Urban Safety and Crime Prevention

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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1.   Introduction

The theme for this year's World Habitat Day, is *Safer Cities*, perhaps in acknowledgment of the growing concern about escalating urban violence, crime and insecurity amongst residents of cities around the globe. As a worldwide phenomenon, urban violence is believed to have grown by between three to five percent a year over the last twenty years, with certain cities showing significant variations at different times. According to Habitat's *Global Report on Human Settlements 1996*, 'violent crime has increased in most cities in recent years. Homicide, infanticide, assault, rape, sexual abuse and domestic violence now make up between 25 and 30 percent of urban crime in many countries'[1].

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence claims at least 3.5 million lives a year and has escalated considerably in the 1990s. 'Today when economic crises are stifling national economies in many countries, injuries of all kinds, resulting from violence, cost the world community almost $ 500 thousand million [$ 500 billion] a year in medical care and lost productivity'[2]. According to the Director-General of the WHO, violence has today become 'the number one reason for premature deaths among young people'[3] . Subsequently, more than 1200 delegates from 191 member states of the WHO have endorsed an international plan of action to deal with violence as a public health issue.

In many third world countries and in East Europe, both petty and violent crimes have increased, and the figures from the recent past have been cause for concern. As a region, Asia has shown that over the period 1975-90, crime had *declined* at a national level, while at the same time in 'cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants there has been a considerable increase in crimes against property, of organised crime and of drug trafficking'[4] .

The overall rate of crime in Asia is the lowest compared to the major regions of the globe – see Table 1, page 2. Africa is the one region out of six, which has the highest rate of *urban* crime as measured by an indicator which examines the percentage of the population who have been a victim of crimes over the last five years, in cities where more than 100,000 people live. On a world average, at least once in five years, more than half the world's population living in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants are victims of some kind of crime. Asian cities, interestingly, have the best record, even better than the cities of highly developed Western Europe and North America, in *every single category* of crime. Asia had much the lowest rate of the regions shown, with only one person in ten being a victim of murder/non-fatal assault over five years.

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[1] UNCHS Press Release, *World Habitat Day 1998: Safer Cities*, CHS/98/05, 13 February 1998.
[2] World Health Organisation, Press Release, WHA/7, 13 May 1997.
[3] World Health Organisation, Statement of the Director-General,

[4] Franz Vanderschueren, 'From Violence to Justice and Security in Cities', *Environment and Urbanisation*, Vol 8, No 1, April 1996, p 94.

Table 1: **Percent of the population who are victims of crime in urban areas with more than 100,000 inhabitants over a 5-year period**

	Percent of the population who over a 5-year period are victims of				
	Theft and damage to vehicles	Burglary	Other theft	Assault & other crimes of personal contact	All crimes
West Europe	34	16	27	15	60
North America	43	24	25	20	65
South America	25	20	33	31	68
East Europe	27	18	28	17	56
Asia	12	13	25	11	44
Africa	24	38	42	33	76
TOTAL	*29*	*20*	*29*	*19*	*61*

Source: Habitat (UNCHS), *An Urbanizing World*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p 123. Originally, United Nations International Crime and Justice Research Institute, *Criminal Victimisation of the Developing World*, Rome, 1995.

Japan is the only country to have experienced a clear reduction in crime over the past half century, although Japanese cities have also recently experienced a sharp increase in certain types of crime, particularly drug related and organised violent crime[5].

While the human, justice and security concerns and repercussions of crime and violence are perhaps the most pronounced and important – crime and violence inflicted upon a victim, is afterall, a violation of his/her basic human rights -- it is necessary to highlight the broader economic consequences of crime and violence as well. First of all, in order to address the growing trend of crime and violence, in many developing countries as much as 10-15 percent of the national budget is consumed by the police and the criminal justice system, eating into already reduced and tight expenditure constraints, with the possible reduction in public expenditure in the human and social development areas.

Not surprisingly, crime and violence impede economic growth, the realisation of which is considered to be one of the main objectives in reducing poverty, both urban and rural. Often crime and violence directly affect the stock of physical capital in the cities -- which is usually quite minimal in the first place – through the active destruction of physical infrastructure, roads and public facilities. The persistence of an environment of crime and violence has a severe negative effect on the overall investment climate of the country. Studies have revealed that in Colombia in Latin America, where the presence of crime and violence has been particularly excessive, the Gross Capital Formation has been lower by one-third due to rising homicide rates, which has resulted in economic growth being far less than the country's potential. In Peru, a recent World Bank study estimated that the wealth loss from

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[5] Panos, 'Crime or Development: Who calls the Shots?', *Media Briefing No 26,* London, October 1997, (Internet Edition), p 4.

violence on account of terrorism was about $ 25 billion[6]. Although the Asia-Pacific region, unlike Latin America and the Caribbean, is not much researched in terms of the effect of crime and violence on the economy -– perhaps because the indicators have improved over time – it is very likely that in our region too, the overall impact of crime and violence is likely to be severe[7].

In the present economic crisis that has engulfed much of the Asia-Pacific region, it becomes increasingly important and urgent to emphasize the highly deleterious impact of crime and violence on economic growth. At a time when social and economic harmony and cooperation are needed to bring countries, households and individuals out of the economic destitution that is facing them on account of the extensive economic collapse in the region, the prevalence and escalation of crime and violence is more worrying. The consequences of this growing pattern are likely to result in even lower economic growth and in an increase in poverty.

2. Urbanisation in the Asia-Pacific Region

The Habitat Agenda quite clearly understands the highly beneficial nature of urbanisation during the course of history, where it has been 'associated with economic and social progress, the promotion of literacy and education, the improvement of the general state of health, greater access to social services and cultural, political and religious participation … Cities and towns have been engines of growth and incubators of civilization and have facilitated the evolution of knowledge, culture and tradition, as well as industry and commerce'[8]. By the turn of the century, as many as three billion people, half the world's population, will work and live in cities. Despite the huge strides made by the cities and their residents in the past, the Habitat Agenda also highlights numerous threats to the prosperity achieved in the past. Amongst the most serious problems confronting cities and towns, the Agenda includes the problem of growing insecurity and rising crime rates. Moreover, it recognises the truth that more people than ever are now living in absolute poverty and without adequate shelter.

Much of this global phenomenon of the extent and nature of urbanisation, also finds its parallels in the Asian context. The accelerated pace of urbanisation in Asia has been a cause and a consequence of astonishing economic and social achievements in many diverse countries. However, on the other hand, this huge urban growth has also been accompanied by large scale poverty, deprivations and environmental degradation. In 1988, 23 percent of Asia's total urban population lived below the poverty line, while almost half of the world's urban poor below the poverty line was resident in Asia's cities[9]. On the one hand, while urbanisation in Asia has allowed large sections of society to partake in the fruits of development, increasingly, urbanisation has led to extreme overcrowding and congestion

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[6] Robert L Ayres, *Crime and Violence as Development Issues in Latin America and the Caribbean*, World Bank Latin America and Caribbean Studies, Viewpoint, January 1998.

[7] The city of Ahmadabad, like so many others across South Asia caught up in communal and sectarian violence, lost several billion rupees of its income as a consequence of communal riots in the mid-1980s. Government of India, *National Commission on Urbanisation – Report of the Working Group on Urban Poverty: A New Deal for the Urban Poor*, August 1988.

[8] UNCHS, The Habitat Agenda: *Goals and Principles, Commitments and Global Plan of Action*, Istanbul, June 1996, p 4.

[9] UNESCAP, *The State of Urbanisation in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok, 1993, p 2-55.

with the marked deterioration of the quality of life of the lives of the residents of several cities and towns in the region. In many of Asia's cities, which have been engines of economic growth and prosperity in their own economies and countries, there is a huge segment of the population which while having played a significant part in that prosperity, lives in relative poverty. In Metro Manila, for example, in the mid-1980s there was a thirty percent incidence of the slum and squatter population. In Madras, of the six million inhabitants, almost sixty percent of the population lives in slums of one kind or another where severe overcrowding is the norm. In Bombay, with a population of twelve million, nearly half is now living in dilapidated chawls, slums and on the pavement[10]; in Jakarta and Calcutta, around sixty percent of the population lives below the level of absolute poverty[11]. Without doubt, one of the main features of urbanisation in Asia as elsewhere, has been the phenomenal rise of urban poverty, a term encapsulating numerous manifestations of deprivation, disenfranchisement and exclusion.

3. Poverty, Violence and Crime in Cities

For many people, especially those who belong to the middle class and elite and to government circles, it is the urban poor who are the main instigators and perpetrators of violence and crime in the cities. There is a strong belief in this bias, and evidence to the contrary is conveniently overlooked and ignored. This is a prejudice that has often hindered any attempt to get to the heart of the problem of either poverty or crime and violence, in our cities. It is true that urban poverty has grown in much of the

world over the last two decades and in this period there has also been a substantial increase in crime and violence focused primarily in the cities. Due to this association, 'many observers while not resting the entire explanation for the increase in crime and violence on the increase in urban poverty have cited it as a major contributing factor[12].

In the urban context, poverty is usually defined or explained in terms of a 'lack of access to productive employment, to basic services, to the resources of the urban economy, to effective and managed representation and to security and justice. The key issue is that poverty reflects the inability of an individual, household or community to satisfy certain basic minimum needs'[13]. Once the nature of urban poverty has been defined, the assumption which follows is that due to frustration and insecurity and the presence of absolute and relative poverty, the urban poor are forced to resort to crime and violence. While there is some evidence which links urban poverty and unemployment to crime and violence, it would be too simplistic to make a direct correlation between poverty, violence and crime in cities. Moreover, the fact that slums and squatter areas have a higher incidence of crime and violence than more well-to-do areas in the city, also does not necessarily imply that it is the urban poor who actually partake in that violence or crime. The presence of organised gangs and mafias in all cities, often controlled by people who are neither poor nor reside in slums, suggests that the urban poor are often manipulated, due perhaps to their vulnerability, and become either victims or party to crime – see Box 1. Poverty may not automatically lead to violence

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[10] Ibid., p 2-41.
[11] Ibid., p 5-3

[12] Robert L Ayres, op. cit., p 11.
[13] Franz Vanderschueren, et. al., *Policy Programme Options for Urban Poverty Reduction*, Urban Management Programme Policy Paper 20, 1996, p 3.

Box 1: Urban Crime and Violence and the Role of Mafias

Mafias are at the heart of the informal sector as it currently exists. Such a situation has arisen because governments lack the political will, capability, or capacity to meet the needs of the low income communities. They have lost their ability to protect the poor and helpless. This state of affairs is exploited by informal sector entrepreneurs and middle men who settle the poor on government or state land and make them pay for it without offering any long term security.

They offer protection from police excesses at a cost they share with the police. To carry out these activities they rely on muscle and their informal links with government functionaries. An important part of their operations through which they finance their other activities, is drug pushing, prostitution, gambling and various forms of smuggling and black marketeering. The manpower for this activity is invariably recruited from the low income communities themselves, whose needs they 'serve'.

The mafias cannot function without the support of government functionaries, especially the police. Nor can they operate in affluent areas where people have access to corridors of power. This often makes them the de facto government in low income settlements and the rest of the city…

… The inability of the State to provide services, employment and access to the corridors of power for the poor thus also leads to a failure to provide justice and protection. This failure introduces and sustains a system of violence, coercion and extortion in urban areas.

Source: Arif Hasan, 'Raising the Curtain on the Urban Drama: The Need for a New Approach', in *Living in Asian Cities*, UNESCAP, Bangkok, 1996, p 56.

or crime, but may favour it certain circumstances[14]. However, it is clear that not all criminals come from the ranks of the poor, and nor does every poor person resort to crime.

Communal, ethnic and sectarian violence, now an unfortunate reality of many of South Asian cities, has frequently been instigated in urban slums by outsiders and people who often have no association with the settlement. Moreover, the urban poor may themselves not be involved in such group violence. A study by the Tata Institute of Social Studies in Bombay found that while precise figures for crime and group violence are not available separately for poor and non-poor neighbourhoods, case studies conducted by the Institute have documented that the underlying reasons for violence in the cities of Ahmedabad and Baroda in the 1980s, was probably because of the anti-social gangs of the

slum area who were trying to establish authority over their turf in the low-income localities[15].

Urbanisation, rapid economic liberalisation, growing mass political upheaval, violent conflict and inappropriate and inadequate policy, are amongst the numerous complex factors, that are themselves linked to poverty and inequality, that have contributed to higher and growing levels of crime. China's current crime wave illustrates this complex process: 'the breakneck speed of economic reform and urbanisation has produced a floating migrant population of around 50 million, the so-called *mang liu*. These people feel free of local cultural norms, now drift around the margins of the newly affluent urban markets and some (though not all) resort to crime for their survival.

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[14] Franz Vanderschueren, op. cit., 1996, p 93.

[15] Government of India, *National Commission on Urbanisation – Report of the Working Group on Urban Poverty: A New Deal for the Urban Poor*, August 1988, p 19.

Similar processes are now at work in other parts of the world'[16].

Ironically, in many parts of the world including Asia, the structural adjustment programmes persued so vigorously in order to increase economic growth, have resulted in growing poverty and inequality. One consequence of these programmes has been the noticeable rise in unemployment in the region. Many studies have shown that unemployment is a major cause for the prevalence and rise in crime, especially in urban areas. Growing unemployment amongst young men, which often results in growing drug and alcohol abuse, is seen as one of the key factors causing crime and violence. The unemployed need not necessarily belong to the section of the urban poor. It is argued that 'the only means of survival for many people who had lost stable jobs as vulnerable Southern economies underwent deregulation and deflation', was to turn to some form of crime[17].

If absolute urban poverty has been identified as one of the causes for encouraging crime and violence in cities, so then too has relative inequality and poverty, which can be as politically volatile as absolute poverty: 'rising expectations and sense of moral outrage that some members of society are getting rich while others are denied even the most basic levels of existence has been a well known source of *political discontent* in the poorest as well as richest countries'[18].

Clearly, the likely causes for violence and crime in cities range from the outcome of growing urban poverty, increasing unemployment, relative and growing inequality, and a host of other factors discussed in this and subsequent sections of the paper. Perhaps the reasons why crime decreased across Asia between 1975-90 was because economic growth was high, persistent and very buoyant, inflation and unemployment always low and manageable, a minimum level of basic social and physical infrastructure was provided and maintained by the government, and because there was growing optimism, hope and opportunity looking into the future. The percentage of the population living below the poverty line fell sharply in countries as diverse as Bangladesh, India, Korea, Indonesia and Pakistan, in the 1970s and 1980s[19]. Throughout the period 1975-90, especially in East Asia, there was always a contingent of factors which promised far better opportunities. This no longer seems to be the case. If indeed it was all these factors which resulted in keeping crime and violence manageable, low and declining, the current economic and social collapse underway since 1997, is going to have a prolonged and profound impact on urban poverty, unemployment, economic growth and upon the levels and quality of human, social and physical infrastructure. The impact, as a culmination of all these factors, is likely to be a substantive increase in violence and crime in the region.

4. The Nature and Types of Violence and Crime in Asian Cities.

While crime and violence are often used in this paper and elsewhere interchangeably, it is important to identify the important distinctions between them. 'Crime is an act punishable by law, i.e., it is the breach of a legal prohibition'[20]. Because of this

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[16] Panos, *Media Briefing No 26*, London, October 1997, (Internet Edition), p 7.
[17] Ibid., p 9.
[18] UNESCAP, op. cit., p 4-14.

[19] Ibid., p 2-56.
[20] Robert L Ayres, op. cit., p 3.

factor, it is not surprising to find that the notion of crime often differs between different cultures, religions and nations. While there are such differences in the definition of crime across countries, there are some crimes, which because they are so deplorable, are condemned universally. Not all crime entails violence – petty theft, white collar crime are such examples. Violence, on the other hand, is the undue exercise of physical and emotional/psychological force (as in the case of extortion, or gain through the threat of violence). Violence need not only be perpetrated by individuals or organised and unorganised groups: the state has also been an active instigator of violence in so many countries in Asia and across the world, against its own nationals or residents of a city.

One of the most serious problems we have in initiating a discussion about the nature and extent of crime and violence across the cities of Asia, is that data are grossly inadequate and crime data are notoriously unreliable and vary across countries making comparison somewhat difficult. The reasons for this include substantial underreporting by victims, the lack of substantive surveys, and the paucity of institutions which gather statistical data regarding the incidence of crime and violence. Except in North America and Western Europe, and now more recently in South America where urban crime is exceedingly high, data on crime and violence usually do not exist. Certainly in the Asia-Pacific region, perhaps because of the overall low level of crime and violence, there is a shortage of adequate data.

Urban conflicts most frequently emerge out of the issue of land: its ownership and its use. Moreover, urban crime is dominated by crimes against property, which account for about half of all offences in cities across the world. Theft, burglary and mugging which are not limited to prosperous towns or neighbourhoods, but also illegal and informal settlements, are the fastest growing crimes and also the ones with the lowest clear-up rate[21].

From the International Crime (Victim) Survey (ICVS), one of the few extensive surveys undertaken globally, in which fifty countries including thirteen from the developing world participated, results for the developing countries revealed that property crime was the most frequent form of victimisation across all five regions, viz., Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, Latin America, Asia and Asia-Pacific. After property crime, the second most frequent form of victimisation in all these regions was violent crime, except in the case of Asia. The survey reveals that *Asia shows the lowest rates for all types of crimes.* The highest rates for crime were observed in the Sub-Saharan Africa region[22].

Violence as represented by robbery and assault/threat is the lowest in the cities of Asia in this thirteen country sample. This statistic is especially remarkable as from a 'global comparative perspective, with the exception of Asia, the developing world cities exhibit three times higher robbery rates as well as higher assault/threat rates than urban areas of the industrialised world'[23]. Most cities in the developing world are at a high risk of victimisation, but Asian cities are far better than those in other developing countries. In addition, the victimisation rates for crimes against women, were also found to be the lowest in Asia. That fact, however, should not minimise the great need to address the numerous crimes against women in our countries.

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[21] Franz Vanderschueren, op. cit., p 95.
[22] UNICRI, The International Crime (Victim) Survey in the Developing World, Chapter 2, UNICRI, Rome, (Internet Edition).
[23] Ibid.

Studies from Bangkok's slums have shown that fifty percent of married women were regularly beaten up by their partners; in Sri Lanka, sixty percent of women interviewed had been subjected to domestic violence; in Papua New Guinea, over half of urban women have been beaten by their partners; in Colombo, 51 percent of battered women reported that their husbands used a weapon during their attacks; and even in Japan, a 1993 survey found that 59 percent of battered women were also raped by their partners. Wife beating is said to occur in all ethnic, socioeconomic and religious groups and is found to be more prevalent in rural areas and urban slums[24],[25].

In many countries, millions of women are victims of harmful and violent practices because of traditional or religious customs, despite the legislation of laws that criminalise these practices, such as dowry, sati, and widowhood rights. Despite declaring these practices illegal, they are widely practiced in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. In 1987, the police in India officially recorded 1,786 cases of dowry deaths, while women's groups recorded more than 1,000 women being burnt to death in the state of Gujarat alone. In the urban centres of Maharashtra State in India, 19 percent of all deaths among women between the ages of 15-44 were due to 'accidental' burns. In 1990 it was recorded that 4,835 women were killed for dowry-related causes in India, while in Greater Bombay, one out of every five

women between the ages of 15-44 died due to 'accidental' burns[26].

Children are another highly vulnerable group, who become victims and accomplices in petty crime. Though not as extensive as many Latin American cities, child prostitution, street gangs, and juvenile crime is part of the social fabric of many Asian cities.

In many cities of Asia, there is a vibrant trade in drug trafficking, which engulfs a wide variety of criminals and victims across neighbourhoods and cities and even has links with international networks. In order to make the business of drugs profitable (and for that matter the trafficking of women and children), government authorities at different levels are also complicit partners in crime. The very high rewards from narcotics trafficking make all effort to combat the related crime and violence (not just the trade in narcotics), quite difficult.

Although much of the evidence from cities shows that issues over property and land give rise to urban conflict, the question of what is illegal, and hence a crime, also needs to be discussed. For example, in some cases, the entire existence of the urban poor can be termed illegal. The urban poor in most cases, live on land acquired through illegal means and not owned by them either as tenants or squatters; their housing does not comply with any standards or regulation, and hence they commit an offence in the way they live; many residents in squatter settlements and slums, acquire water and electricity through illegal (or extra legal) means; and a very large proportion of the urban poor work in what is called the informal sector (many activities of which are

[24] A A del Frate and Angela Patrignani, *Women's Victimisation in Developing Countries*, Issues and Reports No 5, UNICRI, (Internet Edition).
[25] World Health Organisation, *Violence and Injury Prevention: Violence and Health*, (Internet Edition).

[26] A A del Frate and Angela Patrignani, *Women's Victimisation in Developing Countries*, Issues and Reports No 5, UNICRI, (Internet Edition).

considered illegal) and try to avoid as many taxes and rules as far as possible. As far as the state is considered, these residents are conducting a series of activities which the state would consider illegal and hence a punishable offence.

Clearly, the residents or those who conduct these tasks believe they have a right to facilities and services like everyone else, and for them this is simply a matter of survival – see Box 2.

Box 2: Criminal or Victim?

Several forced evictions in Phnom Penh are justified on grounds that those occupying land are doing so illegally. Attempts have been made and continue to be made to classify squatter communities as 'criminals' due to their circumstances of illegality. Yet, are these people victims or criminals? Adequate housing can in no way be considered a privilege, but tantamount to being a human and living a full and dignified life. Although some dwellers may consciously choose to live in illegal circumstances, most living in such conditions do not do so out of free will. Forced evictions impact severely on women and children.

Source: Kenneth Fernandes (ed.), *Forced Evictions and Housing Right Abuses in Asia: Second Report 1996-97*, City Press, Karachi, 1998, p 28.

The ambiguity of whether a crime or violence takes place in the eyes of the law, is best witnessed by the evidence concerning forced evictions. The institutions of the state often have to resort to substantial degrees of violence in order to establish the writ of law – see

Table 2 and Box 3. This is not only the case in terms of evictions, but increasingly in countries where political, sectarian, ethnic and communal violence has escalated, law enforcement agencies are quite frequently called out to restore peace in cities.

Table 2: Some Examples of Eviction

Location	Date	Persons Evicted	Motive	Agent Responsible for Eviction
Bhutan	1990-1	500	military control	Royal Bhutan Army
Bhopal	1991	3000	urban renovation	Municipality
Bombay	1988	200	illegal occupation	Municipal Council
Calcutta	1993	500	real-estate speculation	Municipality
Malaysia	1990	250	real-estate speculation	Government
Rangoon	1988-92	0.5 mn	political control	Government
Quezon City	1988	60000	urban renovation	Municipality
Bangkok	1984-9	214500	real-estate speculation	Municipality
Bangkok	1991	2930	World Bank meeting	Municipality

Source: Habitat (UNCHS), *An Urbanizing World*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p 246.

Box 3: Violence in the Name of Forced Evictions

Most forced evictions have been violent and in some cases have caused death. Paramilitary forces, SWAT (Special Weapons Tactic Teams), heavy artillery, army and armed vehicles are used against defenceless poor people. In Metro-Manila, Philippines, evictions are getting more and more violent. For example, in the eviction of a settlement in Del Pan, nearly a hundred policemen were employed. A SWAT team blocked off the place. A baby tank was positioned on the main street while SWAT snipers were posted on top of buildings. Some men were hurt by the policemen.

In Seoul, South Korea, construction companies hire an eviction agency … They hire gangsters and thugs to be the main evictors. These men move into the district and create an atmosphere of violence and fear by their abusive language and threatening gestures. On the designated day of eviction, thugs are hired in large numbers.

Source: Kenneth Fernandes (ed.), *Forced Evictions and Housing Right Abuses in Asia: Second Report 1996-97*, City Press, Karachi, 1998, p 11.

Just as the nature of crime and violence varies, so does its impact upon a city – see Table 3. For example, domestic or sexual violence, almost always against women, is usually restricted to the household. Petty crime, also has a small impact in terms of geographical space within the city, and is usually restricted to the area of the crime and is localised. So probably too, is murder and other violent crime. A comparison with environmental issues in cities is instructive: environmental problems affect most residents of a city regardless of where they live in the city (of course, there are variations in degree, but one cannot ignore a host of problems which affect all, equally – traffic congestion and pollution, contaminated water, etc.), but a number of types of crimes and violence are very frequently isolated from where the elite live, and pushed into pockets and corners and ghettos of the city, keeping the rest of the city immune. Political, ethnic, communal and sectarian violence, on the other hand, has a very wide spread, and not just a single locality, but the entire city (or cities), may be engulfed as part of this violence having a much bigger impact.

One cannot discuss crime and violence in cities without the mention of the violence of the numerous institutions of the state. Police and military excesses to maintain the status quo or to protect the interests of the government, the state or other vested interests, are quite commonplace in Asian cities. Police corruption and involvement in crime is also not something out of the ordinary. The easy, cheap and plentiful availability of sophisticated weapons, a widespread occurrence in most cities in Pakistan, could not take place without the compliance of the institutions of the state and, subsequently, makes the task of restoring peace in cities not just more difficult, but also often more violent.

Table 3:   A Typology of Crime and its Locational Impact

Nature of Crime	Perpetrators	Victims	Causes	Lacation and Impact
Petty crime, theft	Wide variety of individuals; probably from low and middle income households	Same as perpetrators	Need, opportunity, necessity	Localised
Domestic violence	Men	Female partners	Culture, frustration, tradition, religion	Household
Violent crime: murder, assault, muggings	Men between age 15-35	Same as perpetrators	Enmity, power, a petty crime gone undone	Household, neighbourhood
Armed robbery, kidnapping	Men, often as part of a gang	Upper and middle class households	Ransom, enmity, high financial returns	Localised, household, neighbourhood
Political violence	Organised or unorganised groups/parties	State, other groups	Numerous	Local, city wide, national
Mob/gang violence	Mafia, gangs	Other gangs, groups, individuals	Terrain, power, politics	Localised, neighbourhood
Crimes against property	Mafia, state, municipality, individuals, groups	State/private land and property; other gangs/groups	Need for land and housing; speculation	Localised, neighbourhood
Drug trafficking	Organised groups, middlemen, police, state officials	Individuals across social class	Large economic gain	Neighbourhood, national, international
White collar crime	Government officials, individuals	State, individuals, businesses	Large economic gain	City, institutional, national
State crime	Military, police, municipality, government departments	Citizens, terrorists	Political control, status quo, land	City, national

5. Urban Safety and Crime Prevention

Although crime and violence has been low in the Asia-Pacific region compared to the rest of the world, that has not meant that it has been of insignificant consequence. Hence, numerous initiatives have been taken by residents of cities and their governments to provide mechanisms which ensure the safety of all citizens.

In the case of women and domestic violence, a number of groups have been active in most of Asia, fighting for women's rights and those related to sexual and domestic violence. In most of the large cities of Pakistan, the Women's Action Forum has played a key role in highlighting women's issues and has lobbied Parliament to get discriminatory laws repealed. War Against Rape, another women's group, has tried to address specific issues of sexual violence against women in Karachi. The Women's Legal Bureau in Quezon City in the Philippines, is a feminist legal resource center which provides assistance to individuals and women's organisations in cases involving gender-related issues. It has also created a type of task-force against the trafficking of women and for the creation of shelters for women in Metro Manila. Also in the Philippines, is the Cebu experiment, where an NGO and the police work together in addressing issues of domestic violence. Close cooperation between the police and the community has to be developed over time and requires a clear statement of policy in order to make such cooperation fruitful. Centers of legal education and advice, especially those pertaining to women, have also been established by women's groups all across the cities of Asia.

Special all-female police stations, which are now common in much of Latin America, have also been functioning in a supposedly conservative country like Pakistan. Numerous such police stations have been established in the larger cities of the country where women staff are available to assist women who may want to lodge a complaint of any nature.

According to the ICVS study mentioned above, in order to combat burglary and other crimes, crime prevention measures have been initiated at the community level, where local groups have involved the police, the municipality and even schools. 'Neighbourhood Watch' schemes, involving local residents, are found to be quite popular in Asia. These schemes 'imply a certain level of social cohesion and that all the participating residents share the objective of preventing and reducing crime by increasing the level of "natural surveillance" in a specific area, thus performing informal crime control'[27]. This mechanism works best if the police of the neighbourhood is also involved.

Where the state or private parties have been involved in evicting residents from illegally occupied land, many NGOs have taken the lead in opposing those forced evictions: the Urban Poor Association in Manila, Urban Resource Center in Karachi, and SPARC in Bombay, are just three of such organisations. NGOs have played a key role in the resistance by slum dwellers against eviction from land in Bangkok and have even negotiated settlements around land-sharing arrangements with landlords.

The Habitat International Conference on Urban Poverty held in Italy in 1997

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[27] A A del Frate, *Preventing Crime: Citizens' Experience Across the World*, Issues and Reports, No 9, UNICRI, Rome.

Box 4: The Japanese Answer to Crime

Japan is probably the only country in the world whose crime rates are falling. Much of this success is due to a vast network of community-based, crime control organisations operating in neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces. The Crime Prevention Associations have 540,000 local liaison units; Juvenile Guidance has 126,000 volunteer co-operators; the Women's Association for Rehabilitation has 320,000 volunteers; and the Voluntary Probation Officers Association has 80,000 members.

If crime prevention fails, the 'benevolent visitor' system sends volunteer teachers, social workers, lawyers, chaplains and others into prison and reform schools to advise and guide inmates. Thousands of other citizens organise educational and cultural activities for prisoners. And through the 'volunteer probation officer system', people help to supervise adults and juveniles on probation and parole.

Cultural tradition in Japan considers that those who commit anti-social acts bring shame not only on themselves, but also on their family, the school or the company where they work. So these institutions readily accept some responsibility for the prevention and control of crime, and the reintegration of offenders.

If neighbourhoods are to be mobilise to secure themselves against crime, the community and the police must co-operate and this, in turn, requires a police that is close to the people and not to corrupt or repressive. Japan's neighbourhood police stations, or Kobans, provide a model of such a relationship. Every graduate of the police training academy serves for several years in one of the country's mini stations, which give the police a high-profile, non threatening position in the heart of every community. Officers are required to visit every family and business in their neighbourhood at least twice a year and to provide numerous community services such as helping to organise newsletters, meetings and sports events. The Koban system is highly effective at crime control: in 1989, Koban officers were responsible for 73 percent of all arrests (96 percent of all arrests for murder) and 76 percent of all thefts solved.

Source: Panos, *Media Briefing No 26*, October 1997.

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highlighted the need to control crime and violence through community policing, 'which is one of the most adequate forms of policing which develops close links with citizens. In this scheme, the policing is integrated into the urban setting and thus brings more feelings of security to the public by its presence, while being an agent of social regulation within a local coalition of key urban actors'[28]. This method has worked well in Japan, the only country with a falling crime rate – see Box 4. In Karachi, which has seen increased violence and crime over the last decade,

a Citizen's Police Liaison Committee, housed in the Governor's House has been active for almost a decade monitoring the rate of crime, where, members of the government, police and citizens work closely together -- see Box 5.

One of the more extreme methods undertaken to combat crime and violence, was undertaken in China. In April 1996, the authorities responded to massive and rising levels of crime by ordering a nationwide anti-crime campaign called 'Severe Crackdown'. Just as the name suggests, the action by the Chinese authorities was equally severe, with tens of thousands of suspects arrested and more than one

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[28] UNCHS, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Urban Poverty*, Florence, November 1997, p 20.

Box 5: Police, Government and Citizens

With the help of the Governor of the province of Sindh in Pakistan, a Citizens Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) was set up in 1989 in Karachi. The official functions of the CPLC are: to satisfy itself that First Information Reports (FIRs) are duly registered and no FIR is refused illegally; to find out if dilatory tactics are being adopted to the investigating officers in investigating cases; to find out if the processes are being served properly; to collect statistics of various kinds of cases registered and disposed of during a specified period; to find out if all the Registers required to be maintained at a Police Station are being properly and regularly maintained; to find out if any person is unlawful and unauthorizedly detained at the police station; to assist the police in taking steps for preservation of the peace and the prevention or detection of crimes, particularly trafficking in drugs and ammunition; to see that no gambling dens or any other unauthorised/illegal business is being carried out in the area; and, to report the acts of misconduct or neglect of duty on the part of any police officer.

The CPLC has handled over a hundred cases of kidnapping for ransom; it has run campaigns in the print media for public awareness and education about how to access police emergency cells to report crimes, on how to lodge an FIR, etc.; it maintains a daily record of vehicles snatched/stolen and helps in their recovery. The CPLC has succeeded in breaking up 23 kidnapping gangs, arresting 135 kidnappers and securing the release of 125 victims.

The Committee is run by industrialists and volunteers with help from the police and have their headquarters in the office of the Governor of the province of Sindh, in Karachi. The organisation is self-funded by contributions through members, donations and grants.

Source:

thousand individuals summarily executed for their role in crime[29].

At an international level too, steps have been taken to monitor and minimise crime. The need for hard data to start with, requires extensive communication between countries where definitions and procedures can be streamlined. Currently, the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division and the United Nations International Crime and Justice Research Institute, are three such (currently rather small) organisations which play a role at coordinating some relevant activity. Foreign aid money, albeit a small amount, has also been channeled into improving crime prevention and criminal

justice systems in many developing countries[30].

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Clearly, the situation concerning urban crime and violence in Asia, is undergoing huge change, almost as we speak. The relatively low rate of crime and violence in comparison with other regions, is likely to change for the worse. The extraordinary economic, social and human progress that engulfed this region for the two decades since 1975, has unraveled: not only has it merely slowed down from the giddy heights of just a few years ago, economic growth is now officially *negative* in many East Asian countries, which were once part of the Miracle. It is only inevitable that some of the factors which result in crime and violence, such

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[29] Panos, op. cit.

[30] Ibid.

as growing urban poverty, hopelessness, unemployment, and inflation, will instigate a growing spiral of crime and violence. The possible scenario is likely to be destitution and social and political turmoil. Many countries and cities in Asia are now divided along communal, sectarian and ethnic lines, the consequences of which are already apparent. Hence, it seems that the cities of Asia are in for a transformation that does not bode well for its citizens. Or must that necessarily be the case?

The fact that there is an awareness about the likely scenario, must certainly provide time enough, not just to prepare against the consequences for any eventuality, but also to prepare conditions so that any possible dislocation is actually avoided. Economic growth and development will have to be on top of the agenda of all governments, as it is in most cases, if the fallout from a meltdown is to be averted. Growth, with equity, with focussed programmes to eliminate and deal with urban poverty, will have to be high on the agenda of all Asian governments. But, far more innovative measures will have to be taken to ensure that the economic costs of a slowdown are averted.

Perhaps there could be no better opportunity to forge links between citizens and their governments, particularly, local/municipal governments. Municipal authorities have

a key role in developing and implementing crime preventive strategies and to control and counter violence. Prevention strategies at the city level will need to be initiated in oder to form partnerships between municipalities, community organisations, the police, and the judicial system. In addition, in order to prevent crime and violence, social development policies will have to be a part of crime prevention programmes. In order to promote a just social development programme so as to alleviate poverty and to address the causes and roots from which crime and violence emanates in cities, the *nature and delivery* of development will also have to change. Greater democratisation and participation, more decentralisation, and enhanced autonomy at the local/city level, will need to be a prerequisite for development. In order to address violence and crime, of the possible two options, rather than a hard approach, of greater policing and enforcement (also possibly leading to violence), a softer approach, which addresses the causes for crime and violence – deprivation, lack of alternate options, destitution a lack of basic civic facilities – will need to be adopted. In this time of economic crises, this preference is not going to come cheap. However, it may be the only way of avoiding a surge in crime and violence in our cities and the costs of not doing so are likely to be far, far, greater.