



Citizen Security in El Salvador: Improving the Effectiveness of International Aid

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Task Force 2012

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Task Force Members

Ashley Davis

Dan Fiedler

Janey Greenstein

Sherrie Hsu

Mina Manuchehri

Katherine McKeon

Emily Phillips

Alyssa Virtue

Coordinators/Editors

Kate Fenimore

Katherine Walton

Faculty Advisor

Angelina Godoy

Special Advisor

Jorge Sapoznikow

Evaluator

Mauricio Vivero

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ACRONYMS

AECID – Spanish Agency for International Development
ASAPROSAR – Salvadoran Association for Rural Health
COMPAS – Common Performance Assessment System
DAC – Development Assistance Committee
DEF – Development Effectiveness Framework
DEM – Development Effectiveness Model
ECG – Evaluation Cooperation Group
ERR –Foundation for Studies on the Application of Law
FEPADE –Business Foundation for Educational Development
FISDL – Organization for Funds for Local Development (IDB created)
GIZ – German Agency for International Development
GOES – Government of El Salvador
GPS – Good Practice Standards
IDB – Inter-American Development Bank
IDHUCA – Institute of Human Rights at UCA
IE – Impact Evaluation
IEG – Independent Evaluations Group (World Bank)
IPEA – Institute for Research in Applied Economics
IUDOP – University Institute of Public Opinion
KFW – Credit Agency for German Development Bank
LRR – Loan Results Report
MDB – Multilateral Development Bank
M&E – Monitoring & Evaluation
OVE – Office of Evaluation and Oversight (IDB)
PCR – Project Completion Report
PMR – Project Management Reports
SPD – Office of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness
NODE – Network on Development Evaluation
OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RFP – Request for Proposal
RTI – Research Triangle Institute
UCA – University of Central America
USAID- US Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy report examines the ways in which the international aid community can better support the citizen security needs of the Central American people. El Salvador serves as an appropriate case study in this context, as it currently has one of the highest homicide rates in the world. While international donors have committed significant resources and developed a wide range of projects in response to the nation's escalating violence rates, such efforts have yet to produce appreciable results. International donors and multi-lateral banks have thus far indirectly supported the government of El Salvador in its framing of the violence from a national security perspective through direct military support and indirect budgetary support. This has translated to increasingly militarized solutions that are in conflict with the objectives of local community organizations that view the violence as a product of social exclusion and lack of opportunities.

The efforts of the international aid community have had limited success due to the lack of effective collaboration and coordination among the various actors involved in promoting Salvadoran citizen security interests. First, coordination between various donors has been limited at best. As a result, aid projects frequently fund programs that duplicate the same efforts, fail to collaborate in successful policies, and at times actually hinder each other's communication with local organizations. Second, the private contractor model used by USAID further inhibits communication between project designers and local partners through both the financial incentives and time constraints of the RFP process. This barrier in project implementation decreases both the top-down flow of money and the bottom-up flow of information between the United States government and the aid recipients. Third, accountability systems, particularly within USAID and IDB, overly rely on output-based indicators and internal monitoring systems when qualitative, outcome-based information collected by an independent body would provide much more useful information. Fourth, too much international aid is invested in clearly failed state institutions, in particular the national police, the military and the judicial system. Despite the fact that the corruption and ineffectiveness of these bodies have been well established, they continue to be funded both directly and indirectly in ways that do not address their internal structural weaknesses. Fifth, internationally led programs that aim to improve citizen security through violence prevention tend to prioritize the political and ideological values of the donors over the needs of the communities. In particular, the prevention programs funded by

international donors serve to reinforce the social exclusion of gang-active youth by underfunding or disregarding programs that offer opportunities for individuals who have already demonstrated violent or criminal behavior despite the fact that local community based organizations repeatedly assert that holistic prevention models are the most successful.

This failure to communicate with the Salvadoran people requires a paradigm shift in the international aid community. In each of these areas, local knowledge should be actively prioritized through third-party forums, public opinion polls, more staff on the ground, and greater support for the local organizations that have demonstrated success. Aid needs to be decentralized, so that municipalities and small community-based organizations will be better supported in their own positive steps towards violence prevention and rights-respecting law enforcement. At each stage of the process, from project design to implementation to accountability, the aid community should strive to utilize the expertise of local actors, as this knowledge is critical in providing sustainable, long-term solutions appropriate to the actual communities.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, citizen security in the “Northern Triangle” of Central America has gained increasing attention from the international aid community, yet efforts to resolve the problem of escalating violence through loans and grants have yet to contribute to any substantial reduction in crime. As an example, the United States spent \$361.5 million in Central America between 2008 and 2011, yet during that same period homicide rates in El Salvador increased from 52 to 66 per 100,000 citizens.¹ Our research seeks to address why despite increased investment in citizen security in Central America, violence and crime rates continue to escalate at such alarming rates. This report, based on a case study of citizen security assistance to El Salvador, suggests that poor communication between Central American grassroots organizations and those designing aid projects lies at the root of this problem. In particular, policymakers on both the state and international level have framed the issue as a problem of national security, rather than as a reflection of the lack of human security on the local level. Contrary to predominant political assertions that attribute most crime and violence to gang activity,² communities and local NGOs in El Salvador recognize that existing violence is perpetuated by a variety of structural factors including the social exclusion of marginalized communities, high levels of inequality, increased economic vulnerability, and a lack of basic rights.³ Of course, gangs play a role in the violence, but understanding the problem’s deeper roots is necessary for formulating sustainable solutions. This runs directly counter to current trends that increasingly seek answers in military approaches.

Through greater emphasis on improving the flows of information, especially from the bottom-up, the aid community will more effectively respond to security needs and adjust their own programs according to local information rather than international politics. The long-term goal of improving citizen security in El Salvador requires, first and foremost, that the concept of “citizen security” be reframed, particularly among policymakers in key donor governments such as the US and within the government of El Salvador. As we argue in this report, existing

¹ Peter Meyer, *Central America Regional Security Initiative Background and Policy Issues for Congress*, (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 2011).

² Estimates concerning the percentage of crimes committed by gangs are highly variable and “notoriously unreliable.” For example, while the country’s Defense Minister recently reported that 90% of homicides are committed by gang members, directors of the National Civilian Police estimate that gangs commit 40-45% of homicides. Adriana Beltran, “Stronger than the Iron Fist: Funes Administration Attempts a Different Approach to Crime and Violence in El Salvador,” WOLA, March 18, 2011.

³ Research has demonstrated that violence increases in situations of increased economic vulnerability, extreme inequality, and where social and economic exclusion are prevalent. In reporting on violence in El Salvador, author Mo Hume makes the important distinction that poverty does not directly cause violence nor are all poor people violent, but rather suggests that in situations where poverty and inequality overlap, armed violence is often employed as an option by some individuals. Mo Hume, “Armed Violence and Poverty in El Salvador,” November 2004.

conceptions of citizen security can serve to polarize and exclude particular groups of citizens, establishing a distinction between populations who deserve protection and those who constitute a threat.⁴ The resultant policies tend to justify the failure to protect the human rights of potentially “threatening populations” with the need to defend those populations that “deserve protection,” instead of proposing solutions that work holistically. In El Salvador, youth who participate in gang activity are overwhelmingly defined in political and media discourse as the nation’s primary security threat.⁵ This polarization and exclusion of particular social groups is further reflected within aid allocation, as the majority of aid is directed towards repressive security solutions and prevention programs aimed at the least vulnerable populations, while minimal funding is allocated towards marginalized groups such as youths involved in gangs.

Reframing citizen security also requires recognition that violence encompasses not only visible, physical acts of violence, but also the normalized and often unrecognized forms of “everyday violence” which are most experienced by marginalized populations entrenched within conditions of poverty and exclusion.⁶ Predominant definitions of citizen security serve to silence the suffering of these populations, particularly that of women and adolescents. Thus, domestic violence, while not the main focus of this report, must also be considered within the scope of insecurity, as this form of social violence is also rising within the region.⁷ While violence is often conceptualized solely as an individualized act of criminal deviance, this report argues that such approaches to violence fail to recognize the extent to which social conditions produce acts of violence and thus, must be represented in the solution as well.

Finally, in reframing the concept of citizen security, the donor community should refocus attention upon municipal governments and actual citizens in local communities as the best sources of solutions to their problems. Under this perspective, the international community should approach citizen security efforts as a collaborative partnership with local communities, recognizing that the most valuable insight will come from the citizens themselves. Our point here is not that all local leaders are responsible or all local efforts laudatory, but rather that if any

⁴ Author Peter Peetz asserts that it is important to recognize that what is defined as violence and delinquency within a particular society is highly dependent on the “social and political context” of that society. Thus, this report recognizes the way in which current dialogue on citizen security primarily emphasizes homicides and gang violence, other forms of violence are on the rise in El Salvador as well. Peter Peetz, “Youth Violence in Central America,” *Youth and Society*, 43 (2011): 1459-1498.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe I. Bourgois. *Violence in war and peace*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004).

⁷ *Seconds in the Air: Women Gang-Members and Their Prisons*. (The University Institute of Public Opinion. San Salvador: UCA, 2010)

strategy is to be successful and sustainable in the long term, it must be embraced by those with longstanding leadership in the local context, rather than imposed as a top-down model.

This emphasis on local communities as active leaders in tackling their own challenges rather than passive recipients of international aid undergirds our entire report. Throughout the pages that follow, we discuss development and implementation of aid projects, focusing in particular on USAID and IDB as the primary donors of citizen security related programs in El Salvador. We identify five key areas for improvement, and in each area discuss the ways in which local empowerment and reframing the problems should be key strategies for international institutions to yield improved results.

The five areas where improvements should be made are:

- Coordination, cooperation and information sharing between donors
- Communication between project designers and local NGO partners
- Appropriate and unbiased accountability
- Investing in failed state institutions
- Internationally funded prevention programs

Although our report highlights certain shortcomings in international aid, our intention in doing so is to contribute constructively to the ongoing discussion about improving aid policy. Indeed, the aid community itself has already identified many of these themes in internal critiques, however such reflections have thus far failed to yield any significant and sustainable changes. It is our hope that in offering our own insight on the challenges facing current citizen security policy, we might contribute a new perspective to the ongoing dialogue around improving international assistance in the 21st century—and more specifically, that this evolving framework will translate into tangible improvements in the day to day lives of the residents of this dynamic yet embattled world region.

METHODOLOGY

Our research draws on the review of original and secondary sources about international aid, including academic writings, policy briefs, and the documents of the aid organizations themselves. In addition, we conducted a total of twenty-four interviews, both in person and via Skype or telephone.

The bulk of these interviews took place during our one-week fact-finding mission to El Salvador, from January 29 - February 5, 2012. During this time, we conducted interviews with 20 individuals: four from aid agencies, three from research centers based at the Universidad de Centro America, seven from the municipality of Santa Tecla, and six from local grassroots organizations (a complete list of interviews is provided in the Appendix). During these conversations, interviewees shared comments with us both on and off the record; we took detailed notes and recorded most conversations, with the permission of participants.

Our perspectives were shaped by a visit to the youth detention facility at El Espino, where juveniles from the 18th Street gang are held. While there, we engaged in informal discussions with the youth themselves, as well as some of the service providers who work with them. Our insight was sharpened through our visit to an internally displaced community under gang control, and by our experiences there with community leaders, organizers, and children.

LACK OF COORDINATION AND COOPERATION AMONG DONORS

In this section we examine the lack of coordination amongst the various international actors in El Salvador. Coordination refers to developing citizen security plans in conjunction with other donors, sharing information and best practices, or at the very least informing all relevant actors about intended strategies prior to their implementation. Without effective coordination, aid programs could be duplicating efforts, causing unnecessary bureaucratic burdens for local partner organizations or even working at cross-purposes. In the past coordination has meant a multi-day symposium of major aid players and government representatives, with the limited inclusion of local NGOs or other members of civil society. However, these meetings need to be given more authority and credibility in order to actually generate changes. Local community participation should be a requirement rather than an afterthought. The donor community has already identified this issue as a major obstacle in achieving aid effectiveness, yet currently no successful mechanisms have been developed. Instead, the forums that have been created have only had marginal financial support.

In the Paris Declaration, the international community recognized that the inconsistency of donor approaches for providing and managing aid had resulted in an avoidable duplication of efforts as well as a greater burden on recipient countries that had to work around the multitude of different policies and procedures.⁸ The Declaration committed aid donors to reduce fragmentation by joining together to produce analytic work at the country level and increasing the number of coordinated donor missions.⁹ The goal for 2010 was to produce 66% of country analytic work jointly, and to coordinate with at least one other donor on 40% of donor missions.¹⁰ However, despite this ambitious rhetoric of donor commitment for improving cooperation, the actual levels of donor collaboration in 2010 had only marginally improved. For

⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Aid effectiveness: a progress report on implementing the Paris Declaration*, (Paris: OECD, 2011), 61.

⁹ The need for collaboration on analytic work is necessary to reduce costs and develop a common understanding. OECD states that, “the scarcity of joint analysis and dialogue around it has hampered opportunities for a shared understanding of context.” *Ibid*, 66.

¹⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action*, (Paris: OECD, 2008), 10.

example, joint donor missions increased from only 41% to 44%, while the average global percentage of joint analytic work increased from only 20% to 22%.¹¹

Although no initial baseline was established in El Salvador, the current percentages of donor harmonization fall well below the international average. More specifically, only 12% of donor missions and 39% of country analysis are shared between the relevant actors.¹² In reference to the implementation of the Paris Declaration, Claudia Aguilar Garza, General Director for Development Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador has written, "...despite progress, commitments are a long way from being met."¹³ The international aid community in El Salvador is particularly varied, and there is little agreement or collaboration among the aid donors in the provision and management of aid.¹⁴

The respective El Salvador country strategies of the World Bank, the IDB, and USAID were developed independently of each other, thus illustrating the lack of coordination even within the preliminary planning stages. The IDB's country strategy report is the only one to mention how IDB projects fit with the actions of other donors; however this section is nonetheless vague and lacks details regarding how project coordination will actually be achieved.¹⁵ For example, under the IDB "violence prevention" strategic objective, the organization lists the actions of the other agencies in general terms such as, "USAID: Program to prevent violence in high-risk communities," and "Spanish cooperation: support for citizen security at the local level," but does not include relevant project features.¹⁶ Without detailed coordination on specific projects sponsored by each organization, there is great potential for overlapping projects, overlooked sectors of the population, and even contradicting goals. All major donor governments and banks with efforts addressing citizen security in El Salvador need to consult one another and coordinate projects to maximize the effectiveness of international aid.

The sharing of best practices between aid organizations has been further hampered by the fiscal motivations of the private contractors used by USAID. Once a Request for Proposals (RFP) is submitted, the various contractors such as Creative Associates and Checchi Consulting are then required to compete with one another in order to receive funding. This competition is

¹¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Aid effectiveness: a progress report on implementing the Paris Declaration*, (Paris: OECD, 2011), 66-67.

¹² "2011 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration", 125.

¹³ Claudia Aguilar Garza, "The view from El Salvador," In *Aid Effectiveness 2005-10: Progress in implementing the Paris Declaration*, (Busan, Korea: Busan Bulletin, 2011), 4.

¹⁴ Roberto Rodriguez Melendez, interview by authors, 3 February 2012.

¹⁵ IDB, *Country Strategy with El Salvador*, 32.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 33

not taken lightly, and many contractors ask their local implementing entities to sign an “exclusivity agreement,” which specifically hinders information sharing between firms.¹⁷ This is problematic because information sharing is beneficial for all parties in the long run since every organization has different expertise and focuses on different projects. For example, USAID could learn from GIZ and the Santa Tecla municipal government about how setting long-term goals and having flexibility in their project’s time frame could be advantageous for their project’s overall success and sustainability.¹⁸ USAID’s profit-incentivized system does not provide adequate space for open coordination; rather it implicitly discourages it.

Similarly, USAID has followed the for-profit “technical assistance” model, rather than the “technical cooperation” model, which could be a more effective, collaborative process with local NGOs. Technical cooperation is non-financial and works as a part of human resources to define a project as a shared responsibility between all involved. GIZ uses this approach instead of technical assistance, which is a profit-driven system in which experts are hired to assess the situation of the country and assist with project proposals and implementation.¹⁹ These two different approaches play key roles in outlining the incentives for aid projects. As explained by Nelson Flores of FESPAD, contractors can sometimes spend too much money on consulting, hiring personnel and doing diagnostics, without actually meeting the needs of the targeted population. This implies that the main objectives of contractors working for bi-laterals such as USAID are not to coordinate with others in order to come up with the most effective and feasible solution for El Salvador, but rather to pursue what is in their own best financial interests. GIZ, on the other hand, primarily uses the not-for-profit technical cooperation, and stresses their flexibility, openness and ability to coordinate on various levels in the aid community. This includes inviting any and all NGOs interested in taking part in the planning committee to join their meetings, and working more directly on the ground—with only one third of their work being outsourced.²⁰ This alternative aid approach changes the incentive structure and can help foster connections with local communities, bolstering their credibility and ability to effectively shape and implement projects.

¹⁷ Nelson Flores of FESPAD, interview by authors, El Salvador, 2 February, 2012. See also: Wilson Alexander Alvarado Alemán of Equipo Nahual, interview by authors, El Salvador, 2 February, 2012.

¹⁸ Christof Küchemann, (Representative of GIZ), interview by authors, GIZ, San Salvador, 30 January, 2012

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid.

Thus far, the limited coordination efforts that have originated from within the aid community have failed to attract any long-term funding support. While some coordination mechanisms have been developed, such as the USPS, the IACPV (Inter-American Violence Prevention Coalition), the CCPVJ (American Coalition for Youth Violence Prevention), and consultative groups organized on the large scale by the World Bank and IDB to bring together various participants, no one collaborative effort has yet succeeded in consolidating group objectives for the entire international community to work together on. Instead, these forums have not received the necessary funding or attention from the international aid community to actually alter the way decisions are made. This is largely because it is not in each organization's own fiscal interest to invest in coordination. However, an independent facilitator could potentially bring a higher level of commitment to the process. An impartial third party, acting as the intermediary between the lending organizations and their beneficiaries, could ensure that the most vulnerable populations are receiving aid and the donors are fulfilling their own interests as well. Given that each aid organization does have a vested interest in coordination, such an independent coordinator should be jointly funded to work in the interest of the collective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Donors and lenders should coordinate all country strategies.

- A section in each country strategy report should outline specific guidelines as to how specific details of each respective organization's projects will interact with the projects of other donors. For example, such questions as which sectors of the population the projects will serve, in which municipalities the services will operate, and how particular aspects of individual projects fit in with longer term goals in the region, should be included.

The aid community should create a third party facilitator to increase coordination.

- The facilitator's work should include the creation of a forum bringing together principle actors and representatives from bi-lateral organizations, multilateral banks, the government, and civil society.
- This body should facilitate the coordination of existing plans as well ensuring that community-led organizations are directly included in the development of new plans.
- Major donors should collectively fund this body as an investment in their own efficiency.

USAID and the multilateral banks should design and implement projects that better incorporate the strategies developed by the communities themselves.

- This would require more staff to work on project coordination, aid in the decentralization of funding, and increase communication between all aid entities and recipients
- Because of this emphasis on local cooperation, local actors will best accomplish these duties, and therefore whenever possible Salvadorans themselves should be hired for these positions.

USAID country branches should be given more autonomy for the development and budgeting of their own projects and country strategies.

- Specifically, field missions should be given more autonomy from both the State Department and USAID headquarters in D.C.

THE DISCONNECT OF THE PRIVATE CONTRACTOR MODEL

In this section we examine the disconnect between aid organizations and recipients. Disconnect in this context refers to an obstructed flow of resources, information and objectives between donors and local organizations. This in turn causes a tendency in the international aid community to provide the programs they see fit with little to no input from the population they are attempting to serve. As we will illustrate, this is particularly true for USAID in El Salvador. Aside from hindering the flow of information between aid organizations, the USAID private-contractor model creates an unnecessary barrier between the people designing the projects and the actual recipients of aid. This barrier decreases both the top-down flow of money and the bottom-up flow of information between the US government and the aid recipients. As a result, projects are less effective and less efficient because of this sizable gap between donors and recipients.

At the most basic level, the use of for-profit private contractors significantly reduces the amount of money actually reaching the grassroots level. USAID pays many of its contractors a fixed fee above and beyond their estimated costs (up to 10% of total costs).²¹ USAID estimates that the average percentage of obligated funds that actually flows to local partners is around 20%.²² In our interview with the Institute for Human Rights at the University of Central America, we were told that direct partnerships with aid organizations (as opposed to working through contractors) would be financially to their advantage as they would receive much more money to conduct their work if profitmaking contractors were not serving as middlemen in the process, and taking up a significant amount of the project budget.²³

Furthermore, using contractors as interlocutors for USAID projects stymies communication and slows the implementation of lessons learned. Local Salvadoran organizations do not communicate with USAID directly, but rather go through the contractor that is supervising the project.²⁴ Additionally, the feedback loop between project managers and designers is slow, and inevitably creates a discrepancy between USAID project strategies and the

²¹ The RFP caps the contractors' profits at 10% of the project cost, and the executive contractors minimum salary standardized at \$119,554. USAID, *Guidance for Award Fee Contracting*, (Washington D.C.: USAID, 2011).

²² "USAID Fact Sheet: USAID Announces USAID FORWARD Reform Agenda"

²³ Javier Melgar and Roberto Deras, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012.

²⁴ Javier Melgar and Roberto Deras, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012.

on-the-ground information in El Salvador.²⁵ Even within USAID itself, gaps in perspective emerge and money is sometimes invested in services that the field missions deem unnecessary. According to a 2008 Oxfam Report, USAID in El Salvador discontinued a financial services program, which increased access to capital among small enterprises, because commercial banks stepped into that role in the economy.²⁶ However, policymakers in D.C. decided that the project should continue, which meant that Congress was spending money on redundant services that people working in field missions decided were unnecessary.²⁷ This was a misstep considering that individuals in the field, by definition, work more directly with the local organizations and communities than policymakers in D.C. and therefore need greater independence to invest in projects that meet the local needs.

As a result of this poor feedback system, local organizations in El Salvador, that are most capable of assessing their communities' needs, are largely left out of the project design process. Instead, the contractor or aid organization "pre-cooks" a project and then hires a local organization to carry it out under a specific time frame.²⁸ After the project is over, usually within three to five years, the local organization does not continue to receive financial help unless asked to help complete another project. In an interview, Aldo Miranda of RTI admitted that he has seen many proposals that have been built without involving local people to participate in the process, and this creates a disconnect between the donor's proposal and the vision of grassroots organizations, which directly takes into account the actual needs of the people.²⁹ This not only fails to utilize valuable sources of information, but also is potentially inefficient and costly.

In a particularly clear example of this inefficiency, aid institutions often hire Salvadoran organizations to carry out projects in areas other than those in which they specialize.³⁰ For example, IDHUCA received funding to install outdoor lighting in a community, despite the fact that they are a university human rights group and therefore primarily concerned with research and advocacy.³¹ In this way, many donors overlook the knowledge and expertise of local

²⁵ Aldo Miranda, interview by authors, Skype, Seattle, WA, 14 February, 2012.

²⁶ "Field Report from El Salvador — Oxfam America", 26 June 2008.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 6

²⁸ Roberto Rodríguez Meléndez, interview by authors, El Salvador, 3 February 2012.

²⁹ Aldo Miranda, interview by authors, Skype, Seattle, WA, 14 February, 2012.

³⁰ Javier Melgar and Roberto Deras, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January 2012.

³¹ Ibid.

organizations and as a result miss out on opportunities to support their strengths within the community.³²

Although these local organizations are in a position to best assess community needs, international donors seldom provide funds for capacity building, even though those donors rely on that very capacity to accomplish their own project goals. Moreover, providing organizations with funding for specific projects within a limited time frame does not contribute to organizational sustainability in the long-term. This idea is also affirmed in USAID's 2011 RFP-El Salvador, which asks that the contractor address ways to "foster sustainability at the local level through activities that increase municipal leaders and citizens' capabilities to address crime and violence issues after assistance has ended."³³ However, if a donor provides funding to an NGO in a restricted manner, then the NGO is limited in its ability to strengthen its organization beyond the parameters of the donor's specific project.³⁴ This persists because many donors are overly concerned with the accountability of their money—they do not trust the local organizations enough to let them use the money in a way that they see best fit.³⁵ However, this is a risk that the aid organizations must take because local participation is crucial for achieving sustainable and effective aid.³⁶

USAID's reliance on contractors, rather than their own limited staff, has shifted an increasingly greater proportion of the bureaucratic burden onto the contractors themselves, and as a result, the current system rewards size rather than the suitability of contractors for a specific project. Within the cumbersome RFP process, applicants must invest a great deal of time and money into the initial application, both of which go to waste if the contractor is not selected.³⁷ Additionally, many of USAID's procurement contracts are large and contain a broad scope of components that the contractor is required to address in its project proposal.³⁸ Although smaller, more specialized contractors may be better suited to carry out a specific project in El Salvador,

³² Héctor Aparicio, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012.

³³ USAID, "Request for Proposal SOL-519-12-000002," 17.

³⁴ Javier Melgar and Roberto Deras, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012.

³⁵ Roberto Rodríguez Meléndez, interview by authors, El Salvador, 3 February, 2012.

³⁶ Aldo Miranda, interview by authors, Skype, Seattle, WA, 14 February, 2012.

³⁷ Jorge Sapoznikow, interview by authors, Seattle, WA, 6 January, 2012

³⁸ For example, the RFP for the latest Crime and Violence Prevention Project in El Salvador requires the contractor develop projects that will: 1. Improve the ability of the GOES to implement the National Strategy for Social Violence Prevention in Support of Municipalities (EPV); 2. Support municipal crime prevention observatories; 3. Build the capacity of the GOES to develop municipal-led, community-based crime and violence prevention programs; 4. Develop projects that address the various root causes of crime in an integral manner. USAID, "Request for Proposal SOL-519-12-000002," (Washington DC: USAID, 2011, pg. 12-20)

the necessity for large contractors who can afford to invest resources in the RFP process restricts the applicant pool to large, global contracting corporations.

As a result, USAID's process emphasizes financial resources over more important issues such as having an ongoing regional presence, using a wide variety of local partners, or relevant experience in the field. Many contractors spend an average of 3-6 weeks in El Salvador during the RFP process to find local organizations that will help carry out their projects.³⁹ This time frame is far too short for contractors to effectively incorporate the many dimensions of civil society into their project proposal⁴⁰. Without USAID monitoring this process, they are unable to ensure that the most important aspects of the proposal are being met.

³⁹ Aldo Miranda, RTI, interview by authors, Skype, Seattle, WA, 14 February 2012.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

USAID should reduce overall reliance on contractors to manage aid and instead collaborate with local organizations directly.

- Local organizations should be involved in initial budgeting, planning, and designing of programs.

USAID should require that contractors have an established regional presence.

- This is fundamental for gaining access to local knowledge and building effective partnerships with a variety of community organizations.

USAID should break up procurement contracts into smaller grants and more specific objectives, so as to allow for a greater variety of more specialized contractors to compete for funding.

USAID should allocate an appropriate percentage of the initial project budget to capacity building for the selected organizations.

- Organizations should use the funding as they see fit, but in order to prevent corruption they should adhere to pre-determined communication stipulations with the donor organization.

LACK OF APPROPRIATE AND UNBIASED ACCOUNTABILITY

The donor community's ability to produce timely and accurate evaluations of current and future programs plays a critical role in improving the allocation of aid resources. Within the aid community, accountability is the set of indicators and reports that each individual donor uses to evaluate the efficacy of their programs. A useful and successful accountability system should highlight lessons learned from past projects to be implemented in future projects; offer a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative indicators; conduct project evaluations from project managers, stakeholders, local citizens, and other important members of the project; ensure that evaluations are completed at various stages of the project and finalized on time; and finally, share evaluations with other aid corporations to make sure that all development aid money is reaching the appropriate sectors of civil society and to share lessons learned, difficulties and successes of past projects. As we will show, the accountability methods of the donor community have yet to fulfill these requirements, and as a result project strengths and weaknesses are not accurately identified. This report identifies two weaknesses within the existing system of accountability mechanisms among major aid organizations. First, both the IDB and USAID heavily emphasize quantitative indicators, even when qualitative indicators would be more useful or quantitative indicators are unreliable. Second, third party or civil society accountability sources could be a very useful way to remove the internal biases and motivations of donors from the accountability process, yet they are seldom used effectively.

USAID's reliance on quantitative indicators ignores qualitative information from the ground level that would provide a more accurate assessment of their real progress in the region. For example, to track its efforts in providing employment-generating activities to at-risk youth, USAID measures the number of people they have reached rather than qualitatively evaluating the employability of those people, as GIZ does.⁴¹ This is largely a function of USAID's time constraints for project reports, which do not allow adequate time for more nuanced assessments. As a result, output is often measured instead of outcome, and these indicators do not holistically evaluate improvements in citizen security.

⁴¹ US GAO - Combating Gangs: Federal Agencies Have Implemented a Central American Gang Strategy, but Could Strengthen Oversight and Measurement of Efforts", April 23, 2010, 31. See also: GIZ, "Evaluations Report 2006-2007."

For example, while USAID’s most recent violence prevention RFP does require contractors to measure the number of prevention councils established, it does not take into account the effectiveness of those councils, the levels of citizen involvement, and the degree to which those councils are able to effect change. These kinds of qualitative assessments would provide a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of security projects in El Salvador, but because they require more USAID staffing or more trust in local NGOs, USAID has consistently avoided them.⁴² Similarly, USAID’s “Peace and Security” plan lists the various numbers of trucks, helicopters and training hours delivered, yet at no time do they attempt to determine the success of the police in stopping crime.⁴³

Even USAID’s larger objectives are reported using output measurements, and thus their indicators fail to capture the level of nuance involved in measuring their progress towards these goals. For example, Strategic Objective 1, “Ruling Justly,” is measured by trial court performance (the percentage of cases reaching trial that are concluded, and the percentage concluded within a stipulated time period), and changes in user assessments or evaluations of the responsiveness and quality of service of key government agencies.⁴⁴ Neither of these measurements truly captures whether the project achieved the desired outcomes of more transparency and accountability of government, or whether it strengthened the rule of law.

Unlike USAID, the IDB does attempt to use outcome-based indicators. However, the IDB’s data is inherently incomplete and insufficient. Because donor countries require demonstrations of short-term results (i.e. national homicide rates), the IDB’s data depends on macro quantitative indicators during each stage of project development. For long-term solutions to citizen security in El Salvador, however, these indicators are problematic for three reasons.

First, pertinent qualitative indicators exist for measuring citizen security, which would better measure the long-term sustainability of projects. For example, through the use of citizen testimonial, the Bank could identify whether certain communities are beginning to trust the police more, or could identify the specific needs and strengths of communities in order to better

⁴² As evidenced by a 2010 GAO Report on the Merida Initiative, which states “While State has developed some of the key elements of an implementation strategy for the Mérida Initiative, including a mission, strategic goals, and a resource plan, its strategic documents lack certain key elements that would facilitate accountability and management. For example, its strategic documents do not include outcome performance measures that indicate progress toward achieving strategic goals. In addition, State has not developed a comprehensive set of timelines for all expected deliveries, though it plans to provide additional equipment and training in both Mexico and Central America.”

⁴³ Supported improvements in Armed Forces (ESAF’s) land mobility by purchasing 10 five-ton trucks, 2 dump trucks, one 5000-gallon fuel truck, 3 pickup trucks, 1 trailer, and 1 ambulance.

⁴⁴ USAID Regional Strategy for Central America FY 2003-2008: El Salvador Country Plan, 8

customize future project plans.⁴⁵ Second, the current indicators employed are overly focused on macro-economic indicators, such as national income and prices, trade balance, and public sector debt.⁴⁶ Although the national homicide rate is well documented, it is important to note that other indicators related to citizen security are not, such as domestic violence, violence in schools, youth employment opportunities, and the presence of and access to extracurricular activities.⁴⁷ Third, indicators only provide measurements at the national level.⁴⁸ For example, there is no credible data for homicide rates at the municipal level, aside from Santa Tecla.⁴⁹ Measurements at the municipal level regarding all citizen security related indicators are absolutely necessary for the comparing and contrasting of more safe municipalities to those experiencing greater violence.⁵⁰

The IDB has recognized the weaknesses in these statistics, yet rather than developing new accountability measures, most reporting processes are simply not completed. For example, only 26% of public sector projects “had satisfactory evaluation frameworks,” while only 10% of the Project Completion Reports (PCRs) reviewed by OVE, the IDB accountability body, “could demonstrate development results at completion.”⁵¹ Furthermore, a majority of reports “are not prepared on time, and most of them are not even prepared 6 months after their due date,” which causes ultimately only “16% of IDB projects [to] eventually receive an ex-post evaluation.”⁵² In addition, in 2006, OVE was only able to validate that 3 out of 19 Implementation Progress Reports demonstrated complete data, while according to Yuri Soares of OVE, as of 2012, Loan Results Reports have only been performed on a small subgroup of projects and PCRs are still in the redesign process.⁵³

These statistics provide ample evidence that the IDB’s current evaluation strategies and measuring indicators are either not being strictly implemented or are inadequately designed for the IDB’s projects. The ineffectual design of the IDB’s project reports and accountability

⁴⁵ Christof Küchemann, interview by authors, El Salvador, 30 January, 2012. See also: Mauricio Figueroa, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012.

⁴⁶ IDB, “Country Strategy Report.” 25-7.

⁴⁷ Christof Küchemann, interview by authors, El Salvador, 30 January, 2012.

⁴⁸ IDB, “Country Strategy Report.” 25-7.

⁴⁹ Jeannette Aguilar, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012.

⁵⁰ Christof Küchemann, interview by authors, El Salvador, 30 January, 2012.

⁵¹ IDB, “Development Effectiveness Framework.” 8. 2008.

⁵² IDB, “Development Effectiveness Framework.” 8. 2008. See also: IDB, “Assessment of the 2004 Project Completion Reports (PCRs) Produced Under the Bank’s New PCR Guidelines.” i. 2006.

<http://www.iadb.org/OVE/Documents/uploads/cache/765151.pdf>

⁵³ IDB, “Assessment of the 2004 Project Completion Reports (PCRs) Produced Under the Bank’s New PCR Guidelines.” i. 2006.

<http://www.iadb.org/OVE/Documents/uploads/cache/765151.pdf>

mechanisms were first discovered in the 2006 assessment report cited above, but solutions have still not been created to address these profound issues.⁵⁴ As stated by the same 2006 assessment report, addressing and resolving the fact that “too much outcome information is missing from the PCRs in order to assess development effectiveness” should be an absolute priority of the IDB because it “does not prevent the PCRs from asserting that the Bank achieved its Development Objectives” even though the Bank has clearly not achieved them.⁵⁵

Appropriate and effective accountability is further inhibited by the aid agencies’ overall lack of an independent body to evaluate their projects. While USAID does include some relevant qualitative questions in its RFPs for contractors to consider, the final project evaluations are done by the contractors themselves and are therefore vulnerable to being manipulated by contracting businesses seeking to continue receiving contracts. This calls into question the effectiveness of USAID’s evaluation procedures. The proposal outlines potential questions regarding the impact of the program, recommendations for the contractor and USAID, and lessons learned. Answers to these questions need to be seriously pursued and evaluated by an independent party to gauge the effectiveness of contracted projects. The potential questions are appropriate, such as, “To what extent is the project building the GOES' capacity to implement crime prevention strategies and laws?” and “To what extent have municipal leaders' and community members' capacity for prevention planning, implementation, and analysis increased?”⁵⁶ However, the contract only states that USAID should consider questions such as these, and therefore, does not use these questions as a standard for measuring the success of projects. By having contractors evaluate themselves, USAID is entirely losing the value of these potentially useful indicators.

The US Government Accountability Office has similarly identified the self-evaluation system as a weak point in the contractor system. A GAO report stated: “USAID also conducts some, but relatively infrequent, independent evaluations of longer-term programs.”⁵⁷ The report also noted, “USAID mission officials told GAO that they did not conduct many independent evaluations of democracy assistance because of the resources involved in the undertaking and the difficulty of measuring impact in the area of democracy assistance.” While it is true that democracy assistance is indeed difficult to measure, these projects need to be evaluated by an

⁵⁴ Yuri Soares, interview by authors, Skype, Seattle, WA, 15 January, 2012.

⁵⁵ IDB, “Assessment of the 2004 Project Completion Reports (PCRs) Produced Under the Bank’s New PCR Guidelines.” v. 2006.

⁵⁶ USAID, “Request for Proposal SOL-519-12-000002,” (Washington DC: USAID, 2011), 26.

⁵⁷ US Government Accountability Office, “US Agencies Take Steps to Coordinate International Programs but Lack Information on some US-funded Activities” Sept 2009.

independent organization or agency in order to truly hold contractors accountable for projects.

The Spanish government's aid agency, AECID, does a better job of incorporating qualitative measures and the opinions of civil society into their evaluation mechanisms. AECID employs a system of quantitative and qualitative indicators to gauge the total impact of prevention programs. These indicators are usually assessed during the pre-evaluation process.⁵⁸ Their indicators are not only macroeconomic, but also cultural, educational, and ethical qualitative indicators, which incorporate civil society participation into each Spanish project.⁵⁹ Overall, AECID's accountability strength lies in its attention to past evaluations when planning future projects, and its wide range of indicators. However, while great detail is given in pre-evaluations and planning a project, the final evaluations are completed by the project managers themselves, with no independent evaluations, which leaves little room for completely objective evaluations.

Similarly, the IDB lacks a truly independent evaluating body. Although sometimes described as "independent," the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE) is still very much beholden to the priorities and demands of bank management; the OVE, which is responsible for receiving and reviewing PCRs, as well as implementing potential lessons learned, is an internal department of the Bank. In order to avoid conflicts of interest and external pressure from other departments within the IDB, however, the OVE claims to enjoy absolute independence from Bank management and adhere to firm principles and evaluation standards established by the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG)—an external organization. Although this provides superficial safeguards, the OVE is nonetheless still not an official external third party accountability body and therefore, is more susceptible to altering report standards and deadlines due to influences from other IDB departments.⁶⁰

Furthermore, although the ECG is technically a third party organization, conflicts of interest could still exist because the IDB is a founding member of the ECG and thus, largely influential in the development of its principles and evaluation standards.⁶¹ In fact, in a 2001 and 2004 evaluation report, it was found that PCRs do not adhere to the standards of ECG.⁶² In addition, in an interview with OVE staff member Yuri Soares, concerns regarding a conflict of interest between the OVE and Bank management were confirmed through his candid explanation

⁵⁸ Roberto Rodriguez Melendez, interview with authors, El Salvador, 3 February, 2012.

⁵⁹ AECID, "Ministerio De Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperacion."

⁶⁰ "About OVE - Inter-American Development Bank," IDB, web, 2012. <http://www.iadb.org/en/office-of-evaluation-and-oversight/about-ove,1556.html>.

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² IDB, "Assessment of the 2004 Project Completion Reports (PCRs) Produced Under the Bank's New PCR Guidelines." iv. 2006.

of the fact that the two are in fact not independent from one another because Bank management has to implement the diagnostics that the OVE proposes, as well as implement lessons learned from projects reviewed by the OVE.⁶³ In other words, it is rather “a balancing act between accountability and lessons learned”—causing a direct relationship between OVE and Bank management to be literally unavoidable due to the Bank’s current organizational structure and accountability framework.⁶⁴

In an attempt to create a genuinely “external” accountability body and increase cooperation with other multilateral banks, the IDB led the development of a third party centralized accountability body in 2008. However, this attempt ultimately “did not gain any traction,” and the idea was consequently aborted.⁶⁵ This failure resulted from an inability to develop a centralized corporate governance structure, as well as an appropriate structure for ensuring sustainable financial assistance.⁶⁶ Although in Soares’ opinion, a third party accountability body is still a good option, no serious effort has been made since 2008.

Similar to the IDB, the World Bank also has an internal accountability department called the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG), much like OVE.⁶⁷ Unlike the IDB, however, the World Bank does have a second internal accountability department called the Inspection Panel (IP), which has the power to make appropriate changes to projects if “two or more peoples in the country where the Bank financed project is located believe” that the Bank is in “violation of its policies and procedures.”⁶⁸ It would appear therefore that the World Bank has established a better system of checks and balances than the IDB. At the same time, however, the existence of two internal accountability bodies should not be viewed as a substitute for an *external* third party accountability body, because accountability staff members will unavoidably experience conflicts of interest when attempting to critique the very institution that employs them.

In general, the accountability mechanisms of the donor community all lack input from civil society in their evaluations. The involvement of civil society on both the input and evaluation stages of the process is important since the overarching goal of aid money is to improve civil society, decrease violence and increase citizen security. The University Institute of Public Opinion (IUDOP) in San Salvador already has the capacity to conduct opinion polls, and

⁶³ Yuri Soares, interview by authors, Skype, Seattle, WA, 15 February, 2012.

⁶⁴ Yuri Soares, interview by authors, Skype, Seattle, WA, 15 February, 2012.

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ World Bank Group, “Independent Evaluation Group.”

⁶⁸ World Bank, “The Inspection Panel.”

represents a potentially useful resource for aid corporations. It would be more prudent to incorporate opinion surveys of not only the entire staff involved with the project, as is the practice at GIZ, but also to use the opinions of the citizens in the municipalities. This would improve the scope of evaluations and would allow future projects to be more focused on the needs of the people in the communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All multi-lateral banks and bi-lateral organizations should use a third party accountability institution to ensure that lessons learned are implemented.

- The accountability body should include "incorporation of lessons learned" as an evaluation category.

Indicators used as measurements of aid project effectiveness should include municipal level data, both for control and project recipient communities.

Quantitative indicators should be complemented with qualitative indicators, and output measures with outcome measures, to ensure a holistic reflection of a project's success or failure.

- Examples of relevant outcome based indicators include public opinion polls, qualitative evaluations by partner organizations, and effectiveness evaluations by staff on the ground.
- These measurements should be prioritized over macroeconomic measurements.

EXCESSIVE CENTRALIZATION

Decentralizing aid to the municipal level has the potential to improve coordination, localize project design, and enhance accountability, yet its implementation has been limited. In this section we examine the potential value and existing roadblocks to decentralizing aid. As a rule, the more aid is decentralized, the greater the bureaucratic burden on either the donor or the recipient. As a result, the aid organizations are hesitant to decentralize the aid themselves, and the government of El Salvador has been equally slow to distribute their loans and grants. Given that the aid community is in a better position to bear this burden, donors should prioritize decentralization as a way to deliver more effective aid. This would allow for greater accountability and more direct access to populations in need.

Within bi-lateral aid organizations and multilateral banks, decentralization has been identified as a way to improve aid effectiveness, yet the government of El Salvador often lacks the political will or the bureaucratic means to distribute the funds to local municipalities. Every loan to El Salvador, even those designated for municipalities, is funneled through the executive branch. Yet, as we heard in multiple interviews, a common sentiment in El Salvador that centralized security institutions and funding sources are the accepted form of governance, and that changing these sets of expectations is very difficult, requiring significant political will and leadership on the part of the municipality.⁶⁹ Many aid organizations, including USAID, GIZ, AECID and IDB are encouraging and funding programs to increase decentralization and de-concentration of power; however, thus far these attempts have yielded only minor results. This is exemplified in the current IDB program geared towards “municipal strengthening,” which is being executed by the Technical Secretary of the President, one of the most centralized parts of the government.⁷⁰ While this could function if the government had an appropriate system to handle loan distribution, El Salvador, like most poor countries, does not.

An example of the IDB’s capacity to decentralize loans is their seldom-used non-sovereign guaranteed operations, which are capable of bypassing the Salvadoran government and

⁶⁹ In an interview leaders from the municipality of Santa Tecla (Franklin Martínez, Oscar Ibarra, Stanley Rodríguez, Manuel de Jesús Zamora, José Luis Nieto Cruz, Mary Pineda, Víctor Chávez. February 3, 2012), they described the difficulties involved with bargaining for control of municipal functions with the central government.

⁷⁰ IDB, “Country Strategy for El Salvador: Country Report,” Inter-American Development Bank, June 2010.

ensuring the allocation of loan monies to civil society. These loans were designed with the intention of supplying financial support for “entrepreneurs, particularly micro, small and medium-sized enterprises,” who otherwise have “limited access to financing.”⁷¹ Due to the fact that sovereign guaranteed operations, especially those in the form of budgetary supports, cannot guarantee the IDB that the government will equitably distribute funding to civil society organizations and individuals monumentally important for the development of El Salvador and for the alleviation of citizen security issues, the IDB should utilize non-sovereign guaranteed operations as a means for ensuring this form of support.

Although the IDB does not specify which entrepreneurs are ideal candidates for non-sovereign guaranteed operations, it is important to also note that both economic and social entrepreneurs are capable of providing valuable returns to the Bank and the Salvadoran government. Typically the term entrepreneurs is equated with economically focused actors that seek to jumpstart small businesses and contribute towards the Bank and government’s mutual goal to increase El Salvador’s GDP.⁷² Rodrigo Parot, the Country Representative of the IDB agency in El Salvador, confirmed however, that the success of business ventures is also largely dependent on whether such businesses are operating in a safe environment. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the IDB and the government of El Salvador to promote the disbursement of non-sovereign guaranteed operations to social entrepreneurs focused on the issue of citizen security, because they have the potential to create additional positive externalities for the larger economic community of El Salvador.

⁷¹ IDB, “Country Strategy Report,” 3.

⁷² IDB, “Country Strategy Report,” 25-27.

RECOMMENDATION

All aid entities should decentralize the aid disbursement system by allocating more funds directly to municipal governments.

FAILED STATE INSTITUTIONS

Given the well-documented history of corruption, mismanagement, and human rights abuses in the Salvadoran security forces and penal institutions, the international community should be wary of continuing to invest in failed institutions without accountability. Yet despite this history, the international community continues to finance these institutions, both directly through military assistance and judiciary support, and indirectly through minimally conditioned “budgetary support” loans or easily transferrable fungible funding. This is problematic for a number of reasons, which we explore below in discussions of the main institutions receiving support. By directly and indirectly funding these institutions, the international aid community bears some responsibility for these security “solutions” that are exacerbating, rather than remedying, the violence in El Salvador.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR FAILED INSTITUTIONS

The United States has been heavily involved in providing funding for El Salvador’s Armed Forces (ESAF) and National Police (PNC). It is projected that the total amount of grant money made available to El Salvador in these security and military packages will be nearly \$46 million between 2008 and 2013. This money includes nearly \$16 million for anti-drug enforcement and \$16 million in Foreign Military Financing. From 2006 to 2008, the US provided over \$22 million in Foreign Military Financing in the form of weapons, ammunition, parachutes, helicopters and helicopter equipment, small boats, and body armor.⁷³ Additionally, the US has been active in providing training for members of every branch of the Armed Forces and the PNC. In 2008 and 2009, 1,379 Salvadorans were trained in the United States or by US officials in Central America to participate in anti-drug, anti-crime, and military activities in El Salvador.⁷⁴ In 2009, the US provided materials such as patrol boats, six UH-1H helicopters, and training equipment. Additionally, 144 military officers were trained by US military personnel to become more familiar with American military procedures, “adding to the core of officers familiar with

⁷³ Richard R Verna, “Just the Facts”, United States. Department of State. Legislative Affairs. Report on the Uses of Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training, and Peacekeeping Operation Funds.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

US doctrine and operations.”⁷⁵ The USG has continued to fund these institutions without demanding greater accountability for their lack of success and records of corruption.

Multilateral banks are also funding the Salvadoran government’s security institutions; however, funding is done indirectly through minimally conditioned budgetary support loans and fungible funding. The IDB mainly supplies loans to the government of El Salvador in the form of either investment loans or policy-based loans—with the former being accompanied by a thorough roadmap of conditions for how the funding should be specifically utilized by the government and the latter, as a form of general funding in support of the government’s policies. A third category of lending that is increasingly used by the Bank is in the form of budgetary support, which is less publicized by the IDB due to the fact that this form of lending is defined as “policy based lending, without the policy base.”⁷⁶ For example, in 2010, the IDB approved a \$200 million budgetary support loan for El Salvador, claiming that the overarching objective of the loan is to improve “the country’s public finances” through primarily implementing tax and subsidy reforms.⁷⁷ Although this might suggest that the Bank has placed relatively firm conditions on where the government is able to invest these funds, a statement made by Finance Minister Audley Shaw calls the strictness of these conditions into question. For example, when asked to explain how the government intends to spend the \$200 million, he stated that the funds are simply for “the general budget support” and therefore, “they are not directed to specific projects but they are directed to supporting the budget.”⁷⁸

Rodrigo Parot of the IDB defends the budgetary support programs by saying that the IDB is “comfortable with the government’s overall approach.”⁷⁹ This argument, however, is apparently based more on the IDB’s financial imperatives than the effectiveness of the government; one should question the bank’s apparent blind trust in the recipient country’s proper distribution of budgetary support funds. As a result and reinforced by the government’s limited record of success in improving citizen security, one is able to make the educated assumption that the IDB’s comfort with the government’s use of the funds is really based more on the government’s ability to repay loans than on its ability to effectively govern the distribution of aid. Within the framework of measuring success in terms of money disbursed rather than

⁷⁵ "USAID Fact Sheet: USAID Announces USAID FORWARD Reform Agenda."

⁷⁶ Yuri Soares, interview by authors, Skype, Seattle, WA, 15 February, 2012.

⁷⁷ “El Salvador to review taxes, subsidies, with IDB financing.” IDB. February 19, 2010.

⁷⁸ “IDB loan to support the budget.”RJR News. August 05, 2010.

⁷⁹ Rodrigo Parot, interview by authors, El Salvador, 30 January, 2012.

services delivered, budgetary support lending clearly allows institutions and individuals to produce greater quantifiable results, and the incentive structures within aid organizations and multi-lateral banks reflect this bias.⁸⁰ It seems unlikely that this budgetary support improves the security situation in El Salvador, since much of the money is simply channeled to underwrite government activities that are already known to fail.

Similarly, fungible funding allows the Salvadoran government to use international funds to support its ineffective security institutions, even when those funds have been explicitly designated for another source. Fungible funding refers to the government's ability to withdraw domestic support for an institution or program receiving international aid and use those domestic funds in another arena. A 2003 World Bank study concluded, "The safest assumption for donors is that they are, more or less, financing whatever the [recipient] government chooses to do."⁸¹ This same study found that, as a result of the government's switching of funds from one area to another, in 14 underdeveloped countries, every dollar of international aid designated for education actually resulted in a 6.3-cent net *decrease* in education spending.⁸² It is therefore not possible for international donors to avoid investing in corrupt institutions while supporting others at the federal level. Any aid or loan to El Salvador, outside of entirely aid dependent institutions or municipal programs, is contributing to these security structures and as such, the international aid community shares some responsibility for the actions of these forces.

THE TREND TOWARDS MILITARIZATION AND CORRUPTION

In the Salvadoran context in particular, there are reasons to be gravely concerned about the institutions these aid moneys support. President Funes has increasingly used the military for internal security. Following the 2009 "Prevention and Community Support Plan," the military takes part in joint operations with the police in which the senior police direct the operation while the military provides security. Alternatively, eight military units known as "Zeus Command" conduct independent search and arrest operations in areas of the country with the highest crime levels.⁸³ These operations have no specific timeframe, and thus it is apparent that the military's role in domestic security is growing while the legislators' control over the military's deployment and budgets is waning. In late 2011, Funes appointed former defense minister General David

⁸⁰ William Easterly, "The Cartel of Good Intentions: The Problem of Bureaucracy in Foreign Aid," 227.

⁸¹ J. McGuire, *Decentralization for Satisfying Basic Needs*, 147.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Army War College (US), and Roberto Campos Chicas, *Employment of the El Salvador Armed Forces for Internal Security*.

Munguía Payes to be the new Minister of Justice and Security. This directly violates the 1992 Peace Accords, which banned the military from internal law enforcement. Both Funes and Munguía have asserted that the military presence is an effort to aid the largely ineffective and corruption riddled PNC in combatting the country's indisputably high murder rate, however their presence has not yet yielded results.⁸⁴ In fact, the military forces are potentially as corrupt and ineffectual as the PNC forces they are supplanting.

Funes and Munguía are either not aware of or not acknowledging the legacies of authoritarianism still present within the military's structure, or that these systems are more prone to extrajudicial violence than civilian institutions.⁸⁵ In one survey in El Salvador, 55% of respondents said they would support a military coup under conditions of high crime.⁸⁶ A 2010 survey by IUDOP found that Salvadorans ranked the military highest on a list of trusted institutions, even higher than the church.⁸⁷ However, as one community outreach director described, this actually speaks to the *lack* of public knowledge about the military.⁸⁸ In particular, the State Intelligence Office (OIE), the post-conflict intelligence arm of the defense department, was not bound by the same Peace Accord personnel restrictions as the PNC, and as a result many members of the previous regime's dismantled intelligence department were simply transferred to the OIE with no vetting procedures.⁸⁹ In keeping with the military's tendency towards authoritarianism, in late January 2012, Munguía called for legal reform to make the system less liberal, saying "Our system of laws, which has very high guarantees of civil liberties, would be ideal for a society which had normal behavior, but it can't process the entire quantity of crimes that are being committed."⁹⁰

Aside from the Peace Accord violations, using the military for internal security is simply ineffective, but this is obscured by the national security framing by Funes and Munguía. According to Colonel R.C. Chicas of the El Salvador Armed Forces, the military training on internal security matters is "basic" and largely consists of the particulars of using force and identifying illegal substances.⁹¹ He further describes the military's "lack of knowledge of laws

⁸⁴ Ronan Graham, "El Salvador's Military Has Grown 50% Under Funes."

⁸⁵ In our interview with Hector Aparecio, the director of local NGO Fe y Alegria, he detailed accounts of officers forcing children with long fingernails to bite them off, or detainees forced into barrels of water at night, both by military officers.

⁸⁶ Naval Postgraduate School Monterey CA., and Roberto Atha, "Transitions to Peace: Effects on Internal Security Forces in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala," 5

⁸⁷ Jeannette Aguilar, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012.

⁸⁸ Wilson Alexander Alvarado Alemán, (Coordinator of Equipo Nahual), interview by authors, El Salvador, February 2, 2012.

⁸⁹ Zinecker, H. "From Exodus to Exitus—Causes of Post-War Violence in El Salvador." 2007.

⁹⁰ Army War College (US), and Roberto Campos Chicas, *Employment of the El Salvador Armed Forces for Internal Security*.

⁹¹ Army War College (US), and Roberto Campos Chicas, *Employment of the El Salvador Armed Forces for Internal Security*, 16.

related to internal security.”⁹² Military police scholar Benjamin Beebe elaborates, “detailing soldiers to law enforcement is a clumsy, often ineffective expedient...they are inflexible in their behavior and are prone to overreacting in confrontations with the public.”⁹³

In recent months, Munguía has made statements suggesting that street gangs are responsible for most of the violence in El Salvador, yet no other data source has come close to confirming this claim. General Munguía has asserted that 90% of the violent deaths in El Salvador are attributable to gang violence.⁹⁴ However, this statement is contradicted by the Institute of Legal Medicine, which finds it to be nearer to 10%, and the PNC, which has reported it to be nearer to 20%.⁹⁵ For the less-discussed but widely prevalent human security issues in the country, such as domestic violence, extortion and petty crime, the military’s emphasis on “vigilance and intimidation” is at odds with the need for investigation and community trust.⁹⁶

Nor is the PNC exempt from such critiques. In recent years, the national police have built strategies around sheer numbers of arrests, and as a result other important parts of the process, including selection and training of new recruits, have received less attention. This is an extension of a previous model known as *Mano Dura*. *Mano Dura* first appeared in July 2003 when president Francisco Flores announced his new military-police approach to address high levels of violence. This plan (*Ley Anti-Maras*) criminalized gang activity and gave police more freedom to arrest individuals they deemed suspicious.⁹⁷ Since the passage of this legislation, profiling of young people and mass arrests have accompanied a spike in prison populations and increased national homicide rates. By 2007, the Salvadoran Human Rights Ombudswoman was receiving 300 complaints a day concerning members of the PNC.⁹⁸ Based on our interviews, it seems very likely that these numbers represent only a small proportion of the actual abuses occurring.⁹⁹

The levels of impunity and corruption within the PNC have largely structural causes. Despite a system that was created to give young officers hope of being promoted through the ranks into leadership positions within the PNC based on years of experience, training, and

⁹² Army War College (US), and Roberto Campos Chicas, *Employment of the El Salvador Armed Forces for Internal Security*, 26.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Ayala, Edgardo. “EL SALVADOR: Gangs May Be Scapegoat for Soaring Murder Rate - IPS Ipsnews.net.”

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ William Stanley, “International Tutelage and Domestic Political Will: Building a New Civilian Police Force in El Salvador,” 35.

⁹⁷ Arbitrary arrests are commonplace, and youths are regularly detained merely for looking suspicious. One provision included in the LAM allowed for youth as young as 12 to be sentenced to up to 5 years in prison for displaying tattoos or flashing gang signs in public (Jutersonke, et al. 10). Under the new law, juveniles could be tried as adults, and be sentenced to prison for minor offenses.

⁹⁸ H. Zinecker, 29.

⁹⁹ Several interviewees described instances of police clearly sharing information with gang members, and similarly several interviewees said they had no confidence in the Ombudsman’s office.

conduct, most promotions are the result of personal favors or inside agreements. Some members of the force have noticed “preference for a certain type of people . . . who came from the old structures” and occasions of “reprisals against police who spoke out against their superiors.”¹⁰⁰ This lack of training, selection, and funding has resulted in a police force that is simply incapable of responding to the problem of crime.

Not only are many members of the PNC involved in independent abuses, some are directly connected to the criminal organizations they were created to resist. Human Rights Ombudswoman Beatrice Almanni de Carillo has asserted that there are clear links between PNC leadership and organized crime.¹⁰¹ Protection money, or “taxes”, extracted from communities by the gangs often end up in the hands of high-ranking police officers, suggesting that the police cooperate with the gangs in some capacity. In 2007, police commissioner Rodrigo Avila conceded that the PNC had been permeated by active members of the gangs.¹⁰² In our interviews we heard repeated anecdotes regarding police involvement in gang activity.

The judicial system, similarly, continues to operate in an outmoded fashion resistant to reform, despite the fact that the Salvadoran people see the judiciary as corrupt and ineffective. In opinion surveys, for example, the Supreme Court of Justice often ranks last among institutions who “best defended human rights” in the country, with two times as many people blaming judges for the high crime rates in 1998 as the number of those who blamed the police.¹⁰³ Although aid money has been made available to improve these institutions, entrenched interests, such as the Supreme Court of Justice and the Attorney General, have allocated more money to superficial changes, such as updating equipment, rather than reforming their own internal power structures.¹⁰⁴ This is due to the fact that the High Courts have historically benefitted from the old regime security structure by not being held accountable for any potential corruption.¹⁰⁵ This structure remained intact even after the enactment of the Peace Accords and is perpetuated today, leaving no motives for internal reform.¹⁰⁶ As an example, from 2004 to 2008, the Supreme Court

¹⁰⁰ Adriana Beltran, “Protect and Serve? The Status of Police Reform in Central America”, 17.

¹⁰¹ “Interview with Beatrice Almanni Carillo,” Interview by Heidrun Zinecker, *Publications*, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2007. Web. Jan. 2012.

¹⁰² Zinecker, 30

¹⁰³ Call, Charles. *Constructing Justice and Security After War*.

¹⁰⁴ “El Salvador - El Salvador: Judicial Modernization Project”, *World Bank*, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/ELSALVADOREXTN/0,,contentMDK:21554117~menuPK:50003484~pagePK:2865066~piPK:2865079~theSitePK:295244,00.html>. See also: Jarquín Calderón, Edmundo, and Fernando Carrillo Flórez. *Justice Delayed: Judicial Reform in Latin America*.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Cruz, Jose Miguel. “Democratization Under Assault: Criminal Violence in Post-Transition Central America”.

of Justice was the implementing agency for a US \$18.2 million loan from the World Bank for a Judicial Modernization Project.¹⁰⁷ Of these funds, \$15.37 million was allocated to modernization of the courts of justice, \$4.28 million to strengthening the institutional management capacity of the judicial branch, \$1.39 million to sharing knowledge to improve access to justice and transparency, and just over one million to both development of judicial and administrative career systems and project management, follow up and evaluation.¹⁰⁸ These ratios are highly weighted toward “modernization” goals, under which purchasing equipment and computers is prioritized above educating the community about their rights and supporting the structural reforms that will inspire public confidence in the rule of law.

Reform efforts by the IDB and USAID have been similarly weighted towards the interests of the judicial elites rather than the communities they serve. A program to support the reform of the justice system in El Salvador from 1996 to 2005 by the IDB also employed the Attorney General’s Office along with the Ministry of Justice, the Judicial Branch and others to execute the project.¹⁰⁹ Their bias is apparent in the \$1.8 million going towards planning and purchasing pertinent equipment for institutional strengthening in comparison to \$60,000 that was directed towards training citizens to be leaders and problem solvers in their communities.¹¹⁰ USAID funded a \$9.2 million judicial reform project from 1984 to 1989 that prioritized improving technical capacities such as “buying filing cabinets” over addressing the system’s power structure.¹¹¹ This has only reinforced the ability of the judiciary to function with impunity.¹¹² The public’s involvement in the judicial system and awareness of their rights is a fundamental aspect of a functioning judiciary. An up-to-date information system makes little difference if citizens are reluctant or unable to utilize the system.¹¹³

Prisons, similarly, are failing. As *Mano Dura* has collided with a poor judiciary, El Salvador’s overcrowded prisons now act as a recruitment pool and training ground for newly initiated gang members. The country’s prisons now hold 24,000 inmates in a system that has the

¹⁰⁷ “El Salvador - El Salvador: Judicial Modernization Project”, *World Bank*, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/ELSALVADOREXTN/0,,contentMDK:21554117~menuPK:50003484~pagePK:2865066~piPK:2865079~theSitePK:295244,00.html>.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ “Project - Inter-American Development Bank”, *IDB Website*, <http://www.iadb.org/en/projects/project,1303.html?id=ES0090>.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (US). *Underwriting Injustice : AID and El Salvador’s Judicial Reform Program*. New York, NY: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1989.

¹¹² Rolando González, Carlos Santos and Oscar Garza, interview by authors, El Salvador, 4 February, 2012

¹¹³ Currently, 76% of respondents routinely do not notify the authorities of criminal activity. Charles Call, *Constructing Justice and Security After War*, pg. 39.

capacity for only 8,000 inmates.¹¹⁴ In recent years there have been frequent fires, riots and deaths in these over-crowded environments.¹¹⁵ Despite these conditions, Munguía has said he will lock up 10,000 more.¹¹⁶ This is particularly alarming given that some investigators have dubbed the penal institutions a “graduate school” for gang members.¹¹⁷ For our research team, this situation was clearest during a visit to El Espino, a youth detention center where juvenile members of the 18th Street Gang are incarcerated. One youth in particular said he did not have tattoos when he was detained but was targeted because of relationships he had with gang members. Upon entrance to the prison, he was immersed into the gang environment and compelled to formally join the gang and get tattooed. In his case, being detained and sent to prison actually solidified his involvement in criminal activity.

¹¹⁴ Latin American Herald Tribune, “Three Inmates Killed at Prison in Northern El Salvador,” <http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=473373&CategoryId=23558>.

¹¹⁵ Zinecker, 33

¹¹⁶ Stone, Hannah. “The Iron Fist Returns to El Salvador”

¹¹⁷ Max Manwaring, “Sovereignty Under Siege”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Multi-lateral banks should place greater conditions on funding and provide increased transparency of where funding flows.

- All loans should be accompanied with guidelines that specify how much funding is to be designated to each respective government institution and distributed to civil society organizations and actors.
- In order to ensure the proper investment of funds, multilateral banks organizations must demand budget reports from the government of El Salvador on a routine basis, which thoroughly account for the use, non-use, or misuse of all funding.
- Multilateral banks should no longer distribute loans in the form of budgetary supports, unless the recipient government is evaluated as performing adequately.

The international community should increase support for transparency in the justice sector and educating the community about their rights.

- Increasing public confidence in the legal system and spreading awareness about the rights all citizens are granted through this system should be prioritized over updating judicial equipment and funding other technical improvements.

The international aid community should not fund corrupt and ineffective state institutions.

- The foreign aid community should use third party findings to ensure that funds are not made available to military and policing units that commit human rights abuses, following the principles of the United States' Leahy Law.

The international aid community should fund local, community-policing programs instituted at the municipal level.

LACK OF APPROPRIATE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

In theory, violence prevention approaches move beyond simply identifying and punishing perpetrators, but instead seek solutions to the underlying conditions that motivate individuals to participate in crime. In this way, violence prevention strategies succeed in reducing crime by strengthening local communities to maintain and improve the well being of citizens rather than arming communities against their own citizens.¹¹⁸ In this section we examine limitations the donor community has placed on its own violence prevention efforts, and the ways in which those structures are working against the kinds of effective, community-based programs that have been identified by grassroots leaders in El Salvador.

Violence prevention is recognized by the international donor community as an effective strategy to combat citizen insecurity in El Salvador.¹¹⁹ However, the existing model employed by major international donor organizations serves to *impede* rather than *enhance* the capacity of local actors to effectively target citizen security needs. Donors overwhelmingly favor programs that target “primary prevention” strategies, which address citizen insecurity through primary education, youth leadership programs, community development, alternative dispute resolution, and vocational training in an attempt to reach individuals before they have participated in any violent behaviors. In contrast, donors are often reluctant or explicitly unwilling to fund programs that emphasize “secondary” or “tertiary” prevention programs, such as rehabilitation and “second-chance” programs for gang-active youth. As a result, the donor community has consistently underfunded prevention strategies that directly serve the marginalized populations most connected to violence.¹²⁰

While existing aid models which categorize violence prevention by primary, secondary, and tertiary are useful on the international level for understanding the allocation of prevention funds, numerous interviewees active in community-based groups told us that such frameworks,

¹¹⁸ Geoff Thale, “The Crisis of Crime and Violence in Central America: More than just Drugs and Gangs,” WOLA, June 20 2011.

¹¹⁹ Under the subject of ‘citizen security’ and ‘violence reduction’, the World Bank, the IDB, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Habitat Program, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime and others have invested in a wide-range of activities designed to promote preventative approaches to addressing urban violence. Furthermore, all of the bi-lateral and multilateral aid organizations interviewed for this report have funded prevention programs and are enthusiastic about the effectiveness of violence prevention as a strategy to combat citizen insecurity.

Jutersönke, Oliver, Robert Muggah, and Dennis Rodgers, “Gangs, Urban Violence, and Security Interventions in Central America,” *Security Dialogue*, 40.4-5 (May 2009): 388.

¹²⁰ The international community only minimally funds tertiary and secondary prevention, despite the recognized need that these sectors should become “current priorities” in aid allocation. “Mapping Study,” WOLA, 2011.

formulated in Europe and the US, are severely out of step with the actual lives of citizens. Specifically, in seeking to isolate “problem” youth from the community in order to invest in the “good kids” rather than the “bad ones,” such frameworks misconstrue the extent to which gangs are inextricably part of families and communities at the local level.¹²¹ In continuing to use such frameworks to guide prevention funds, donors prioritize their interests and “outsider” knowledge, ultimately preventing local organizations and leaders from efficiently and inclusively serving their communities. While these internationally driven efforts may be well intentioned, they ultimately interfere with valuable collaboration and coordination between donor and recipient, reinforce the exclusion and social stigmas that perpetuate violence, and direct critical funds away from the populations that most need support.

Whereas international aid organizations often have their own conceptions of citizen security as well as greater political interests at stake in allocating aid, local grassroots organizations are closely engaged with citizens and often have valuable insight on the security needs of the communities they live and work in. As a result, the programs that local organizations perceive as most effective in combating violence often do not match the categories of programs that bi-lateral and multilateral aid institutions are willing to fund.¹²² The program director of a local Salvadoran NGO acknowledged that at times, economic resources are “wasted” as a result of the imposition of international organizations’ strictures¹²³. The director further emphasized that, “we are the ones who understand the reality in our government,” demonstrating how local knowledge is inhibited by the ineffective models imposed by donors.

Recognizing the limited results that violence prevention efforts funded by bi-lateral and multilateral organizations have produced thus far, authors Jutersönke et al. point out that existing programs often operate more for the display of the international community. They argue that such efforts are “most visible at the level of practice,” evident in the numerous, wide-ranging primary prevention programs being implemented and “heavily promoted” by bi-lateral and multilateral development agencies in the region.¹²⁴ For example, two of the local community

¹²¹ Antonio Rodríguez López, interview by authors, El Salvador, 2 February, 2012.

¹²² Héctor Aparicio, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012. Mauricio Figueroa and Manuel Abarca, interview by authors, El Salvador, 31 January, 2012. Nelson Flores, interview by authors, El Salvador, 2 February, 2012..

¹²³ We have decided to keep this individual’s comments anonymous so to avoid compromising any future funding for the organization.

¹²⁴ Jutersönke et al. argue that prevention efforts, which they categorize as “second generation interventions,” tend to be “all smoke and no fire,” as their “much anticipated rhetorical turn has yet to fully take hold.” Jutersönke, Muggah, and Rodgers, “Gangs, Urban Violence, and Security Interventions in Central America,” *Security Dialouge* 40:4-5 (Oslo: Sage Publications on behalf of International Research Institute, 2009) 387-388.

organizations interviewed pointed to the European Union's violence prevention program PROJOVENES, arguing that while this program receives millions of dollars in funding, it has generated "minimal results" due to its failure to reach the programs' supposed beneficiaries. Such primary prevention programs, which are actively promoted among the agencies themselves, have yet to produce tangible results in the day-to-day lives of local citizens.¹²⁵

Given the framework favored by the international donor community, local organizations are often forced to strategically tailor or compromise the design of their own prevention programs to fit the strict models imposed by international aid agencies. While some local organizations simply refuse to accept funding from institutions such as USAID due to the incongruence of their objectives, others use their own funds to work around these constraints. For example, Héctor Aparicio, director of Fe y Alegría, a violence prevention NGO in San Salvador, explained that as a recipient of funds from USAID, his organization must fulfill the specific primary prevention objectives determined by the agency as a means of securing funds; but in order to do the secondary and tertiary work necessary in the communities, which USAID refuses to fund, he must mount and fund separate projects - a deep challenge given scarce resources. Yet for Aparicio, this deeper involvement with the communities, through engagement with all their members, not just the so-called "good kids" who have yet to commit crimes, is vitally necessary; if the organization were only to engage in the limited scope of interventions USAID funds, the community would reject its efforts as reinforcing exclusion. In this sense, his organization's primary prevention work is only successful because it is accompanied by the secondary and tertiary work that USAID refuses to support, and for which he must fundraise separately.¹²⁶

Similarly, other Salvadoran organizations such as Fundación Quetzalcoatl, ASAPROSAR, and Passionist Social Services recognize the way in which gangs are in fact embedded within the structures of local communities, and acknowledge that the reality of effective violence prevention programs for at-risk youth requires negotiating with and involving gangs to include and protect at-risk youth within the programs. Adopting a pragmatic, realistic understanding of the immediate needs of her community, Lucy Luna, director of ASAPROSAR, described how she provides special identification to youth in her programs to protect them from

¹²⁵ "USAID Fact Sheet: USAID Announces USAID FORWARD Reform Agenda," 2009.

¹²⁶ Nelson Flores, interview by authors, El Salvador, 2 February, 2012.

being forced into gang recruitment.¹²⁷ Effective solutions such as the identification system used by Luna emphasize the valuable role local organizations play in responding to the diverse, micro-level needs that characterize violence prevention programs for at-risk youth.

By disproportionately or in some cases exclusively investing aid into primary prevention programs, international donors fail to include the country's most marginalized populations within the scope of their violence prevention efforts.¹²⁸ Gang-active youth are thus defined as beyond the scope of assistance, further contributing to their dehumanization and rejection by society as a whole. Although prevention strategies aim to target the social conditions that cause violence, gang members are all too often understood in isolation from conditions of poverty and inequality rather than as a product of them.¹²⁹ Thus, the donor community should take a leading role in challenging rather than reinforcing predominant political and media representations of gang-active youth as the nation's most pressing security threat. This can be achieved through investing greater resources into secondary and tertiary violence prevention programs aimed at rehabilitation and other objectives.¹³⁰

Emphasizing the ineffectiveness of an aid model that neglects secondary and tertiary prevention strategies, Cunningham et al. note that while primary prevention programs play an important role in reducing violence rates, it is "never possible" to eliminate all risk factors for violent behavior from the lives of youth, regardless of how well-designed primary prevention programs may be. Thus, aid models that rely solely upon recently implemented and narrowly funded primary prevention programs are impractical, unrealistic, and fail to recognize the deeply entrenched social conditions that youth in El Salvador face.¹³¹ Cunningham et al. further

¹²⁷ Community organizer Lucy Luna described how youth in her programs are issued their identification cards, so that when approached by gang members, they can show they are involved in a program that the gang leaders trust and recognize as legitimate. Lucy Luna, interview by authors, El Salvador, 1 February, 2012.

¹²⁸ Peetz, Peter. "Youth Violence in Central America." *Youth & Society* 43: 4 (Sage Publications, December 1, 2011) 1459–1498

¹²⁹ As established previously, poor, marginalized youth in El Salvador have few options for the "pursuit of a dignified life," and the majority of the sources consulted for this report agree that this lack of opportunities and basic rights for young people has contributed to rise of the gangs in the country. USAID's Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment reports, "the majority of youths aged 14-25 years old face social exclusion characterized by the lack of basic services...that could improve their lives." Fariña, Laura Pedraza, Spring Miller, and James Cavallaro, *No place to hide: gang, state, and clandestine violence in El Salvador*. (Cambridge, Mass: International Human Rights Clinic, Human Rights Program, Harvard Law School, 2010.)

¹³⁰ While El Salvador is undoubtedly facing a problem of lethal youth violence, Peetz points out that the country stands out for the way in which the issue is framed as the country's main security threat, arguing that "the fear of youth violence is so intense and ubiquitous that not only (alleged) gang members but also the entire younger generation come under suspicion." Peetz, 2011: 1479.

¹³¹ Wendy Cunningham, *Youth at risk in Latin America and the Caribbean: Understanding the Causes, Realizing the Potential*, (Washington D.C., World Bank, 2008).

emphasize the value in investing in at-risk youth, arguing that the youth prevention strategies with the highest returns are the interventions that target those who are most at risk.¹³²

Nonetheless, many of the international bi-lateral organizations we visited in El Salvador largely reflected these dominant social attitudes, viewing gang members as undeserving of donor resources due to their criminal status. For example, while highly enthusiastic about the success of prevention strategies as a whole, Christof Küchemann, director of the German bi-lateral organization GIZ, stated he felt it was not the duty of his organization to support “murderers” who have gone down a “bad route.”¹³³ As a result, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts were not considered an effective or legitimate use of the organization’s resources. Similarly, as we heard from local violence prevention organizations, youth already involved in crime are not within the scope of USAID’s prevention efforts.¹³⁴ Thus, the prevention models employed by most international aid organizations exclude “problem” youth from the reach of donor support, failing to recognize their unique role in the solution. Local leaders such as Padre Antonio Rodriguez, of Passionist Social Services, who work to combat social exclusion by integrating gang members into violence prevention efforts, are widely misrecognized as representing the gangs themselves. Labeled a “spokesman for the gangs,” Rodriguez has endured criticism for his efforts to support individuals who wish to leave gangs and become reintegrated in society and thus advocates for society to “trust the institutions and NGOs that are working with young people in rehabilitation.”¹³⁵ The insight offered by community leaders such as Rodriguez serves to emphasize that even if we may be personally unsympathetic to the plight of those who commit crimes, their presence in the Salvadoran context suggests the need to craft solutions that involve offenders rather than disregarding them.

Thus, in adopting a comprehensive model for violence prevention, the aid community must recognize that any strategy for addressing the problems faced by at-risk youth requires a sustainable system of “second-chance programs” which enable adolescents to return to a “safe,

¹³² Cunningham et al. makes the important argument that although the aid community would ideally like to provide prevention programs to all children and young people, “budget constraints make that impossible.” She points out that as a result, “the most pragmatic strategy with the highest returns may be to target interventions to those who are most at risk.” Cunningham, 2008:162.

¹³³ GIZ explicitly states on its website that it does not “work directly with youth gangs or in the rehabilitation of criminal youth. Its activities focus more on measures targeting primary violence prevention and the promotion of peaceful co-existence.” Christof Küchemann, interview by authors, El Salvador, 30 January, 2012.

¹³⁴ Nelson Flores, interview by authors, El Salvador, 2 February, 2012.

¹³⁵ Daniel Valencia and José Luis Sanz, “Este gobierno también creyó en el diálogo con pandilleros,” *El Faro* (San Salvador, 17 September, 2010). See also: Antonio Rodríguez López, interview by authors, El Salvador, 2 February, 2012.

productive path to adulthood.”¹³⁶ Such prevention approaches cannot be successful without the direct involvement of local actors and a range of strategies tailored to respond to the diverse needs experienced by such youth, including education equivalency and job training programs for school dropouts or tattoo removal for youth who have been in gangs.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Cunningham et al. argue, “Second-chance programs are not only more effective than incarceration and other get-tough strategies, but are also less costly, especially when the costs and benefits to society as well as to the individual are factored in.” Cunningham, 2008: 162-163.

¹³⁷ Antonio Rodríguez López, interview by authors, El Salvador, 2 February, 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The international aid community should increase investment in violence prevention programs that value and act upon local knowledge, directly target at-risk youth, and offer local NGOs the authority to design prevention projects.

Recognizing that the most effective responses to gang violence are community-based, donors should increase local ownership of programs through enabling local NGOs, community organizations, and program beneficiaries to take a leading role in designing the conditions of future programs.

CONCLUSION

While the international community is eager to help the nation of El Salvador confront its urgent security challenges, there are numerous ways in which the forms that assistance takes could be improved. Some of these changes are technical matters, relating to the way projects are evaluated and implemented; others are more conceptual, stemming from the assumptions underlying project design. Regardless all are important to address through a bottom-up approach, grounded in the understanding that Central Americans are most able to identify and implement sustainable solutions to the problems of their region. The international community has a fundamental role to play in supporting this process, but it will only achieve success when it adopts community-based frameworks for change, refocusing its approach from punitive to preventative, top-down to bottom-up, exclusive to inclusive; from citizen security to human security. While this implies a distinct break with the dominant paradigm—in particular, it requires the abandonment of the current trend toward militarization, more aid allocated directly to local leaders, the inclusion of outcome-based accountability measures, and the creation of more formal communication channels—this is not as radical a revision as it might appear. In fact, currently many Central American communities are adopting innovative approaches to these challenges, precisely along these lines. Not only are such efforts already underway, they are demonstrating impressive results.

El Salvador's community policing model, instituted in Santa Tecla and other municipalities, has drawn inspiration from Nicaragua and elsewhere, but its success is fundamentally a result of its emphasis on responding to the needs of the community. Santa Tecla's manual for community agents clearly identifies that it is the population, not the police, who should identify the problems—ranging from categories such as criminal issues, commercial zoning, and coexistence. Santa Tecla has been able to decrease the number of PNC officers to 120 serving a population of roughly 239,000 alongside 225 community agents.¹³⁸ Following the start of the community-policing program, the homicide rate in Santa Tecla dropped from 66 per 100,000 in 2005 to 20 per 100,000 in 2010 (although in 2011 it rose due to increased drug

¹³⁸ "Santa Tecla City Council Member Presentation on Citizen Security", interview by authors, El Salvador, 3 February, 2012.

trafficking in the region).¹³⁹ According to the city council members and police officials, this success is largely due to the level of public ownership over the reform process itself, a hallmark of the community-policing model.¹⁴⁰

There are aspects of the Santa Tecla model that address each of the five issues we have touched on in this report. First, by decentralizing aid to the municipal level, donors are able to more closely coordinate with each other and work together towards collective goals. Second, police objectives are designed in close consultation with advisory commissions comprised of community members, local church representatives, local and international NGOs, police and government representatives. This ensures that police operations are in line with community needs. Third, community-police accountability is greatly enhanced through both the participation of the commissions and the use of outcome-based indicators, such as increased reports of crime, which are qualitatively evaluated to measure citizen confidence in the police.¹⁴¹ Fourth, new municipal police bodies like Santa Tecla's give donors the opportunity to bypass potentially failed centralized state institutions, without the possibility for fungible funding. Finally, Santa Tecla's community police are first and foremost a preventative organization. They are designed to encourage community trust and create safe public spaces, all within the framework that they exist to serve community members, not repress them.¹⁴²

As we have discussed throughout this report, several local organizations working in particularly violent Salvadoran communities may also offer valuable models for the international donor community to support. Organizations such as Fundación Quetzalcoatl, Fe y Alegría, Equipo Nahual and Passionist Social Services all emphasize holistic, community-based interventions, rather than reinforcing the marginalization of certain populations by partitioning the community into deserving and undeserving populations. Whether they approach their work from a psychosocial focus, or simply create non-discriminatory safe spaces for other forms of social interaction, these organizations all stressed to us that their success is based on their willingness to approach violence prevention as a social issue. Essentially, their strategies work

¹³⁹ "Santa Tecla City Council Member Presentation on Citizen Security", interview by authors, El Salvador, 3 February, 2012.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ SIDA, "Nicaraguan Police Focus on Preventative Work with Swedish Police - Sida - Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency." <http://www.sida.se/English/Countries-and-regions/Latin-America/Nicaragua/Programmes-and-projects/1/Nicaraguan-police-focus-on-preventative-work-with-Swedish-police/>.

¹⁴² Research Triangle International/CECI. Manual De Doctrina Del Agente Municipal Comunitario Del Municipio De Santa Tecla. Proyecto de Prevencion de la Violencia y del Crimen a Nivel Comunitario, n.d.

because they seek to empower, rather than repress the communities and individuals that have turned to violence following their systematic disempowerment by the structures they live in.

Although citizen security in Central America may appear to be a discouraging topic of study, we find reason for optimism when approaching it from a bottom-up perspective rooted in the wisdom and leadership of Central Americans themselves. The international community has a vital role to play; not only in supporting community-led initiatives but also in examining the ways its own assistance practices may limit the effectiveness of its interventions. Some of this work has already been done; many of our recommendations here address areas the international community has identified for improvement yet failed to implement. Others suggest newer areas where we believe refocusing could be useful. Taken together, we hope these recommendations will lead to more productive partnerships for citizen security in Central America.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Donors and lenders should coordinate all country strategies.

- A section in each country strategy report should outline specific guidelines as to how specific details of each respective organization's projects will interact with the projects of other donors. For example, such questions as which sectors of the population the projects will serve, in which municipalities the services will operate, and how particular aspects of individual projects fit in with longer term goals in the region, should be included.

The aid community should create a third party facilitator to increase coordination.

- The facilitator's work should include the creation of a forum bringing together principle actors and representatives from bi-lateral organizations, multilateral banks, the government, and civil society.
- This body should facilitate the coordination of existing plans as well ensuring that community-led organizations are directly included in the development of new plans.
- Major donors should collectively fund this body as an investment in their own efficiency.

USAID and the multilateral banks should design and implement projects that better incorporate the strategies developed by the communities themselves.

- This would require more staff to work on project coordination, aid in the decentralization of funding, and increase communication between all aid entities and recipients.
- Because of this emphasis on local cooperation, local actors will best accomplish these duties, and therefore whenever possible Salvadorans themselves should be hired for these positions.

USAID country branches should be given more autonomy for the development and budgeting of their own projects and country strategies.

- Specifically, field missions should be given more autonomy from both the State Department and USAID headquarters in D.C.

USAID should reduce overall reliance on contractors to manage aid and instead collaborate with local organizations directly.

- Local organizations should be involved in initial budgeting, planning, and designing of programs.

USAID should require that contractors have an established regional presence.

- This is fundamental for gaining access to local knowledge and building effective partnerships with a variety of community organizations.

USAID should break up procurement contracts into smaller grants and more specific objectives, so as to allow for a greater variety of more specialized contractors to compete for funding.

USAID should allocate an appropriate percentage of the initial project budget to capacity building for the selected organizations.

- Organizations should use the funding as they see fit, but in order to prevent corruption they should adhere to pre-determined communication stipulations with the donor organization.

All multi-lateral banks and bi-lateral organizations should use a third party accountability institution to ensure that lessons learned are implemented.

- The accountability body should include "incorporation of lessons learned" as an evaluation category.

Indicators used as measurements of aid project effectiveness should include municipal level data, both for control and project recipient communities.

Quantitative indicators should be complemented with qualitative indicators, and output measures with outcome measures, to ensure a holistic reflection of a project's success or failure.

- Examples of relevant outcome based indicators include public opinion polls, qualitative evaluations by partner organizations, and effectiveness evaluations by staff on the ground.
- These measurements should be prioritized over macroeconomic measurements.

All aid entities should decentralize the aid disbursement system by allocating more funds directly to municipal governments.

Multi-lateral banks should place greater conditions on funding and provide increased transparency of where funding flows.

- All loans should be accompanied with guidelines that specify how much funding is to be designated to each respective government institution and distributed to civil society organizations and actors.
- In order to ensure the proper investment of funds, multilateral banks must demand budget reports from the government of El Salvador on a routine basis, which thoroughly account for the use, non-use, or misuse of all funding.
- Multilateral banks should no longer distribute loans in the form of budgetary supports, unless the recipient government is evaluated as performing adequately.

The international community should increase support for transparency in the justice sector and educating the community about their rights.

- Increasing public confidence in the legal system and spreading awareness about the rights all citizens are granted through this system should be prioritized over updating judicial equipment and funding other technical improvements.

The international aid community should not fund corrupt and ineffective state institutions.

- The foreign aid community should use third party findings to ensure that funds are not made available to military and policing units that commit human rights abuses, following the principles of the United States' Leahy Law.

The international aid community should fund local, community-policing programs instituted at the municipal level.

The international aid community should increase investment in violence prevention programs that value and act upon local knowledge, directly target at-risk youth, and offer local NGOs the authority to design prevention projects.

Recognizing that the most effective responses to gang violence are community-based, donors should increase local ownership of programs through enabling local NGOs, community organizations, and program beneficiaries to take a leading role in designing the conditions of future programs.

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Adriana Beltrán, Senior Associate for Citizen Security, Washington Office on Latin America. January 22, 2012.

Rodrigo Parot, El Salvador Country Representative, Inter-American Development Bank. January 30, 2012.

Christof Küchemann, Country Director, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), January 30, 2012.

Joaquín Samayoa, Director of Investigation and Development Education, Business Foundation for Educational Development (FEPADE). January 30, 2012.

Javier Melgar and **Roberto Deras**, Institute of Human Rights, University of Central America (IDHUCA). January 31, 2012.

Héctor Aparicio, Director, Fe y Alegría Zacamil. January 31, 2012.

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