

# Taking Action Locally to Prevent Gun Violence in São Paulo, Brazil

**Summary:** One of the key factors recognized for contributing to the impressive reduction in homicides in the city of São Paulo over the last decade is stricter gun control policies. The reduction, however, has not been felt equally throughout the city – at least 65 districts still presenting alarming homicide rates. In 2010 the *São Paulo City Gun Control Plan* was launched with the aim of further reducing firearm-related homicides and keeping them down through eight objectives with corresponding technical and awareness-raising measures. The Plan is part of a pilot project coordinated by the NGO Instituto Sou da Paz and was developed collectively by civil society organizations, security forces and local government. This paper presents the background and theory behind the project, as well as the conclusions of a formative process evaluation of the Plan. More of this type of evaluation is needed to contribute to the formulation of effective policies and interventions to reduce violence in Latin American neighborhoods.

**Key words:** local violence prevention, gun control, firearms, São Paulo, evaluation

Over the last decade São Paulo city has registered an impressive 80% reduction in homicides rendering it comparable with international success cases like New York and Bogotá.<sup>1</sup> Despite this striking decline, the benefits have not been felt evenly throughout the city. Thousand of residents continue to live in neighborhoods with alarmingly high levels of violence - currently 65 out of the 96 districts display homicide rates considered epidemic by the World Health Organization.<sup>2</sup> The question that remains is how the policies that seem to be working can be identified and their impact amplified throughout the city.

This is among the questions being debated by academics, policy makers and actors from the public security sector themselves; unfortunately there are no easy answers. Some of the driving factors being discussed that may have led to the reduction in homicides include: changes in socioeconomic and demographic structures, investment in police intelligence and technology, community policing, increased incarceration, investment in violence prevention and gun control. However, the chronic lack of documentation and evaluation of public safety policies means there is effectively very little information available about how such policies were implemented - making any sort of impact estimation a dubious task. There is an urgent need to promote documentation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies in this area.

This paper addresses the need for more discussion of not only which public safety policies have been implemented and their impacts, but specifically *how* they were implemented. In particular there is a need for more attention to the implementation of public policies at the municipal level. The study presents the program theory and formative evaluation of one year of implementation of the *São Paulo City Gun Control Plan* launched in 2010. The Plan is part of a pilot project coordinated by the NGO *Instituto Sou da Paz (ISDP)* that aims to reduce gun homicides in the city through eight objectives with corresponding technical and awareness-raising measures. These objectives were developed collectively by civil society organizations, police forces and different spheres of government. This paper presents the conclusions of a formative evaluation of the project in an attempt to contribute to the debate on formulating effective policies and interventions to reduce violence in Latin American neighborhoods.

What makes the Plan unique in terms of public safety policy in Latin America is the very specific focus on the instruments of armed violence, the integration of efforts by multiple actors at the

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<sup>1</sup> According data from the Secretary of Public Safety for the State of São Paulo in 1999 the homicide rate was 52.58 per 100 thousand inhabitants and fell to 11.25 by 2009. In New York homicides fell by 81% (1996/2007) and Bogotá registered a 71% drop (1993/2003).

<sup>2</sup> Homicide rates in 95 districts according to Sistema de Informações sobre Mortalidade - PRO-AIM/SMS - CET/SMT – SFMSP Updated Dec. 2010. Homicide rates above 10 per 100,000 inhabitants are considered epidemic by the World Health Organization according to Kliksberg, 2006, 1.

local level and the buy-in it creates from implementing agents through their own participation in the process. Three key components have made this type of project possible: 1) the growing number of studies conducted on firearms and their role in violence in the Brazilian context, 2) the identification of some of the core problems in implementing the national gun control law (the Disarmament Statute) and 3) evolutions in the policy making process over the last ten years that have allowed municipal governments and civil society to acquire new roles.

## **Firearms – The instruments of armed violence**

Between 1979 (date of the creation of the Mortality Information System – SIM) and today, nearly 700 thousand Brazilians lost their lives to armed violence.<sup>3</sup> The number of firearm-related deaths continued to grow peaking at almost 40 thousand in 2002 and becoming the number one cause of death for young Brazilians (15-25).<sup>4</sup> In addition to the high rates of gun violence, Brazil is among the top exporters of small arms, habitually exporting over USD 100 million per year.<sup>5</sup> The first legislation concerning firearms in 1934 was exclusively concerned with manufacturing and banning the production of weapons of war by private companies, without any mention of weapons for civilian use.<sup>6</sup> This decree marked the beginning of Brazilian gun control legislation that until 2003, remained largely focused on national security and protecting the arms industries, and generally neglected the regulation of domestic sale of firearms and use by civilians. As one might imagine, the lack of strict regulation led to a flux of thousands of weapons entering into circulation over the course of many decades. While there is no consensus on the number of guns in circulation in Brazil today, the most reliable study estimates that this number is around 17 million - accounting for weapons of the state, registered civilian weapons and illegal ones. Of these, 90% are in civilian hands.<sup>7</sup>

Deeply alarmed by rising violence and insecurity, Brazilian civil society began to mobilize focusing its efforts on prevention and demanding new public policies to deal with the problem. As a result of this pressure, in 2003 the Brazilian government approved the Disarmament Statute, which, among other measures, created the mandate for the first national gun buy-back campaign. The success of this campaign - responsible for taking more than half a million firearms out of circulation - coupled with other measures such as the ban on civilians carrying a weapon and more stringent requirements to purchase a firearm, was followed by the first reduction in gun deaths in 13 years.

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<sup>3</sup> MS/SVS/DASIS - Sistema de Informações sobre Mortalidade – SIM, 1979 – 2009, Categories CID10: X93, X94, X95 (consulted October 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Waiselfez, 2003, 16

<sup>5</sup> Small Arms Survey, 2011, 1

<sup>6</sup> Fernandes, 2005, 37

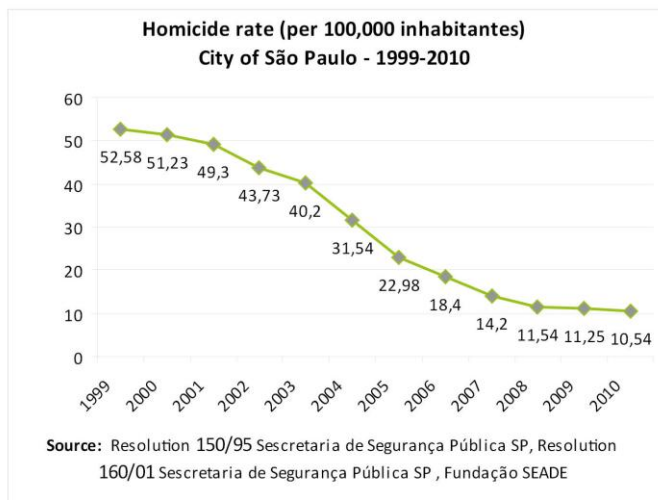
<sup>7</sup> Dreyfus, 2010, 85

Graph 1 - Homicide Rate (100,000 inhabitants) Brazil - 1997-2008



In the city of São Paulo, homicide rates began to drop in 2000. It is worth noting that in that year, the police had begun operating under a state policy to prioritize the seizure of illegal firearms. From 2001 to 2007, 228,813 weapons were seized in the state of São Paulo.<sup>8</sup> The data shows that after the approval of the Disarmament Statute, the drop in the homicide rate accelerated from 15% between January 2002 and January 2004, to 38.4% from January 2004 to January 2006.

Graph 2 - Homicide Rate (100,000 inhabitants) São Paulo 1999-2010



<sup>8</sup> Cerqueira, 2010, 80

Evidence that gun control measures are helping to reduce violence in Brazilian neighborhoods is an important contribution to the international debate about the role and validity of such policies. For decades academic scholars who have written on firearms and crime have been unable to arrive at any consensus on the issue. A number of researchers have attempted to show that more weapons cause more crime - including Cook and Ludwig (1998, 2002), McDowall et. al.(1995) and Newton and Zimring (1969) – arguing that firearms encourage violent responses to interpersonal conflicts and diminish the perceived risks for perpetrators. Others, such as Lott and Mustard (1997), Kleck (1995) and Bartley and Cohen (1998), have argued that the high prevalence of firearms in a society helps diminish crime, considering the threat of self-defense with a firearm by potential victims. Many of the shortcomings of the existing research (described in the 2005 report by the US National Research Council)<sup>9</sup> stem from the lack of reliable data and the weakness of methods. While these studies have focused predominantly on the US context, a recent Brazilian study (Cerqueira, 2010), using new models and new data sets, offers evidence of a statistically significant causal relationship between the prevalence of firearms and levels of homicides across municipalities of São Paulo.

Past studies have had particular difficulties measuring the prevalence of firearms (in some instances using questionable *proxies* such as the number of specialty gun magazine subscriptions).<sup>10</sup> Cerqueira adopts the *proxy* considered most accurate by the international research community for its relation to the amount of firearms in circulation – the proportion of suicides committed with a firearm.<sup>11</sup> Using this *proxy* variable Cerqueira presents *time series* and *cross-sectional* analyses of 645 municipalities in the State of São Paulo, between 2001 and 2007. The opportunity to measure causal effects presented itself with the implementation of the Disarmament Statute of 2003 which restricted access to firearms, significantly increased the cost of owning one and upped the consequences of illegal firearm possession. Thus, the Disarmament Statute served as an exogenous *dummy* variable influencing the availability of firearms. The study finds a statistically significant positive relationship between the availability of firearms and homicides (elasticity 2.0). On the other hand, it found no effect of the prevalence of firearms on crimes such as robbery, drug trafficking and other economically motivated crimes - suggesting the absence of any effect of dissuasion because the potential victim could be armed.<sup>12</sup>

While homicides are decreasing in São Paulo city, they are still too high and police data suggests that two out of three are still committed with a firearm.<sup>13</sup> Having identified firearms as a significant risk factor contributing to lethal violence years ago, ISDP has worked to promote stronger gun control measures since its founding in 1999. The organization played an active role in mobilizing society and the Congress for approval of the Disarmament Statute and later in defense of the law against bills aimed at dismantling it.

Years after passage of the law, realizing the gap between the Statute on paper and in practice, ISDP conducted a national survey between 2008 and 2010 on its implementation. The research examined how various aspects of the law were (or were not) being implemented in 10 Brazilian states. The study concluded that the model legislation has failed to reach its full potential due to fundamental implementation flaws. Although it is a federal law, ISDP found its implementation

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<sup>9</sup> Wellford, Pepper, and Petrie, 2005

<sup>10</sup> Moody and Marvell, 2002; Duggan 2001. In: Cerqueira, 2010, 79.

<sup>11</sup> Kleck in 2004 investigated the validity of 25 proxies for the prevalence of firearms used in the literature and concludes that the most valid proxy would be the proportion of suicides committed with a firearm. The consensus among scholars on this proxy is also confirmed in *Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review*. National Research Council. 2005, p. 41. [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=10881&page=41](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10881&page=41)

<sup>12</sup> Cerqueira, 2010, 124-126

<sup>13</sup> DHPP/Secretaria de Segurança Pública – Estado de São Paulo 2010. In: Instituto Sou da Paz, Diagnóstico, 2010, 20.

varies greatly from one state to another, and almost all states examined had significant defects in its execution.<sup>14</sup>

## The Implementation Deficit

*“El peor déficit en América Latina no es el de políticas públicas ‘correctas’, sino de la capacidad de implementar políticas en general”*<sup>15</sup> - Eugenio Lahera, Director of Public Policy, Chile 2000-2006

Eugenio Lahera, former policy advisor to the Chilean Presidency, is one amongst many who have highlighted the difficulty in transforming laws into practice in Latin America. He and others have suggested that the implementation conundrum is rooted in multiple factors including context, the agents and agencies responsible, as well as the lack of effective implementation strategy.<sup>16</sup>

So what can be done to improve policy implementation? Existing literature takes one of two lines of rationale: top-down, or bottom-up. The top-down scholars see a hierarchy of decision-making whereby policies are designed at the top and executed by implementing agents on the ground. In this respect, implementation can be better controlled through establishing precise plans and goals that will allow policy results to be achieved as predicted.<sup>17</sup> Others have challenged this view by highlighting the fact that policy objectives are often still ambiguous and left to different interpretations in practice. Additionally, the lack of coordination between multiple agencies is problematic and different institutional values or interests generate different motivations for policy implementation.<sup>18</sup> Bottom-up authors argue that, for these reasons, policy making has to be viewed as a continuum whereby the original policy is adapted and transformed by implementing agents.

Brazil's Disarmament Statute is particularly difficult to enforce and monitor due to the range of different responsibilities attributed to different public agencies or entities (Federal, Civil and Military Police, Judiciary, Army) and obligations for private legal entities (weapons and ammunition stores and industries, private security companies and shooting clubs, for example).<sup>19</sup> Most of these pertain to the Federal Executive, notably the Brazilian Army and the Federal Police. Although not all inclusive, the main responsibilities of these public institutions is summarized in Table 1.

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<sup>14</sup> Instituto Sou da Paz, 2010, 8

<sup>15</sup> Lahera, 2007, 239.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 240

<sup>17</sup> Authors include Hjern and Porter(1993) , Sabatier (1993), Barrett (2004) and others.

<sup>18</sup> Authors included Pressaman and Wildavsky (1973), Hogwood and Gunn (1993), Sabatier and Mazmanian (1989) and others.

<sup>19</sup> Instituto Sou da Paz, 2010, 8

Table 1 - Gun Control Responsibilities Attributed to Public Agencies	
Public Institution	Responsibilities
Brazilian Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Destruction</b> of guns seized or turned over voluntarily</li> <li>• Authorizing and supervising all aspects of the <b>production</b> and trade of arms and ammunition</li> <li>• Supervising <b>transportation</b> of weapons from the manufacturing plants to stores, police and ports for export</li> <li>• Supervising <b>Import and Export</b> of weapons and ammunition for both restricted and permitted use</li> <li>• Maintaining the <b>SIGMA</b>, the database with information regarding firearms of <b>hunters, collectors, sports shooters, the Armed Forces, and the Military Police</b></li> <li>• Supervising the above categories"</li> </ul>
Federal Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control of <b>firearms in the hands of the civilian</b> population including registering and issuing authorization for the purchase or possession of weapons for civilians</li> <li>• Maintenance of the <b>SINARM data base</b> containing information on weapons registered to civilians</li> <li>• Registering the firearms of the <b>Civil Police</b> and of the <b>Municipal Guards</b></li> <li>• Registration, supervision and authorization of weapons and employees of <b>private security companies</b></li> <li>• Receiving and registering the <b>weapons turned over voluntarily</b> (ie: Gun Buy-Back Campaigns)"</li> </ul>
State Secretary of Public Security/ State Police (Civil and Military)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Seizure of weapons</b> involved in crimes or illegal situations and refer these to the Judiciary</li> <li>• <b>Investigation and forensic</b> work on crimes committed with firearms</li> <li>• <b>Relay information</b> on the characteristics and circumstance underlying all gun seizures to the Federal Police</li> <li>• Provide "<b>necessary support</b>" to the Army in its oversight of gun and ammunition commerce</li> <li>• May partner with Federal Police to <b>receive weapons voluntarily turned in</b> (ie: Gun Buy-Back Campaigns)</li> </ul>
Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After criminal prosecution <b>turn firearms over to the Army</b></li> <li>• May donate the weapons to police forces</li> <li>• <b>Remit a list of the weapons apprehended and stored</b> by the court, specifying their characteristics and their storage location, to SINARM or to SIGMA every semester"</li> </ul>
Secretary of Municipal Security/ Metropolitan Civil Gaurd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In cities with over 50,000 inhabitants Municipal Guards may carry firearms</li> <li>• Municipal Guards may partner with the Federal Police to receive weapons voluntarily turned in "</li> </ul>

Source: BRASIL. Brasília, Lei n°. 10.826 de 22 de dezembro de 2003 - Estatuto do Desarmamento

The ISDP study found that one of the largest barriers to implementing the law was the lack of coordination, cooperation and information sharing amongst these key actors.<sup>20</sup> Building from this study, the design of the pilot project *São Paulo City Gun Control Plan* takes a critical look at how these obstacles can be addressed at the local level. Within this context, it has become increasingly clear that policy implementation should be understood as a process of interaction amongst diverse stakeholders and institutional structures, all of which influence the process according to their interests, resources and priority attributed to the issue. The argument put forward by the project is that by bringing together governmental institutions responsible for gun control implementation and civil society locally - and engaging them through a participatory process in the creation of a city plan - some of these obstacles can be reduced.

It is important to recognize that this initiative has only been made possible through the evolution of public policy in Brazil over the last decade. The modern policy environment has widened the group of actors responsible for policy formulation and implementation, and opened new spaces for civil society participation.

### Evolution of public policy and local level cooperation

Not unlike other Latin American countries, public policy in Brazil up through the 1980's was essentially top-down. Decisions and financial resources were centralized through the Federal Government, while municipalities - when involved at all - were relegated to the role of executing

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 138

policy. According to Farah (2001), this led to three important characteristics. Firstly, local governments, who were directly exposed to citizens needs but had little control over resources, would negotiate funding and dole it out through favor based relationships. Furthermore, the disorganized and rapid growth of state led to a plethora of new agencies with overlapping mandates and no central coordination mechanism. Finally government structures became increasingly specialized and autonomous (in education, health, transportation, etc) becoming isolated with little conversation between them.<sup>21</sup>

Admittedly governmental institutions in Brazil still exhibit many of these traits today. However changes brought on by democratization and the new Constitution of 1988 led to a fundamental shift towards decentralization and new institutional arrangements. In Brazil, as in other Latin American countries, the concept of citizen security (as opposed to national security) and municipal policy gained increasing importance with the transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy. This shift created a new opening for both municipalities and civil society in policy-making and implementation.

Although the Constitution determines that police and penal systems fall under the supervision of state governors, municipalities have come to occupy an active role in the public security arena – especially in the area of prevention.<sup>22</sup> In 2000, with the launch of the *Plano Nacional de Segurança Pública* (National Public Safety Plan) and municipal elections, municipal public safety policies began to gain momentum.<sup>23</sup> This new involvement has become apparent over the last decade with the expansion and creation of Civil Municipal Guards, Municipal Public Safety Secretaries and Municipal Public Safety Plans. Other violence prevention initiatives have included tightening the regulation of alcoholic beverage sales, improving urban planning for safety and new investments in social programs.<sup>24</sup> As public safety stopped being seen as a strictly police related issue, from both a conceptual and administrative point of view, municipalities began taking a new multidisciplinary approach involving different administrative levels and institutions. The municipal government is the closest to the people and therefore has more clarity of the problems communities face. This understanding facilitates the formulation of more effective public safety policies, directs intervention strategies towards the most urgent community priorities and enables integrated actions directed towards target populations. Since 2003 Brazilian municipalities have reported a 168% increase in spending on public safety, which amounted to R\$2 billion in 2009.<sup>25</sup> Although still low when compared to the total number of municipalities (5,565), we now see 865 cities with Civil Guards and 1,230 with a management body dedicated to public safety.<sup>26</sup>

The increasing role of local government combined with the paradigm shift away from the traditional repressive approach to public safety, have also created a new space for civil society participation. Organizations have shown that they are capable and willing to work with government to create new policies and interventions to reduce violence. A testament to this was the wide participation of civil society in the 266 municipal conferences, 1,140 open conferences and a national level conference on public safety – 1<sup>st</sup> CONSEG – all of which took place between December 2008 and August 2009.

The convergence of these factors has led to a favorable environment for new initiatives involving multiple agencies, institutions and civil society organizations to promote safer

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<sup>21</sup> Farah, 2001, 121

<sup>22</sup> Kahn and Zanetic, 2005, 3-7

<sup>23</sup> Paulo Mesquita Neto, 2005, 6

<sup>24</sup> Kahn and Zanetic, 2005, 7-13

<sup>25</sup> Forum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2010, 7

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 62

communities on the local level. In this new environment, policy making becomes more horizontal and is adapted and transformed by diverse stakeholders active in the implementation process. The *São Paulo City Gun Control Plan* seeks to work within this new dynamic to reduce homicides in the city. The project aims to perfect the implementation of national gun control legislation on the local level – eliminating the implementation deficit –, increase effectiveness and cooperation among responsible governmental institutions and increase awareness of the general public about the dangers of firearms.

## The São Paulo City Gun Control Plan

The most recent data available for the city of São Paulo shows that:

- the majority of homicides in the city (65.8%) is committed with a firearm,
- in resolved homicide cases 49% of perpetrators and 70% of victims had no criminal record,
- 7 in 10 murders were motivated by revenge, disagreements, jealousy and crimes of passion, indicating that most were products of conflicts that could be resolved in other ways if not for the presence of the firearm,<sup>27</sup>
- greater prevalence of firearms in circulation is positively correlated with a higher rate of homicide.<sup>28</sup>

These findings support the logic and program theory of the *São Paulo City Gun Control Plan* project which postulates that firearms are a risk factor that exacerbates violence in the city and, therefore, **decreasing the demand for weapons, increasing control over them and reducing the existing stock** in circulation should contribute to a drop in homicides.

The assumptions that underlie the design of the project are:

- 1) A Municipal Plan is needed to coordinate, stimulate and unite efforts to reduce demand and increase control over firearms in the city;
- 2) The Plan must be based on a diagnosis of firearms in circulation, homicides in the city, the demand for firearms, and the major issues concerning arms control;
- 3) For the Plan to be complete, and generate commitment for its implementation, it is important that it be constructed and implemented through a participatory process;
- 4) It is essential to have one organization to coordinate the process, organize meetings, organize and circulate information, encourage and perform actions within the Plan.

The overall program theory can be observed in Figure 1. The diagram shows a visual representation of how the project was designed to reach desired outcomes.

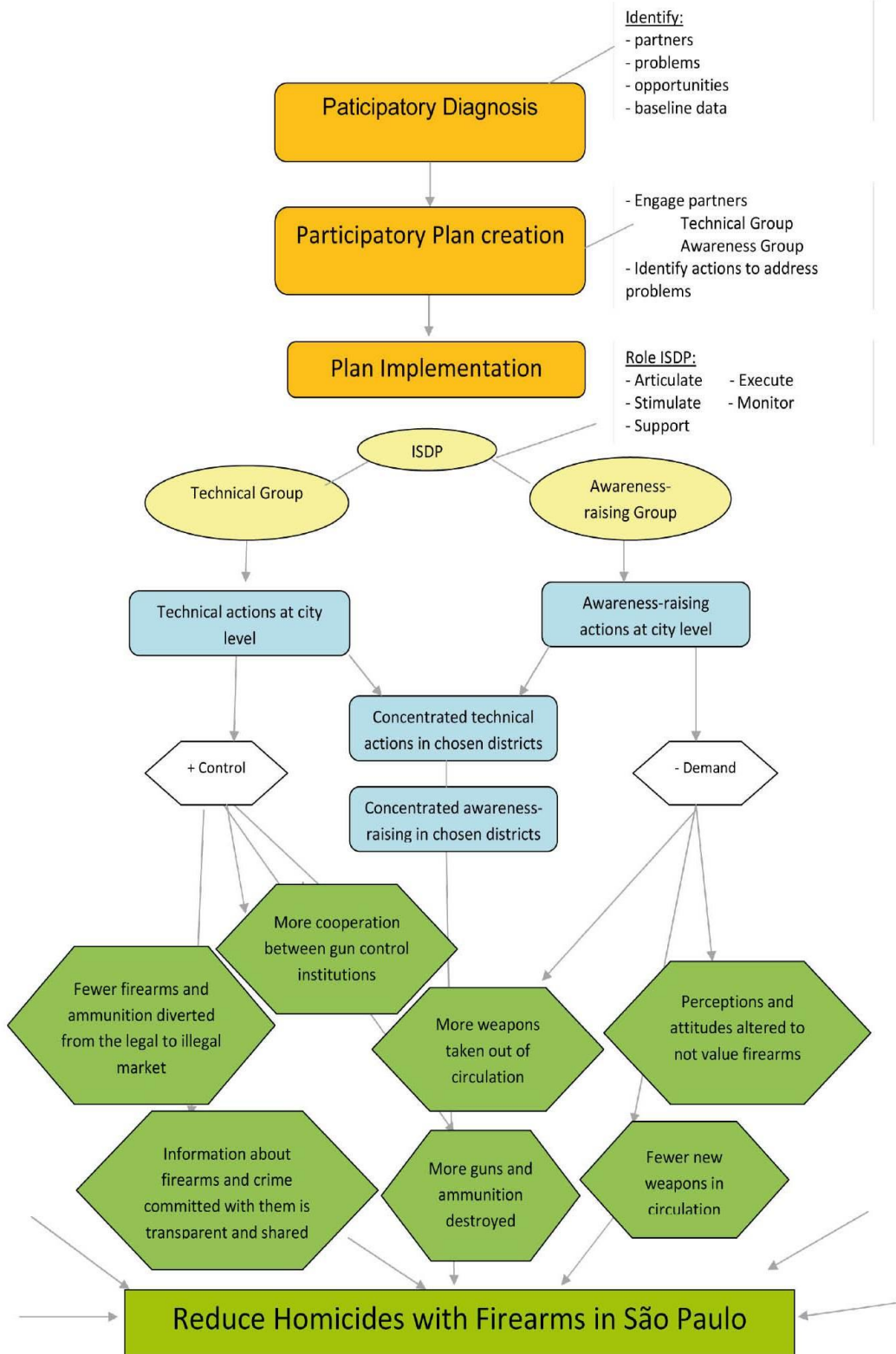
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<sup>27</sup> DHPP/Secretaria de Segurança Pública – Estado de São Paulo, 2010. Based on 1,100 resolved homicide cases between 2005 and 2009 in the city of São Paulo. The number of resolved homicide crimes in the city is currently 45% according to the Secretary of Public Safety.

<sup>28</sup> Cerqueira, 2010, 77



**Figure 1 – Program Theory São Paulo City Gun Control Plan**



As presented in Figure 1, the project was divided into 3 stages. This evaluation analyzed the 3 stages from June 2010 to August 2011, but the implementation of the Plan continues today.

### **Diagnosis**

The first stage of the São Paulo City Gun Control Plan involved a diagnosis of the problem of armed violence and firearms in the city. The diagnosis was developed over the first 7 months of the project and involved collection of quantitative and qualitative data to guide the development of the Plan. Research was conducted by ISDP on the impact of firearm use in the city of São Paulo, the demand for these artifacts, the main problems with control of these weapons, as well as existing policies and opportunities in this area. The diagnosis coordinated information from multiple official sources (Federal Police, Civil Police, Army, Civil Guard and the Municipal Secretary of Public Safety), as well as relevant research conducted by other institutions (such as victimization surveys from 2003 and 2008)<sup>29</sup>. The assessment sought to identify the main challenges and opportunities for improving gun control, as well as potential partnerships, key players and opportunities for awareness-raising.<sup>30</sup>

A unique contribution of the diagnosis was the creation of a new indicator that helps pinpoint city districts most in need of attention. The indicator triangulates information to identify districts with high homicide rates, low rates of firearm seizures, high rates of stolen weapons and low rates of voluntarily surrendered weapons by the population. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the investigation examined the detailed nuances and specific problematic areas of gun control processes locally (gun registration, seizures, stockpiles, destruction, etc.).

### **Formulation of the Municipal Plan**

The second stage of the project included the development of the *São Paulo City Gun Control Plan* in partnership with two groups mobilized during the diagnostic phase - a **Technical Group** (composed of the public institutions responsible for arms control in the city) and an **Awareness-raising Group** (made up of civil society organizations, academic institutions and other public bodies).<sup>31</sup> The Plan was developed over a series of monthly meetings of these two groups, facilitated by ISDP. Deeply rooted in the diagnostic report, the Plan includes technical measures to counter the problems identified and create a comprehensive local gun control system. In addition, other measures designed by the Awareness-raising Group are aimed at reducing the demand for firearms. The final Plan was launched in December 2010 and contains 8 objectives:<sup>32</sup>

Objective 1: Improve management of firearm and ammunition control processes

Objective 2: Improve the quality and transparency of information about the control of firearms and ammunition

Objective 3: Reduce firearms and ammunition in circulation

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<sup>29</sup> A partnership formed with the research institution Insper (Instituto de Pesquisa e Ensino) that conducted victimization surveys in 2003 and 2008 in the city permitted the cross tabulation of data on individual households that declared owning or wanting to acquire a fire arm (region of the city, religion, motivation for owning or wanting a firearm).

<sup>30</sup> For a summary of the non-confidential results of the diagnosis divulged to the public see <http://desarmasp.wordpress.com/dados/>

<sup>31</sup> For a full list of organizations and institutions see <http://desarmasp.wordpress.com/parceiros/>

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed version of the Plan, see appendix 1.

Objective 4: Ensure the adequate protection of stockpiles

Objective 5: More rigorous monitoring of legal owners found most vulnerable to diversion (specifically private security companies and private weapons collectors)<sup>33</sup>

Objective 6: Articulate demands with other levels of government

Objective 7: Encourage people not to own guns

Objective 8: Reduce risk factors related to armed violence

### **Implementation**

The third and final stage - the implementation and monitoring of Plan activities - has been taking place since January of 2011. The implementation of actions by the partners of the Technical and Awareness-raising Groups is monitored, encouraged, and in some cases executed by ISDP. In the original design of the project, the activities of the Plan would take place in the city as a whole, but there would be an intensification and closer monitoring of activities in two specific districts of the city to be identified by the Technical and Awareness-raising Groups. Because of financial and human resource limitations, the project ultimately focused on one region – M'Boi Mirim in the southern zone of the city.

#### **Focus on the M'Boi Mirim Region**

Based on the analysis of indicators of homicide, weapons seized, stolen firearms, voluntarily surrendered weapons and the existence of local institutions and organizations to support awareness-raising activities, both the Technical and Awareness-raising Groups agreed that *Jardim São Luis*, in the Southern region of the city, should be the district of focus.

Subsequently, the enthusiasm of local authorities led to the expansion of the targeted actions to the entire region of *M'Boi Mirim* (spanning *Jardim São Luis* and *Jardim Angela*). Historically this region has had some of the highest homicide rates in the city, but has presented impressive reductions in recent years. According to the Public Health Mortality Information System (SIM), while the homicide rate in *Jardim Angela* was reduced by 83% in the last 10 years, this rate in *Jardim São Luis* also fell by 78%. However, despite this improvement, rates are still above the city average as a whole.

A new group for local mobilization in the region was created and includes the local government representatives, the Civil and Military Police active in the region, the Municipal Civil Guard, civil society and religious organizations, the Secretariat of Environment and Secretariat of Public Health. Local organizations and institutions conducted three main activities through August 2011 including: **The Children's Disarmament Week** (held between April 11-15) which engaged more than 100 schools in the region and collected over 6,000 violent toys, the **Popular Consultation** (an opinion survey on guns, disarmament, security and the gun buy-back campaign) and the **Week of Disarmament** (August 6-14) where people were encouraged to turn in their guns to one of several new temporary collection posts hosted by local institution or organization, where weapons could be voluntarily surrendered in exchange for a R\$100 deposit .

### **Evaluation Questions and Methodology**

This paper presents the results of a formative evaluation, conducted by the author, one year after the initiation of the project. Essentially the evaluation examined how the project was implemented, lessons learned, the basic assumptions of the methodology and some preliminary results. Evaluation questions included the following: 1) How does the implementation of three

<sup>33</sup> These categories were identified as particularly vulnerable to diversion by the ISDP study. Instituto Sou da Paz, 2010, 175-177.

main stages of the project compare with what was planned? 2) Was the process participatory and did this generate more commitment from the actors involved? 3) Is the format of the Plan the best format to achieve the desired results? 4) How would partners evaluate the role of ISDP? 5) Is the management of gun control in the city better today than before? 6) How successful have awareness-raising activities been in disseminating information to the general public?

Information was collected through empirical observation of technical group meetings, a series of key informant interviews with the ISDP staff, 5 members of the Awareness-raising group and the Municipal Secretary of Public Safety, as well as a focus group conducted with the Technical Group. A total of 19 member institutions participated in a voluntary and anonymous survey.<sup>34</sup> Documentation from meetings, attendance lists and other documents produced were also analyzed. Finally, in order to respond to question 6, a number of short phone interviews were conducted with employees of the institutions involved in activities of disseminating information to the public.

## **Findings**

### ***Breakthroughs***

Among the main achievements of the diagnostic stage was the collection and, more importantly, organization of data from multiple sources on firearms, homicides and demand for weapons in São Paulo city. Although significant limitations remain in terms of availability and transparency of information (discussed further below), the diagnosis made it possible to bring together information about the life cycle of a firearms in São Paulo - from demand, to homicides committed (per city district), to weapons stolen, seized, turned in and stockpiled in the city. This is the first time such a comprehensive set of data on the issue, from so many different sources, has been compiled. This feat is even more significant due to the fact that much of this information was inaccessible or unknown by the very members of Technical Group who are responsible for implementing gun control policy. The information not only allows for an overview of the system and arms flows, but it also creates a baseline for monitoring and improvement. The collection of data over multiple years, disaggregated by district, permits identification of trends and warning signs for districts in need of special attention. A better understanding of the main barriers to gun control processes at the local level was a key achievement and the processes itself served as a mechanism to engage partners and consolidate the two working groups.

Another significant achievement is having reached a consensus among all stakeholders (even those who were previously resistant) that there is a need to strengthen gun control procedures and awareness of the dangers of guns within the city. Not only were stakeholders from the Technical and Awareness-raising groups able to agree on the need for the Plan, but they were also able to agree collectively on a common set of objectives and actions to prioritize. The hope is that by creating a common agenda, stakeholders' internal institutional agendas and goals will align themselves for a beneficial outcome. While it is still early to verify how well the collective agenda is being internalized by partners to the Plan, the very fact that they have regularly engaged in dialogue with each other on a monthly basis, for over a year, is an achievement in

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<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that while 19 institutions is a small number, it can be considered significantly representative of both the Awareness-raising and Technical Groups. The questionnaires from the Technical Group effectively represent 75% of the group institutions. Although the Awareness-raising Group has a much larger number of partners, effectively only 13 institutions participated in more than one meeting over a year long period. Thus, the 12 questionnaire responses can be considered extremely representative of this group (92%).

itself. In the case of the Technical Group, members from different institutions that are each responsible for different pieces of the puzzle in the gun control process have contact and are sharing information about their work on a regular basis. The sharing of information and designing common goals has challenged the prior “production line” mentality to gun control. As one member of the Technical Group, a representative of the Ministry of Justice mentioned in the focus group:

*We see the usefulness of this group when we recognize that we are all seeing the same issue from different angles. Each agency has its expertise in relation to arms control. We are learning to look not only at the problems that our agency has, but to see from the perspective of others, understand what problems they have, and find common solutions. .*

The partners for Awareness-raising, including both civil society organizations and public entities, have no legal responsibility to work on this issue. Some of them have not worked with the issue of gun control before and for many it competes for attention among other projects and thematic concerns. Thus their very engagement and participation in designing the Plan, in group meetings and awareness-raising activities should be considered a net gain.

While ISDP played an important role of organizing and coordinating discussion, all three stages of the project were regarded by members of both groups as highly participatory. Some methods adopted specifically to ensure the democratic participation of all partners in the process included: 1) presentation of diagnostic data to everyone allowing all to have equal access to information essential to the process, 2) the creation of mediated open spaces for discussion and proposals at meetings, 3) partners were consulted on the objectives and actions of the Plan both individually and collectively at meetings, 4) all documents produced were sent along with meeting notes to all partners for suggestions and comments. Although there was some fluctuation, partner participation in meetings was not significantly higher or lower in any of the three stages of the project (meaning that partners were not excluded from any part of the process).<sup>35</sup>

To ensure the process was indeed participatory, ten questions were developed for the survey applied to both groups.<sup>36</sup> The responses of partners on the ten criteria were aggregated to create a participatory index variable that weighed all criteria equally in a single number. Criteria were accessed by participants on a *likert scale* of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest ranking). The average value on the index was 8.48 (standard deviation of 1.29). Thus we can conclude that based on the criteria set forth, the process has been participatory. A Pearson’s Correlation Test revealed that, for the participants of the two groups that responded to the survey, there was a positive correlation between the participatory index score and their perception of the level of commitment of their institution/organization to the implementation of the Plan ( $r=0.48$ ). In the case of these two groups a linear regression test shows that the relationship between perceptions of the participatory process and perceptions of the level of institutional commitment is linear ( $p=0.039$ ). However, our analysis also suggests that many other factors can influence the real commitment of the institutions with the Plan. One important factor is that the autonomy of the partners to assume responsibility for actions related to the Plan on behalf of their institution is relatively low (according to questionnaire responses), thus commitment to the Plan must be consolidated at the level of their superiors.

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<sup>35</sup> Average meeting attendance for both groups in all three stages was 11 institutions/organizations, thus participation was not significantly higher or lower in any one part of the project.

<sup>36</sup> Participatory criteria were adapted from *The Practical Guide for Evaluating Participatory Processes* published by the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy (see Appendix 2 for criteria).

Regarding awareness-raising activities it is worth noting the success of the Children's Disarmament Campaign in the region of M'Boi Mirim. The success of this campaign can be judged not only in terms of toy guns turned in<sup>37</sup>, but in terms of mobilizing partners in the region. Although ISDP assisted with the campaign concept and production of material, awareness-raising was carried out exclusively by partners of Mobilization Group in M'Boi Mirim. The experience seems to validate the choice of a region of focus where there was already a network of actors mobilized. The Military Police and Municipal Civil Guard from the area conducted visits to 76 participating schools to talk about the campaign and collect toy guns. The aim of the campaign was not only to raise awareness of children about the dangers of guns, but mainly to raise awareness of their parents and disseminate information about the firearm buy-back program. There was concern that the discussions could end up with a predominant focus on turning in toy guns, but we discovered through a series of interviews that the key messages disseminated in school visits included instructions for the children to discuss the dangers of guns with their parents. All 10 members of the Military Police and Municipal Guard mentioned in their interviews that they asked the children to tell their parents that real guns could also be turned in at designated collection posts in the area.

During the week three guns were turned in. Although it is not a high number, if we consider that only 4 of weapons turned in the region during the entire year in 2010. Additionally this is a region that has typically had very low confidence in the police, so the act of turning over a firearm to the police is very symbolic of progress. In one specific case ISDP staff learned of a child who told his grandmother about what he learned in school and she handed in a gun that belonged to her grandson who had been arrested. In another case during the Children's Disarmament Week, a woman who learned the gun control through her child contacted ISDP and was advised on how and where to turn in a weapon. More importantly, this activity laid the groundwork for the Week of the Voluntary Gun Buy-Back in the region in August 2011.

Regarding the technical measures of the Plan, the area where there was clearly great progress is the Voluntary Gun Buy-Back Campaign. After the original Gun Buy-Back Campaign in 2004 and 2005 that collected nearly 139,000 guns in the state of São Paulo, the Municipal Civil Guard began a new collection campaign in 2009. However through the Plan and the meetings of the Technical Group new contracts were established to allow the Civil and Military Police to also establish collection posts as was done in previous buy-back campaigns. The result is that the city now has the largest number of collection posts in history - 173. Many of the most fundamental problems with prior campaigns were identified and solved through the Technical Group. Perhaps most importantly, the campaign seems to have been instrumental in opening channels of dialogue and initiating exchange of information in the Technical group especially between the Ministry of Justice, Federal Police, Civil Police, Military Police and the Municipal Civil Guard. The campaign has been a fundamental centerpiece of the Plan that has allowed both the Technical Group and the Awareness-raising group to work collectively. Clearly, the campaign has been the area of least resistance, greater exchange of information, greater cooperation and problem solving. One possible hypothesis to explain this is that, since different security agencies are carrying out identical functions (collection of weapons), the problems they face are the same and all partners benefit from the solutions. Additionally, the campaign is voluntary and doesn't involve criticism or interference with the core tasks attributed to each institution (weapons seizure, registry, stockpiling, destruction) thus facilitating a more

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<sup>37</sup> The resulting amount of 3.031 toy guns turned in is deemed to have been heavily influenced by the occurrence on the eve of the campaign of a school shooting in Rio de Janeiro that received national media attention.

collaborative environment. It is hoped that this collaboration spills over into more of the hardcore institutional work in the second year of implementing the Plan.

Although we consider it premature to assess the desired project outcomes after 6 months of implementation of the Plan, the consolidation of the Technical Group and the monthly meetings alone seem to be contributing to improving the management of arms control in the city. By providing a space for interaction among the main institutions responsible for gun control, the evaluation shows signs of greater exchange of information between actors, greater cooperation and finding solutions to improve control procedures.

One example is the increased participation of the Army in the Technical Group meetings and their increasing willingness to discuss arms control issues with the group. Although the lack of engagement of the Army with the Plan initially has been a challenge, it is important to recognize some subtle changes in this regard. Historically, the relationship between the Army, the police and NGOs has been complicated and has involved rivalries and strained power relations - the work of arms control is no exception.<sup>38</sup> Having identified the lack of participation of the Army as a major challenge for the Plan, since they continue to be responsible for key functions essential to reducing arms flows, ISDP devoted time to improving relations with this important actor. Individual meetings with representatives of the Army in São Paulo and the higher decision making branch in Brasília have sought to create a better understanding of the Plan and more involvement with the Plan's activities. If this new openness will translate effectively in the Army's engagement with the Plan and cooperation with other actors of the group is something that must be monitored throughout the second year.

A second example is the increased willingness and interest of Technical Group members to work on establishing stockpile management norms. Among the main actions taken through the first six months of implementation of the Plan are visits from the ISDP team to firearm deposits maintained by the Judiciary, the Civil and Federal Police (DIPO, DPC, PF) and sharing of information by each member on measures currently taken to secure these sites. Furthermore, a new bi-lateral partnership between the Municipal Civil Guard and the Judiciary was formed to help gather and record large lots of weapons to be sent for destruction from the Judiciary to the Army. It is expected that in the second year of the Plan these actions will lead to the production of a São Paulo safety standards guide for the custody of weapons (which will serve as a reference and also to create criteria for stockpile management and monitoring).

### ***Limitations and Challenges***

Although the diagnostic report was able to gather new information on firearms in the city that had not previously been compiled in one place, much of the information sought was also not found. Much of the data necessary for a truly complete picture of the problem was unavailable because it is either not registered, or because responsible bodies were unwilling to share it. Since the responsibility for public safety in Brazil is primarily attributed to the federal and state governments, much of the data is only available at those levels of disaggregation (not at the municipal level). Although the municipality has assumed an important role in preventing violence, there is not sufficient and consistent data at the city level on many aspects of the gun control process. For example, ISDP could not obtain information from the Federal Police about the total number of guns sold and registered, or in the hands of private security companies at the

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<sup>38</sup> Further details on the complexities of these relationships can be found in the ISDP study – *Implementação do Estatuto do Desarmamento; do papel a prática*: [http://www.soudapaz.org/Portals/0/Downloads/Integra\\_Implementa%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20do%20Estatuto%20do%20Desarmamento%20-%20do%20papel%20para%20a%20pr%C3%A1tica.pdf](http://www.soudapaz.org/Portals/0/Downloads/Integra_Implementa%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20do%20Estatuto%20do%20Desarmamento%20-%20do%20papel%20para%20a%20pr%C3%A1tica.pdf)

municipal level (data was only available for São Paulo state). Also ISDP was denied data requested from the Army on the number of collectors, sports shooters and hunters registered in the city, as well as details on the oversight procedures for these categories.<sup>39</sup>

Although the diagnosis was able to measure the demand through the two victimization survey's consulted (in terms of percentage of the population of the city that claims to have or want to have a gun) and basic characteristics of gun owners (race, income, religion, education), it was quite superficial in terms of identifying influential factors. The report pinpoints the finite details about controlling access to and use of firearms. The same level of detail was not reached with regard to demand. It also is apparent in retrospect that the Awareness-raising Group lacks partners with technical knowledge of how to influence people's decisions and desires, for example those with expertise in marketing and communications.

Some of the limitations of the Plan itself are derived from the Plan format that contains no details as to the strategies, deadlines and responsible parties for implementation of each activity. While developing the Plan the focus was on arriving at a shared set of objectives and actions among diverse stakeholders each with their own institutional interests, resistances and agendas. The flexible format of the Plan has allowed for necessary adaptation over the first year of the project. However, while the agreement on common goals has been important, without benchmarks, targets and detailed plans for implementation, these goals at best represent a cluster of good intentions. In order to move beyond this point in year two, working groups should develop each of the Plan's activities in the format of a mini-project with clear deadlines and designated responsible parties. These activities need to be actively monitored by the group collectively.

Also there are still significant barriers to be overcome to improve the coordination, cooperation and information sharing between members of the Technical Group. While these activities were observed in the evaluation, the most solid examples have been related to the Gun Buy-Back Campaign and not the core responsibilities of these agencies. The majority of the problems observed both in the ISDP study of 2010 on implementation of the law, and the diagnostic report, are within this realm that the Technical Group has yet to address (destruction processes that are delayed and lead to the accumulation of weapons, information on weapons seized by state police not transmitted to the Federal Police registry system, information about collectors and sports shooters not shared between the Army and the Federal Police, etc.)

Up until the end of the evaluation period (August 2011) the impact of awareness-raising activities on a city-wide level showed relatively limited impact. The targeted mobilization and awareness raising activities in the region of M'Boi Mirim seem to have been much more effective in communicating the right message. The evaluation found that dissemination of information about the Voluntary Gun-Buy Back program and awareness-raising at the city level was not as effective. Although members of the Awareness-raising group are part of institutions or organizations that have wide networks and a presence throughout the city, disseminating information via these networks was limited. Although on the survey members of the group declared feeling comfortable relaying information about the issue<sup>40</sup>, it seems to be more difficult for this information to spread throughout the organization or institution. During the evaluation short phone interviews were conducted with employees of different regional branches the organizations/institutions participating in the Awareness-raising group. Attempts were made to obtain information on the voluntary buy-back campaign from attendants at 6 Centers of

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<sup>39</sup> Some unofficial information was shared later with the Technical Group on the topics mentioned, but the formal request at the time of the diagnosis remains unanswered.

<sup>40</sup> The average response on the questionnaire on members comfort level for relaying information about the Voluntary Gun Buy-Back and dangers of having a gun was 8.48 (on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being completely comfortable).



Citizenship Integration (CIC), 5 Women's Centers of Citizenship (CCM) plus 7 other women's centers and 6 Tele-centers (where citizens have free computer access) chosen randomly in different regions of the city.

In the case of the CICs, out of 6 locations contacted, in only two locations were we able to receive information on the Voluntary Gun Buy-Back campaign and only after speaking with the director of the center. The two directors we spoke with were knowledgeable, but in none of the 6 CICs contacted was the first person who answered the phone able to give information about the campaign. This becomes a problem when, even after three calls, on different days and at different times, the director was not available to speak with us (the case in the other 4 CICs). At this point it is reasonable to assume that someone seeking information on the issue would likely have given up. When we spoke to the CCMs and Women's services, in only three locations (out of a total of 11) had the person we spoke with seen material or heard of the campaign. This was disappointing considering a specific brochure was designed to target awareness-raising at women and was distributed to these locations. The most successful case of dissemination of information about the campaign seems to have been Tele-centers where information had been displayed on the screens of computers available free of charge to the public in 400 locations around the city. Telephone interviews confirmed that the screen saver was displayed for a month, but employees still could tell us nothing that they remembered about the campaign. These results suggest that awareness-raising strategies need to be rethought and possibly are more effective when targeted in specific geographic regions of the city (specifically those with more active and mobilized civil society and public entities), as was done in the M'Boi Mirim region.

In other sections of the Plan, there seems to have been little progress over the first year including activities related to objective 8 (reducing risk factors related to armed violence), objective 3 (intensified operations for the seizure of weapons in districts with high homicide rates and low levels of apprehended firearms), and objective 5 (more rigorous monitoring of categories vulnerable to diversion – private security companies, collectors and sports shooters). These aspects of the Plan should be reviewed early in the second year from the perspective of the degree of difficulty to implementing them, cost versus benefit and what possible strategies could be used to promote their implementation. It will be important to discuss each of these issues individually with the institutions and organizations responsible to get a more realistic picture of what progress on these issues can reasonably be expected over the second year of the Plan.

In conclusion, in the first year of the project, and first six months of Plan implementation, we can see that there is not an even balance between awareness-raising and technical measures as projected in the program theory. Two key factors have influenced this imbalance. Firstly, most of the technical measures are difficult to implement strictly on the municipal level, much less on the district level. In part this is a reflection of the fact that the main agencies responsible for implementation of gun control processes reside at the state and federal levels (Federal Police, Ministry of justice, Army, Civil and Military Police, etc). While some of their functions can be intensified at the municipal level, few can be targeted to specific districts (ie: gun registration, stockpile security, oversight of private security companies). The one control function that can be targeted towards specific districts is the seizure of illegal weapons, which has not been intensified in any specific district to this point. On the demand side of the Plan, the opposite dynamic has been observed: little ability to implement awareness-raising activities at the city wide level and much more efficiency at the district, or regional level. In essence the Plan has thus focused awareness-raising in one region and technical measures on the city as a whole.

## ***Lessons Learned***

Important lessons learned in the first year of the project begin with the understanding that the context within which the project is inserted is extremely important. The existence of a strong national gun control law and the existence of active local leaders that support the Plan, such as the Municipal Secretary of Public Safety, have been key factors for the success of the Plan. Similarly, the National Voluntary Gun Buy-Back Campaign seems to have been a catalyst for action. Without the legal framework for this campaign (which currently allows for a permanent amnesty and repayment for turning in a weapon anywhere in Brazil), it is hard to imagine that the project would have the same trajectory. However it is also relevant to mention that while the legal framework and national campaign are present in every Brazilian city, none have reached the level of multi-institutional participation that São Paulo has.

Another factor that must be considered as part of the project context is the history of rivalries and lack of communications between the public security institutions themselves and their traditional distance from civil society. Finally, it should be noted that ISDP has been working with the issue of gun control for over 10 years - which has led to thorough legal and technical expertise and already well established relationships with many of the partners the Plan. When thinking about the future dissemination of the methodology to other cities, recognizing this environment becomes extremely important.

Lessons learned from the project to this point begin with the importance of the diagnostic process. The first essential steps to this process should include: 1) clearly define the goal of the diagnostic report and who will use or have access to it, 2) analyze the information which the institution already has, the degree of difficulty of getting new data and prioritize what information will be most useful to selected goals. In the case of the ISDP, a previous two year investigation of the main difficulties in implementing the Disarmament Statue nationally preceded the diagnosis at the city level. Thus the diagnosis served to gain a much deeper understanding of how arms control mechanism and processes actually work at the local level. This included visits to each institution to physically see how processes like firearm registry and stockpile management work in practice. It would have been helpful and saved time and resources to determine this focus from the beginning of the diagnosis process.

In terms of developing the Plan, the dynamics and planning of the monthly meetings of the two groups were essential. Having separated the two groups in this case seemed advantageous because it allowed each group to focus on their own expertise – some members of the awareness-raising group have little knowledge of the technical details of gun control procedures and vice versa. It was also deemed important to create an environment of trust and confidence among group members. Talking to group members individually and asking them to gather information or respond to questions between meetings was seen by the ISDP as helpful for not losing momentum and making the most of monthly meetings.

A flexible and adaptable Plan format seems to be most suitable for the first year, but in the future it is important to develop a second internal version of the Plan, with partners, that include more details on targets, timetables and responsible parties. Overall a Plan with fewer, more specific activities is more easily executable in the implementation phase. At the beginning of the implementation phase it is important to prioritize the activities most central to achieving the overall desired outcomes of the Plan.

Finally, both working groups agreed that having one organization or institution to centralize information, organize and document meetings and maintain constant contact with the group is essential. In the case of the *São Paulo City Gun Control Plan*, ISDP played this role. Table 4

below shows the responses to the questionnaires related to the characteristics that are most important for the entity that conducts this type of project. We asked to partners of both working groups to rank each feature on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being unimportant and 5 very important). The table shows the most important characteristics that this organization or institution should display according to questionnaire responses. Characteristics that 75% or more of both groups ranked as very important were: to be serious and well respected organization, have a good relationship with the group members, have the ability to listen and mediate, be organized and be able to interact with of various levels of government.

Table 2 - Most important characteristics for an organization/ institution coordinating this type of plan		
Characteristic	% of Technical Group that ranked this as very important	% of Awareness-raising group that ranked this as very important
<b>Be a serious and respected organization</b>	100	92
Have technical expertise on the issue	71	92
Have experience working with the issue	57	42
<b>Have a good relationship with group members</b>	86	75
<b>Have the ability to listen and mediate</b>	86	75
<b>Be organized</b>	100	75
<b>Be able to interact with various levels of government</b>	86	83
Have financial and human resources to conduct this process	57	58
Be a civil society organization	29	42
Be a public institution	0	8

Source: Questionnaire responses from 19 organizations/institutions from the Technical (06/13/11) and Awareness-raising (06/21/11) Groups.

Regarding the importance of the coordinating entity being a civil society organization or government institution, we see that the group considers these factors to be less important than the rest. The representative of the Ministry of Justice in the Technical Group pointed out,

*The ability to dialogue with all agencies is essential. So I think the question of whether it's a government agency or civil society organization doesn't matter, what matters most is the knowledge and the relationship with all members of the group.*

Perhaps most important is to have a strong partnership between civil society and city government leadership. In this sense, the solid partnership between the ISDP and the Municipal Secretary of Public Safety has been key to the success of the project.

## Conclusion

Armed violence in urban neighborhoods across Latin America has long become a glaring concern. While it is clear that new public safety policies and interventions are necessary, it is far from clear what works. The extensive history in the region of repressive policies, unpredictable and arbitrary police raids and sporadic law enforcement don't exhibit any evidence of being effective in reducing violence thus far. Policies that focus on limiting risk factors (structural inequalities, family or neighborhood violence, availability of weapons, etc.) and strengthening protective factors (community and public security institutions, family support, education), seem more promising; however there is far too little evidence to support this claim. Furthermore, there is a paucity of proven best practices for guidance. Although evaluation of public safety policy is fraught with the challenges of determining cause-and-effect and teasing out the impact of a particular program, nothing could be more important. If there is to be substantial progress in saving lives and creating secure and healthy communities, we must study not only the specific impacts of these policies, but also exactly *how* they are implemented. This paper argues that, if earnestly pursued, evaluation findings can have a profound impact on how we choose and design further policy interventions for Latin American neighborhoods.

The findings of the formative evaluation of the *São Paulo City Gun Control Plan* offer tantalizing glimpses, and some evidence, that the project is altering the way implementing agents of gun control policy at the local level interact. It is creating new spaces for cooperation and exchange of information and engaging new public and civil society actors in awareness-raising. While it is too early to judge the long-term impacts of this initiative, evaluation findings have highlighted areas for improvement and identified seedlings of potential. These findings give cause for pause and fuel for transformation. Continuous evaluation and monitoring will help infuse the project's development with evaluation questions allowing for increased efficiency and judgment of overall effectiveness.

Many more evaluations like this one are needed. In the end, the aim is not just to summarize data, but instead to tell the story of possible futures of safer neighborhoods and build clear proposals for the way forward.

## **Appendix 1 – São Paulo Municipal Gun Control Plan**

### **Objective 1: Improve management of firearm and ammunition control processes**

- Hold monthly meetings with the Technical Group to continue to identify and solve process barriers
- Report to Management Group Integrated Municipal Urban Safety on the progress of the Plan.

### **Objective 2: Improve the quality and transparency of information about the control of firearms and ammunition**

- Design and maintain a blog that will show data on arms control in the city, support awareness raising activities and disseminate information about the Plan.
- Advocate for the inclusion of relevant data on gun control in the Observatory of the Municipal Urban Safety.
- Coordinate the dissemination of relevant information to the media.

### **Objective 3: Reduce firearms and ammunition in circulation**

- Focus search and seizure of weapons in districts with higher homicide rates.
- Regularly send all weapons that are in storage (with the police and judiciary) to be destroyed.
- Increase the number of posts where people can turn in weapons in the voluntary gun-buy back campaign
- Reduce flaws in the processes around the voluntary buy-back campaign

### **Objective 4: Ensure the adequate protection of stockpiles**

- Create and implement São Paulo Stockpile Security Standards, with minimum standards for security and control of all weapon's storage areas in the city.

### **Objective 5: More rigorous monitoring of categories vulnerable to diversion**

- Strict monitoring of categories of weapons holders vulnerable to diversion (Private Security Companies, collectors, target shooters, hunters, sports shooting clubs, and gun shops).

### **Objective 6: Articulate demands with other levels of government**

- Strengthen joint government initiatives with regard to arms control.

### **Objective 7: Encourage people not have guns**

- Conduct awareness-raising about the dangers of firearms and the existence of the voluntary gun buy-back campaign.
- Produce and disseminate awareness-raising materials

### **Objective 8: Reduce risk factors related to armed violence**

- Disseminate alternative forms of conflict resolution.
- Promote compliance with laws on closing bars.
- Disseminate information about the proper regulation and storage of weapons.

## **Appendix 2 – Criteria for a Participatory Process**

1. Involvement of partners was during at all stages of the project (Diagnosis, Development of the Plan, Implementation)
2. Institutions are aware of to the main the conclusions of the Diagnostic Report
3. The partners believe that every step of the process was a participatory
4. The groups have a clear mission
5. The leadership of some institutions in the group does not prevent all institutions to have a voice in the process
6. All relevant institutions have participated in most meetings
7. The topic being discussed is relevant to all participants
8. Decisions taken reflect the views of the group
9. All participants are allowed to make proposals
10. Group members receive the information needed to participate actively

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### Interviews

Daniela Godinho, *Sub-prefeitura do M'Boi Mirim* (City Hall for M'Boi Mirim city region). São Paulo July 4, 2011.

Denis Mizne, former Director ISDP and Alice Ribeiro Project Coordinator ISDP. São Paulo, Brazil, June 30, 2011.

Edson Ortega, Municipal Secretary of Public Safety of the city of São Paulo. São Paulo, Brazil, July 4, 2011.

Maria Isabel Suarez, Secretariat of Justice and Defense of Citizenship, São Paulo. Brazil July 4, 2011.

Maria Janice de Sousa, Women's Service's Coordinator (*Coordenadoria da Mulher*) for the city of São Paulo. July 7, 2011.

Melina Risso, Director ISDP and Alice Ribeiro, Project Coordinator ISDP. São Paulo, Brazil, June 29, 2011.

Nei Sá, Youth Sector of the Archdiocese of the Catholic Church, São Paulo, Brazil. July 6, 2011.

### Focus Group

A focus group on August 2, 2011 included representatives of : the Brazilian Ministry of Justice PRONASCI, The Brazilian Army – 2<sup>nd</sup> Military Region *Serviço de Fiscalização de Produtos Controlados* (SFPC), the São Paulo State Military Police, the Department of Controlled Products (DPC) of the São Paulo State Civil Police, the Department of Homicides and Protection of the Person (DHPP) of the São Paulo State Civil Police, the Municipal Secretariat of Public Security for the city of São Paulo and the Municipal Civil Guard of the city of São Paulo.