

## Chapter IV

# A social agenda: youth and family violence in Latin America with an inclusive approach

## A. Introduction

In recent decades, the issue of youth violence in Latin America has become increasingly prominent in public debate, on government agendas and in international forums and conferences. Violence has increased in most of the region in recent years, and young people are clearly overrepresented in terms of the incidence and the severity of the phenomenon, both as victims and as perpetrators. In many countries of Latin America, young people are committing violent crimes, and dying as a result of such crimes, at earlier and earlier ages. Against this background, policies to address the root causes of escalating youth violence are urgently needed.

Youth violence entails very high social, ethical, human and economic costs to society. The effects of violence may include direct costs, such as the destruction of property and the loss of human lives, and indirect costs in the form of resources allocated to criminal justice and incarceration, as well as high health expenditures. In a more general sense, the rise in violence and insecurity undermines social cohesion and breeds public distrust with respect to the effectiveness of the rule of law as a means of ensuring people's safety.

In response to growing concern among representatives of international organizations, governments and civil society over the rise in youth violence in Latin America,

in 2008 ECLAC conducted a series of assessments of the situation and of the youth-related policies and programmes implemented by Latin American governments and institutions. The outcome document was presented at the eighteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in El Salvador in October 2008, which focused on youth and development.

As in previous years, this chapter is based on information provided by the ministries responsible for the issues examined (in this case ministries of public safety). This information was supplemented with data from other agencies also working on the implementation of policies aimed at reducing and eradicating youth violence. An effort has been made

to synthesize the views of national authorities concerning specific realities and problems of violence affecting young people and to examine the institutional and programmatic orientations being applied in this area. Responses to the ECLAC survey were received from the following countries: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter is divided into four sections: the first is an assessment of the various forms of youth violence, which examines the contexts in which youth violence occurs from the dual perspective of victims and victimizers. It also presents the views of government authorities with

respect to the problems arising from youth violence in their countries. The second section outlines the major policies, programmes and approaches being applied to preventing youth violence, focusing in particular on legislative reforms and changes. The following section provides more detailed information on existing programmes, summarizes the main lessons learned from them and offers recommendations for the future. Lastly, the section on the international agenda outlines the social commitments made during the seventeenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Chile in 2007, the theme of which was “Social cohesion and social policy to achieve more inclusive Ibero-American societies”.

## B. Assessment of youth violence

Violence perpetrated by and inflicted upon young people takes many forms, including self-directed, interpersonal and collective violence. Such violence is fuelled, in turn, by various forms of symbolic and social exclusion during youth, such as inequality of opportunity, lack of access to employment, institutional disaffiliation, the gap between symbolic consumption and material consumption, territorial segregation, lack of opportunities for social and political participation and growth in informal employment. Although it is very difficult to measure the various forms of violence, violent deaths among young people are a clear indicator and one that is comparable across countries. The figures show that violence is an increasingly frequent cause of death among Latin American youth, and they also show a strong gender bias: homicide, road traffic accident and suicide rates among young men more than double those among young women.

### 1. Contexts, types and magnitude of youth violence

Violence is fuelled by exclusion and segregation. Many Latin American young people face situations of exclusion in many areas, including the economic, social, political and cultural spheres. Although many countries have become more economically prosperous, much of the youth population continues to live in poverty, and high levels of inequality persist.

In this context, many young people lack the skills needed to participate in the knowledge and information society, and their quest for greater autonomy is thwarted by barriers to access to high-quality jobs that would enable them to enjoy material autonomy. As a result of the weakening of both formal and informal mechanisms of social protection (labour markets, families and communities, among others), young people today are more vulnerable than in the past. Increased symbolic consumption and educational capital generate expectations of social mobility that are frustrated

<sup>1</sup> The response received from Cuba indicated that the questionnaire did not apply to the situation and the issues of concern in that country and that incidents of youth violence remain isolated phenomena.

by barriers that prevent access to productive assets or to a first job. Despite greater democratic freedom, young people exhibit apathy and lack of interest in becoming involved in the political system, in a context of mistrust of public institutions. The generation gap grows wider because young people are continually recreating their identity and developing ways of seeing the world that are shaped by connectivity and risk, further distancing themselves from the adult world. All this translates into various forms of discrimination against young people and into the stigmatization of youth (ECLAC/OIJ, 2008).

Researchers and analysts agree that the violent behaviour by young people is the result of structural processes associated with the persistence of poverty and unemployment. Several studies have pointed out that the frustrations felt by young men as a result of unemployment often give rise to illness, increased violence among youth gangs, interpersonal conflict and domestic violence. Among women, unemployment leads to greater economic dependence on men, which in turn can lead to increased violence against women (Moser and van Bronkhorst, 1999). The social exclusion that unemployed young people experience every day, in a context of mass consumption, accounts for a structural dimension to violence that affects young people in the economic sphere. Indeed, there appears to be some consensus that what young people receive as structural violence they return as social violence (De Roux, 1993).

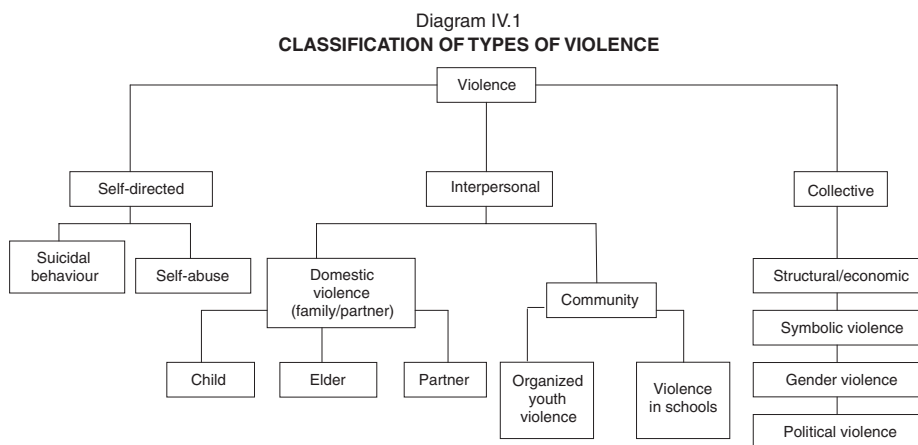
In this context, many young people know that they have little chance of getting into a prestigious occupation or profession and less still of earning a good salary. Their lack of attachment to institutions increases their feeling of being “outsiders” (Briceño-León and Zubillaga 2002). The inequality they experience begins to smack of injustice. Gaps created by unemployment and educational levels breed discontent, which is compounded by the greater risk of death from violence (OMS, 2003; Rubio, 2005, Rodríguez, 2005; Kliksberg, 2007a; Muñoz González,

2002). Hence, physical violence cannot be analysed without considering the violence inherent in the mechanisms that transmit social exclusion (Kliksberg, 2007b).

In another context, violence is expressed at the symbolic level through various forms of language and cultural representations that society imposes on individuals and groups through their cognitive processes of apprehending reality. Symbolic violence is a “gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (...) of recognition or even feeling” (Bourdieu, 2001). This category includes the “naturalized” forms of gender violence implicit in the dominance of men over women. The effectiveness of this dominance lies in the ideological acceptance by both the dominators and the dominated, which stems from the enormous importance of beliefs and feelings in the production and reproduction of male superiority as a central aspect of the established order.

Another symbolic form of violence is media content that portrays stereotypical or discriminatory images of some groups of youths —images in which many young people do not recognize themselves. Audiovisual productions that convey sensationalized and exaggerated depictions of violence are an insidious form of violence that contribute to its tolerance and legitimacy, and to the stigma attached to youth, with violence thus becoming part of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

According to a model that integrates health and violence, adopted by some international agencies (Pan American Health Organization, Inter-American Development Bank, World Health Organization, World Bank), particular forms of youth violence can be distinguished according to how they relate to problems of a structural, institutional (community), interpersonal (relational) or individual (psychobiological, ethical or moral) nature. Hence the varied contextual origins and modes of expression of violence, depending on whether young people are the victims or the perpetrators (see diagram IV.1).



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of World Health Organization (WHO), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva, 2002.

## 2. Impact of violence on mortality and morbidity among young people

The World Health Organization considers violence to be a public health problem, defining it as: “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation” (WHO, 2002, p. 5). This definition associates

intentionality with the commission of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces. This definition excludes unintentional incidents such as most road traffic injuries and burns.

Violence takes many forms, which need to be clearly defined. Box IV.1 summarizes the various forms of violence as they have been defined by the United Nations system.

### Box IV.1

#### TYPOLGY OF VIOLENCE

##### Self-directed violence

Violence that a person inflicts on himself or herself. Includes suicidal behaviour and self-abuse.

##### Interpersonal violence

Violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals. Includes family and intimate partner violence and violence perpetrated in community contexts by individuals who may or may not know each other.

##### Collective violence

Violence inflicted by larger groups such as States, organized political groups, militia groups and terrorist organizations. Includes social, political and economic violence.

##### Gender-based violence/violence against women

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Violence against women encompasses:

**Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family**, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, violence perpetrated by family members other than the spouse and violence related to exploitation.

**Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community**, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and girls and forced prostitution.

**Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State**, wherever it occurs.

##### Violence against children

All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

**Source:** World Health Organization (WHO), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva, 2002; United Nations, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104), New York, February 1994; World Health Organization (WHO), Report of the consultation on child abuse prevention (WHO/HSC/PVI/99.1), Geneva, 1999.

In order to understand young people's exposure to the various forms of violence it is necessary to distinguish levels of risk in various population groups. Studies reveal gender, age and ethnic biases in youth violence. However, there are major impediments that hinder comparative analysis of rates of violence among youth, including lack of information, insufficient disaggregation of the information that does exist and the fact that the available data cover different periods and have been collected from numerous sources. Most countries in the world lack adequate information on the number of deaths caused by violence, and in any case deaths account for only a small proportion of the problem. The fact that the data come from a variety of sources—including law enforcement, judicial and health agencies—makes it difficult to standardize the information in order to assess the situation. Moreover, the data are not collected on a regular basis and suffer from significant underreporting.

The crude death rate from homicide per 100,000 population is one of the most reliable statistics. Nevertheless, even these figures must be interpreted with caution because they are highly sensitive to the methods used to collect the data (Buvinic, Morrison and Orlando, 2005). Homicide is undoubtedly the severest form of violence, but there are other serious forms of violence that often go unreported.

According to information for 16 Latin American countries, external causes are the leading cause of death among young people (141 per 100,000 population). The leading cause among males is homicide (68 per 100,000 population), followed by road traffic accidents (30 per 100,000) and suicide (10 per 100,000). Among females the figures are significantly lower: the death rate from external causes is 19 per 100,000, with road traffic accidents accounting for 6 deaths per 100,000, homicide for 5 per 100,000 and suicide for 3 per 100,000.

Homicide death rates vary considerably from region to region in the world. WHO data indicate that the highest rates occur in Latin America, where homicide is the leading external cause of death. Homicide rates

among males exceed critical levels in several countries, including El Salvador (176), Colombia (159), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (112) and Brazil (97) (see table IV.1).

Table IV.1  
**LATIN AMERICA (16 COUNTRIES): RATE OF MORTALITY DUE TO EXTERNAL CAUSES AMONG PERSONS FROM 15 TO 29 YEARS OF AGE, BY SEX<sup>a</sup>**  
*(Per 100,000 population)*

Country	Males				Females			
	Total	Homicides	Suicides	Road traffic accidents	Total	Homicides	Suicides	Road traffic accidents
Argentina (2004)	81	17	19	16	17	2	5	5
Brazil (2004)	173	97	8	39	20	7	2	8
Chile (2004)	72	15	22	20	14	1	5	5
Colombia (2004)	228	159	12	26	28	13	5	6
Costa Rica (2004)	66	13	14	24	13	3	2	5
Cuba (2005)	55	14	10	16	17	4	5	6
Dominican Republic (2004)	99	17	3	30	15	2	1	5
Ecuador (2005)	131	55	16	32	25	4	9	6
El Salvador (2005)	242	176	16	32	34	18	8	5
Mexico (2005)	94	23	11	33	17	3	3	7
Nicaragua (2005)	68	23	15	13	13	2	6	2
Panama (2004)	90	36	12	26	16	2	5	6
Paraguay (2004)	96	43	9	19	26	3	5	6
Peru (2000)	45	3	2	10	14	1	1	3
Uruguay (2004)	73	11	23	17	19	3	6	6
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of) (2004)	271	112	9	37	28	6	3	11
Latin America Total (16 countries)	141	68	10	30	19	5	3	6

**Source:** Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), *Health Statistics from the Americas, 2006*, Washington, D.C., 2007; Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) - Population Division of ECLAC; and Population Division of the United Nations.

<sup>a</sup> Codes V01-Y98 in the International Classification of Diseases, 10th revision.

Although rates of mortality from external causes in Chile, Costa Rica and Cuba are closer to European averages, they differ considerably with respect to the principal component, which for these three Latin American countries consists of homicide and suicide and for the European countries of road traffic accidents. Male suicide rates are particularly high in the countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay), as are road traffic accident rates in the Dominican Republic and Mexico, where the figures are similar to those in Europe, but homicide rates are also high. In the year 2000, suicide was the third leading cause of death among young people aged 10 to 19 in Latin America and the eighth leading cause among adults aged 20 to 59 throughout the Americas (PAHO, 2006).

It is important to highlight some gender differences with respect to deaths from external causes. According to statistics from the early 2000s, three out of every four homicide victims worldwide were male and homicide death rates for males were more than three times those for females (WHO, 2002). Recent data corroborate this larger proportion of male youth homicides and their rising trend in recent years.

The gender biases in youth violence figures are evident. The number of young males deaths from external causes is eight times higher than that of young females in the 16 Latin American countries studied. However, there are less visible and less reported forms of violence that are very difficult to measure and that affect women in general and young women in particular (see box IV.2).

## Box IV.2

## METHODOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES IN MEASURING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Sources of information for measuring violence, and especially gender-based violence, suffer from a number of deficiencies, as the reliability of the statistics is affected by underreporting of some crimes, especially crimes of sexual and family violence (Arriagada and Godoy, 2000). Some violent behaviours are viewed as “normal” in accordance with some deeply ingrained cultural standards, both because they are perceived as falling within the private sphere and because of the reactions of shame, fear or disgrace associated with acknowledging the abuse (INEGI, 2006). The task of producing a full, up-to-date assessment of the prevalence, causes and repercussions of violence against women in Latin America has not yet been accomplished, and consequently there is no baseline for monitoring and evaluating

the impact of relevant policies, laws and programmes (ECLAC, 2007e).

Analysis of the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez in Mexico is representative of these problems: the exact number of victims is a matter of dispute among various sources, owing to the lack of official records. According to data from the NGO “8 de marzo”, between January 1993 and November 2003 the number of women murdered was 271, but according to Amnesty International the figure was 370 (with 137 of those cases also involving sexual violence), while the Chihuahua Women’s Institute (ICHIMU) puts it at 321. Mexico’s National Commission for Human Rights recorded 236 murders and 40 disappearances of women during the period 1993-2002, while the Chihuahua state prosecutor for follow-up on the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez indicates that 379 women were

killed from 1993 to 2005 (Tavera, 2008). In the face of this conflicting information, it is recognized that statistics must be collected and compiled in order to determine the magnitude and the characteristics of the phenomenon. It is also acknowledged that criminal statistics constitute a basic tool for tackling the problem of violence against woman, especially femicide; that the formulation of high-quality policies requires reliable information that will make it possible to effectively assess problems; and that accurate, timely and documented information is a civil right. Accordingly, the development of a statistics and records system on femicide in Mexico is being advocated. It has also been suggested that the administrative format of records should be improved and that a gender perspective should be applied in the conceptualization of the crime of homicide.

**Source:** Irma Arriagada and Lorena Godoy, “Prevention or repression? The false dilemma of citizen security”, *CEPAL Review*, No. 70 (LC/G.2095-P/I), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), April 2000; Lúgía Tavera Fenollosa, “Estadísticas sobre violencia de género. Una mirada crítica desde el feminicidio”, *Políticas sociales y género*, Gisela Zaremberg (coord.), Mexico City, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), vol. 2, 2008; National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI), “Hombres y mujeres en México”, 2006 and 2007 [online] [www.inegi.mx](http://www.inegi.mx); ECLAC, *No more! The right of women to live a life free of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/L.2808), Santiago, Chile, 2007.

### 3. National authorities’ perceptions of youth violence issues and societal dynamics

The authorities consulted indicate that the primary violence-related problems faced by young people are linked to organized youth violence (crime, gangs, street violence or carrying of weapons), which has become prevalent in some urban areas in several countries of the region. The situation of gangs (known as *pandillas* in most Latin American countries, but called *maras* in Central America and *quadrilhas* in Brazil), the increase in crime in the Southern Cone countries and in violence in the Andean countries are clear indicators of the need for targeted interventions aimed at specific groups of young people. Of particular concern is the relationship between youth gangs and drug use, drug trafficking and human trafficking. The authorities also highlight the seriousness of family violence, both between intimate partners and between generations. While reporting of gender-based violence has increased, there is still a severe lack of protection for children and young people who suffer abuse. Self- or other-directed violent behaviours associated with alcohol and drug use are also significant problems.

Patterns of violent behaviour change over the course of a person’s lifetime. The period of adolescence and young adulthood is a time when violence is often given heightened expression. Because youth is a transitional stage, factors related to the construction of identity that

may motivate the development of violent behaviours must be considered, as must factors of a social and individual nature that may explain such behaviours (Vanderschueren and Lunecke, 2004). Any preventive measures envisaged must be flexible and tailored to the characteristics of young people and their environment. Understanding when and under what conditions violent behaviour typically occurs as a person develops can be helpful in planning interventions and policies for prevention that target the most critical age groups (WHO, 2002).

According to the ECLAC survey on policies and programmes to address youth violence, national authorities’ primary concerns relate to social exclusion and social inequality (Argentina, Brazil), which are expressed in organized youth violence and which translate into crime, gangs, street violence and the carrying of weapons (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru). Secondly, the authorities’ surveyed expressed concern about domestic violence, both between intimate partners and between generations (Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico) and, thirdly, about self- or other-directed violent behaviours associated with alcohol and drug use (Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru) (see table IV.2).

Table IV.2  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (12 COUNTRIES): PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

Countries	Youth violence problems		
	First in importance	Second in importance	Third in importance
Argentina	Social exclusion and lack of expectations	Lack of individual and social aspirations, drug addiction	Lack of standards and models, unemployment
Brazil	Social inequalities, difficulties in accessing education and work	Discrimination and physical and symbolic victimization through police violence, violent deaths	Recurrent conflicts related to drug abuse and trafficking
Chile	Crime	School violence	Intimate partner violence
Colombia	Armed conflict, theft	Drug trafficking and crime Homicide	Youth gangs and culture Extortion
Costa Rica	Rebellious behaviour	Lack of parental authority	Environment in which young people live
Dominican Republic	Narcotic drug and alcohol use at early ages	Participation in drug micro-trafficking and related activities	Social violence and aggression generally linked to the foregoing
Ecuador	Abuse within the family	Intergenerational violence	Suicide
El Salvador	Gangs	Crime	Family violence and abuse
Guatemala	Gangs (extortion, violence)	Drug and alcohol addiction	Homicide, foeticide, child sexual abuse
Mexico	Family violence	Street violence	Intimate partner violence
Peru	Crime, gangs	Drug and alcohol abuse, family violence	Lack of adequate education and training
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	Robbery	Illegal carrying of weapons	Drug possession

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of government responses to the ECLAC survey on policies and programmes for tackling youth violence, 2008.

## 4. Organized youth violence

Youth violence is primarily an urban phenomenon. An estimated 78% of Latin American young people live in cities (ECLAC, 2005) and suffer the repercussions of problems associated with urban concentration, which national authorities see as the principal problem affecting youth. In some countries these problems are related to social exclusion (Argentina); theft and other forms of crime (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador); gangs and street violence (El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru); drug trafficking (Colombia); homicide (Colombia) and illegal possession of weapons (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela). The scale of these problems may be considerable. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for example, the offences committed most frequently by children and adolescents aged 10 to 17 in 2007 were theft, illegal carrying of weapons and possession of drugs.<sup>2</sup>

The findings of international studies indicate that the vast majority of those responsible for violence against

young people in urban settings are of the same age and sex as their victims. In most cases, the perpetrators are males acting in groups (UNICEF, 2006). In large cities, such violent relations among young people occur as a consequence of the formation of local groups in the context of situations of marginalization and disruptive behaviours. In general these are criminal groups structured as gangs, which develop their own subcultures and fight among themselves for territorial control of neighbourhoods or districts.

Gangs may be informal groups of youths that defend a territory and possess an informal leadership structure or they may be organizations with their own internal survival and operational dynamics (including assigned roles and rules). Often juvenile gangs provide an alternative setting for the socialization of excluded children and youth, whose sense of belonging is based on participation in group activities ranging from sharing of leisure time to commission of crimes. In some cities, large groups of youths commit a variety of crimes in their immediate environment (hotel hold-ups and robberies) but also engage in acts of intimidation and coercion.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics provided by the Scientific, Penal and Crime Research Corps (CICPC) of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Empirical studies conducted in the late 1980s had already revealed the proliferation of violent gangs of adolescents and young people in cities such as Guayaquil and Mexico City (Rodríguez, 1996). In Brazil, various studies have found that the majority of youths involved in murders, either as victims or as perpetrators, are impoverished black or mulatto males between 15 and 17 years of age. They tend to reside in peripheral areas and *favelas* (slums) surrounding urban centres and are generally not enrolled in school (Willadino Braga, 2003). This confirms the hypothesis widely held in the literature that institutional disaffiliation increases the exposure of young people (those who do not work or attend school) to acts of violence, both as victims and as perpetrators.

The socio-economic exclusion and institutional disaffiliation of many Brazilian adolescents and young people living in *favelas* occurs in tandem with a high prevalence of drug trafficking, which comes to be seen as a “way out”, a means of participating in extended networks and gaining a share of power and greater access to consumer goods. The *favela* residents involved in drug gangs are usually young people between 15 and 30 years of age who are looking to earn money. Members of drug gangs control the *favelas* and protect the places where drugs are sold. Young gang members defend such places from attacks by other gangs (*quadrilhas*) and raids by the police, which puts

them in the lowest, and the most dangerous, echelons of the drug trade. Other *favelados* (slum-dwellers) recognize that these young people are the poorest participants in the drug trade. Within their peer group, however, they are seen as brave and they acquire a certain degree of social status. Youth crime thus becomes a violent means of adapting to economic and social conditions of exclusion and an attempt to participate in social consumption patterns (Sperberg and Happe, 2000).

The 1990s saw explosive growth of gangs (*maras*) in Central America. The Central American *maras* have been strongly influenced by the culture and style of gangs in the United States (see box IV.3). In El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, *maras* have flourished in social contexts shaped by deep-seated problems such as unemployment, exploitation of child labour, urban and civil violence and the deportation and return of many young people who had migrated north during the years of civil war. Some *maras* have subsequently become part of transnational organized crime networks, especially drug trafficking networks. In El Salvador, the gang movement became firmly entrenched during the peace process of recent years, with the return of young people who had been refugees or exiles (for economic or political reasons) in the United States—especially in Los Angeles—and who came home to resume their lives in a completely changed context (Rodríguez, 1996).

#### Box IV.3

##### THE *MARAS* OF CENTRAL AMERICA: A LONG-STANDING PHENOMENON

Youth gangs have existed in Central America at least since the 1960s, but their characteristics changed considerably during the 1990s. Youth gangs emerged in the Central American immigrant community in Los Angeles in the 1980s. The two dominant groups were the Mara Salvatrucha, or MS, and the 18th Street Gang (*Barrio 18*). The origin of the *maras* is complex and is the result of an amalgamation of several processes, including the disruption of traditional agricultural relations and indigenous forms of relationship; the violent eviction of indigenous groups; the destruction of urban habitats as a result of official, military and paramilitary violence in cities; lack of jobs, which led to international migration; changes in family structure, including tens of thousands of war orphans and family fragmentation resulting from the migration of parents and siblings.

When the Central American young people who had migrated to the United

States in the 1980s began returning to their home countries in the next decade—often as a result of United States deportation policies—and the influence of United States subcultures grew in Central America, youth gangs in the region began to adopt the style and the names of Los Angeles gangs. Although links were established between gangs, two phenomena should be highlighted: the growth of ethnic gangs in Central American immigrant communities in the United States and the fact that youth gangs in Central America “reinvented” themselves.

The term *mara* first began to be used in El Salvador in the 1980s to refer to gangs, but also to groups of friends. Although *maras* may include girls and women, they are essentially a male social phenomenon, which may begin at an early age (some members join gangs as young children) and extend through youth and early adulthood. *Maras* are subdivided

into “cliques”, whose members feel a sense of belonging to the larger gang. In general, *mara* or gang members come from economically disadvantaged areas and from poor and marginal urban contexts, or else they are migrants who have returned from the United States. Most of them have dropped out of school, have low-paying jobs and live in an environment characterized by ineffective or non-existent services, overcrowding and low social capital.

Over the years, many of these gangs, or *maras*, have become vertical organizations involved in drug trafficking, human trafficking and urban crime. According to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA, 2006), there are 70,000 to 100,000 gang members in Central America, which poses a serious threat to public order in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and also in south-eastern Mexico and some parts of the United States.

**Source:** E. Falkenburger and Geoff Thale, “Maras centroamericanas en maras y pandillas juveniles: dos mundos diferentes”, *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals*, No. 81, March–April 2008; World Health Organization (WHO), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva, 2002; Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), “Pandillas juveniles en Centroamérica: cuestiones relativas a los derechos humanos, la labor policial efectiva y la prevención”, 2006; Dina Krauskopf, “Pandillas juveniles y gobernabilidad democrática”, document presented at the seminar Youth gangs and democratic governance in Latin America and the Caribbean, Madrid, 16–17 April 2007.

The Governments of Honduras and El Salvador have responded to gangs with tough repressive strategies and laws making gang membership a crime. These measures have forced the gangs to operate clandestinely and, as a result, they have become more organized. Gang cohesion

in prison environments has also increased. Generally speaking, such hard-line strategies have failed to stem the rising tide of violence or reduce the number of homicides in the affected countries (WOLA, 2006).

## 5. Drug trafficking, drug use and crime

The consumption and distribution of psychoactive or psychotropic drugs is a central concern for the authorities of Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Peru, while in other countries, such as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, it is considered a relatively minor problem.

In the cities of the region where there are nerve centres for the drug trade, alienated young people play a major role in various areas of the criminal economy, including the production, circulation and consumption of drugs (Kaplan, 1997). Social exclusion leads children and youth to become involved in the drug distribution network, where they are exposed to dangerous and unsafe conditions.

According to one report, the 7,000 children and youths under 18 years of age who work in the drug trade and belong to the oldest criminal faction in Rio de Janeiro, Commando Vermelho (CV), receive as payment 20% of the drugs they sell in drug dens (*bocas de fumo*) in the tourist capital of Brazil (IBISS, 2006). A study conducted by the organization Observatório de Favelas in Rio de Janeiro

noted the high turnover of young people working in the drug trade and the downward trend in the age range of consumers (13 to 19 years). It also noted the high degree of instability in the lives of these young people. High school dropout and drug use rates, coupled with lack of access to public spaces outside their communities, severely limit their sociocultural environment. Clashes with the police were the cause of 60.4% of deaths in the course of the study. The young people interviewed reported witnessing 122 deaths and 205 beatings during the first five months of the study (Observatório de Favelas, 2006).

In peak periods of crime, the number of victims has climbed to epidemic levels. From January to early September 2008, clashes between drug gangs claimed 3,200 lives in Mexico. At the same time, there was a downward trend in the average age of the victims. In 1986, the average age of people killed in the city of Medellín was 35-45; by 1987 it had dropped to 25-35 and by one year later to 20-25. In 1989, 70% of the people killed in that city were between 14 and 20 years of age.<sup>3</sup>

## 6. Family and gender-based violence

Violence against women, as defined in the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/104), is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. Gender-based violence is usually perpetrated by adult men, is rooted in the macho culture and tends to be justified on the basis of theories

that attribute it to something in the physical realm of the aggressor (psychopathology), to affective ties (crimes of passion) or to social factors (poverty or low levels of education). While this form of violence—which may involve forced sexual relations within marriage, date rape and rape in other contexts, sexual abuse and harassment, and forced prostitution—occurs in all cultures, social strata and ethnic groups, it is often not reported owing to the ineffectiveness of existing laws on the matter and to stigmatization of victims.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the chief administrative officer to the Medellín City Council (1989), quoted in Salazar (1993).

As a mechanism of male domination, gender-based violence often takes place in the context of intimate partner relationships. Studies on violence against women conducted by the World Bank have highlighted some common features of violence in such relationships (Heise, Ellsberg and Gottemoeller, 1999):

- The vast majority of the perpetrators are men, and women are at greatest risk with men they know.
- Physical violence is almost always accompanied by psychological abuse and, in many cases, by sexual abuse.
- The majority of women who are physically abused by their partners will be subject to multiple acts of violence over time.
- Violence against women transcends boundaries of socio-economic class, religion and ethnicity.
- Men who abuse their partners generally exhibit strong controlling behaviour.

While in some countries the authorities viewed domestic or family violence as the main problem affecting young people, whether as victims or as perpetrators (Ecuador and Mexico), in others it is considered a problem of relatively little importance (Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru). Government perceptions of the magnitude of this phenomenon coincide with the findings of studies of changes in Latin American family structure, which have revealed that the increase in family violence in

several countries (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Honduras) observed in 2006 affected mostly women (ECLAC, 2007e).<sup>4</sup> Violence in intimate partner relationships between young people has also shown a gradual rising trend, which was cited as a source of concern by authorities in Chile and Mexico.

Although the various forms of domestic violence are generally manifested in social settings related to home and family, they reflect disparities and inequalities that are condoned in the public domain. WHO estimates for 2002 indicate that between 10% and 36% of Latin American women had been subjected to physical or sexual violence, and that between 70% and 80% of victims of sexual violence were girls. In almost half of those cases, the aggressors lived with their victims and in three quarters of the cases they were family members of the girls or boys who suffered abuse (WHO, 2003). Around one in three women in Latin America has been the victim of physical, psychological or sexual violence by family members; among adolescent girls aged 15 to 19, rates of emotional abuse are significantly higher (see table IV.3). A United Nations report (ECLAC, 2007e) draws attention to the social tolerance that exists for violence against girls and young women, especially in the private sphere, which is linked to crime, corruption, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, harassment and sexual violence, above all in domestic service.

Table IV.3  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (6 COUNTRIES): PERCENTAGES OF ALL WOMEN AND YOUNG WOMEN REPORTING HAVING BEEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY FAMILY MEMBERS, 2000-2005

Country	Physical violence		Intimate partner sexual violence		Emotional violence	
	All women	Women aged 15-19	All women	Women aged 15-19	All women	Women aged 15-19
Bolivia, 2003	52.3	43.9	15.2	11.1	53.8	48.7
Colombia, 2005	39.0	37.6	11.5	7.5	65.7	68.0
Dominican Republic, 2002	21.7	19.1	6.4	5.3	67.5	79.3
Ecuador, 2004	31.0	...	12.0	...	41.0	...
Mexico, 2003	9.3	...	7.8	...	38.4	...
Peru, 2004	42.3	27.3	9.8	4.5	68.2	75.6

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *No more! The right of women to live a life free of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/L.2808), Santiago, Chile, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The following figures illustrate the magnitude of this problem in Colombia in recent years: of all the cases of child abuse reported to the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), complaints of physical abuse totalled 3,261 in 2003, 13,685 in 2004 and 20,211 in 2005—an increase of 52% over the period. Reports of psychological abuse totalled 2,496 in 2003, 2,994 in 2004 and 4,090 in 2005, a 64% increase between 2003 and 2005. Reports of sexual abuse rose from 1,451 in 2003 to 2,182 in 2004 and 3,301 in 2005, an increase of 127% over the three-year period.

Manifestations of gender violence in the domestic sphere are associated with patterns of inequality in power relations within families and couples. A comparative study of domestic violence in nine developing countries found that women who shared the majority of household decisions with their husbands or partners were less likely to be abused (irrespective of household income level). The same report noted that women whose mothers had been abused by their fathers were twice as likely to be victims of domestic violence (Kishor and Johnson, 2004).<sup>5</sup>

All the women interviewed in the course of studies conducted in 16 communities in 10 countries in the framework of a set of PAHO projects to address gender-based violence said that they had suffered violence as a means of control used by their partners to reinforce unequal power relations within the family (Velzeboer and others, 2003). These studies also revealed that few health care providers have received specialized training in dealing with women living in situations of violence and none had protocols or standards for care. The police and legal services were often the first places women turned to for help. However, police stations were found to be the institutions that were least supportive, and law enforcement officials were found to be unaware of laws to protect victims. With regard to the role of schools, teachers felt ill-equipped to meet the needs of affected students and their families. At the community level, community members belonging to unions, cooperatives or businesses where women were able to exercise leadership also lacked information about how to detect and respond to the problem.

Violence against women is a major public health problem and is associated with a higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases (PAHO, 2007)<sup>6</sup>. According to a comparative study, there is a clear relationship between abuse of women and deterioration of their health and that of their children. For example, in almost all the countries

studied, women who had been abused by their partners had higher numbers of unwanted births and stillbirths (between 33% and 72%) than those who never experienced such violence. There is evidence of a correlation between violence and pathological conditions such as low birth weight, premature birth and miscarriage. It was also found that women who had been the victims of violence were more likely to have sexually transmitted infections than their peers who had not suffered abuse, but were less likely to receive antenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy, and their children aged 12 to 35 months were less likely to be fully vaccinated. Children of abused women were also more likely to die before reaching 5 years of age (Kishor and Johnson, 2004).<sup>7</sup>

Family violence usually occurs first in childhood. A global study on violence against children, which highlighted the living conditions of children in Latin America, found that each year more than 6 million children in countries of the region suffer severe abuse and over 80,000 die as a result of domestic violence. Sexual abuse is the least reported form of child abuse. The perpetrators are usually male and in 8 out of 10 cases are parents or relatives. According to a United Nations report on violence against children, in Costa Rica 32% of women and 13% of men interviewed reported having been sexually abused during childhood; in Nicaragua the figures were 26% and 20%, respectively, and in Chile, 75.3% of children surveyed said they had suffered some type of violence inflicted by their parents.<sup>8</sup> More than half suffer physical violence and one in four, severe physical violence (UNICEF, 2006).

While the limited availability of data makes it difficult to undertake a comparative analysis in the region, domestic violence is known to be a problem of considerable magnitude in some countries. For example, in Uruguay an average of 36 women a year die as a result of such violence, and women who have experienced domestic violence are five times more likely to attempt suicide and are at increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases and maternal mortality. According to data from the National Observatory on Violence and Crime of the Ministry of the Interior of Uruguay, in 2005 there were 6,802 domestic violence complaints. Those reports include men and women of all ages (MSP, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> This report was based on data from Demographic and Health Surveys conducted in nine developing countries: Cambodia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Haiti, India, Nicaragua, Peru and the Zambia. These surveys, most of them carried out after 1998, collected a large body of demographic and health data on women 15 to 49 years of age (Kishor and Johnson, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> According to the report *Health in the Americas 2007*, after sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean is the subregion in the world most affected by HIV/AIDS. An estimated 1.2% of the Caribbean population—about a quarter of a million people—were living with HIV/AIDS in 2006. Half of the people infected are women, and young women are 2.5 times more likely to be infected than young men. Nearly three-quarters of those infected live in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, but HIV prevalence is high throughout the subregion: 1%-2% in Barbados, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica; 2%-4% in the Bahamas, Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago. From 1981 to 2005, more than 1.7 million AIDS cases were officially reported in the Americas, 38,000 of them in persons younger than 15 years of age (PAHO, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> This report was based on data from Demographic and Health Surveys conducted in nine developing countries: Cambodia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Haiti, India, Nicaragua, Peru and the Zambia. These surveys, most of them carried out after 1998, collected a large body of demographic and health data on women 15 to 49 years of age (Kishor and Johnson, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that these data are not comparable because the various surveys applied different criteria and some used a broader definition of “violence” than others.

## C. National policies on youth

Various approaches to preventing youth violence have been tried in Latin America. They include the risk approach, the public safety approach, the conflict theory approach and the rights approach. Through different lines of action aimed at reducing youth violence, these prevention models seek to reinforce protective factors and enhance the strengths of adolescents and young people. A wide variety of initiatives have been launched in the various countries. National programmes are based on a number of different paradigms for addressing youth-related issues, policies are based on different laws, the agencies and levels of government responsible for implementing youth-related initiatives differ and there are also differences in the types of activities carried out by the public agencies involved in youth-related work in each country. Two points appear to be crucial with regard to policies aimed at youth: the need for an integrated approach on the part of government institutions and the need for policies that will support and facilitate coordination of the efforts of governmental and non-governmental institutions.

### 1. Policy approaches to youth violence in Latin America

One peculiarity of national youth policies is that different age criteria are applied in each country. The differences in the age range defined as “youth” reveal at least two trends. First, the period defined as “youth” is starting at younger ages (in Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Mexico) and extending to older ages (in Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama and Paraguay), which may mean that the definition of youth is expanding with respect not only to age but also to the way in which youth are viewed in society (OIJ, 2001). The second trend is the age overlap between “adolescents” and “young people” in the definitions of youth.

This situation affects not only the basis on which youth policies are formulated, but also the scope and nature of countries’ programmes for these age groups. On the one hand, although in the discourse on the subject youth is deemed to encompass adolescence, in practice crucial periods of the youth experience are excluded. Moreover, young people between 18 and 29 years of age

have acquired the status of citizens, since at 18 people are tried as adults in courts of law and can exercise their right to vote (Krauskopf, 2000). The gap between the social and legal realities creates a dual status for young people. While programmes for adolescents do contribute to the development of young people, they do not fully cover the youth period (Krauskopf and Mora, 2000).

Another feature of youth policies is the relative lack of explicit approaches for this population group. National policies envisage specific programmes (for example, targeting the poor) as well as general ones, but few are oriented specifically towards young people. Moreover, as noted above, in some cases there are no clear criteria to indicate whether young people should be included in the minor or the adult population. Consequently, a cross-sectional approach is applied by the various sectoral agencies that deal with youth-related issues within their respective spheres of action (e.g., education, health, employment). While policies may include actions aimed at young people,

they generally have a sectoral bias —i.e. they are designed from the standpoint of the sector, not that of the individuals at whom the policies are aimed (Balardini, 2003).

National youth policies in the region are based on four perspectives regarding the characteristics of youth (Krauskopf, 2000): youth as a preparatory period (in which youth is defined in terms of crises), youth as a problem phase (which limits the scope to issues such as crime, drugs, violence and school dropout), young people as citizens (a perspective that prioritizes the full rights of young people to participate in youth-related policies and

programmes) and youth as strategic agents of development (a view aimed at building human and social capital, including skills and abilities to enable youths to further their own development and become productive members of society). The latter two approaches view young people as social actors (see table IV.4).

From each of these approaches emerge various options with respect to the design of policies and the nature of programmes aimed at youth. From the perspective of controlling or eliminating violence, all include objectives aimed at preventing criminal behaviour.

Table IV.4  
PARADIGMS OF THE YOUTH PHASE IN POLICY AND PROGRAMME APPROACHES

Paradigm of the youth phase	Policies	Programme features	Programme types	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Transition to adulthood</li> <li>– Preparatory stage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Geared towards preparing youth for adulthood</li> <li>– Extension of access to education</li> <li>– Healthy, recreation-oriented leisure time, with low coverage</li> <li>– Military service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Universal</li> <li>– Undifferentiated</li> <li>– Isolated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Educational programmes</li> <li>– Leisure programmes: sports, recreational and cultural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Integration of youth</li> <li>– Fostering the protective factors of adolescence</li> <li>– Crime deterrence during the “pre-criminal” stage</li> <li>– Violence prevention</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Risk and wrongdoing</li> <li>– Problem phase for society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Compensatory</li> <li>– Sectoral (predominantly justice and health)</li> <li>– Targeted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Oriented towards providing social assistance and controlling specific problems</li> <li>– Targeted to working-class urban youth</li> <li>– Fragmented programme delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rehabilitation programmes</li> <li>– Social reintegration programmes</li> <li>– Prison-based programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Social control of organized youth groups</li> <li>– Violence prevention</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Youth as citizens</li> <li>– Stage of social development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Incorporated into public policies</li> <li>– Intersectoral</li> <li>– Involvement of youth as persons with specific political, social, cultural and economic rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Comprehensive</li> <li>– Participatory</li> <li>– Encourage partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– National poverty reduction policies</li> <li>– Direct and conditional resource transfer programmes</li> <li>– Volunteer programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Community-based strategy</li> <li>– Violence prevention</li> <li>– Participatory strategies</li> <li>– Social capital</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Youth as strategic agents of development</li> <li>– Stage of training and contribution to production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Incorporated into public policies</li> <li>– Intersectoral</li> <li>– Geared towards involving young people as human capital and developing social capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Equity and intersectoral institutional collaboration</li> <li>– Action to address exclusion</li> <li>– Youth participation in development strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Emergency employment programmes</li> <li>– Training programmes</li> <li>– Production and business development programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Violence prevention</li> <li>– Market participation</li> <li>– Economic capital</li> </ul>

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of D. Krauskopf, “La construcción de las políticas de juventud en Centroamérica”, *Políticas públicas de juventud en América Latina: políticas nacionales*, Oscar Dávila (comp.), Viña del Mar, CIDPA Ediciones, 2003.

Two main approaches to preventing youth violence have been put in place: one focusing on reducing risk factors and the other on reinforcing the protective factors and strengths of adolescents. These approaches to prevention have given rise to various lines of action aimed at reducing youth violence.

With respect to interventions to reduce violence-related risk factors, two types of initiatives have been implemented with a view to, on the one hand, expanding and improving the education system and, on the other, promoting sound use of leisure time among young people. In both cases it is assumed that young people have a certain amount of time

to prepare for adulthood (Rodríguez, 1995 and 1996). The assumption behind these interventions is that recreation can prevent crime and encourage the adoption of constructive social behaviours among young people. They aim to reduce the negative effects of lack of parental supervision outside school hours, which leads many children and young people to socialize with violent peers.

Another area of intervention is oriented towards social control of organized youth groups. The objective of programmes implemented under this approach has been to control the linkage of youth movements with other non-youth social movements which had adopted—either at the same time or at different times in history—a position of open defiance of the political system. This model, which took a punitive or situational prevention approach, was adopted by ministries of the interior and institutions devoted to the advancement of youth. The strategy consisted of isolating student movements and “confining” them within universities, preventing them from forging ties with other protest movements involving working-class urban youth (Rodríguez, 1995). Prison policies might be associated with this model.

In a similar vein, in recent years “heavy-handed” policies have been advocated as a means of dealing with the problems of youth violence, whether or not it is associated with drug trafficking, gangs or crime. Some examples of this approach include lowering the age of criminal responsibility in many countries of the region, police crackdowns on youth groups, injunctions against such groups and the enactment of repressive anti-youth laws that expand police powers, such as the anti-tattooing law in Honduras and the “heavy-handed” (*mano dura*) and, later, “super-heavy-handed” (*súper mano dura*) laws in El Salvador. Such harsh responses to violence have failed to control the problem and have created serious dilemmas with regard to human rights and the rule of law, in addition to contributing to prison overcrowding (WOLA, 2006).

A third model is linked to the poverty elimination strategies undertaken by democratic governments in the 1980s. These initiatives served to quell the demands of young people who were marginalized and excluded from education, serving as a compensatory measure for the negative social effects of structural adjustment programmes. Poverty reduction programmes were based on the direct transfer of resources to impoverished groups through food, job creation and health care programmes organized through social emergency funds. Although these

programmes were not classified as youth programmes, youth were beneficiaries of almost all of them, especially the job creation programmes. While they did not contain explicit violence prevention objectives, they did serve indirectly as a preventive or containment mechanism.

Since the 1990s a new model for youth policies has become widespread. This model focuses on incorporating excluded young people into the labour market. In this context, large numbers of young people have taken advantage of the opportunities created by emergency employment programmes. Although these programmes do not explicitly target young people, they began to be implemented in various countries with a marked age bias, following the model of the successful “*Chile Joven*” (“Young Chile”) programme, a vocational training programme for young people launched in Chile in 1990. The experience was repeated in other countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay, with financial support from the Inter-American Development Bank. These programmes prioritized national development needs, providing rapid training through innovative methods. By focusing their objectives on human capital formation and treating youth as contributors to development, these programmes ushered in a new youth policy approach, helping to de-link action in this area from compensatory social policies and focus employment programmes on the youth population.

In general, programmes that address the issue of violence focus on some dimension of behaviour, such as criminal behaviour, school dropout or adolescent pregnancy. Although international instruments have promoted a holistic approach to national plans, activities related to youth violence still tend to be subdivided by type of violence (political, territorial, and domestic and organized crime, among others). Projects structured in this way lack mutually reinforcing interrelated approaches (Moser, 1999). The lack of a conceptual framework comprising various disciplines (public health, criminology, sociology and psychology, among others) is one of the biggest obstacles to achieving a holistic approach to violence.

Responses to the ECLAC survey conducted on policies and programmes for the control and prevention of youth violence point to the coexistence of various competing approaches relating to the role and the needs of young people. This points up the importance of a holistic approach in policies aimed at young people.

## D. Recent legislative changes in national legal frameworks

The responses of national authorities to the ECLAC survey reveal four major areas of reform in national legal frameworks: general laws on youth, reforms of child and adolescent protection codes, new legislation on family violence and gender equality, and laws concerning the legal responsibility of adolescents and youth. It is important for these legislative reforms to be followed by monitoring and evaluation of the results of the changes introduced. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child have contributed to the reform of domestic legislation.

### 1. Progress in the development of youth-related institutions and legislation

Given the multiple dimensions of violence, legislation on the matter is diverse and addresses the problems of youth from different angles. The ECLAC survey of policies and programmes for the prevention and control of youth violence reveals four major areas of reform in national legal frameworks: general laws on youth, reforms of child and adolescent protection codes, new legislation on family violence and gender equality and laws concerning the legal responsibility of adolescents and youth.

Various countries have adopted laws on youth or young people, which serve as a legal framework for national youth policies (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and, more recently, Honduras and Bolivia, where legislation is currently under discussion) (ECLAC/OIJ, 2008). The process of creating laws to support national youth plans or programmes has varied from one country to the next. In Colombia, a document published in 1995 by the National Council on Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) established the National Youth Policy, under which laws, decrees and regulations relating to young people were established. The 1998 National Development Plan included an Education Plan for Peace, which called for the implementation of the National Youth Policy through the “Builders of a New Country” (*Constructores de un nuevo país*) programme. The “Young Colombia” (*Colombia Joven*) national

youth programme was launched in 2000 and its terms of reference have recently been revised.

In 1996 Costa Rica enacted an organic law on the National Youth Movement and established an agency with the same name to establish policy guidelines within the framework of a universal youth policy. In 2002, a general law on youth was adopted, laying the foundation for the National Youth System. Although this law has undergone numerous changes, it has raised the hierarchical standing of the agency responsible for the matter, which has evolved into the Vice-Ministry for Youth.

In 1999, the President of Nicaragua launched the formulation of a national youth policy through the Ministry of Social Action. Two years later, a law to promote the development of young people was enacted, which led to the development and adoption of the National Policy for the Comprehensive Development of Youth and the creation of a youth secretariat, with responsibility for implementing the Plan of Action. This law changed the institutions responsible for youth policy and is now regarded as vanguard legislation in the region (Dávila, 2003).

In the Dominican Republic, a law on youth was enacted in July 2000 with the aim of establishing a legal, policy and institutional framework to guide the actions of the State and society in general towards the formulation and implementation of a set of policies for meeting the needs and expectations of young people and promoting

their effective participation in decision-making processes. The law's objective is to foster the development of young people, without regard to sex, religion, political affiliation, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or nationality.

One of the countries currently discussing a general law on youth is Bolivia, where the first national survey of youth provided the basis for an assessment of Bolivian youth and the formulation of proposed guidelines for national youth policies, which in turn led to a proposal to amend the Constitution and to the development of draft legislation on youth.<sup>9</sup>

In Peru, a decree establishing the National Youth Plan 2006-2011 was approved in 2006. The Plan is underpinned by the law on the National Youth Council, adopted in 2002. This legislation was designed to establish the legal and institutional framework for the actions of the State and society with regard to youth policy and to create favourable conditions for democratic participation and representation of young people.

Another area of reform relates to the amendment of legal codes relating to children and adolescents. There are very few specific references to youth in the national constitutions of Latin American countries and those that do exist generally relate to adolescents and young people under 18 years of age. These provisions are focused on protecting the family and seeking resources to ensure, among other things, the right to life, food, health, education, physical integrity and leisure time for children and adolescents. The influence of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the efforts to incorporate its provisions into domestic law are positive developments (ECLAC/OIJ, 2007).

In Bolivia, the only explicit reference to youth is contained in a decree on the rights and duties of young people. The Dominican Republic has laws relating specifically to young people, including legislation creating a national youth agency and establishing a National Students Day. In Cuba, programmes for youth began to be offered with the Cuban revolution. The Constitution of 1976 ushered in a legal reform aimed at eliminating legislative fragmentation, and currently there are laws dealing specifically with the youth population. In Chile, there are no domestic laws or regulations relating specifically to youth, with the exception of the law creating the National Institute for Youth (OIJ, 2001).

Thus, the legal provisions relating to youth in the various countries relate mainly to safeguarding the rights of minor children and adolescents (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Uruguay). With the exception of laws relating to the age of criminal responsibility, there is no explicit reference to young people, who are subsumed within laws relating

to children and adolescents (ECLAC/OIJ, 2007). In the Dominican Republic, legislation governing the system for protecting and upholding the fundamental rights of boys, girls and adolescents was adopted in 2003 (Law 136-03).

According to the survey conducted by ECLAC in 2008, recent legislative changes relating to children include amendment of the chapter on juvenile criminal responsibility in the Child and Adolescent Code in Colombia and modification (in 2007) of the provisions relating to malicious gangs in the Child and Adolescent Code in Peru and prohibition (in 2006) of work and activities that are dangerous or harmful to the physical or mental health of adolescents. Brazil's response to the survey cited decree No. 6,490 of 2008, which established the implementing regulations for articles 80-D and 80-E of Law No. 11530, which created the National Programme for Public Security with Citizenship (PRONASCI).

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the organic law for the protection of children and adolescents forms the basis for the activities of the Autonomous Institute of the National Council for the Rights of Boys, Girls and Adolescents (IACNDNNA), formerly the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CNDNA). In 1999, children and adolescents were recognized under the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as persons possessing full legal rights and entitled to State protection. A year later the Organic Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (LOPNA) came into force. In December 2007, the latest reform of that law, which establishes the legal provisions relating to the criminal justice system and criminal responsibility for adolescents, stipulated changes aimed at accelerating litigation processes through the combined use of oral, written and recorded statements and promoting mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution with a view to avoiding litigation. In addition, in 2006 a law was enacted to protect children and adolescents with respect to Internet chat rooms, video games and other multimedia programmes.

In addition, some countries have implemented reforms aimed at strengthening organizations and forums for youth participation, such as youth councils (Colombia, Peru). This reflects a gradual recognition of young people as persons with rights and as agents of development and an effort to help organize the relationships that they may establish with other segments of society. Another type of citizenship-related legislation in force at present has to do with the establishment of voting rights. In most Latin American countries, the minimum voting age is 18 years, while in Cuba and Nicaragua 16-year-olds have the right to vote. 10 With regard to political participation of youth, there are no uniform constitutional provisions among countries.

<sup>9</sup> See [online] [http://www.oij.org/notas/notas\\_1.htm](http://www.oij.org/notas/notas_1.htm).

<sup>10</sup> The constitutions in force at the turn of the century set the age of majority at 21 years and conferred political rights at 25 years of age.

Table IV.5  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (19 COUNTRIES): MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED IN DOMESTIC LEGISLATION AS OF 2008**

Topics	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Cuba	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	
Domestic laws on domestic and family violence and violence against women	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sexual harassment	X			X		X			X	X										X
Family violence		X		X	X															
Sexual abuse and mistreatment of children		X		X	X															
Family code		X					X													
Criminal law applicable to adolescents and young people				X		X				X			X							X
Gang activity										X	X						X			
Organized crime										X	X									X
Family courts			X	X																
Youth councils					X												X			
National youth system					X												X			
Information on criminal law						X														
Family support													X							X
Smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings								X												
Maternity							X													

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of country responses to the ECLAC survey on policies and programmes for the prevention and control of violence, 2008; country responses to the ECLAC survey on programmes aimed at families, 2006; and L. Paulassi, E. Fear and N. Gherardi, "Legislación laboral y género en América Latina: avances y omisiones", *Políticas hacia las familias, protección e inclusión social*, Seminarios y conferencias series, No. 46 (LC.L.2373-P), Santiago, Chile, 2005.

A final area of legislative change concerns the treatment of gender-related issues and violence in labour laws. One example is sexual harassment, which is addressed explicitly under the laws of Costa Rica, El Salvador (in the criminal code) and Uruguay. In Argentina, the laws currently in force cover only public-sector employment and contain implicit stipulations relating to “psychological or other coercion”. The laws of other countries use terms such as “severe abusive treatment by the employer” (Ecuador) or allude to “respect for workers where their privacy, private life or dignity might be affected” (Chile). The lack of awareness of these issues—which tend to affect young women starting out in their working lives—is reflected in a lack of adequate legislation on sexual harassment in most countries of the region (Pautassi, Faur and Gherardi, 2005).

Another focus of recent legislation is promoting the incorporation of women into the labour market, whether

through business development, access to property (Colombia) or employment (Colombia, Dominican Republic). Only in Bolivia have regulations concerning paid work in the home recently been put in place (ECLAC, 2007a).

Matters relating to the development of a culture of peace or to healthy lifestyles are not reflected in national constitutions, although in some countries they are addressed implicitly. Only in Ecuador—in the context of the drafting of a new Constitution—has a culture of peace been advocated as a right. At the same time, the recent incorporation of considerations relating to quality of life in constitutional law represents a step forward in the legislative sphere, although this is a general right, not a specific right of adolescents and young people. It should be noted that there is a great void in Latin American constitutions with respect to the “right to a future”—i.e., the set of conditions required for the advancement of young people, adolescents and children.

## 2. National legal frameworks in the area of family violence

Legislation on family violence—in force in all countries of the region—is one of the most well-established areas of law in Latin America. In some cases, national plans to combat violence, with emphasis on violence in the home, are complemented by legislative measures that promote gender equality in the public (especially labour) sphere and in the private domain (gender relations within the household).

Most of the laws and policies in Latin America use the term “family violence” to refer mainly to violence perpetrated against women by their intimate partners. While PAHO used that term in its early works on the subject, it later began using the terms “gender-based violence” or “violence against women” to refer to the broader range of violent acts experienced by women and girls, perpetrated both by their partners and by family members and individuals outside the family.

Prior to the existence of international sanctions against gender-based violence, women’s organizations in various countries of the region had formed national coalitions to propose and lobby for relevant legislation, obtained funding to train police and judges and provided counselling and services to affected women. Thanks to the women’s movement, the seriousness of the problem of violence against women has been increasingly recognized since the 1970s, and the issue has been discussed at the international level at the World Conferences on Women

held in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1996) (Velzeboer, 2003). Those events helped to put in place instruments that expanded protection against this problem for women.

One such instrument is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and its Optional Protocol of 1999, ratified by 14 Latin American countries (the exceptions being Chile, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua). This convention led to the inclusion in national legal systems of important rights for women arising from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which have been further elaborated as general recommendations by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Optional Protocol establishes the Committee’s competence to receive, consider and investigate complaints of any form of discrimination against women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women led to the elimination of the notion of “marital authority” (*potestad marital*) from legal regimes, doing away with the rules relating to the head of household, which gave the man the right to make decisions concerning the family, including choosing where to establish the conjugal domicile, granting the wife permission to work and limiting her freedom of movement. As a result of this change, a husband’s right to discipline his wife and to do as he wished with her body without her consent was also abolished, giving rise to laws

on family violence. Another key element of the Convention relates to equality of rights with regard to access to family planning services, in particular in relation to decisions concerning the number of children desired and maternity protection. This, in turn, facilitated the development of public policies aimed at reducing maternal mortality.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 also had a notable impact on family relations, particularly with regard to protecting the rights of girls who were being forced into marital relationships at a young age in some countries. As the social and legal status of young people is generally equated with that of the population under 18 years of age, it is necessary also to look at legal instruments relating to children and adolescents, which include national child and adolescent codes, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (International Labour Organization Convention C138) and the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention C182). The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the international instrument that has had the greatest impact in terms of recognition of the rights of young people; however, it refers explicitly to adolescents and young people between 15 and 18 years of age. There is no international instrument providing protection specifically for the youth population aged 19 to 24 (Bernales, 2001).

Countries fall into three categories with respect to the Convention: some have ratified it, but still have old legislation concerning children in force; others have begun processes of reform aimed at ensuring full protection of the rights of children, but still partially retain legislative approaches that predate the Convention; and a third group of States have substantially amended their laws in accordance with the Convention and are engaged in complex processes of institutional transformation under new policies and programmes (ECLAC, 1998). While most countries have ratified the ILO conventions on child labour, there are inconsistencies with respect to international standards concerning the minimum working age, as well as major differences between and within countries.<sup>11</sup>

In summary, most Latin American countries have adopted a regulatory framework on family violence or legal provisions on gender equality. Most of them were introduced in the 1990s; more recently, a law on women's right to a life free from violence (2007) was adopted in Mexico and the "Maria Da Penha" law against violence (2006) was enacted in Brazil.

In the 1990s, a number of countries adopted anti-violence legislation, including the law on protection against family violence (1994) in Argentina, the law on family or domestic violence (1995) in Bolivia, the law on violence against women and the family (1998) in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the family violence act (1994) in Chile, the domestic violence act (1996) in Colombia, the law on violence against women and the family (1995) in Ecuador, the family violence act (1996) in El Salvador, the law on prevention, punishment and eradication of family violence (1996) in Guatemala, the domestic violence act (1997) in Honduras, the law on family violence prevention and assistance for victims for the Federal District and 22 states (1996) in Mexico, the domestic violence act (2000) in Paraguay and the law establishing the State and societal policy against domestic violence (1993) in Peru.

Some countries have no specific national legislation on the subject. In the case of Nicaragua, Law 230 introduced amendments and additions to the Criminal Code (1996), while in Panama Law 27 (1995) criminalized domestic violence and child abuse, provided for the establishment of specialized agencies to provide care for victims of these crimes, introduced reforms and added articles to the Criminal and Judicial Code and instituted other measures.

In all these laws there are differences with regard to the acts that constitute family violence, the penalties for perpetrators and the measures of prevention and immediate protection available to victims, depending on the balance between preventive and punitive measures (see table 3 in annex).

Regarding definitions of acts of violence, while some countries make clear distinctions among the various types of violence, including physical, psychological, sexual and economic or property-related violence (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Uruguay), others do not (Argentina, Nicaragua, Paraguay) or they exclude the economic/property dimension (Bolivia, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru). In Chile, the law defines and punishes acts of physical and psychological violence committed in domestic settings, but does not include sexual assault in the home and does not protect non-minor children or siblings (whose cases come under the criminal code).

In terms of whether such cases should be dealt with under civil or criminal law, current legislation includes measures that emphasize prevention, punishment or both, depending on the country. Costa Rica has a law establishing protective measures for victims of domestic violence and giving oversight responsibilities to the Ministry of Women. Bolivia's legislation establishes preventive measures and

<sup>11</sup> The minimum working age is 18 in Bolivia and Colombia, 17 in Cuba, 16 in Brazil, Chile and the Dominican Republic, 15 in Uruguay and 14 in Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama. Peru has established different minimum ages for workers in agriculture (15 years), mining and industry (16 years) and industrial fishing (17 years) (ECLAC, 2004a).

amends a criminal law that allowed impunity for perpetrators. It also establishes statutory rape, rape and sexual abuse as public order offences. In Chile, the legislation is both punitive and preventive and grants powers to civil courts, the Chilean national police force (Carabineros de Chile) and the national investigatory police force (Policía de Investigaciones), but also provides for treatment and community services. Although this is a civil law, cases of serious physical violence come under the criminal code. Uruguay's domestic violence act provides for both a preventive approach to the problem and a criminal response (prosecution in order to prevent further violence).

With regard to the specific limitations of these laws in national contexts, it should be noted that protection measures in Costa Rica are considered inadequate, as only 20% of requests for interim measures of protection are resolved in favour of the petitioner. In Bolivia, limitations include a shortage of human and financial resources, lack of uniform procedures and lack of training and strengthening of the capacity of health personnel to ensure enforcement of the law.

Indeed, few laws exist to enable health personnel to pursue legal action when needed. Uruguay is an exception,

as it has adopted the international instruments and models of intervention proposed by PAHO to address violence, which give responsibility to health personnel, without requiring them to report all cases of which they may become aware. In 2004 four special courts on domestic violence were established in Montevideo, in addition to the traditional district courts and public defenders' offices, which are responsible for emergency cases. In Uruguay, the domestic violence act provides for the creation of the National Advisory Council on Combating Domestic Violence, which is tasked with drafting the National Plan to Combat Domestic Violence and grants jurisdiction to family courts to intervene in cases in which no criminal offence has been committed.

Other legislative changes identified in the ECLAC survey responses reveal a variety of actions. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reforms in legal procedures and family law have been introduced with regard to parental authority, custody and the right to family life, replacing former provisions regarding parental visitation rights (organic law on protection of the family, fatherhood and motherhood, 26 July 2007). In Mexico, federal law was amended with a view to preventing and eliminating discrimination.

### 3. Criminal law relative to adolescents and young people

As a result of increases in the proportion of arrests among youth in several countries, there have been calls to lower the age of legal responsibility, with proponents pointing to the legal impediments that hinder the prosecution and punishment of individuals under 18 years of age. In some cases, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, provisions have been included to protect children under 18 and avoid their being subject to the same penalties as adults. The age of criminal responsibility is 12 in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico; 13 in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Uruguay; 14 in Chile, Colombia, Panama, Paraguay and Peru; 16 in Argentina, Bolivia and Cuba; and 18 in Brazil.<sup>12</sup>

Lowering the age of criminal responsibility has created problems in terms of overcrowding of prisons and lack of appropriate detention facilities or institutions to facilitate the reintegration of young offenders into society. It has been found that, where the State fails to address the social exclusion of young people, repressive or heavy-handed policies have led to a strengthening of gang organization and to the transformation of youth gangs into complex criminal organizations, and have also exacerbated the crisis in prisons (Aguilar, 2007). Such measures may expose young people to situations of violence (riots, revolts, etc.), which will only encourage more criminal behaviour in the long term.

<sup>12</sup> In El Salvador, cases involving young people aged 12 to 16 are handled through an antisocial behaviour system, while cases involving those aged 16 to 18 come under the criminal justice system. In Cuba, minors are subject to the same procedure as adults, but the criminal code provides the option of reducing sentencing limits based on two age brackets. In cases involving defendants aged 16 to 18, sentences can be reduced to half and for defendants aged

18 to 20 they can be reduced by one third. Executive Order 64/82 establishes a system for treating children under 16 years of age with behavioural disorders. Bolivia has a "social responsibility" system for young people aged 12 to 16, while those aged 16 to 21 are tried in the general justice system, but are afforded special protections under the applicable legislation.

Paradoxically, although there is consensus on the limitations of the prison system, the debate surrounding this issue is taking place in legal contexts that have conflicting legal instruments, such as the doctrine of “irregular situation” and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which children are viewed as persons with rights. While under the former, young people are considered abandoned or delinquent persons who should be institutionalized (i.e., imprisoned), the latter seeks to provide “comprehensive protection” for young people (García Méndez, 1994). Several countries that have signed the Convention continue to apply traditional approaches based on the doctrine of irregular situation and support lowering the age of criminal responsibility.

Recent changes in juvenile criminal justice law include criminal code reforms concerning penalties and security measures, rehabilitation, treatment without incarceration and community service, and crimes against the free development of personality in Mexico, and amendments, in 2006, to the law for the treatment of juvenile offenders in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In recent years, laws have been enacted in the latter country on computer crime (2001), organized crime (2005), social responsibility in radio and television (2004) and drug abuse and illicit trafficking (2005). Reforms on juvenile violence in El Salvador include the anti-*maras* act, the law to combat criminal activities of illicit groups and associations, and the juvenile criminal justice law, adopted in June 2006, formerly known as the juvenile offender act.

## E. Policies and programmes for the prevention and reduction of youth violence

The policies and programmes undertaken in Latin America to prevent and reduce youth violence are diverse in nature; some have been oriented towards public safety and peaceful coexistence, while others have focused on the elimination of domestic and family violence against women, recreation, school-based interventions and educational rehabilitation for offenders, job training or adolescent and youth health. The results of the ECLAC survey show that only in some countries are programmes against youth violence part of national youth systems; in others they are carried out in the framework of specialized and sectoral initiatives.

### 1. Content of programmes on youth violence

In the array of programmes for youth, several areas of intervention for the prevention and control of youth violence can be distinguished: safety and peaceful coexistence; domestic and family violence or violence against women, recreation, intervention in schools and educational rehabilitation for offenders, job training and adolescent and youth health. While these strategies are beginning to be based on multi-sectoral planning, there is

still a tendency to address youth violence as a cross-cutting element of broader policies, including national public safety strategies and plans for the protection of children and adolescents, strengthening of the family and gender equality, as well as national violence deterrence plans.

The results of the ECLAC survey show that programmes against youth violence are part of national youth systems only in some countries. This is the case with the lines of

action proposed under Peru's Youth Policy 2005-2015, Brazil's National Youth Inclusion Programme (ProJovem), Colombia's Presidential "Young Colombia" (*Colombia Joven*) Programme and Mexico's National Youth Policy and National Youth Programme (PROJUVENTUD).

In other countries, programmes to prevent youth violence are carried out within specialized areas of action. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, youth violence prevention activities are implemented under national plans for the protection of children and adolescents (2001-2007), a national plan against sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation (2005), border crime prevention plans and plans for the protection of families in the Colombian-Venezuelan border area. In Chile, youth violence prevention activities are undertaken mainly under the National Public Safety Policy (2004) and in El Salvador, in the framework of the National Youth Policy and Public Safety Policy. Peru has implemented plans to prevent violence with support from PAHO and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), together with training programmes for officials responsible for youth development activities.

At the sectoral level, several programmes have drawn on successful experiences in the areas of adolescent health, prevention of risk behaviours, awareness-raising and promotion of healthy lifestyles. The participation of specialized non-governmental organizations has been crucial to the implementation of these programmes, both because of their methodological contributions and because

they have provided the initial impetus for initiatives that were later replicated in the public sphere (as in the case of the Adolescent Guidance Centre (CORA) in Mexico, which is considered a paradigmatic example of such an initiative). The "Open your Eyes" Programme in Colombia and the healthy schools and communities programmes carried out through the Ministry of Health in Peru are other examples. This group of prevention programmes also includes drug abuse programmes (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Peru).

Plans for training and employment as a means of preventing violence include apprenticeship, job training and microenterprise development programmes. Apprenticeship programmes include technical training programmes designed to meet the needs of the productive apparatus. Evaluations of some of these programmes have criticized their educational bias (targeting of young people who had completed basic education) and lack of business management training, technical assistance and credit support (Rodríguez, 1995).

Another area on which youth violence prevention programmes have focused is youth participation. In this context, volunteer programmes have been developed, building on volunteer initiatives already under way in local environments, including Christian youth groups, the Scout Movement and Catholic youth ministry groups. Their focus has been on training youth community and outreach workers, an area in which Christian youth groups have accumulated considerable experience.

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## 2. Public safety and peaceful coexistence programmes

Measures implemented in the area of public safety have included intervention models promoting reparation and accountability, within the framework of strategies for ensuring public safety and encouraging youths and adolescents to accept responsibility for their crimes, coupled with judicial structures for victim assistance and community-police partnerships at the local level. Government action has encompassed a wide range of pre- and post-crime interventions, utilizing family- and community-based intervention approaches, as well as measures aimed at youth in conflict with the law (see table 4 in the annex).

The family is the focus of intervention for various programmes aimed either at strengthening the family (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Peru) or at putting

in place support structures for victims of violence. In Ecuador, for example, special police units have been established to serve women, families and children, under the coordination of the Ministry of the Interior. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela a school and community ombudsman programme was in effect from 2002 to 2006. Noteworthy among the initiatives incorporating prevention models with community-based approaches are those programmes that link the work of the local police with various sectors of the community. One example is the National Programme for Public Security with Citizenship (PRONASCI) in Brazil, which combines public safety and social activities. Other examples include the Peruvian Youth Patrols Programme and Friends of the Police Youth Club, similar to neighbourhood watch and community-based

school policing associations. Another type of programme involves the creation of specialized bodies within the national police to deal with child and youth issues. In 1978, Colombia created a special juvenile police force, made up largely of women. Colombia has also established a child and adolescent police corps, formerly known *Policía de Protección Juvenil* (Juvenile Protection Police) and currently called *Policía Cívica Juvenil* (Juvenile Civic Police). In the Dominican Republic, the Democratic Security Plan includes a neighbourhood security programme for excluded communities that provides scholarships, banking services (small unsecured loans for small initiatives), recreation, and vocational and job training. Steps have also been taken to regulate the distribution and consumption of alcoholic beverages, protect victims of violence and control access to weapons.

The use of community-based approaches to address the problem of violence has led to the creation of programmes aimed at fostering the social integration of at-risk youth. Such programmes are based on recreation and the promotion of opportunities for youth participation and representation, as well as increasing job opportunities for young people. Brazil has launched the Protection Programme for Children and Adolescents under Death Threats (PPCAAM), which ensures their safety and protection by removing them from the place of risk, placing them in a safe environment and ensuring their access to health care, education, sports, cultural opportunities and, where appropriate, to market-oriented job training courses. Other programmes of this type in Latin America include a programme to promote a culture of peace, human rights and youth violence prevention and a youth advancement programme, implemented in accordance with the specific lines of action of the educational policy in Peru, and programmes to promote peaceful neighbourhoods and opportunities for dialogue on diversity in Ecuador.

A variety of recreation-oriented interventions have been implemented, ranging from the celebration of Children's Day in Colombia to sports development projects in countries such as Chile (football/soccer schools), Costa Rica (construction of football/soccer fields) and Brazil (programme offering access to sports, nutritional supplements, academic support and sports equipment). In Costa Rica, sports development projects are offered by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Justice, which provide training to team fan groups with a view to discouraging violence during football/soccer matches.

The area of promoting youth and adolescent accountability for crime includes a whole range of measures targeting young offenders, including rehabilitation, school reintegration and early intervention. One example is the programme "Chats about Juvenile Criminal Law" in Costa

Rica, a national programme implemented in 2001 under the coordination of the Ministry of Public Safety. Peru has programmes for early intervention and counselling for at-risk adolescents and youth, crime reparation measures and social reintegration of young offenders, administered by the Ministry of Justice.

Some countries have attempted to combine punitive and situational prevention approaches in addressing youth violence. In Chile, for example, the National Public Safety Strategy includes community public safety plans, which are implemented in collaboration with municipalities through annual projects to prevent violence in educational institutions and psychosocial prevention initiatives targeting at-risk children and adolescents. The public safety plans, launched in 2005, are limited to urban areas and involve the implementation of projects of the Municipal Support Fund (FAGM), which during the 2006-2007 financial year benefited 15,067 young men and women in 57 communities. The amount available for projects was 908,329,557 pesos (approximately US\$ 1,481,000 in 2000) per year. Another line of action of the National Public Safety Strategy is a comprehensive programme for children and adolescents carried out with funds from the 24-Hour Integrated Security Programme of the National Police of Chile. The programme was implemented in three urban regions, with a budget of 512,000,000 pesos (US\$ 773 million in 2000), provided by the Ministry of the Interior and the National Children's Service. It is aimed at children and adolescents included in the 24-hour programme (who have come into contact with a police unit for matters relating to infringement of rights or violations of the law but are considered not criminally responsible).

Another country that has combined strong punitive measures with measures aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence and a culture of peace is El Salvador, where various national plans are being implemented, including the "Heavy-Handed" (*Mano Dura*) plan (introduced in July 2003) and the "Super-Heavy-Handed" (*Súper Mano Dura*) plan (introduced in June 2004 and renewed in January 2006), designed to control youth gangs. In the area of prevention, El Salvador has also launched (in January 2007) the National Plan for Social Prevention and Peace, which targets at-risk communities in 13 districts (*municipios*) in the western part of the country, and the "Friendly Hand" (*Mano Amiga*) and "Outstretched Hand" (*Mano Extendida*) plans (in June 2004). In the same vein, the Government has implemented a programme for the social prevention of youth violence and crime in El Salvador and a programme for the social prevention of youth violence and crime specifically targeting the western part of the country, the situation appraisals for which were based on risk maps, municipal data, community records and school assessments. With regard to the monitoring

and evaluation systems in use, impact indicators for specific components of work were developed and surveys of victimization and perceptions of insecurity were conducted, in addition to the normal periodic updating of the table of indicators of violence and crime of the Central American Observatory against Violence (OCAVI) and the implementation of municipal observatories. The aforementioned programmes for youth violence and crime prevention also included school-based components aimed at encouraging recreational sports and art as tools for steering young people away from violence.

In the area of public safety and peaceful coexistence, Colombia is one of the countries that developed the most programmes and incorporated the issue of violence to the greatest extent into its national youth policy. In the framework of the new Constitution of 1991, which marked a significant step forward with regard to decentralization and democratization, the first national strategy against violence was formulated and was revised in 1993. Both national plans recognize that there are diverse manifestations of violence, which call for specific differentiated policies. To address the problem of violence, an institutional framework was established which covers the national, regional and local levels and is diversified by sector (families, schools, youth, women). This framework is designed with both a preventive approach (education, employment, participation) and a coercive one (police, army, justice). In addition, there has been open debate and an effort to raise public awareness of the issue in the media, political parties and community

organizations. A number of institutions have been created in recent years, including presidential advisory councils, urban mediation centres, community-based mediation and dispute resolution centres, special grievance committees, youth houses, “centres of love” in Buenaventura, grass-roots organizations, family police units, security councils, peace commissions, human rights offices and citizens’ groups, which have joined the traditional police, justice and municipal government agencies.

Noteworthy initiatives at the local level include the Development, Security, and Peace (DESEPAZ) Programme in Cali and the Strategic Security Plan for the Medellín metropolitan area. The DESEPAZ Programme includes five priority projects: research on the epidemiology of violence; strengthening of law and order through the establishment of a security council and improvement of police forces; education for peace and coexistence through the media, support for the school system and the family structure; opening up of opportunities for participation at the local level through community government councils, community safety councils, local administrative boards and intersectoral committees; education for community participation and peaceful coexistence and promotion of social development in critical and at-risk sectors. The Colombian case is remarkable for the strong institutional system underpinning the Plan, the dynamic linkage with the national youth agency and the diversity of the strategies and programmes aimed at providing a comprehensive solution to the problems of youth at various levels.

### 3. Violence prevention in the educational sphere

In the area of education, several countries have mounted major efforts to prevent violence in schools, although schools are now having to contend with new problems such as cyber-bullying. In most cases, prevention programmes are provided for under education policies and are carried out with the support or coordination of the local police force or other agencies (justice, social development, health, etc.).

In Chile, the specific policy for young people calls for the implementation of comprehensive preventive schools and of the “Safer Chile” programme, which includes a line of action focusing on schools and another line of action aimed at preventing child and youth violence. Comprehensive preventive schools were established in 2007 in 60 communities, with funding totalling 1 billion

pesos (approximately US\$ 1,511,000 in 2000). This initiative targeted students aged 12 to 14 with behavioural problems in secondary schools with a high-risk student population. The project to prevent violence in schools, which began in 2005, benefited 26,512 young people and members of the educational community in the country’s 31 urban districts (*comunas*) during fiscal year 2006-2007. The budget for the project totalled 372,866,136 pesos (approximately US\$ 608,000 in 2000). It focused on the educational community in municipal and private-subsidized institutions, selected on the basis of an assessment of public safety in the community in question. It is proposed to extend the project to the second level of primary school and to the first and second levels of secondary school starting in 2008.

There have also been initiatives to prevent school dropout. Chile has launched school reintegration programmes nationwide, with funding of 426 billion pesos (about US\$ 695,000,000 in 2000), mainly from the Ministry of Education, but also with support from the Ministry of the Interior. The target population for these initiatives are youths under 18 years of age who have left school or at risk of doing so. The Ministry of Education and the National Drug Control Council (CONACE) (under the Ministry of the Interior) are responsible for coordinating these programmes. Costa Rica has implemented the “New Opportunities” programme, a conditional cash transfer programme coordinated by the Ministry of Education and aimed at preventing school dropout.

Another example of educational initiatives for the prevention of youth violence is the Colombian “Seeds of Knowledge” (*Semillas de conocimiento*) programme, which includes education projects aimed at preventing crime and wrongdoing among children and adolescents. The lines of action of this programme are: student social service, workshops to strengthen values for parents and children, police training and creative use of vacation time. Also in Colombia, the “Playing” (*Juguetando*) programme uses recreation for girls and boys, adolescents, parents and children to disseminate information on their fundamental rights.

A recent advance in violence prevention through education is the integration of approaches emphasizing a culture of peace, citizenship, peaceful coexistence and healthy school environments, which are being applied in various educational institutions in the region. The experience of the “Making Room” (*Abrindo Espaços*) programme, now called “Open School” (*Escola Aberta*), implemented by UNESCO in Brazil, revealed that the greatest impact of violence at the community level is that it creates school environments that are incompatible with teaching and learning. This programme was implemented at the national level (in 14 state capitals of Brazil) and was

based on a 2002 study of violence in schools. That study mapped the types of violence occurring on school premises and identified situations that can trigger it (disciplinary measures, aggressive acts between students and teachers, graffiti, physical damage to the school, unclear rules of organization, lack of material and human resources, low teacher and staff salaries and lack of dialogue with the community, among others). The programme’s objectives are to promote interaction among schools, families and communities (creating mechanisms of negotiation with regard to the internal rules and regulations of the school); to implement positive measures in terms of public safety; to produce educational materials to sensitize families and teachers; and to provide access to cultural activities at the local level in existing school facilities.

The programme opened schools at weekends (Saturdays or Sundays or both), giving young people access to computer laboratories, sports facilities, libraries and other facilities. An assessment carried out by UNESCO in the State of Rio de Janeiro, presented in the report *School of Peace*, clearly revealed the power of schools to foster tolerance and mutual respect. A recent evaluation of the experiences of Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco (2000) shows a decrease in robbery, fights, petty theft, vandalism, graffiti, sexual assault, drug trafficking and use, personal humiliation, carrying of firearms, gangs in schools, poor student behaviour and alcohol consumption on school premises, among other accomplishments (Morales, 2007). In addition to the Open School programme, the National Youth Policy created “Literate Brazil”, a literacy programme targeting the population over 15 years of age; a programme to upgrade and expand secondary education (PROMED); a programme to facilitate access to professional education (PROEJA); a national textbook programme for secondary schools (PNLEM); and the “University for All” programme (PROUNI), which provides full and partial scholarships for low-income students.

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#### 4. National plans against domestic violence

After the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, a number of Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean drew up plans for the coordination of actions to put a stop to domestic violence, utilizing as a basis the various international instruments relating to the protection of women’s rights, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women and the Convention of Belém do Pará. The various initiatives undertaken in this area have helped to ensure the inclusion of the issue on public agendas, the development of communication strategies, the promotion of laws, the provision of technical assistance to health services and the implementation of sectoral and cross-sectoral action.

In several countries, national plans against domestic violence have been framed within gender equity policies based on the Beijing Platform for Action (Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay). These plans call for comprehensive action on all areas of the Platform, which distinguish them from the plans formulated in other countries, such as Bolivia and Brazil (García and others, 2000).

In most cases, the institutional actors responsible for the national response to domestic violence are ministries of the family, ministries of justice, agencies for the protection of women and health institutions. In Bolivia, the major actors in the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women are ministries and vice-ministries. In Chile, the National Plan on Prevention of Violence within the Family is overseen by the National Women's Service (SERNAM), working in coordination with various ministries, the women's movement, international cooperation agencies and municipal victim assistance centres and programmes. In Costa Rica, the entity that has overall responsibility for the National Plan to Address and Prevent Intra-Family Violence (PLANOVI) is the National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family (now known as the National Institute of Women), with support from various government institutions that are part of the plan, including municipal women's offices, community networks, civil society organizations that participated in the design of the plan and international cooperation agencies.

In Brazil, the institutional actors responsible for the National Programme to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence are the National Council on Women's Rights (CNDM), the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice (responsible for shelters for victims of violence). The plan includes four strategic lines of action: coordination of inter-ministerial action (health, education and culture), legislative changes, strengthening the legal and law enforcement system for dealing with violence against women and public awareness-raising campaigns (García and others, 2000). The Protection Programme for Children and Adolescents under Death Threats (PPCAAM) provides for the removal of children from their families and their placement in safer communities.

In Uruguay, implementation of the National Plan against Domestic Violence launched in late 2004 is the responsibility of the National Institute for Women of the Ministry of Social Development and the staff of the Gender Violence Area of the National Women's Health and Gender Programme, among other agencies. The plan is rights-based and follows the approach advocated by PAHO/WHO. It established a model of care for domestic violence based on cross-cutting approaches (gender equity, participation, partnerships) and national coalitions of political actors for the development of legislation and

public policy. At the sectoral level, it includes community-based strategies to strengthen networks, campaigns and self-help groups (MSP, 2006).

In Mexico, the national youth policy encompasses the National Network to Counter Violence against Young Women and Men and the National Programme for Youth (PROJUVENTUD), a medium-term programme to address gender and equity issues. Strategies implemented to date include training at the regional and national levels in gender equity, awareness and information campaigns on intimate partner violence among young people, training and distribution of "Paths to Equity" (*Caminos hacia la equidad*) educational materials and the national "Women as Seen through the Eyes of Youth" (*Las mujeres desde los ojos de la juventud*) video competition.

One of the most important programmes in Colombia is "Make Peace" (*Haz paz*), which is being carried out in the framework of the National Policy for Family Peace and Coexistence. Through this programme, tools are being disseminated to increase and improve service delivery to families in conflict and victims of family violence. The institutions involved in the formulation and implementation of the "Make Peace" programme are the National Planning Department, the presidential advisory committees and special programmes for women's equity, the Ministries of Social Protection, Education, Communications, Culture, Interior and Justice, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the National Police, the Attorney General's Office and the Office of the Ombudsman. The Presidential Advisory Council for Social Policy assumed responsibility for coordinating the "Make Peace" programme in 2000, and between 2001 and 2003 the Colombian Family Welfare Institute also gradually became involved.

The process of implementing these national plans has been complex. In some cases, the national plan against domestic violence has been used to compensate for a lack of public policies for gender equity (Bolivia), while in others, the lack of a comprehensive plan has given rise to sectoral policies and activities (Chile), the effectiveness of which has been lessened by lack of coordination and implementation problems. In countries that have not developed policies and where governmental institutions are weak, the problems have multiplied. In cases where the national plan and the gender policy have been based on a comprehensive vision (Costa Rica), an effort has been made to offset weaknesses in the policy by emphasizing continuity of the plan and ongoing attention to the issue of violence.

While government efforts to stem domestic violence in Latin America have given the problem greater visibility, there remain some difficulties in implementing existing legal provisions. One major obstacle to implementing

programmes aimed at addressing family violence is the lack of linkage between the laws enacted and the national plans and programmes put in place. In Chile and Costa Rica, unlike in other countries, the plans have had greater continuity (García and others, 2000).

The programmes implemented in this area encompass various forms of public action. While in some countries a national policy with a comprehensive approach has been applied (e.g., Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica and Uruguay), in others specific actions against domestic violence have been undertaken by various public institutions, but there is no national plan or programme. The latter approach is less costly, but the characteristics of demand for such services make it inadequate in the long term. A growing concern at present is intimate partner violence among young couples, the victims of which are mainly young women. Chile and Mexico have initiated awareness and prevention campaigns to address this form of violence.

In all cases, the provision of services to victims of domestic violence has expanded. In Bolivia, such services are provided by health care facilities and family protection teams, and comprehensive legal services have

also been developed. In Costa Rica, several national ministries provide victim assistance services of various types, although municipal governments are playing a growing role. In Brazil, the network of shelters for victims of domestic violence has received federal funding and been strengthened, the Ministry of Health has adopted a response protocol and the health and police sectors are coordinating their activities. There are differences with regard to the approach to victim assistance: in some cases (Bolivia and Costa Rica) victim assistance services take direct responsibility for providing assistance, while in others they focus on prevention and technical assistance (Brazil and Chile) (García and others, 2000).

One of the most recent advances is the implementation of national programmes, regional campaigns and activities targeting various groups, including the organized participation of groups of men against violence. Evidence of the impact of such initiatives is the growing participation of judges and magistrates therein and the gradual inclusion of the issue of domestic violence on the electoral platforms of presidential candidates of both sexes (ECLAC, 2007e).

## F. Coordinating institutions and entities working in the area of youth violence

The government agencies that deal with issues relating to youth vary by country. They include ministries, vice-ministries, youth secretariats, under-secretariats, institutes, directorates and national youth councils. There are also some government agencies located within non-specialized ministerial institutions, whose administrative and political authority is limited by their lack of independent legal status. Youth observatories that serve as information clearinghouses have been established in only three countries of the region. The main problem with regard to financing for policies and programmes to prevent youth violence is lack of continuity in the allocation of resources owing to non-inclusion of the relevant activities in public budgets, the low priority accorded to the issue of violence and its various manifestations as a public health and safety issue and lack of political will to mandate funding for measures to address it.

## 1. Features of the coordinating institutions working in the area of youth violence

In the countries studied, the institutional approach to the issue of youth violence has depended on consolidation of the agencies responsible for issues relating to youth. Progress in that regard has been uneven. In Brazil, for example, the National Youth Council, the National Youth Secretariat and the National Youth Inclusion Programme (ProJovem) were created jointly under the National Youth Policy, adopted by law in 2005. In other countries, official youth agencies have been created by presidential decree —i.e., by the chief executive currently in office, without any legislative backing, as a result of which they are vulnerable to changes of government (ECLAC, 2000c).

With regard to the level of the government agencies that deal specifically with youth, they include ministries (Panama), vice-ministries (Bolivia, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Costa Rica, Paraguay), youth secretariats (Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Peru), under-secretariats and institutes (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay), directorates (Argentina, Ecuador), national youth councils (Guatemala) and others. Some public agencies are smaller units located within a non-specialized ministerial institution and lack independent legal status, as a result of which they are administratively and politically limited (El Salvador and Nicaragua until 2001). Others come under to a high-level government agency and enjoy administrative autonomy, but work directly with a lead agency, which has primary responsibility for youth-related matters, such as the ministry responsible for formulating the national youth policy (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) (Dávila, 2003). These agencies may work at the national, provincial or local (municipal or departmental) levels, depending on their jurisdiction.

In general, the objectives of the national institutions that deal with youth include at least four tasks: systematic compilation of information about the situation of youth, professionalization of technical personnel, design and implementation of innovative programmes and development of communication skills in order to build consensus among leaders and public opinion. While significant progress has been made, the institutional structure needs to be modified in order to delegate responsibility for leadership and for coordination of plans and programmes to national youth institutes.

The survey conducted by ECLAC in the region reveals that a variety of institutions maintain information systems or collect statistics on violence as it affects the youth population. In some countries there are violence observatories operating in coordination with national youth agencies. At the regional level, as part of an effort to quantify the magnitude of the problem, since 2004 the Pan American Health Organization and the Inter-American Coalition for the Prevention of Violence, with technical support from the CISALVA Institute at Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia, have been supporting and implementing a project involving municipal violence observatories in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama. In addition, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has been working for a decade in the area of violence prevention and public safety, with a portfolio that to date includes more than US\$ 215 million. According to the ECLAC survey, information on violence in Honduras comes from the Honduras Violence Observatory, a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the National Autonomous University of Honduras. In Ecuador, such information is based on data from the Youth Observatory and in Uruguay it is supplied by the National Observatory on Violence and Crime.

With regard to the dissemination of information to support the formulation and implementation of national and regional policies for the prevention and control of violence, worthy of note is the work being carried out by the Central American Observatory against Violence (OCAVI), which serves as a virtual information centre for decision-makers, operators of prevention systems, academics and members of the general public concerned with the phenomenon of violence and crime in Central America. OCAVI is part of the Safe Central America Plan, an initiative of the Central American Integration System (SICA). The observatory is located in El Salvador and monitors the issue both at the national level and at the regional level in Central America. Given the transnational nature of the problem, it also collects information from Mexico, the United States and Canada and from other countries in Latin America and the world. OCAVI studies a wide range of topics related to the problem of violence in the region and in the world. The information compiled by the observatory includes indicators of violence, studies and research, public policies, projects and models of prevention, control and rehabilitation.

In other countries, information on youth violence is compiled by national statistics offices. This is the case in Argentina, Mexico and Peru. The Integrated System of Social Indicators of Ecuador is another example. In Guatemala, the institutions that coordinates and compile information on youth violence are the National Youth Council (CONJUVE) and the police, while in

Peru this work is done by the Ministry the Interior, the national statistics office, the National Youth Secretariat and the National Police. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the agency that maintains statistics on offences committed by children and adolescents at the national level is the Scientific, Penal and Crime Research Corps (CICPC).

Table IV.6  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (14 COUNTRIES): INSTITUTION SERVING AS A CLEARINGHOUSE FOR INFORMATION ON YOUTH VIOLENCE

Country	Ministry of the Interior	National statistics office	Youth institute	Police	Violence observatory	Other
Argentina		X	X	X		X
Brazil						X <sup>a</sup>
Chile	X			X		
Colombia						X
Costa Rica	---					
Dominican Republic						
Ecuador		X				
El Salvador						
Guatemala			X	X		
Honduras					X	
Mexico		X				
Peru	X	X	X	X	X	
Uruguay					X	
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)			X	X		

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of government responses to the ECLAC survey on policies and programmes for tackling youth violence in Latin America, 2008.

<sup>a</sup> There is no specific institution that compiles and coordinates information on youth violence.

With respect to the management and coordination of programmes targeting youth violence, youth agencies and the ministries responsible for violence problems work in coordination with police forces, NGOs, foundations, schools, community associations and other stakeholders.

In Chile, the Ministry of the Interior and several NGOs coordinate programmes on youth violence, working with municipal governments and local police forces. Some programmes, especially those related to recreation, job training and education, are coordinated by the National Institute for Youth (INJUV). The Institute is a mainly technical body responsible for coordinating institutional efforts; it comes under the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation and has municipal youth offices at the local level.<sup>13</sup> This entity was established

<sup>13</sup> Between 1997 and 1999, UNJUV's implementing functions were reduced. Currently, it is responsible for implementing the Youth Information System (SIJ) and Interjoven, initiatives aimed at intervening in specific strategic areas which reinforce its technical, advisory, linking and coordinating role.

in 1991 and was designed to function as a decentralized public service, having independent legal status and its own financial resources. Its activities are carried out through various public agencies. Its youth policies are aimed at adolescent students in secondary and higher education institutions. INJUV works nationally in a coordinated manner through 168 local and municipal youth agencies.

In El Salvador, the institutions that coordinate youth-related programmes vary, depending on whether they are repressive or preventive in nature. The National Civil Police are responsible for coordinating the "Heavy-Handed" (July 2003) and "Super-Heavy-Handed" plans, while the National Youth Secretariat oversees the activities carried out under the "Friendly Hand" and "Outstretched Hand" plans. Responsibility for implementing the National Plan for Social Prevention and Peace is shared by several ministries (Labour, Education), institutions for the protection of women, international agencies such as UNDP, mayors and other institutions.

In Colombia, the institutions engaged in activities to deter violence include the Office of the President, the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, the Ministry of Social Protection and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute.<sup>14 15</sup> The latter is an agency of the Ministry of Social Protection, with 201 local centres and service points to serve the population in all municipalities of the country. Currently about 10 million Colombians are benefiting from its services.

The implementation of programmes related to youth violence in Costa Rica is a joint effort involving the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Safety, the Ministry of Justice and the National Children's Foundation. Until 2002, the entity responsible for youth issues was the National Youth Movement (MNJ). That year, the National Council on Public Policy for Young Persons was established under the leadership of the Vice-Minister for Youth. Other members of the Council are the Minister of the Presidency, three representatives from the National Youth Advisory Network, the Minister for the Status of Women and a representative of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. Its work is split among MNJ activities relating to youth participation, the exercise of rights and coordination of activities in five areas: participation, training, research, communication and legislation (ECLAC, 2000c).

In Mexico, programmes are coordinated by state institutes for youth and the National Polytechnic Institute. In Peru, youth violence programmes are coordinated jointly by the Ministry the Interior and the National Youth Secretariat (SNJ), a division of the Ministry of Education, in some cases working with the Ministry of Health and the ombudsmen. In Ecuador, a large proportion of youth violence programmes are coordinated jointly by government ministries and national NGOs.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Autonomous Institute of the National Council for the Rights of Boys, Girls and Adolescents (IACNDNNA)—an entity that works with information related to violence against girls, boys, and adolescents—is the highest authority in the Child and Adolescent Protection System. The Foundation “Youth and Change”, established in 1994 under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, has action programmes in the areas of social and productive participation, youth leadership, comprehensive health care for adolescents, vocational training for unemployed youth and prevention of crime, adolescent pregnancy, school dropout and low educational attainment. The Foundation works with other ministries (Health and Social Welfare, Justice) in carrying out its activities.

## 2. Funding sources and constraints

In the countries surveyed, the programmes aimed at preventing and reducing youth violence receive funding from the federal government (Brazil) and the Ministry of the Interior (Argentina, Bolivarian Republic Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru). Owing to the sectoral nature of some programmes, other ministries (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador, Peru), NGOs (Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico) and foundations (Ecuador) may also contribute funding.

In El Salvador, the Programme for Social Prevention of Youth Violence and Crime has a budget of 16,000,000 colones (approximately US\$ 1,355,000 in 2000), of which 72% is a contribution from the European Commission and the remaining 28% comes from the Government. The budget for the Programme for Social Prevention of Youth Violence and Crime targeting the western part of the country totals 990,555 colones (approximately US\$ 83,800 in 2000), funded by the Office of the President through the National Council for Public Safety.

<sup>14</sup> See [online] [www.presidencia.gov.co](http://www.presidencia.gov.co).

<sup>15</sup> See [online] [www.icbf.gov.co](http://www.icbf.gov.co).

Table IV.7  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (12 COUNTRIES): SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR PROGRAMMES FOR THE CONTROL AND PREVENTION OF YOUTH VIOLENCE**

Country	National, federal, municipal government	Ministry of the Interior	Other ministries	Reimbursable international funds	NGOs	Foundations	Combination
Argentina		X					
Brazil	X						
Chile		X	X	X			
Colombia		X					
Costa Rica		X					
Dominican Republic	X						
Ecuador			X		X	X	X
El Salvador		X					X
Guatemala		X		X			
Mexico					X		
Peru		X	X				
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)		X	X				

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of government responses to the ECLAC survey on policies and programmes for tackling youth violence in Latin America, 2008.

In Peru, the majority of programmes on youth violence are funded by the Public Treasury. The resources for implementing the various programmes of the National Police in this area come from public and private institutions (NGOs and regional and local governments, among others), as the police force does not have a budget allocated for such activities. Consequently, precise data on the amount of that funding are not available. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, youth violence programmes are funded by the General Directorate for the Prevention of Crime (Ministry of the Interior) or with combined funding from the Ministry of Education, the National Fund for Protection of Children and Adolescents and state and municipal funds for the protection of children and adolescents.

As concerns funding for national plans against domestic violence, major budgetary constraints have been encountered in several countries. In Bolivia, neither the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence nor the law from which it arises provides for means to ensure its sustainability. This has resulted in a number of funding-related problems, including the weakness of the Vice-Ministry, the lack of an equity plan and the transfer of resources and services to other gender equity areas for which there is no plan but which are considered urgent. Funding for the plan has been cut since 1997, and it is currently dependent on international cooperation resources. In Brazil, the National Programme to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence has been

hampered by insufficient allocation of budgetary resources and complications caused by differences between states (García and others, 2000).

In Chile, the majority of funding for the National Programme for the Prevention of Family Violence comes from the State and is channelled through the National Women's Service (SERNAM) and other ministries. However, shortages of financial and human resources limit prevention and technical assistance activities. Lack of systems for the collection, processing, analysis and production of statistics is another major problem. The Ministry of Health and municipal governments, which were given responsibility for implementing the plan in the original design, did not have sufficient resources to do so.

In Costa Rica, financing for the National Plan to Address and Prevent Family Violence (PLANNOVI) comes from the National Institute of Women (INM), which in 1999 invested 92,826,000 colones (about US\$ 334,000 in 2000). This figure accounts for 14.8% of the Institute's overall budget for that year and 42% of expenditure for technical areas. That investment covered all operating and building-related expenses. Institutional investment in the area of gender-based violence has increased steadily since the issue has been on the political agenda (García and others, 2000). In Mexico, total funding for the medium-term programme on gender and equity issues, which covers the period 2006-2012, amounts to 700,000 pesos per year (US\$ 52,200 in 2000).

Many of the constraints in relation to funding for policies and programmes to prevent youth violence relate to lack of continuity in the allocation of resources, owing to non-inclusion of the relevant activities in the public budget (Peru), the low priority accorded to the issue of youth violence and the channelling of the bulk of funding to interdiction (Colombia). Lack of visibility of the problem (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) also

undermines institutions dealing with youth-related issues, reducing their stature and legitimacy in dealing with those issues (Ecuador). Violence is not regarded as a public health and safety issue in Mexico, and it is therefore not a priority for the allocation of resources. Another reason for the lack of continuity in funding relates to the lack of political will to mandate funding for violence prevention measures (Colombia) (see table IV.8).

Table IV.8  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (12 COUNTRIES): MAIN POLICY AND PROGRAMME FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

Country	First in importance	Second in importance	Third in importance
Argentina	No response	...	...
Brazil	No response	...	...
Chile	Lack of resources	Lack of youth participation	...
Colombia	Low visibility of the problem	Lack of political will to mandate funding	Channelling of funds to interdiction rather than prevention
Costa Rica	Lack of resources	Lack of political commitment	Lack of institutional coordination
Dominican Republic	No response	...	...
Ecuador	Lack of policies on and for young people	Weak institutional structure for dealing with youth-related issues	Lack of public awareness of the issue
El Salvador	Lack of a national public policy on prevention of youth violence	Lack of sustainability of programmes	Lack of resources
Guatemala	Corruption in public institutions	Lack of government participation	Lack of policies
Mexico	Lack of training among human resources	Lack of infrastructure	Lack of public awareness of the issue
Peru	Bureaucratic red tape	Activities not included in the public budget	Lack of participation by public and civic institutions
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	Lack of continuity in funding	Lack of monitoring and evaluation	Lack of assessment of the problem

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of government responses to the ECLAC survey on policies and programmes for tackling youth violence in Latin America, 2008.

The invisibility of the issue of youth violence in programmes is closely linked to the lack of comprehensive situation assessments at national and regional levels (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela). Youth violence is generally addressed through a punitive approach, and budget allocations therefore tend to reinforce measures related, for example, to juvenile criminal responsibility, personal injury or aggravated theft—in other words, focusing on the criminal dimension of youth violence. Hence, the problem is not visible from the standpoint of its impact on youth themselves, but only from the standpoint of punitive action against crime (Colombia). Lack of evaluations to determine the effectiveness and the return on programmes implemented is another source of concern (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).

Lack of budgetary autonomy may lead to an increase in bureaucratic red tape (Peru) and corruption in public

institutions (Guatemala) or lack of adequate budgets (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Costa Rica) and training opportunities for human resources in the area of youth violence (Mexico). In countries such as Ecuador and El Salvador, the lack of continuity in financing for investment in youth violence prevention is attributed to the absence of policies on youth and for youth (Ecuador) and public policies on prevention.

In several countries funding problems are attributed to the breakdown of institutions. Authorities from Peru cited the lack of participation by public and civic institutions in the proper implementation of programmes, while authorities in Mexico noted the lack of an adequate structure for programme implementation, one that would enable both horizontal and vertical approaches.

### 3. Evaluation of experiences and lessons learned

Evaluations of some of the programmes carried out to date and of the experiences gained, point to some progress in terms of inter-ministerial coordination and private- and public-sector networking, but the weakness of the institutions and agencies implementing the programmes is an impediment to the dissemination and replication of successful experiences. Analysis of these programmes reveals at least two gaps that are hindering efforts to address youth violence: the implementation of a broad spectrum of activities, rather than targeting specific groups of youths and the absence or shortage of action focusing specifically on children, women and young men living in the street. Experts say that policies aimed at reducing violence should be specific, coordinated, decentralized, participatory and selective. They recommend prevention as an essential primary measure, in addition to secondary and tertiary measures aimed at ensuring the social reintegration of rehabilitated young people.

Evaluations of programmes related to youth violence point to some progress in terms of inter-ministerial coordination and private- and public-sector networking. However, they also indicate that a major problem is the small size and low prestige of the agencies responsible for their implementation, which reduces the possibilities for disseminating and replicating successful experiences.

Policies to reduce youth violence should meet certain requirements. They should be targeted in order to provide a focused response to the various facets of the problem. They should also be coordinated in order to ensure the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, decentralized to allow for more concerted action by local authorities and the community, and participatory, meaning that young people themselves are consulted about their perceptions and the risks they face. The creation or strengthening of comprehensive youth plans applying these approaches is being promoted in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay (Rodríguez, 2005).

Objectives are proposed in the areas of education, health and employment, as well as innovations in police procedures, legislative reforms and media campaigns. Notable in this area is PAHO's focus on addressing violence through an epidemiological approach that combines medical and legal aspects of violence with prevention and the promotion of a culture of health, based on equity and respect for life and the physical and psychosocial integrity of individuals. Such approaches should be reflected in the changes introduced by governments to promote a culture of peaceful coexistence in school

curricula, together with institutional measures to ensure the protection of constitutional and human rights (De Roux, 1993; OPS, 1993).

The experience gained in urban violence reduction programmes underscores the need to concentrate community and institutional efforts at the level of local authorities (municipal governments or mayors), as a point of convergence between institutions and beneficiaries of public services, governments and citizens. At the institutional level, the community assets and social capital of disadvantaged sectors should be strengthened, multisectoral initiatives that enhance the quality of services should be promoted and policing and judicial strategies should be improved.

Comprehensive plans against youth violence should distinguish between principal and complementary goals. The principal goals should be prevention of violence, early identification and prevention of risk situations, and promotion of healthy lifestyles. In the context of public policy, such plans should translate into primary prevention measures aimed at stopping violence before it happens. Violence prevention plans should include strategies to support relatively large segments of the population that have multiple risk factors and few protective factors (Krauskopf, 2007a).

Additional goals include timely intervention to address those affected by violence, identifying at-risk populations and breaking the intergenerational cycle of violence. This calls for secondary prevention efforts targeting specific individuals or social groups who have been clearly identified as being prone to engage in habitual violent or criminal behaviour. Specialized interventions are needed in order to neutralize or prevent pre-criminal situations among at-risk groups, school dropouts and victims of domestic violence, among others.

Tertiary prevention should also be encouraged, targeting young people who are involved in gangs and who are in conflict with the law, with the aim of changing their lifestyles through rehabilitation and treatment alternatives. In order to address the problem of youth violence, it must be recognized that young people are stakeholders and individuals with rights, opinions, experiences and expectations of their own. All of this represents a costly process with results that will only be seen in the long term in the framework of comprehensive programmes. There are currently participatory training projects, involving the participation of young people as models in peer education for other young people of both sexes who find themselves in conflict with law. But after the

rehabilitation process is complete, it is necessary to ensure the reintegration of young people in an environment that encourages their acceptance and discourages stigmatization, in order to strengthen their resilience and other positive characteristics, rather than characterizing rehabilitated young people as drug addicts or criminals.

Lastly, the analysis of existing policies and programmes reveals a failure to target specific segments of the youth population. Most actions are aimed at youth in general and do not address the specific problems of rural youth, students or youths who have partially or fully joined the working world.

#### Box IV.4

##### LESSONS LEARNED FROM EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH

The ingredients of success in programmes for reducing youth violence are:

- Addressing the problem from early ages, with a holistic approach that includes families, peers and community networks.
- Resolving specific problems while at the same time promoting positive behaviours through activities aimed at building individual capacities and encouraging participation for self-determination.

- Working in networks with other programmes and ensuring capacity to meet the multiple needs of young people.

- Using case management systems —i.e., interdisciplinary groups of professionals devoted to meeting the needs of youth, incorporating a dimension of individualized care.

- Adopting community-wide multi-agency collaborative approaches.

- Fostering private-sector participation, including community participation in the design and implementation of programmes.

- Encouraging youth participation and empowerment, especially in the early phases of programmes, a critical stage for establishing dialogue and ensuring the sustainability of actions.

- Facilitating the replicability and sustainability of effective programmes.

Source: M. Schneidman, "Targeting at-risk-youth: rationales, approaches to service delivery and monitoring and evaluation issues", *LAC Human and Social Development Group Paper*, No. 15932, Washington, D.C., World Bank, 1996.

## G. Seventeenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government: social cohesion and social policies

The seventeenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government was held in Chile in 2007. Its central theme was “social cohesion and social policies to achieve more inclusive Ibero-American societies”. The Declaration of Santiago, adopted at the Summit, includes important commitments by the Governments of Latin America concerning social cohesion, access to basic services, gender equity and protection for young people and vulnerable groups.

The seventeenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government was held from 8 to 10 November 2007 in Santiago, Chile. The central theme of the Summit, which was supported by the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB) and ECLAC, was “social cohesion and social policies to achieve more inclusive Ibero-American societies”.

In preparation for the conference, a number of ministerial meetings on social and economic issues were held between May and October 2007. The issues addressed included social security, health, culture, education, children and adolescents, economics and finance, public administration, the environment, housing and development and tourism (see box IV.5).

## Box IV.5

**DECLARATION OF SANTIAGO ADOPTED BY THE SEVENTEENTH IBERO-AMERICAN SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

Place and date: Santiago, 8-10 November 2007.

Participants: 22 Heads of State and Government of member countries of the Ibero-American community.

Organizers: Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB), Government of Chile.

Preparatory activities:

Ninth Ibero-American Conference on Children and Adolescents, 28-29 May, Pucón, Chile.

Ninth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Public Administration and State Reform, 31 May-1 June, Pucón, Chile  
Seventh Ibero-American Forum of Ministers of the Environment, 11-13 June, San Salvador.

Sixth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Security, 5-6 July, Iquique, Chile.

Ninth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Health, 9-10 July, Iquique, Chile.

Seventeenth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Education, 23-24 July, Valparaíso, Chile.

Tenth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Culture, 26-27 July, Valparaíso, Chile.

Eleventh Meeting of Ministers of the Presidency and Equivalent Officials, 30-31 August, Costa Rica.

Seventh Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Tourism, 29 September-2 October, Buque Aquiles, Chile.

Sixteenth Ibero-American Forum on Housing and Urban Development, 8-10 October, Santiago.

Selection and summary of the principal commitments on social issues.

– Adopt policies to increase the creation of decent, high-quality employment. Make decent, high-quality employment, social mobility and redistribution common objectives of all public policies.

– Give priority in the international agenda to the promotion of social cohesion and the need for more inclusive societies in which human rights are respected and social protection ensured.

– Promote greater development and coordination of social policies to overcome poverty, ensure universal access to social services and improve the quality of education, health, housing, security and social protection services.

– Implement policies to enhance the well-being of the most vulnerable groups.

– Mainstream gender equality in public policies on social cohesion.

– Develop programmes, policies and legal instruments that reflect the commitment of the Ibero-American States to youth.

– Further the development of social protection systems with universal coverage through contributory, non-contributory and solidarity instruments.

– Strengthen the advancement of and respect for human rights as an essential component of policies for social cohesion.

– Provide for full protection of the human rights of migrants, irrespective of their immigration status, in the legal framework of each State.

– Recognize that addressing the social problems of the region will require a wide-ranging social dialogue, which must take place in a climate of understanding, in which governments, employers and employees work together to forge a social partnership that will generate wealth and create decent and productive employment.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Technical seminars were also conducted, including one on “social cohesion in Ibero-America”, which was held in Madrid on 18 and 19 June 2007 and was organized by SEGIB with the collaboration of ECLAC and with the sponsorship of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development (AECID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). ECLAC/SEGIB seminars on social cohesion were also held 30 July 2007 in Mexico City, on 1 August in Bogotá and on 3 August in Brasilia. In these seminars, experts and representatives of the private sector and government discussed a paper entitled “Social Cohesion, Inclusion and a Sense of Belonging in Latin America and the Caribbean”, prepared by ECLAC with financial support from SEGIB and AECID.

Representatives from 22 member countries of the Ibero-American community participated in the seventeenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government with a view to exchanging experiences in the design and implementation of policies on social cohesion in

which the various Ibero-American states, the aim being to increasing levels of inclusion, justice, protection and social assistance and strengthening feelings of solidarity, belonging and social identity.

The Declaration of Santiago contains 24 commitments made at the seventeenth Summit. The main ones relate to economic growth and imbalances in international economic and trade relations, employment, social cohesion, poverty reduction policies, quality of life of the most vulnerable groups, gender equity, youth, social protection, access to cultural goods, the Millennium Development Goals, human rights of migrants, multiculturalism, tax reforms and measures, climate change and natural disasters, multilateralism and cooperation (see a selection of these commitments in box IV.5)

The participants declared 2008 to be “Ibero-American Year against All Forms of Discrimination” and chose the venues for future summits on youth and development, to be held in El Salvador (2008), Portugal (2009), Argentina (2010) and Spain (2012).