local level
- National government	✓ (few)	✓ (few)	✓ (few)	✓
- Local government	✓	✓	✓ (starting)	✓
- Civil society organizations	✓	✓	✓	✓
- Private sector	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitoring & Evaluation		• Monitoring of activities • Monitoring of complaints' statistics • Monitoring of crime statistics		

Results of Community Policing at the Local Level

This section will address the following questions:

- What lessons can be drawn from the different approaches to COP at the local level?
- How has the perception of citizens with regard to citizen security changed after introducing or expanding COP?

Table 3 presents evidence of the general results of COP. According to the crime statistics at the local level, dangerous crimes decreased in the six communities out of the nine reviewed from which statistical information was available. This reduction is consistent with the results of the recently published evaluation of USAID COP programs in Central America (USAID 2014, 32) and with some international experiences (Telep and Weisburd 2011, 23).

Second, the results also show a positive change of attitude among police toward young people. This is particularly evident in urban areas in El Salvador, with police stations of the *koban* type, and in Honduras and in Nicaragua, as the result of specific attention to youth violence. In Nicaragua, youth violence moved from fourth to fifth in the list of the most important problems of citizen security (see GIZ 2014b, 173).

Third, observations suggest an increased trust in police as a result of implementing COP for all of the reviewed countries. This reported increase is consistent with the results of an evaluation of USAID community programs, which reported "that satisfaction with and trust in police performance has increased somewhat" (USAID 2014, 51).

The changes in rates of selected crimes in the reviewed districts and municipalities are presented in figure 5. A decline in homicide rates can be observed in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In Honduras, reports of incidents of domestic violence—a highly underreported crime (Manjoo 2015)—increased in the first few years.

Notwithstanding the inverse relationship between COP and homicide rates, crime reduction was not the only reason for the introduction of COP in Central America. COP expanded the concept of policing beyond crime fighting, to include improving citizen security, fostering confidence in the police, reducing fear, and responding to specific security demands of citizens at the local level.

Figure 6 reflects changes in the views of stakeholders toward the local community police in Honduras. Some interesting trends can be derived from the figure: (1) the level of satisfaction related to the activities, experience, and knowledge of community police officers is relatively high; (2) police infrastructure was rated good; and (3) the commitment of citizens to prevention activities is evaluated as satisfactory.

Lessons Learned

The following lessons can be drawn from the case study:

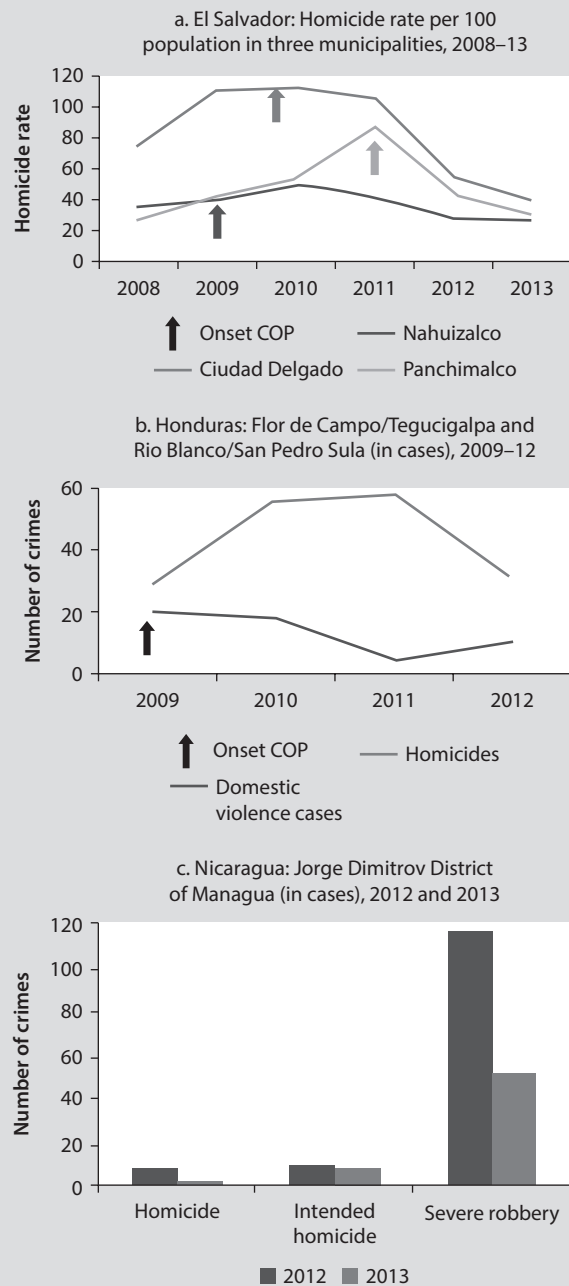## Implementation of COP Requires Strong, Coordinated Leadership

- COP involves the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders at the local level including residents, local government officials, schools, church groups, and the private sector, and it relies on gaining their trust. Community leaders participate in problem solving by identifying and developing plans to address their most pressing concerns regarding public security. At the beginning of this process, the responses to the issue of youth violence range from repressive measures to prevention-oriented approaches. The strategy chosen depends mainly on contextual conditions and on who guides the process.
- In Central America, countries chose different facilitators to coordinate with stakeholders in the

Table 3 Results of Community Policing in Central America

Observed result	Applied method or evidence	Comment
Very dangerous crimes decreased	Homicide and other crime statistics	In the six communities out of nine reviewed for which statistics were available
Complaints of underreported crimes increased	Domestic violence statistics	Only Honduras, no data analyzed for other municipalities or communities
Positive change of attitude of police toward young people increased	Interviews with police and other stakeholders	Common finding
Trust in the police increased	Interviews with stakeholders, qualitative and quantitative analysis	Common finding; quantitative analysis only in Honduras

Source: Marion Bihler, based on GIZ 2014b.

Figure 5 Changes in Selected Crimes in the Reviewed Areas of Three Countries after the Introduction or Scaling Up of Community Policing

a. El Salvador: Homicide rate per 100 population in three municipalities, 2008–13

b. Honduras: Flor de Campo/Tegucigalpa and Rio Blanco/San Pedro Sula (in cases), 2009–12

c. Nicaragua: Jorge Dimitrov District of Managua (in cases), 2012 and 2013

Source: GIZ 2014b.
Note: COP = community policing.

- The experiences in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras show that without guidance from local governments for coordinating partnerships, COP often focuses primarily on crime control (problem-oriented policing). However, unless the traditional capacity of police forces to control crime is improved, COP will be considered to be "soft policing" with relatively weak impact on citizen security.

Barriers to the Transition from Fragmented Pilot Programs to Integrated Implementation of COP

- The observed differences in achievement among countries are mainly caused by institutional constraints and by weak coordination both within police forces and among police forces, local government, and civil society.
- Attempts to bypass local government by establishing pilot projects directly with implementing institutions or organizations at the local level were problematic. When the support ended, the pilot projects also ended. In addition, donors offered a variety of uncoordinated approaches. These problems hindered the systematic integration of COP into public policy.
- The police, the local government, and the community must have clear and specific roles in COP. For historical reasons (internal armed conflict, impact of organized crime, political violence) neighborhood patrols have been problematic in Central America, having led to mob violence even in recent years. In the USAID´s report on COP warns, "When such groups adopt vigilante-style approaches, however, their actions no longer qualify as community-based prevention; they have become private security or paramilitary groups. Given the risks, support for neighborhood watch forms of community-based prevention warrants strong oversight, ideally by the police" (USAID 2011, 5).
- Problems that are highly relevant to the community, such as security in the schools and the security of women, children, and youth must be made a priority.
- More analysis is needed into what motivates community members to participate in COP, whether they are representing the community as a whole or only a specific interest group. Underrepresented groups may feel excluded and avoid participating.
- The links among the national, departmental, and local levels of evaluation and monitoring systems should be strengthened. Without an integrated information system, the efficiency and effectiveness of the broad

implementation of COP. In Nicaragua, the police were accepted as the key facilitator by the other stakeholders. In Santa Tecla, the mayor and the local government assumed the role of implementing and adapting COP to the local context.

Figure 6 Honduras: Satisfaction of Interviewed Stakeholders with Local Community Police in Four Districts
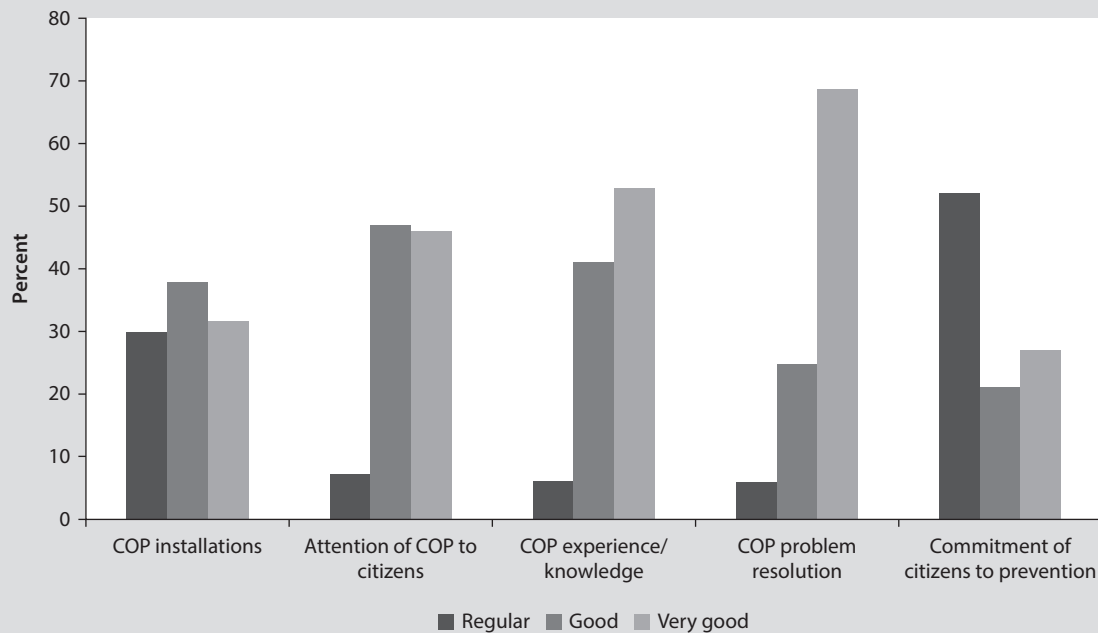
Source: GIZ 2014b.
Note: COP = community policing.

range of interventions cannot be assessed. Assessment is relevant for the sustainability of COP. Which starts with a broad spectrum of activities that can be scaled up later based on community needs and resources.

Changes Required in the Police for Implementing Community Policing

- COP requires changes in the police presence at the local level, in police communication strategy, and in the internal controls and the professional ethics of the police.
- The orientation toward prevention also requires dedicated training in areas such as youth and gender and conflict mediation.
- Officers are a key element of COP. Their attitudes, skills, and behavior have a significant influence on the acceptance and legitimacy of COP.
- In addition to traditional police skills, police staff must acquire skills in communication, managing social processes, attending to victims of violence, conflict mediation, and cooperation with other institutions. Training processes should include experiences from the field. In addition, middle and senior managers should be involved in the training process.
- A transparent and fair human resources policy is a necessary condition for successfully implementing

COP, including selection, training, and supervision of personnel, and adequate working conditions.
- Police personnel should reflect the structure and demands of all social groups within society, particularly in countries, such as Guatemala, with a great diversity of ethnic groups. It is also important to increase the number of women in the police force at all levels. Policewomen change the culture and communication style within the police force and are often more responsive toward women, children, and young people.
- Because COP is a decentralized approach to policing, self-assessment, peer coaching, and supervision are critical to improving and maintaining the quality of services delivered.

How the Case Study Informs the Science of Delivery

This section addresses the five core approaches for delivering solutions for citizens (Gonzalez de Asis and Woolcock 2014).
- **Focus on citizen outcome: Is COP more responsive to citizens' demands for security?**

The findings of the case study confirm that, in general terms, the change from a repressive approach (*mano dura*) to prevention-based approaches has improved citizen security, measured by both actual crime and the perception of security. Transparent and open lines of communication among the police, public institutions, and the local government about citizens' demands is particularly important in the area of citizen security.

Public disorder is a further aspect to be considered. Disorder is not always directly linked to serious crime. Disorder caused by alcohol and drug abuse might represent a phenomenon of the transition process from youth to adulthood.

- **Inclusive and intersectoral approach: What are the general experiences of the multisectoral approach of COP?**
  The success of COP on security at the local level depends on specific local conditions and on the commitment of formal and informal organizations within the community. The experiences of El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua show that it is possible to improve citizen security even where crime rates are high.

Evidence-Based Results: What Improvements in Citizen Security Have Been Achieved?

A decreasing trend in very serious crimes was observed in all the communities in this case study that were able to provide police statistics. On the international level, however, evidence showing whether COP reduces various crimes is still not coherent. The police must extend and improve their monitoring systems. There is overwhelming evidence that COP has a positive impact on citizens' perceptions of the police at the local level. Although the police formerly tended to stigmatize young people, COP has the potential for a positive change in attitude toward young people.

- **Importance of leadership**
  Although the positive impact of COP is recognized, it remains a political and communication challenge to avoid popular attitudes in the search for a quick solution to public insecurity. As public security is always a politically hot and sensitive topic, it is advisable to strengthen the capacity of external observers, such as civil society organizations, universities, and ombudsmen, and to institute conflict resolution and mediation initiatives at the local level

to observe and inform in an accurate and reliable way the impact of COP programs and police performance.

The experience in Central America also shows that opposition within the police agāinst COP should not be underestimated. COP is often considered to be "soft" policing. In response, several countries first adopted COP through pilot projects and protected these pilots against this unfounded but nevertheless popular accusation that is sometimes supported even by the mass media.

- **Factors that have promoted or hampered the implementation process**
  Positive factors for implementing COP approaches include the following:
  – Involving communities
  – Support of local governments
  – Accountability to the communities
  – Implemented methodological tools
  – Participatory planning and accountability
  – Interaction with civil society organizations
  – Support from international donors
  – Investment in training processes
  – Including high-ranking police in the training process

  Negative factors for implementing COP approaches include the following:
  – Lack of interagency coordination
  – Rotation of police personnel
  – Media pressure to solve violence issues
  – No shared vision on how to tackle the problem
  – Resistance to change within the police (some cases)
  – Missing buy-in by governments
  – Lack of systematic monitoring system
  – Limited resources
  – Specialized training only for officers involved in COP pilot programs

- **Adaptive implementation: Which adaptations and refinements of the COP approach were necessary during the implementation process? And which adaptation processes have been blocked and why?**
  Successful implementation of community policing requires that the police be seen to be the guarantors of civil order and justice. Mechanisms must be established to to reduce corruption, avoid abuse of power, and ensure that the processes of recruitment, assessment, promotion and dismissal of police staff are transparent. Particularly the dismissal of police officers due to misconduct is often interrupted (for Guatemala see Phillips 2014; PDH 2014; for El Salvador, see ISSAT 2015; for Honduras, see Haugaard 2015). The implementation of COP was sometimes hampered

by citizens' mistrust of the police caused by prior police behavior or corruption. Joint planning with the community and periodic accountability have been strategic elements in contributing to improved police performance.

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