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**Comprehensive strategies for crime prevention  
towards social and economic development**

## **Workshop 1. Evidence-based crime prevention: statistics, indicators and evaluation in support of successful practices\*\***

**Background paper prepared by the Secretariat**

### *Summary*

The paper discusses how the generation of knowledge that can drive effective policies requires evidence in the form of data, analysis, monitoring and evaluation.

Different types of statistics form the basis of quantitative knowledge. Data on detected and reported crime and on the criminal justice response are mainly based on administrative records maintained by criminal justice institutions. Such records can cover only those crimes that are reported to or come to the attention of the authorities. Data generated through crime victimization surveys, on the other hand, provide a more comprehensive overview of crime, including the part that is not reported (the “dark figure” of crime). Other tools exist to quantify crimes that are not reported to the authorities, such as the multiple systems estimation methodology, which is used to measure the total number of victims of trafficking in persons. Geospatial information systems and citizen-driven data collection systems, such as safety audits carried out at the local level, complement national statistical systems by providing key information for crime prevention. While many efforts have improved the quality and availability of statistics on crime and criminal justice, there remain serious gaps to be overcome through technical assistance and the development of international standards.

A systematic and coherent indicator framework allows a holistic approach to be taken to the measurement of crime. Accordingly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) promotes a comprehensive measurement framework that emphasizes data quality and promotes data comparability through standardized data production methodologies.

Analytical research that uses qualitative and quantitative evidence on crime and its related factors is also key to the development of knowledge-driven policymaking. Such research requires a variety of sources on both conventional and organized crime in order to build an evidence base at the international, national and local levels. This

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idea is well represented in the targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals. Special analytical tools can be used to address criminal situations, the threats they pose and prevention needs at the international, regional, national and local levels. International analysis can provide insight into trends and patterns with a view to supporting global and regional policy decisions, while national and local analysis can reveal the impact of crime on citizens and identify the type of targeted prevention measures that are needed.

Adequately implemented evaluations enable an understanding to be built of the success factors in policymaking. Evaluations provide insight not only with regard to what works, but also why it works and how a policy can be successfully implemented in various contexts. The main success factor for a “good evaluation” is the use made by policymakers of the evidence produced. The United Nations Evaluation Group “Norms and standards for evaluation” address this crucial point through two types of standards: on the supply side, those related to evaluation products, recommendations and dissemination; and on the user side, standards to ensure that evaluation results are integrated and that there is a systematic response and follow-up.

The narrative presented in the paper demonstrates that the availability, quality and comparability of both administrative and sample survey data on crime and criminal justice need to be strengthened. The development of a high-quality and comprehensive national system of criminal justice statistics requires a strong national statistical framework that not only ensures the production but also the intersectoral integration and analysis of data on crime and criminal justice produced by different institutions. Such systems can be strengthened through the use of common statistical frameworks (such as the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes) and of recognized methodologies and tools (such as the UNODC and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Manual on Corruption Surveys: Methodological Guidelines on the Measurement of Bribery and Other Forms of Corruption through Sample Surveys*). It is important that the collection, analysis and dissemination of data also be suitable for monitoring progress in the attainment of relevant Sustainable Development Goals as a whole and – through appropriate disaggregation of data – in subgroups of the population, such as women and girls, in order to “leave no one behind”.

The paper also shows the importance of analytical tools that can support policymakers in using evidence to develop efficient policies at the international and local levels. An example of such a tool is regional organized crime threat assessments, which bring together quantitative and qualitative information on several organized crime markets to identify the threat posed by organized crime in a certain region. Good practices and established standards can support the building of national and local evidence bases for crime prevention and can also enable implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to be monitored. In addition, innovative analytical tools are needed to understand those aspects of crime that are difficult to capture, such as the hidden part of crime or illicit financial flows.

The paper also highlights the need to mainstream evaluation into the policy design process, thus ensuring that crime prevention initiatives have the necessary resources for evaluations to be carried out. Moreover, it highlights the importance of developing strong national evaluation systems that ensure the availability of evaluative evidence for policymaking and for informing the review process of the Sustainable Development Goals while fostering a culture of evaluation by implementing high-quality evaluation processes at all levels.

## I. Introduction

1. Crime prevention remains extremely complex in nature. There are many nuanced factors to crime and violence that are interlinked and exist in a constant state of change. The concept of prevention is grounded in the notion that crime and victimization are driven by many causal or underlying factors. These are the result of a wide range of factors and circumstances that influence the lives of individuals and families as they grow up, and of local environments, and the situations and opportunities that facilitate victimization and offending.<sup>1</sup>

2. As indicated in the UNODC *Handbook on the Crime Prevention Guidelines: Making Them Work*, “determining what factors are associated with different types of crime can lead to the development of a set of strategies and programmes to change those factors, and prevent or reduce the incidence of those crimes”. These underlying or causal factors are often termed risk factors and include dynamics that affect the macro social and economic conditions; factors that affect individual countries and local environments and communities; those relating to the family and close relationships; and those that affect individuals.<sup>2</sup>

3. Two sets of crime prevention guidelines have been adopted by the Economic and Social Council, in 1995<sup>3</sup> and 2002,<sup>4</sup> respectively. In its resolution 56/261, adopted in 2002, the General Assembly invited States, inter alia, to support the promotion of close cooperation between sectors such as justice, health, education and housing to support effective crime prevention and work with civil society. Moreover, crime prevention is a crosscutting dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, as many of the Goals involve efforts to foster an environment that promotes equal opportunities for all individuals while eliminating risk factors for crime and violence.

4. Crime prevention relies heavily on policymakers, who need to be informed and use reliable evidence when addressing the issue. This use of reliable evidence must be done at all levels – international, national, local and municipal – to ensure that policies are integrated holistically while being adapted to the specific needs and issues of different communities.

5. Different types of evidence are required to generate knowledge-driven policies. For example, statistical information, such as trends in criminal phenomena, indicates the magnitude of the phenomena, while knowledge of the evolution of key risk and resilience factors, in longitudinal analysis, provides the depth of understanding required to design comprehensive policies. Moreover, evidence-based policymaking depends on a good knowledge of what constitutes successful practices and on a deep understanding of the success factors that can be obtained from adequately implemented evaluations. Evaluations provide insight into not only what works, but also why it works, and how the implementation of a policy should be considered in various contexts.

6. Governance constitutes a transversal dimension of evidence-based decision- and policymaking. Access to information, collaboration on knowledge-building processes and involvement in planning and policymaking by all relevant stakeholders, including citizens and communities, constitute fundamental conditions for evidence-based crime prevention. Partnerships and shared responsibility are at the core of the United Nations approach to both crime prevention and sustainable development through, respectively, the Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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<sup>1</sup> *Handbook on the Crime Prevention Guidelines: Making Them Work*, Criminal Justice Handbook Series (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.IV.9), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Guidelines for cooperation and technical assistance in the field of urban crime prevention (Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/9, annex).

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/13, annex).

## **II. Evidence-based crime prevention**

### **A. Statistics as a primary tool for understanding crime and informing crime prevention policies**

7. Statistics play a primary role in evidence-based crime prevention: they build the base for a shared understanding of criminal phenomena and their risk and resilience factors that can be addressed through evidence-based programmes. Knowledge of the basic facts about crime – such as the prevalence of various types of crime and their trends, their geographical distribution and the population groups that are most at risk – is of paramount importance for establishing the priority areas for crime prevention interventions.

8. Different types of statistics can inform policymaking. Data produced by law enforcement and criminal justice institutions are based on administrative records at different stages of the criminal justice process. While they can provide an overall picture of some patterns and trends, they do not capture the entire crime phenomenon as they cover only crime that is detected or reported. They are heavily influenced by government priorities and capacities for responding to the problem of crime.

9. Crime statistics that are generated through sample surveys (targeting households, businesses or specific actors in the criminal justice system) are better at capturing the entire picture of crime as they can measure the “dark figure” of crime, which does not come to the attention of the authorities. Such surveys provide information on the context in which crimes are committed and the characteristics of victims and offenders, but they cannot describe “victimless” crime such as wildlife crime.

10. Statistical information can also identify protective and risk factors. For example, statistics on homicides by type of killing mechanism can shed light on the role of firearms in homicides, while data on the relationship between victims and offenders can provide information on domestic violence.

11. Other types and sources of statistics play an important role in efforts to understand crime. These include data from the health sector and contextual data on relevant aspects such as urbanization, inequality and the situation with regard to rule of law. The range and depth of understanding that arise from these sources better inform decision makers about the risk and resilience factors affecting crime. These statistics also allow for greater contextual and environmental considerations.

12. Two main challenges can impede the proper integrated use of different sectoral statistics to understand crime: technical difficulties in linking databases, and governance structures limiting accessibility. Greater harmonization of data collection methods through strong national statistical frameworks, and the establishment of a culture of information-sharing, collaborative processes and transparency increase the opportunity to integrate data and better describe crime, its root causes and risk and resilience factors.

### **B. Indicators for monitoring crime**

13. Typically, a distinction is made between indicators that can measure policy inputs, processes and outcomes. The monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals is a good example of a system of indicators – outcome indicators for the most part – that makes it possible to track progress at the national level and compare situations around the world. Indicators also provide a template for developing more detailed, adapted perspectives of specific situations for countries or local authorities.

**2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related targets/indicators relevant to crime and criminal justice statistics**

<i>Policy area</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Violence reduction	16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age  16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months  16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live
	11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities	11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months
	5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age  5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
Organized crime and trafficking	16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation
	16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime	16.4.1 Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars)  16.4.2 Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments
	15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products	15.7.1 Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked
Access to justice, corruption and rule of law	16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	16.3.1 Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms  16.3.2 Unsensenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population

<i>Policy area</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
	16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	16.5.1 Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months  16.5.2 Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months

14. A number of criteria can be used to select indicators and establish an indicator framework. A good indicator should be specific, relevant, trackable, easy to interpret and sensitive to change, and thus able to reflect change as it happens. When looking at an indicator framework, systemic coherence is an important criterion of quality.

### C. A holistic approach to data quality

15. According to the United Nations Statistics Quality Assurance Framework, data providers should aim to meet a specific set of criteria in order to produce high-quality data.<sup>5</sup> Three other dimensions for data quality could be added to those criteria:

(a) *Representability*: to illustrate all perspectives of a particular phenomenon. In the context of crime, victimization surveys, for example, ensure that victim perspectives and experiences are fairly represented and included in crime statistics systems;

(b) *Disaggregation*: to provide a better understanding of the criminal phenomena and more targeted crime prevention policies. A number of attributes characterize crime statistics: (a) crime attributes such as motivation and circumstance; (b) victim attributes such as gender, age, level of education, socioeconomic background, occupation, main place of residence and relation to the author of the crime; (c) perpetrator attributes such as gender, age, level of education, socioeconomic background, occupation, main residence and relation to the victim of the crime; (d) time; and (e) geographical attributes;

(c) *Spatialization*: the use of localized data and geographical information systems is very valuable not only for crime statistics, but also to better inform the spatial distribution of risk and resilience factors and therefore improve the development of community-based, localized prevention policies and initiatives.

### D. Challenges and opportunities for data collection at the international, national and local levels

16. Data collection is an integral part of fostering a data-oriented culture and an essential condition for proper evidence-based policymaking. This section examines the main challenges stakeholders at every level face in the process of collecting high-quality, useable data, and identifies existing tools to address those challenges.

17. At the international level, the two main challenges to fostering a data-oriented culture are availability and comparability. As countries have different levels of statistical capacity, information gaps hinder the reliability of knowledge in less developed regions. Moreover, different concepts, methods and quality of data undermine the comparability of evidence produced by different countries. The

<sup>5</sup> Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nation System, “UN Statistics Quality Assurance Framework: including a generic statistical quality assurance framework for a UN agency” (September 2016).

International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes helps to overcome some of those challenges by harmonizing the way in which crime data can be classified. Although the framework makes it possible to standardize the collection, analysis and dissemination of data, there remains a clear lack of methodological standards guiding data collection, handling, analysis and meaning for the purposes of data comparability.

18. At the national level, many crime and criminal justice statistics systems are still weak owing to a combination of factors, including a lack of resources, coordination and technical skills. Capacity-building activities are essential for strengthening these systems. The demand for technical assistance and training activities on crime and criminal justice statistics has grown markedly in the last few years, as related to the adoption and implementation of new standards such as the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes and the Latin American and the Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey Initiative, and the needs arising from the national monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goal targets (E/CN.3/2019/19, para. 17).

19. Local authorities, especially municipalities, are valuable data collectors and can significantly contribute to the understanding of local contexts and issues. For example, local and municipal authorities collect data through their municipal police force and other services such as housing, urban planning and community services (access to water and sanitation, recreation and leisure, programmes for at-risk groups, community health services, etc.). However, local authorities face many capacity-related and institutional, technical and methodological challenges in producing high-quality data. Local safety audits constitute one of the successful tools that local governments and municipalities can use to develop a deep and refined understanding of local contexts and are promoted by UNODC. The audits combine disaggregated administrative data on crime and risk and resilience factors and neighbourhood-level environmental data (on housing, infrastructure, transportation, urban planning, services, etc.), with qualitative data gathered during focus groups with local stakeholders and citizens as well as through other types of qualitative methods (exploratory walks, participatory observation, etc.). The involvement of all relevant stakeholders, as well as the community, is key in the creation of local safety audits. The audits are very useful tools for local crime prevention policymaking, as they can easily be integrated into the policy cycle as part of both the design and planning of crime prevention strategies (through participative problem-solving activities), and monitoring and evaluation processes (through a thorough review of existing crime prevention policies, programmes and actions).<sup>6</sup> As part of its work on community- and evidence-based crime prevention, UNODC has supported local governments in conducting local safety audits, which have provided a deeper understanding of crime and victimization trends and served as a basis for the revision of local crime prevention and safety policies.<sup>7, 8</sup>

20. Citizens also produce a vast amount of personal data, notably, in the form of large sets of unstructured data known as “big data”. New technologies and the globalization of the Internet of things and connected objects enable individuals to participate in data collection processes and inform policymaking in a meaningful way. Citizen-driven data collection is aimed at harnessing the possibilities offered by big data and the Internet of things to provide a unique and direct way for individuals to provide their perspective. In the area of public safety and crime prevention, the applicability of this approach is highly valuable. A concrete example is the development and large-scale dissemination and use of the SafetiPin mobile application, which crowdsources data and information on insecurity in cities. Born of

<sup>6</sup> Sohail Husain, *Guidance on Local Safety Audits: A Compendium of International Practice* (Paris, European Forum for Urban Safety, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> <https://auditoriadeseguridad-cdeunodc.org>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://observaseguridacali.unodc.org.co>.

the need to improve the safety of public spaces for Indian women, SafetiPin has proven to be a successful example of a citizen-driven, knowledge-building tool.<sup>9</sup>

## E. International data-collection and analysis tools

21. There are various international data-collection and analysis tools that can provide information to the international community and national authorities on global and regional trends, patterns and threats in order to guide the development of crime prevention policies.

22. The United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems is reliant on a network of national focal points, which take the form of institutions and officials appointed by countries and have the technical capacity to produce data on crime and criminal justice. As of 2016, some 130 focal points had been appointed.

23. Since 2011, the *Global Study on Homicide* has constituted an important tool for the international comparison of violence levels. The picture it paints is of a phenomenon marked by large disparities in distribution, demographics, typologies and mechanisms. It is based, among other sources, on the UNODC homicide statistics data set (total number of homicide victims, disaggregation of homicide victims by sex and age, by killing mechanism (firearm, sharp object or other) and by perpetrator/context of the crime (family/intimate partner, organized crime, gang, robbery or other).

24. Mandated by the General Assembly through the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the biennial *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the global, regional and national levels, primarily on the basis of detected trafficking cases. As UNODC has been systematically collecting data on trafficking in persons for more than a decade, trend information is presented with respect to a broad range of indicators, which can inform policymakers on changes happening over time.

25. Since 2016, the *World Wildlife Crime Report: Trafficking in Protected Species* has taken stock of the situation regarding wildlife crime, with a focus on trafficking in specific protected species of wild fauna and flora, and has provided a broad assessment of the nature and extent of the problem at the global level.

26. In the context of the *UNODC Study on Firearms 2015*, a global data-collection system on trafficking in firearms was developed on the basis of official information on seizures collected and provided by Member States. By developing the study, not only did UNODC create structures for systematic data analysis and collection, but it also strengthened long-term national data collection capacities in States where that was a challenge.

27. In the past decade, UNODC has produced a wide range of reports on transnational organized crime, including a series of regional threat assessments and one global report. In recognition of the fact that criminal markets are often interconnected, transnational organized crime threat assessments describe the mechanics of a range of criminal activities, including illicit drug markets, trafficking in persons, the illegal wildlife trade, the dumping of toxic and electronic waste, counterfeit products, smuggling of migrants, falsified medical products and trafficking in oil, minerals and other natural resources. After placing these contraband flows in the context of regional development, the transnational organized crime threat assessments discuss the impact of organized crime on social, economic and political stability. The assessments rely on data drawn from official UNODC sources, but also

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<sup>9</sup> Kalpana Viswanath and Ashish Basu, "SafetiPin: an innovative mobile app to collect data on women's safety in Indian cities", *Gender and Development*, vol. 23, No. 1 (March 2015), pp. 45–60.



include statistics and qualitative information derived from trade data, academic research, interviews, court cases and other sources.

## **F. International standards and global efforts to improve crime statistics**

28. The Statistical Commission and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice have discussed on multiple occasions ways to improve the quality and availability of crime statistics at both the national and international levels. In 2013, both Commissions adopted a road map on crime statistics, which has achieved notable results in terms of the production of new international standards, the provision of concrete assistance in the production of new or improved nationally owned data collection systems and the improved coverage and relevance of international data sets and analytical reports. In particular, achievements have included: (a) the development and implementation of the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes, which has been gradually implemented by countries as a global tool for standardizing crime statistics across jurisdictions and criminal justice institutions; (b) the development and implementation of new methodologies for measuring unconventional crimes, for example, the multiple systems estimation methodology for calculating the total number of victims of trafficking in persons (including those who do not come to the attention of the authorities); (c) the revision of the global data collection system (United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems) and the expansion of the global homicide data set with more data on the typology of homicide and information on the quality of national data, and with the 2019 edition of the *Global Study on Homicide*; and (d) innovative regional and global partnerships to support national capacity for improving crime statistics, particularly through the “centres of excellence” model established by UNODC in partnership with national statistical offices in Mexico and, more recently, the Republic of Korea.

29. In 2019, the Statistical Commission adopted an updated road map that builds on the achievements of the 2013 road map and lays out a series of actions to further address gaps in crime statistics related to methodological tools, national capacity for producing and disseminating crime statistics, and international data collection and analysis. The main objectives for the next five years are: the development of a series of new methodological tools; the use of big data to provide information on the macrodynamics of crime; the provision of support to countries through regional and global programmes and targeted national assistance in implementing international standards and quality certification of national crime statistics processes; and the production of global data sets and global analytical reports to inform the international community of the dynamics of and threats related to crime.

30. The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes,<sup>10</sup> a major outcome of the 2013 road map, provides a framework for all nations to use internationally agreed upon concepts, definitions and principles in order to enhance the consistency and international comparability of crime statistics. The benefits of adopting the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes are twofold: firstly, it increases the comparability of crime statistics between nations, and secondly, it supports capacity-building by fostering good data-collection practices that are congruent with international standards. Implementation manuals and technical assistance are planned to accompany the Classification in order to ensure that every nation is able to implement it.

31. The *Manual for the Development of a System of Criminal Justice Statistics*, produced by the United Nations, presents a general framework for the development of national systems of criminal justice statistics. It provides basic statistical instruments for data collection such as questionnaires, information output, reports,

<sup>10</sup> UNODC, *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes*, version 1.0 (March 2015).

classifications, definitions and victimological issues, with a view of making national approaches more comparable.

32. The *Manual on Victimization Surveys*, produced by UNODC and the Economic Commission for Europe, establishes a systematic approach, offering countries a harmonized methodology for including citizen-centred data on crime, as well as for addressing the “dark figure” of crime. The publication provides a comprehensive source of information for developing national victimization surveys. Key issues are considered, such as questionnaire design, interview methods and analysis and dissemination of data.

33. The recent UNODC and UNDP *Manual on Corruption Surveys: Methodological Guidelines on the Measurement of Bribery and Other Forms of Corruption through Sample Surveys* helps to measure bribery and other forms of corruption through sample surveys.

34. The *Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: Statistical Surveys*, published by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, provide guidance on collecting, processing, disseminating and analysing data on violence against women. The Guidelines introduce the concepts, definitions and data requirements for measuring violence against women and offer guidance on planning, organizing and implementing a survey on violence against women (a stand-alone or dedicated survey).

35. Small data and qualitative approaches may also be used as tools for gathering data intended for evidence-based policymaking. Small data are accessible and easy to manage and can be a useful means of building a detailed picture of the current state of affairs in a given place. This can be done through local safety audits and participative methodologies.

36. Geographical information systems are another tool that has come to be widely used to support policing and crime prevention. Such systems can be used for operational, tactical and strategic purposes. This includes mapping patterns of different types of offences, identifying the areas where offences occur most frequently (hotspots), and identifying some of the causal factors.<sup>11</sup> Geographical information system-based statistics are widely used by municipalities to develop a refined spatial understanding of crime within their territory. They are a valuable addition to traditional statistical approaches in the local implementation of crime prevention policies.

## G. Other tools

37. Numerous countries, regions and cities have developed observatories to improve information on and understanding of crime and the social and economic problems associated with it. Crime observatories are primarily aimed at informing policy decisions on the basis of information that goes beyond crime statistics. They build on partnerships between public, quasi-public and/or private actors (such as municipal services, transport services, social housing, landlords, businesses and traders) to access data from each sector. They often develop and use geographical information systems, victimization and fear-of-crime surveys and self-report delinquency surveys, as well as information from qualitative interviews and focus groups, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of local crime and violence.<sup>12</sup>

38. The Centre of Excellence for Statistical Information on Governance, Victims of Crime, Public Security and Justice was created in 2010 by UNODC and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI). Its main objective is to strengthen statistical, analytical and monitoring capacities in the areas of governance, victimization, public security and justice. In its decade of existence, the Centre has

<sup>11</sup> UNODC, *Handbook on the Crime Prevention Guidelines*, p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

improved dialogue among national stakeholders involved in the production and use of statistics and strengthened the coordination of regional processes. It has also generated new methodological approaches and supported many countries in Latin America in implementing victimization surveys, improving the quality of national crime statistics and monitoring the crime-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators. The forty-fourth session of the Security Council established that the centre of excellence model constitutes a good practice that should be replicated. A new centre of this kind has recently been established in the Republic of Korea by UNODC and Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) to support countries in the Asia and Pacific region in improving their crime statistics and their reporting of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators related to crime and criminal justice.

### III. Monitoring and evaluation

#### A. Overview

39. With a view to ensuring the effective and efficient use of resources, the monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes are essential tools that can provide decision makers with information and evidence on actual results that can be achieved.<sup>13</sup> In that regard, monitoring and evaluation systems constitute an integral element of the policy cycle that “recognizes the importance of both an ability to provide sound evidence (the supply side) as well as the capacity within the system for individuals and institutions to use the information (the demand side)”.<sup>14</sup> However, monitoring and evaluation refer to very different concepts and need to be considered as complementary tools.

#### B. Monitoring

40. In a monitoring and evaluation system, monitoring is defined as the “continuous examination of any progress achieved during the implementation of an undertaking in order to track its compliance with the plan and to take necessary decisions to improve performance”.<sup>15</sup>

41. Proper monitoring in crime prevention is particularly important. Efficient monitoring systems make it possible to track progress and compliance by all stakeholders and to identify successes and obstacles, thus supporting adaptive management practices. However, while monitoring is instrumental in the implementation of crime prevention policies, it does not offer an in-depth analysis of a policy’s effects. To understand whether a policy works, how it works and why it works, evaluation is necessary.

#### C. Evaluation: definition and approaches

42. In 2005, the United Nations Evaluation Group produced its “Standards for evaluation in the United Nations system”, which were updated in 2016 and renamed the “Norms and standards for evaluation”, in order to provide an adequate institutional framework for the effective management of evaluation functions. An evaluation is defined in the 2016 document as “an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Development Group, *Results-Based Management Handbook: Harmonizing RBM Concepts and Approaches for Improved Development Results at Country Level* (October 2011), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group, *National Evaluation Capacity Development: Practical Tips on How to Strengthen National Evaluation Systems – A Report for the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Task Force on National Evaluation Capacity Development* (November 2012), p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group, “Norms and standards for evaluation” (June 2016), p. 30.

examining the result chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders”.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the “universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation”,<sup>17</sup> thereby underpinning the principle of “no-one left behind”.

43. Evaluations of crime prevention policies and programmes typically focus on three main components: (a) the implementation and achievement of targets and activities, also called process evaluation; (b) immediate results and outputs, whether expected or not, also called results evaluation; and (c) mid- and long-term outcomes and impacts, whether expected or not, also called impact evaluation.<sup>18</sup>

44. Brigitte Ellefsen<sup>19</sup> identifies three main approaches to evaluation in the area of crime prevention. The evidence-based “what works?” approach relies heavily on quantitative information (statistical data) and experimental methodologies such as randomized controlled trials. It is an outcome-oriented approach that is aimed at measuring whether an intervention has had the intended effect. Its advantages include its effectiveness and accountability, its high degree of objectivity and impartiality and its ability to inform resource allocation decisions and to identify good practices.

45. However, there are also weaknesses in and limitations to the “what works?” approach. Firstly, it does not demonstrate causality, but only establishes correlations. Secondly, replicability cannot be ensured. While this type of evaluation can show whether or not an intervention “worked” in a particular context, it fails to demonstrate its replicability. Crime prevention policies have a broad and diverse range of objectives, priorities, stakeholders and types of action. Owing to their limited methodological options (experimental methods and randomized controlled trials), “what works?” approaches also limit the type of information used for evaluation and the range of parameters that can be evaluated (results and outcomes). This is overly restrictive for complex policies.

46. As a response to those shortcomings, crime prevention policy specialists developed the “what’s to be done?” approach, which not only focuses on results, but also on process and implementation. The approach combines quantitative and quasi-experimental methods with case studies. This enables the integration of contextual factors, and therefore increases transferability. “What’s to be done?” approaches also integrate stakeholder practices and experience-based knowledge, which make it possible to construct comprehensive solutions for improvement.

47. While “what works?” approaches provide straightforward information on performance, “what’s to be done?” approaches offer a more nuanced analysis of the entire public policy process. However, although “what’s to be done?” approaches take contexts into account, they fail to acknowledge the fact that geo-historical, social and political contexts are constitutive parts of a policy.

48. As a response to this, critical-realistic approaches place context at the centre of their focus in order to address the question of who is responsible for achieving the desired result, under what conditions and with what consequences. These approaches triangulate methodologies to better understand the complexity of various contexts. Therefore, they constitute an interesting evaluation framework for complex policies. As with “what’s to be done?” approaches, critical-realistic approaches evaluate both

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> UNODC, *Handbook on the Crime Prevention Guidelines*.

<sup>19</sup> Brigitte Ellefsen, “Evaluating crime prevention: scientific rationality or governmentality?”, *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, vol. 12, No. 2 (November 2011), pp. 103–127.

impacts and process, which allows for a holistic understanding of the policymaking process.

49. However, critical-realistic evaluation has some significant limitations, the main one being that it requires heavy investments in terms of resources, as well as high-level skill sets and elaborate research structures. This makes it very difficult to use in contexts where capacities are weak or underdeveloped. In addition, it is more exploratory than “what works?” and “what’s to be done?” approaches, and its results are unpredictable.

#### **D. Key success factors for evaluation in support of crime prevention policymaking**

50. According to the UNODC *Evaluation Handbook: Guidance for Designing, Conducting and Using Independent Evaluations at UNODC*, a good evaluation: (a) informs policymaking by providing useful recommendations, (b) fosters the engagement and adhesion of a variety of stakeholders by providing reliable and relevant evidence, and (c) supports results-based management systems.

51. Thus, the main success factor for a “good evaluation” in support of policymaking is the use by policymakers of the evidence produced. The United Nations Evaluation Group “Norms and standards for evaluation” address this crucial point through two types of standards. Firstly, on the supply side, evaluation products, recommendations and dissemination should be developed and planned according to the needs of the intended users. Secondly, users (organizations and institutions) should ensure that evaluation results are integrated and that there is a systematic response and follow-up.

52. When developing evaluation systems, it is essential to define the concept of “success”, which can mean different things for different stakeholders. It can also vary depending on the chosen criteria, the time frame (short-term versus long-term impacts) and on how well it is measured. Accordingly, it is important, with regard to outcome and impact evaluation systems, to avoid the “easy-to-reach and easy-to-measure” definition of success.

53. Timing is also a crucial factor. Evaluation strategies should be developed during the design phase of policymaking in order to ensure that all policy objectives and targets are measurable, and that quality data can be produced to measure them. Furthermore, results and findings should be made promptly available to decision makers, in order to support the policymaking cycle in a timely manner. One of the main challenges of impact evaluation is that long-term impacts are often not measurable within a policy cycle. However, short-term results can be misleading and provide an inaccurate view. These limitations should be considered in the policymaking process.

54. Budget and resource considerations are crucial when designing an evaluation framework. Systematic, rigorous, participatory and independent evaluations require considerable investments in terms of skilled personnel, research efforts and contribution to the evaluation process by the participating stakeholders. This means that evaluation processes should be budgeted for during the planning and resource allocation phase of policymaking. Moreover, this financial planning should also include the efforts made to disseminate and use evaluation results and recommendations.

55. Participatory approaches are particularly interesting in evaluation processes, as they are instrumental in the production of high-quality evaluations and ensure the presence and participation of vulnerable and under-represented groups.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> UNODC, *Evaluation Handbook: Guidance for Designing, Conducting and Using Independent Evaluations at UNODC* (Vienna, 2017).

Participatory approaches should consider who to include in the evaluation, and for what reason to include them.<sup>21</sup>

## **E. Building capacity for the monitoring and evaluation of crime prevention policies: from the international to the local levels**

56. International institutions of the United Nations system have produced both normative frameworks and a considerable body of knowledge on monitoring and evaluation issues. These apply to United Nations-based processes as well as to national monitoring and evaluation frameworks, with the United Nations evaluation principles being embedded in the broader frameworks of the 2030 Agenda. The harmonized and standardized framework of the United Nations Evaluation Group “Norms and standards for evaluation”, the ethical guidelines and cross-cutting approaches can act as a model for national systems. Capacity-building is especially important at the country level, since it constitutes the interface between international frameworks and subnational and local systems.

57. The United Nations Evaluation Group provides several key recommendations for the development of national evaluation capacity for supporting efficient integration of monitoring and evaluation processes into the policymaking cycle, and identifies four essential building blocks: (a) clear vision and leadership; (b) an enabling environment that fosters a shared understanding of and receptiveness to monitoring and evaluation principles and processes; (c) technical capacity for carrying out monitoring and evaluation and producing quality evidence; and (d) capacity for users to demand, understand and use this evidence.<sup>22</sup>

58. National Governments play a key role in crime prevention efforts, as recognized by the 2002 United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, which recommend the establishment of a permanent central authority to provide institutional leadership and to coordinate and supervise national policymaking and its implementation across sectors and at the subnational and local levels. These central authorities are well placed to lead monitoring and evaluation processes by: (a) ensuring the sound integration of monitoring and evaluation into national crime prevention policies; (b) disseminating and ensuring the proper use of monitoring and evaluation results and evidence; and (c) promoting and disseminating good monitoring and evaluation practices and providing capacity-building support to all stakeholders.

59. Subnational, local and municipal authorities also play an important role in crime prevention efforts. For that reason, it is crucial to develop monitoring and evaluation capacity not only at the national level, but also at the subnational level, especially for municipalities. Cities and urban centres face specific challenges related to crime and need to be supported in their ability to produce evidence on the effects of the actions they take to prevent crime. This can be facilitated through the support of the national agency in charge of crime prevention policymaking, which can provide financial resources, normative frameworks and training. Local universities can also play a key role in local capacity-building.<sup>23</sup>

## **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

60. In preparation for the workshop, it is necessary to:

(a) Strengthen the development and use of tools and methods aimed at increasing the availability and quality of evidence resulting from research, statistics, evaluation and meta-synthesis on crime prevention, in order to better measure the

<sup>21</sup> Irene Guijt, “Participatory approaches”, Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation No. 5 (Florence, Italy, United Nations Children’s Fund, Office of Research, Florence, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group, *National Evaluation Capacity Development*.

<sup>23</sup> See examples of these arrangements in the *Handbook on the Crime Prevention Guidelines*.

impact of responses to crime and enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention and criminal justice programmes and policies at the local, national, regional and international levels;

(b) Provide financial and political support in order to further strengthen a culture of evidence-based decision- and policymaking through independent and real-time evaluation, research and analysis at all levels in the area of crime prevention and criminal justice;

(c) Strengthen evidence-based decision-making at all levels by further enhancing evaluation capacity and supporting the development of evaluation tools and instruments in order to systematically assess the results of policies and investments designed to address crime and criminal justice programmes at the local, national, regional, global and institutional levels.

61. Taking into account the outcomes of the regional preparatory meetings, the fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice may wish to consider the following recommendations:

62. At the national level, evidence-based processes should be integrated at all stages of the policy cycle, as well as at all levels of government. To achieve this, several strategies should be put in place aimed at:

(a) Developing strong national statistical frameworks that ensure the intersectoral integration of data produced by different institutional mechanisms and at different levels of government;

(b) Establishing national coordination systems for crime and criminal justice statistics to ensure comparability of data across all criminal justice stages and to foster analysis and research that can address crime from a holistic perspective. The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes is a comprehensive framework for supporting national coordination systems and building coherent national crime statistics that inform crime research. It achieves this owing to its granular information on crime contexts, seriousness, typology and mapping that goes beyond the listing and counting of different forms of crime;

(c) Fostering a data-oriented culture by implementing high-quality standards for data collection and promoting good practices at all levels, from data collection to management and analysis;

(d) Implementing data disaggregation as an integral part of good-quality data to enhance understanding of criminal phenomena and their context and impact, particularly on certain subgroups of the population, including women and girls;

(e) Adopting “open data” policies to actively promote access to and availability of information, evidence and data for all relevant stakeholders, including governmental, international and non-governmental bodies for transparency and accountability purposes;

(f) Producing and making data available for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators in the areas of violence, crime, organized crime, trafficking, access to justice, corruption and rule of law, in line with reporting practices for global monitoring of the 2030 Agenda;

(g) Developing high-quality national indicator frameworks in the area of crime prevention to supplement the global Sustainable Development Goal framework and to promote evidence-based monitoring of crime prevention policies and interventions;

(h) Adopting and creating tools to enable the interpretation of evidence and its adaptation to policymakers’ and other stakeholders’ needs; with the transnational organized crime threat assessment model providing a good example of analytical outputs that bring together quantitative and qualitative information and information from various geographical entities within and across national borders to capture the transnational part of crime;

(i) Experimenting and innovating national and international data collection and analysis systems with new sources of data when they are relevant to and of the quality required for crime prevention; investing in the integration of national crime statistical systems with geographical information systems to map crime and provide more precise and timely information for targeted government action; using statistical methods that can complement traditional data sources from administrative records; considering the multiple systems estimation methodology to estimate the number of victims of trafficking in persons or the modelling used to estimate illicit financial flows derived from illicit markets; and using artificial intelligence, which has been proven to provide beneficial information for crime prevention strategies (for example, hotspot policing), while exercising caution to ensure that artificial intelligence-based actions do not feed a vicious cycle in which only some communities or population groups are targeted;

(j) Implementing good practices and recognized methodologies in national frameworks; considering the implementation of the UNODC-UNDP *Manual on Corruption Surveys: Methodological Guidelines on the Measurement of Bribery and Other Forms of Corruption through Sample Surveys* as an example of a standard that can help countries to measure corruption and regularly monitor the Sustainable Development Goal targets related to corruption; and using other regional and international initiatives, such as the victimization survey module developed for Latin America, to help countries benefit from each other's best practices;

(k) Investing in local-level data and research and citizen-driven data collection; and using safety audits as an example of an approach that engages communities in order to map the crime problem and help contextualize statistics, providing a powerful tool for understanding where and how to prevent crime and violence;

(l) Complementing administrative data by diversifying data collection methods, in particular, using victimization, fear-of-crime and other types of surveys and innovative methods to gather evidence;

(m) Complementing statistical data with qualitative methods;

(n) Systematically using participatory as well as human rights and gender-responsive evaluation approaches in order to ensure all relevant stakeholders' perspectives are taken into account and foster those stakeholders' engagement in policymaking processes;

(o) Mainstreaming evaluation into the policy design process, thus ensuring that crime prevention initiatives have the necessary resources for evaluations to be carried out;

(p) Developing strong national evaluation systems that ensure the availability of evaluative evidence for policymaking and for informing the Sustainable Development Goal review process;

(q) Fostering a culture of evaluation by implementing high-quality evaluation processes at all levels.

63. At the international level, the international community and the United Nations system and its agencies should support Member States in the implementation of norms and standards and good practices:

(a) By continuing to support countries in strengthening their capacity for collecting, processing and analysing data and producing research that can authoritatively inform crime prevention policies;

(b) By encouraging the development of South-South cooperation mechanisms, such as the "centres of excellence" model;

(c) By informing Member States and other stakeholders about global and regional trends and threats in order to better focus crime prevention policies in different parts of the world;



(d) By supporting the development and implementation of independent evaluations at the global, regional, national and local levels;

(e) By producing evidence-based global reports and studies on thematic areas and topics relevant to crime prevention and in relation to relevant Sustainable Development Goal targets in order to increase understanding of global trends, patterns and vulnerabilities in the areas of violence, crime, organized crime, trafficking, access to justice, corruption and rule of law;

(f) By continuing to support countries in strengthening their national evaluation capacities and systems for informing policymaking related, in particular, to crime prevention policies and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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