



UNITED NATIONS



SIXTY YEARS WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on  
Social Exclusion, Poverty, Inequality,  
Crime and Violence: Towards a Research Agenda  
for informed Public Policy for Caribbean SIDS  
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 4 April 2008

Distr. LIMITED  
LC/CAR/L.170  
13 May 2008  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**REPORT OF THE AD HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON SOCIAL  
EXCLUSION, POVERTY, INEQUALITY, CRIME AND VIOLENCE:  
TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR INFORMED PUBLIC POLICY  
FOR CARIBBEAN SIDS**

---

This report has been reproduced without formal editing.

**Table of contents**

Background..... 2

Agenda item 1 – Welcome..... 2

Agenda item 2 – A review of the links between poverty, crime and violence ..... 2

Agenda Item 3 – Defining a research agenda ..... 3

Agenda Item 4 – Closing ..... 5

Annex ..... 6

# **AD HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON SOCIAL EXCLUSION, POVERTY, INEQUALITY, CRIME AND VIOLENCE: TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR INFORMED PUBLIC POLICY FOR CARIBBEAN SIDS**

## **Background**

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean convened an expert group meeting on Social Exclusion, Poverty, Inequality – Crime and Violence: Towards a Research Agenda for informed Public Policy for Caribbean SIDS on Friday 4 April 2008, at its conference room in Port of Spain.

The meeting was attended by 14 experts drawn from, the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago; and Mona Campus, Jamaica; the St. Georges University, Grenada; the Trinidad and Tobago Crime Commission and the Ministry of Social Development, Government of Trinidad and Tobago and representative of Civil Society from Guyana. Experts from the United Nations System included representatives from the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Barbados; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Port of Spain and UNDP Barbados/SRO and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The list of participants appears as an annex to this report.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum in which differing theories and methodologies useful to addressing the issues of social exclusion, poverty, inequality, crime and violence could be explored. It was expected that at the end of the meeting there would be consensus on areas of research which could be pursued over a two to four-year period by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean and its partners, which would lead to informed public policy in support of the reduction of the growing violence in Caribbean society.

## **Agenda item 1 – Welcome**

The Regional Adviser of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean welcomed participants to the meeting noting that current literature on crime and violence in the Caribbean had suggested that violent crime had become unhinged from its root causes resulting in a more complex phenomenon that required solutions that were more complicated and long term in nature. She also suggested that the ‘escalation dynamic’ noticeable across the subregion required deeper investigation and understanding and that the increasing reports of rape and murder of women and children had become a significant aspect of this dynamic.

She concluded her welcoming remarks by highlighting what Professor Anthony Harriott had suggested as significant ‘markers’ of the changing nature of crime and violence in Jamaica. Although he was alluding to Jamaica in his research, the Regional Adviser, suggested that these ‘markers’ might be pertinent to the subregion as a whole. Among the ‘markers’ highlighted were the following:

- (a) An extraordinary high rate of homicides and social violence;

- (b) Shift from interpersonal to inter-group violence;
- (c) An entrepreneurial structure to violence; and

(d) A perception by the population of the incapacity of formal institutions to effectively cope with the situation and the display of an increasing tendency towards abuse of power, poor service and corruption by the primary caretaker institutions.

### **Agenda item 2 – A review of the links between poverty, crime and violence**

The background document, produced by ECLAC, “Exploring Policy Linkages Between Poverty, Crime and Violence: A look at three Caribbean States”, which examined the links between poverty, crime and violence in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Saint Lucia, was presented as a point of departure for the dialogue that ensued.

Through the overview of the paper, the Social Affairs Officer at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean presented a synopsis of the crime and poverty statistics in the three countries under investigation as well as a review of the literature which examined the crime, violence and poverty nexus. She suggested that the meeting consider the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of violence, as detailed in the Report on Violence and Health (2002) as the best working definition to inform the day’s dialogue. WHO defined violence 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 higher likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”.

A number of problems with the measurement of crime and violence were highlighted, among them were, the underreporting of crime, the changes in ways of recording statistics by statistical agencies and the outdated record keeping practices. In regard to the impact of tourist arrivals on crime measurement it was suggested that the unrecorded increases in the population due to tourist arrivals, as well as tourist exposure to crime and violence could lead to distortions in crime ratios. Another issue of concern was the discrepancies which existed in some countries between public health and police records of crimes.

In the overview of the situation of crime and violence in the Caribbean, key dimensions were noted. Among them were that violent crime was on the increase in many countries of the Caribbean. To substantiate this contention, the reported murder rates of 30 per 100,000 population annually, was noted. The World Bank’s suggestion that the Caribbean rates were reported to be higher than any other region of the world, and that these rates had risen in recent years for many of the region’s countries, was also noted.

It was highlighted that there was an increased involvement of young people as both victims and perpetrators of violent crime including homicide.

In regard to the links between crime and violence, it was reported that the literature on the relationship between crime and violence and poverty focused on two central arguments, that crime and violence restricted growth and development and that inequality, relative deprivation

and social exclusion, more so than absolute measures of income poverty, contributed to levels of crime and violence.

The area of primary research of the paper was in regard to the policy and programming links between crime, violence and poverty reduction. The paper contended that since much of the discourse in the public domain and among policy makers on the causality of crime and violence, pointed to a link with poverty, this very preliminary study sought to ascertain to what extent such discourse found its way into policy articulation and programming in the three countries under review. The results suggested that links between crime, violence and poverty were made primarily at the level of national development plans, national security strategy, penal policy, national crime prevention and reduction initiatives and less so within social sector programming.

The preliminary research concluded that some links are being made between levels of crime and violence and poverty within all three countries under review, however, crime and violence are being addressed mainly as judicial and national security issues.

At the conclusion of the presentation a roundtable discussion was held. Participants thanked ECLAC for the study and suggested additional research that could strengthen the main arguments.

Experts bemoaned the lack of gender disaggregated crime statistics, the different classification across countries making comparable analysis difficult and insufficient comparable data to undertake the kind of time series or trend analysis necessary to result in informed policy formulation.

In regard to sexual violence, experts reminded the meeting of the importance of the necessity for disaggregated data and the need to strengthen capacity to determine the extent of under reporting of gender based violent crime.

There was a call for a number of key social constructs to be further examined, such as determining possible linkages between social exclusion and people's level of frustration with respect to an increase in crime and violence. In addition, it was suggested that deeper exploration of the crime and violence links to disempowerment rather than just to poverty was necessary.

### **Agenda Item 3 – Defining a research agenda**

Participants were invited to present their ideas for defining a research agenda for poverty, crime and violence. It was suggested that short and long term goals be defined within the framework of an integrated agenda pitched at a regional level. It was argued that an overarching structure along with a graded approach was needed, to allow for investigation into other areas.

Experts agreed that the present approach to intervention could best be described as 'piece meal' and a shift was needed towards a comprehensive approach in order to effect real change. In so doing, a review of success cases of governmental intervention could prove insightful into defining an effective mechanism for policy intervention. Some specific ideas on research

options were: investigating masculinity, family structure, sexual violence, understanding the governance structure at the local level and the links to social cohesion.

It was noted that the research agenda should have two aims:

- (a) To influence policy makers by providing the necessary supporting evidence to convince and lead them to adopt a more comprehensive approach to address the issues of crime and violence reduction; and
- (b) To provide information and analysis for further research.

Specific recommendations suggested that research should explore a further understanding into the linkages between the deterioration of the core family institution, changing values and norms within the society and the impact of existing policies and programmes. Experts noted the importance of identifying the risk profile of specific family structures, determining and documenting the impact of crime on the victim and developing a profile of the perpetrator.

Another point of departure for the research agenda would be to engage in discussion on security. It was suggested that the current discourse on security is being driven by the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> events; however, it was necessary to broaden discourse to include the question of the transshipment of drugs, the proliferation of small arms and the issue of deportees.

It was also noted that included in the research agenda should be the examination of how people received social services and an exploration of whether these were in fact beneficial, through a thorough assessment of the interventions and how these were perceived by the receiving groups.

The issue of the influence of the prison experience on youthful offenders and on their integration into society, or lack thereof, was an area deemed to require additional research.

Specifically, the meeting recommended research into:

- (a) The role of the State or governance processes in increasing exclusion and marginalization and the impact of such on crime and violence;
- (b) Historical tracking of crime and violence determining the influencing factors, turning points and benchmarks;
- (c) The history of the death penalty in the Caribbean and the possible links between crime and violence;
- (d) The links between violence against young people and the expression of violence by young people;
- (e) The links between literacy and young offenders;

- (f) Nature of recidivism in Caribbean SIDS; and
- (g) State action which may reinforce vulnerability and marginalization e.g. courts and treatment of female offenders.

#### **Agenda Item 4 – Closing**

The Regional Adviser thanked participants for joining in the deliberations, assured them that the paper would be widely circulated and that the outcome of their deliberations would be used to inform not only the research agenda of ECLAC in this area but development partners as well.

The meeting closed with the usual exchange of courtesies.

Annex**List of Participants**

Onwubiko Agozino, Professor of Sociology, Department of Behavioural Sciences, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad. Tel: 868-662-2002 ext. 2023; Fax: 868-663-4948; email: [onwubiko.agozino@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:onwubiko.agozino@sta.uwi.edu)

Sherene Lisa Ali, Research Specialist II, Ministry of Social Development, #69 Independence Sq., Port of Spain, Trinidad. Tel: 868-627-6723; Fax: 868-625-5515; email: [sherenelisa@hotmail.com](mailto:sherenelisa@hotmail.com)

Andaiye, International Coordinator, Red Thread, Princes & Adelaide Streets, Charlestown, Georgetown, Guyana. Tel: 592-223-6254; email: [red\\_thread@gol.net.gy](mailto:red_thread@gol.net.gy)

Sandra Baptiste Caruth, Programme Specialist, Poverty and Social Policy, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 3A Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Tel: 868-623-7056 ext. 231; Fax: 868-623-1658; email: [Sandra.baptiste.caruth@undp.org.tt](mailto:Sandra.baptiste.caruth@undp.org.tt)

Oliver Benoit, Assistant Professor, School of Arts and Sciences, St. George's University, St. George's, Grenada. Tel: 473-415-0920; email: [benoit@brandeis.edu](mailto:benoit@brandeis.edu)

Ian Boxill, Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work, University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston 7, Jamaica. Tel: 876-977-0315/876-512-3311; Fax: 876-977-9301; email: [ian.boxill@uwimona.edu.jm](mailto:ian.boxill@uwimona.edu.jm)

Dennis Brown, Lecturer, Department of Behavioural Sciences, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad. Tel: 868-662-2002 ext. 2020 or 3053; email: [dennis.dbrown@gmail.com](mailto:dennis.dbrown@gmail.com)

Nadine Bushell, Programme Analyst, Governance, UNDP/SURF, 3A Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Tel: 623-7056/7/9 ext. 295; Fax: 868-623-1658; email: [nbushell@surf.undp.org.tt](mailto:nbushell@surf.undp.org.tt)

Roberta Clarke, Regional Programme Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UN House, Hastings, Christ Church, Barbados. Tel: 246-467-6126; email: [Roberta.clarke@unifem.org](mailto:Roberta.clarke@unifem.org)

Damian Greaves, Msc. Sociology, Instructor, Department of Liberal Studies, School of Arts & Sciences, St. George's University, Grenada. Tel: 473 444 4175 Ext. 3653; Cell: 473 536 2204/404 4904; email: [dgreaves@sgu.edu](mailto:dgreaves@sgu.edu)

Amory Hamilton-Henry, Programme Coordinator, SPARC, UNDP Barbados/SRO and the OECS, UN House, Marine Gardens, Hastings, Christ Church, Barbados. Tel: 246-467-6029; email: [amory.hamilton-henry@undp.org](mailto:amory.hamilton-henry@undp.org)



Dana Seetahal, SC, Senator, 35 Abercrombie Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Tel: 868-625-5105/868-625-1125; Fax: 868-627-7312; email: [seets@carib-link.net](mailto:seets@carib-link.net)

Edo Stork, Deputy Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 3A Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Tel: 868-623-7056; Fax: 868-623-1658; email: [edo.stork@undp.org](mailto:edo.stork@undp.org)

Wendy-Ann Wattie, Acting Director, Social Planning and Research, Policy, Programme Planning and Development Division, Ministry of Social Development, ANSA McAL Building, 69 Independence Square, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Tel: 868-625-8565 ext. 3159; Cell: 868-762-2376; Fax: 868-627-9879 and 868-627-4853; email: [wattie\\_wendy\\_ann@hotmail.com](mailto:wattie_wendy_ann@hotmail.com) and [wattiew@msd.gov.tt](mailto:wattiew@msd.gov.tt)

### **Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**

Asha Kambon, Regional Adviser, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, 1 Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Tel: 868-623-5595 ext 2300; Fax: 868-623-8485; email: [asha.kambon@eclac.org](mailto:asha.kambon@eclac.org)

Gabrielle Henderson, Social Affairs Officer. Email: [henderson.gabrielle@gmail.com](mailto:henderson.gabrielle@gmail.com)