SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO YOUTH VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

November 2013

On November 14, 2013, Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), convened a diverse panel of experts to discuss the pressing issue of youth violence in Latin America and explore effective prevention strategies. The forum, titled Seeking Solutions to Youth Violence in Latin America, was held in partnership with the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University.

Panelists included:

- Gustavo Payan, project director, EDC
- Nancy Taggart, project director, EDC
- Milthon Medina, youth representative from Honduras, teacher, and Red Cross volunteer
- Laura Roper, monitoring and evaluation expert and adjunct lecturer at the Heller School
- Ron Slaby, senior scientist at EDC and research associate of the Children’s Hospital in Boston
- Tim Cross, president of YouthBuild International
- Enrique Betancourt, former executive director of Mexico’s National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation

An archived recording of the event is available via Adobe Connect: http://go.edc.org/se59. Also a brief summary of the event can be found at: http://go.edc.org/60gm

Policy Recommendations

Panelists agreed that reducing youth violence in Latin America was of critical importance to the region’s governments, economies, and families. They also believed that the time was right to begin making progress toward a more peaceful region and made the following policy recommendations:

1. Begin gathering high-quality data about youth violence

- High-quality data will allow for more strategic allocation of resources. Optimally, data should be disaggregated (e.g., by geographic location, gender, and type of violence) to inform policymaking and programming.
- More data is needed from specific regions where either violence is underreported or where existing statistics do not provide an accurate picture of the issue.

2. Combine different approaches to youth violence prevention and education

- Change gradually from individual programs to tailored strategies, informed by best practices
- Focus on “hot spots” with high concentrations of risk factors, and then determine optimal interventions for these areas
Leverage the influence of political leaders and celebrities to implement effective advocacy campaigns
- Develop personal relationships with youth, communities, and government
- Start small to learn how to navigate the work that needs to be done in the context of corruption and other challenges

3. Increase the role of the private sector

- Identify business opportunities of co-investment that promote crime prevention
- Partner with governments to improve services
- Have businesses actively participate in a training cycle (e.g., workforce development curriculum development or improvement, job placement)
- Change attitudes and behaviors of businesses toward youth to reduce stigma

4. Reach out to politicians and government officials

- Invest in building the capacity of local institutions (e.g., strengthen management skills of government agencies dealing with violence prevention to increase their efficiency in implementing strategies and programs)
- Increase political support by showing that prevention can yield immediate returns on investment
- Depoliticize the issue of violence prevention and citizen security and develop common language that can be used by community members, government, and civil society groups
- Identify a set of intermediate indicators for violence prevention more achievable and accessible for governments to use to measure progress (such as in Mexico and Los Angeles, California)

Resources, Organizations, and Best Practices
Below are resources—organizations, programs, tools, and research—shared during the forum. Though there are many more, those in the following list were explicitly discussed as resources that can help practitioners inform and improve their youth violence prevention efforts:

- Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC): [www.edc.org](http://www.edc.org)
- USAID’s Proyecto METAS (Mejorando la Educacion para Aprender, Trabajar y Superarse): [www.proyectometas.org](http://www.proyectometas.org)
- YouthBuild International: [http://youthbuildinternational.org/](http://youthbuildinternational.org/)
- FECHAC (Fundacion del Empresariado Chihuahuense in Mexico) – Example of a model for effective and transparent engagement of the private sector in social development, including violence prevention: [www.fechac.org](http://www.fechac.org)
• **100 Tacticas Creativas para la Seguridad Ciudadana** (100 Creative Tactics for Citizen Security) – Government of Mexico’s National Center for Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation: [http://issuu.com/tacticascreativas/docs/100tacticascreativas](http://issuu.com/tacticascreativas/docs/100tacticascreativas)

• **Youth violence prevention in Latin America and the Caribbean: a scoping review of the evidence** – A report from the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center: [http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/0de9c5dd2bf52b9ed5e0f2b21bcc6578.pdf](http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/0de9c5dd2bf52b9ed5e0f2b21bcc6578.pdf)

• **Evaluation of the Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development Program** – A report from the City of Los Angeles’ Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Program – Example of a best practice that has effectively reduced violence and developed a set of indicators: [http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412251-LA-Gang-Reduction.pdf](http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412251-LA-Gang-Reduction.pdf)

• **PromotePrevent** – A website that provides access to resources that promote safe and healthy schools and communities where children can learn, play, and grow: [www.promoteprevent.org/](http://www.promoteprevent.org/)

• **Boston versus Bullies** – Example of a best practice involving athletes in promoting violence prevention in schools: [http://www.bostonvsbullies.org](http://www.bostonvsbullies.org)

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