

CHAPTER 5: CRIME AND VIOLENCE AND THE URBAN POOR

I. Background and Introduction

Crime and violence have been identified as a key issue for Dhaka, and particularly affects the urban poor. Accurate data on levels of violence in Dhaka are scarce – but available information indicates that while levels of lethal violence (homicide rates) are much below some of the very violent urban centers in Africa and Latin America, overall levels of violence are serious and perceived to be on the rise. The sheer scale and diversity of crime and violence in the poor slums of Dhaka means that it has become ‘routinized’ or ‘normalized’ into the functional reality of life, and affects every aspect of daily life for the urban poor. Reflecting general public opinion, daily newspaper reports attest to the extent of the problem. The situation in Dhaka was described the following way in a 2000 publication: “...Dhaka has emerged as a city of crime, insecurity and political violence...social unrest, violence, theft, robbery, looting, murder, hijacking, arson, throwing of acid on innocent females, raping of minor girls, possession and use of illegal arms, illegal rent/toll collection, frequent traffic congestion, etc. phenomenally increased over the years and have now become a way of life in Dhaka city.” (Siddiqui *et al*, 2000).

The situation in Dhaka is thought to be worse than in the rest of the country. There are few studies or statistics on crime and violence for Dhaka or other cities in Bangladesh. However, a recent IFPRI study conducted a small household survey in 14 slums in the city of Dinajpur. The area is thought to have a lower crime rate than Dhaka, and yet some form of crime or violence affected one of every six households in these slums in the previous 12 months (Garrett and Ahmed, 2004). In a 1995 survey of the urban poor 24 percent of households described the security situation in their area as poor and 8 percent as very poor. The corresponding numbers for Dhaka were 32 and 14 percent respectively (Nazrul Islam *et. al.*, 1997).

Crime and violence are no longer considered just a ‘social’ or ‘law and order’ problem, but also as an obstacle to development which erodes the poor’s human, physical, and social capital, and with high associated economic costs. Whilst estimating the costs of crime and violence in Dhaka is beyond the scope of this study, these include costs to the judicial system, health care costs, foregone earnings, costs on private security, loss of competitiveness, and loss of jobs, production. (See Annex 4, Box A4.1). Crime and violence affect all levels of society: the rich and – even more - the poor, women and men, and young and old. Urban crime and violence also generate a climate of fear. The fear of crime and violence are ‘serious threats to the stability and social climate of cities, to sustainable and economic development, the quality of life and human rights’. (UN-Habitat *Safer Cities*, 2002).

Ways to address crime and violence and strategies to deal with this public “epidemic” is an area that is increasingly becoming a priority – internationally as well as in Bangladesh - for government and citizens alike. The traditional response to crime and violence has been one of control and repression. Studies (e.g. Greenwood *et al*, 1998)

have shown, however, deterrents such as the severity of punishment and the strength of the police force alone have a limited impact. It is often argued that crime and violence is the output of a complex set of factors including rapid urbanization, persistent poverty and inequality, social exclusion, political violence, the more organized nature of crime, and the growth of an array of illegal activities. As such, experiences in the US, Europe, and increasingly from developing countries themselves, have shown that *crime and violence can be substantially reduced through well-planned prevention strategies that go beyond traditional police responses – especially at the local level.*

This chapter presents some of the main manifestations of crime and violence in Dhaka – particularly as they affect the urban poor - by presenting the main findings of a qualitative and victimization study carried out in four Dhaka slums for this study. It will also briefly examine some of the social, institutional, and legal aspects to the crime and violence situation in Dhaka. In the final section, policy recommendations are presented.

II. Manifestations of crime and violence affecting the urban poor in Dhaka

Whilst there is some information on the types of crime and violence that routinely face the urban poor in Dhaka from anecdotal evidence, newspaper reports, and a few academic and qualitative studies from around Bangladesh - the various dimensions of crime and violence such as the range, prevalence rates, costs, and associated risk factors are not fully understood. Routine police statistics – that are often used to give some sense of prevalence rates in particular – are especially unreliable in the case of Dhaka. There appears to be a very high rate of under-reporting of crime and violence, particularly by the urban poor due to the costs involved of lodging a complaint, legally, bribery and also due to the threat of retaliation by police (UNDP, 2002; Siddiqi, 2000).

Study Methodology: In an attempt to fill in some of the gaps in existing studies and police data, a victimization study was carried out in the four slums included in the ‘Slum Observatory’ project (explained in Chapter 1) in the 2004/05 round. The study asked key questions about the types of crime and violence in slums in Dhaka; how prevalent crime and violence are; the perceptions and the degree of fear of crime and violence; the costs of crime and violence and their impact on households; and lastly how the poor respond to crime and violence and information on their views about the police, victim support services, etc.

The four slums located in Pallabi, Mohammadpur, Lalbagh and Rayer Bazar are quite distinct. They differ in age and type of settlement and have quite different levels of violence – Shahid Nagar reported to be the most violent slum, followed by Mohammadpur, after which the other two come with some distance. Aparajeyo-Bangladesh has been providing services to children and mothers for some years in these areas and the NGO has an in-depth knowledge of and an established relationship of trust with these communities.

As part of the study design, a series of focus group discussions were held in the different slums with community leaders and residents to explore perceptions of crime and

violence and potential responses to the survey questions. In addition, a series of life histories were collected.

Study Limitations: Whilst the study provides a wealth of interesting data and information, a number of limitations were encountered. A key challenge of this type of study is to ensure full confidentiality in order to gain frank responses. In most cases the interviewers report that full cooperation was received from respondents when discussing the general problems of crime and violence in their slums. Many respondents seemed to enjoy having outsiders visit them and ask their opinions. However, due to the crowded conditions in the slums it was impossible to guarantee confidentiality. In most cases the head of the households (including many female-headed households) were interviewed, and bystanders or family members often listened in and joined the discussion. This resulted in an unwillingness to report personal victimization information. So while high levels of crime and violence were widely acknowledged and discussed, few respondents admitted to having been a victim themselves and the interviewers reported a real fear among residents in responding to personal victimization questions, e.g. ‘have you been a victim of robbery over the last 12 months’. This does not appear to have been a problem in the Dinajpur survey and may reflect the higher levels of insecurity in the slums of Dhaka where few of the respondents were willing to take the considerable and real personal risk of being seen as an “informer” in spite of repeated assurances of anonymity and confidentiality by the interviewers.

On the other hand – and to our surprise – there was a very high rate of reported domestic violence. This is contrary to international experience which tends to find that in order to get information on domestic violence special surveys and methodologies are needed – separately from general victimization studies. Again, this may reflect the fact that domestic violence and violence against women are extremely widespread and considered a part of normal life in these communities – carrying no legal or social sanctions and to be freely discussed.

A. Main Survey Findings

Extent and variety of crime and violence: The results from the focus group discussions and surveys indicate a wide range of different types of crime and violence that occur in the slums and confirmed the complex, multi-faceted, and all-present nature of the phenomenon. The vast majority of respondents, some 93 percent, said that they have been affected by crime and violence over the last 12 months with 33 different types of crime identified by the respondents (Table 5.1). Among the most commonly reported crime and violence are toll collection, mastaan-induced violence, drug and alcohol business, land grabbing and violence, gambling, violence against women and children, illegal arms’ business, arson in slum, murder and kidnapping, and sexual, physical, and psychological torture and abuse of wife. During FGDs and recording of life histories in particular, the widespread problem of alcohol and drug abuse - including serious heroin addiction - was often linked to crime and violence (trafficking, crime to support habits) and domestic violence.

Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor

Table 5.1: Percentage of Respondents affected by crime and violence

	Slum				
	Shahid Nagar	Raver Bazar	Mohammadpur	Pallabi	Total
Affected	250 100%	249 99.6%	213 85%	216 86%	928 93%
Not Affected	0 0%	1 0.4%	37 15%	34 14%	72 7%

In addition, many other categories were identified such as ‘using children in political meetings and picketing’, ‘loafers’ dens’, and acid throwing. Whilst not giving an indication of how serious the presence of each of these types of crime and violence is in the various slums, it clearly indicates the extent to which every aspect of the daily lives of the slum dwellers is affected by acts of crime and violence (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Nature of Crime and Violence Occur in the Slums (Multi-response)

Type of Crime and Violence Reported by Respondents	Slum				
	Shahid Nagar	Rayer Bazar	Mohammadpur	Pallabi	All
	(percent of respondents)				
Total affected by crime and violence	100%	100%	85%	86%	93%
Clash among mastaan/terrorist groups	86	58	88	80	78
Political violence	83	53	78	76	73
Toll collection	80	50	66	48	61
Carry and distribution of drugs, alcohol and substance	54	58	56	53	55
Committing crime under the influence of intoxicants	53	58	49	57	54
Sexual abuse	44	73	48	49	53
Kidnapping	50	52	36	50	47
Conflict between husband and wife	45	81	82	74	71
Farce in the name of justice	49	27	58	56	47
Land grabbing under political shelter	67	37	63	64	58
Establish political control	25	41	68	44	45
Theft/pilferage	76	52	72	67	67
Mugging	45	68	69	55	59
Acid throwing	37	24	18	36	29
Conflict between house owner and tenant	56	27	56	43	45
Gambling	38	61	36	38	43
Torturing women/girls for dowry	56	68	54	48	56
Disturbing the community under the influence of cannabis, alcohol & heroine	46	57	54	48	51
Forcefully conducting sex trade with adolescent girls	19	27	20	31	24
Kidnapping girls	15	40	41	24	30
Selling illegal and intoxicating substances	67	67	60	47	60
Using children in political meetings and picketing	62	75	77	74	72
Harassment and regular toll collection by police	50	58	48	39	49
Violence and abuse of girls working as domestic aides	39	74	67	54	58
Loafers den	57	72	77	65	68
Known mastaan/gangs den	51	58	42	38	47
Kidnap people from other places and holding them in the slum for ransom/mugging	12	20	21	23	19
Exploding hand bombs	33	22	67	32	37

Chapter 5: Crime and Violence and the Urban Poor

Type of Crime and Violence Reported by Respondents	Slum				
	Shahid Nagor	Rayer Bazar	Moham mad pur	Pallabi	All
	(percent of respondents)				
Illegal fire arms business and hiding arms in the slum	67	34	56	56	53
Arson in slums to gain control	33	53	55	35	44
Collecting regular toll from shopkeepers/hawkers by police and their aides	36	50	51	30	42
Harassment by police in the name of House Search	38	72	67	45	55
Collecting toll in the name of arbitration by local political leaders	41	60	52	52	51
Establish illegal casino to arrange circus/fairs	38	71	42	41	48
Operate illegal financial transactions through local clubs	40	53	25	38	39
All	25	25	25	25	100

Source: Slum Observatory Survey, 2004

Severity of crime and violence. When asked about the severity of crime and violence in the slum on a scale of 1-5, 1 being not at all and 5 being very severe, toll collection, political conflict, and the harboring of *mastaans* - musclemen and organized crime - to control the slum were considered most severe – followed by drug and substance trade, use of arms, sexual abuse, sex trade, hand bomb explosions, and murder. However, there is a clear difference in levels of severity between the different communities (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: The Severity of Crime and Violence (Multi-response).

	Slum							
	Shahid Nagor		Rayer Bazar		Mohammadpur		Pallabi	
	N	Severity scale	N	Severity Scale	N	Severity Scale	N	Severity scale
Murder	134	2	163	2	223	2	202	1
Hand bomb explosion	94	2	161	2	190	2	174	2
Use of arms	184	2	166	3	193	3	187	2
Toll collection	207	3	217	4	203	4	182	3
Political conflict	166	4	216	4	222	4	225	3
Sexual abuse	73	2	224	2	182	2	190	2
Drug and substances trade	156	3	199	3	190	3	174	2
Harboring mastaans to control slum	40	4	173	4	160	4	204	2
Women trafficking and sex trade	55	2	99	2	146	2	143	2
All	248	25.1	248	25.1	242	24.5	249	25.2

Source: Slum Observatory Survey, 2004

These results also confirm the high level of control of *mastaans* over the slums and community life. This was also found in the Dinajpur survey. There seems to have been a city-wide rise in *mastaani* preying on city dwellers and collecting money from businesses, bus terminals, construction worksites, and slums over the last decade. According to a report prepared in 1998, there were 30 different groups, employing about

Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor

30,000 people, active in Dhaka City (GSS, 1998 as cited in Siddiqui et al, 2000). They are mostly area based, bus terminal based, and college/university based (in particular Dhaka University and Jagannath University College). It is estimated that alcohol and drugs such as hashish, heroin, phensidyl, pethidine, etc. are sold at about 5000 points all over Dhaka City (Siddiqui *et al*, 2000).

Political violence generally takes the form of clashes between the police and opposition political groups or between supporters of the government and opposition political parties. This is particularly noted during hartals (general strikes), processions, demonstrations and political meetings. Other political crimes are secret killings, looting, destruction of property, arson, and rioting (Siddiqui, *et. al*, 2000). The survey findings also indicate the strong links between political parties and criminals living in the slum areas – regularly paying (or compelling) slum dwellers, including children, to participate in political rallies, protests, and open-air meetings.

Perceptions of safety. Overall, about 31 percent of respondents feel that they are not safe within their community though this varies greatly between slums. In Shahid Nagar, 64 percent of respondents reported to feel not at all safe in their community, followed by 33 percent in Mohammedpur, and 19 percent in Pallabi. The respondents from Rayer Bazar feel quite safe in their slum, only 6 percent reporting to not feel safe at all. (Annex 4, Table A4.1). Interestingly, much of this is attributed to the fact that the slum in Rayer Bazar is reported to have a very strongly active Imam, who does not ‘tolerate’ immoral or criminal behavior in his area.

These results reflect differentials in reported crime data as well as international patterns of urban violence, which usually find that crime and violence are concentrated in a limited number of ‘hotspot’ neighborhoods and can also differ quite dramatically within different areas of the same slums.⁷¹ While these are often some of the poorest slums, many very poor slums do not have serious problems of crime and violence. This has real implications for the targeting of crime and violence prevention and reduction policies.

During focus group discussions with community leaders from around the city of Dhaka the following areas were identified as the most unsafe in declining order: Vasanti, Agargoon, Lalbag, Mohammedpur, Bapura, Ghattala, Kalsi, Kalayanpur, Taltala, Mesul.

Where, when, and by whom? The survey results show that crime and violence occurs in a number of different places, most of it within the slum and about 35 percent reported to happen inside the household compound (which is usually shared by a number of different families). Other high risk areas are the roadside, the market side and the way to and from work. Female garment workers are particularly vulnerable on their route to work and will often walk in groups to provide some protection or even stay the night at the garment factory. Crime and violence appear to occur throughout the day; however, evening and night are ‘peak times’. When asked who is involved (perpetrator) in crime

⁷¹ Police data were collected for the year 2004 from all four Thana Police Stations represented in the survey. Unfortunately, the data were not available specifically for each of the slums within these areas, but do clearly demonstrate differentials between areas.

and violence the most commonly mentioned are the *mastaans*, from both inside and outside the community, husbands (mainly involved in domestic violence), law enforcing agencies, and neighbors and ‘others’. ‘Others’ include thieves, muggers, robbers, extortionists, teasers, snatchers, murderers, arsonists, etc. The respondents indicate that many poor slum dwellers are involved with activities such as the arms trade, drug trade, trafficking, and black marketing as a means to maintain their livelihoods.

Crime and violence against women. Violence against women was repeatedly raised during FGDs and the qualitative fieldwork as one of the most serious manifestations of violence affecting poor women in Dhaka. This includes physical and psychological violence inflicted by the husband or the husband’s family (the latter often dowry-related), burning of wives, acid attacks, suicide as a result of physical and psychological torture, as well as violence against women in the workplace, on the way to- and from work, etc. Of our total sample (about 50 percent female respondents), 30 percent said to have been a victim of domestic violence in the past 12 months – in fact it was the highest reported incidence of crime or violence reported in the survey. This is likely still significantly under-reported as this was not a specialized domestic violence survey. The causes most frequently reported include marital problems, confiscation of wife’s money, polygamy, dowry related issues, and not taking responsibility of children. See Annex 4, Table A4.2 for a full list.

These findings reflect what is known about violence against women in Bangladesh. According to the UNFPA (2000) Bangladesh has the second highest incidence of violence against women in the world. A survey carried out in 1997 by the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs with the assistance of the Government of Denmark found that not only is violence against women widespread, it is also widely accepted: 50 percent of the women interviewed thought it the husband’s right to beat his wife; 85 percent felt it was right to hit the wife if she was disobedient; 80 percent of the women respondents felt that if a man rapes a woman the woman should marry the rapist. As mentioned above, part of the relatively high response rate on violence against women in our survey may be explained by this high level of social acceptance of the phenomenon.⁷²

Women, particularly poor women, face social and economic exclusion in Bangladesh which is evident through the high levels of violence against women. While the constitution guarantees principles of non-discrimination on the basis of gender, as regards ‘family matters’ women are subject to “Shariah” or religious law. Bangladesh is a signatory to CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) and despite the introduction of a number of laws such as the ‘Ordinance of Acid-throwing Act’, the ‘Ordinance of Women and Child Repression Act’, and the revised ‘Ordinance of Family Act’ – all aiming to assist women - the main problems are the lack of enforcement of these laws and lack of access for women to the legal system.

⁷² Facts taken from a World Bank presentation: *Violence Against Bangladeshi Women: a few facts and figures*.

Costs and impact of crime and violence in the slums. The survey results show that there are significant financial costs associated with the crime and violence in the slums. Costs related to medical treatment, loss of productivity due to injuries and direct financial costs due to the collection of ‘tolls’ – many garment workers report routinely having to pay 10 percent of their wages in ‘protection’ for example. Other costs include the illegal land renting fees, electricity and water bill fees, ‘tolls’ collected by both local gangs and the police in the name of providing ‘security’, losses through thefts and muggings, etc. Unfortunately the study was unable to quantify the total monetary costs to the poor of the crime and violence they routinely face. This would certainly be an area of interest for further research.

The non-monetary costs are also considerable. It is clear that in many of the more violent slums there is lack of social cohesion and considerable levels of fear and mistrust. This negatively affects social capital and prevents community members from organizing. Many respondents report being afraid of moving about their community after dark – which particularly impacts women. Annex 4, Table A4.3 lists some of the negative effects of the high levels of violence in the slums as reported by the respondents. If anything, these responses indicate that whilst crime, violence, and fear are ‘routinized’ and part of daily life, they do nevertheless have an enormous impact on the poor’s well-being and their impacts on children are of particular concern. Some of the impacts mentioned include: children suffering high levels of insecurity and mental anxiety; family disruptions due to domestic violence; tremendous pressure on the parents of growing girls due to the risks to them; working women getting worried and scared of sexual abuse; mental anguish due to unemployment status; and constant fear and insecurity due to use of arson, arms, and explosives.

Reported and non-reported crime and violence and access to justice. A majority (60 percent) of crime and violence is not reported to anyone. Of the reported numbers, only 3 percent is reported to the police. When crime was reported, it was mainly reported to community leaders (16 percent) and family members (18 percent). The very low reporting rate to law enforcement agencies or Ward Commissioners, less than 2 percent reflects the extraordinary low levels of trust in these agencies. (See Annex 4, Table A4.5).

The survey data also indicate that in 88 percent of reported cases no action was taken and perpetrators went fully free. The police took action against a reported perpetrator in only 1 percent of all cases. The lack of reporting to the police or official action undertaken reflects the low prevalence of a formal preventive, investigative, or judicial authority in these slums. In 7 percent of the reported cases the community took some kind of action – reflecting the respondents’ preference for and higher confidence in local *shalish* (See section 3 below).

The role of political leaders and institutions and Law Enforcement Agencies in dealing with crime and violence. The links between the incidence of crime and violence and the role of political leaders/institutions are perceived to be strong. (Annex 4, Table A4.4). Respondents indicate that the leaders of different political parties

patronize the criminal activities and violence with the intention to control the slums through ‘terrorists’ and mastaans. By controlling the slum dwellers, the politicians command a strong voting base, collect rent from the dwellers and income from other illegal activities, ensure the participation of slum dwellers in various political meetings, gathering, rallies and demonstrations, and use them in political conflicts and confrontation. During the FGDs it became clear that there is a widespread feeling that the political commitment to reduce violence is only rhetoric.

At the same time, law enforcement agencies are hardly seen to play any more positive role in combating crime and violence. Police are seen to maintain a low profile in responding to crime and violence because of their deep relationships with the offenders. In most cases the victims do not lodge complaints against the criminals in fear of further retaliation by them because they often enjoy the protection of the law enforcement agencies. It is also widely reported that in addition to legitimate fees, the law enforcement agencies often collect bribes from victims just to record a case.

When slum residents were asked what can be done to improve the crime and violence situation in their communities, the results range from better employment and income generation opportunities, to improved social welfare services and education and training, to improved justice, law and order, and governance (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Respondent’s recommendation regarding combating existing Crime and Violence (Multi-response).

	Slum									
	Shahid Nagor		Rayer Bazar		Mohammadpur		Pallabi		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Job opportunity	227	90	197	79	231	93	210	84	865	87
Training	118	47	81	33	178	72	186	74	563	56
Undertake different development activities	138	55	132	53	193	78	159	64	622	62
Better governance	146	58	137	55	189	76	181	72	653	65
Compel the police to behave lawfully	132	52	144	58	185	74	156	62	617	62
Stop political crimes	141	56	189	76	220	88	154	62	704	71
Punish criminals through speedy trials	142	56	139	56	191	77	156	62	628	63
Develop strong public welfare leadership	120	48	163	66	181	73	174	70	638	64
Adopt all possible measures to prevent women trafficking	58	23	96	39	117	47	149	60	420	42
Take strong actions against sex trade	94	37	107	43	127	51	140	56	468	47
Strong control over black marketing and drug trade	104	41	144	58	136	55	69	28	453	45
Control toll collection	148	59	180	73	171	69	125	50	624	63
All	252	25	248	25	249	25	250	25	999	100

Source: Slum Observatory Survey, 2004

III. Relationship between crime and violence and social, institutional, and legal issues

Various frameworks to understand crime and violence and to develop corollary short-, medium-, and long-term policy responses have been developed. One prominent approach comes from the field of public health and is based on the identification and addressing of risk factors.⁷³ The risk factors in this model are usually classified in three groups: individual factors, domestic/household factors, and societal factors.

The available information on Dhaka shows that this model is consistent with the characteristics of crime and violence – they are a complex mix of interpersonal, social, economic, and structural factors. Crime and violence is carried out by a variety of different individuals and groups and ranges from widespread domestic violence, to disorganized ‘opportunistic’ street crime, to the extremely well organized - and who operate for motives that range from hunger, to greed, and to politics.

Justice System. It is clear from the survey findings that there is an almost complete lack of trust by the urban poor in Dhaka in the justice system. This is confirmed by the comprehensive 2002 UNDP report on *Human Security in Bangladesh* which finds that many laws and practices of the criminal justice system in Bangladesh are ‘anti-poor’ and have a far more harmful effect on the poor and disadvantaged than on other sectors of society, despite constitutional guarantees to the contrary. Consequently, many citizens, especially the poor, do not feel adequately protected.

The report finds that: many laws are open to interpretation and to the use of discretionary powers, and that the current bail system favors the wealthy and influential and penalizes those without money or influence. Thus the poor are over-represented in prisons whereas many wealthy or privileged individuals guilty of crimes manage to escape the process of law; that the legal grounds for arrest without warrant are too broad and allow the police to exercise a high degree of discretion. Most preventive detention cases never reach the courts, whilst of those that do, almost 90 percent are found to be illegal; that victims of rape and other sexual violence continue to be further victimized by a legal system that discriminates against victims and protects the guilty; that laws relating to dispossession of immovable property, public nuisance, and vagrants are not implemented in-line with their original intent, and often discriminate against and harm the poor; and that in addition to loopholes in laws and procedures and lack of awareness on judicial issues among the population, there is a severe implementation gap. (UNDP, 2002). Specific recommendations are made in order to improve the laws and legal procedures and to ensure that they do not discriminate against the poor.

Access to justice for the poor and legal aid. The enormous costs of going to court, the delays in court proceedings, and the lack of legal aid facilities has made the

⁷³ Whilst looking at risk factors is very important, various authors have highlighted the need to also look at the strengths and assets or ‘protective factors’ of individuals and communities, not just their problems. See International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, 2000; Moser, 2000)

judicial system virtually inaccessible for the vast majority of the poor. The main providers of legal aid to the poor are NGOs such as BLAST (Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust) and BELA (Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association). Despite constitutional provisions stating a citizen's right to legal defense, there is currently no legal obligation for the State to provide legal aid if the pleader or accused is unable to afford the fees(UNDP, 2002).

Shalish (informal courts). It is estimated that nationally about two thirds of disputes never enter the formal court process and are either settled at the local level, through informal settlement by local leaders or a community court, or remain unsettled. The results from our survey indicate a much lower use of this informal settlement mechanism (8 percent), however, it was still the most used form of seeking justice in the Dhaka slums. Since settlement of cases through formal courts is both time consuming and expensive, Shalish councils provide a welcome alternative that could be strengthened and supported. However, it is also recognized that the institutional affiliations and political backgrounds of court officials and community leaders means that their relations to other institutions, particularly the police, local political leaders, and wealthy and influential individuals open these shalish courts to outside influence and may affect their functioning (UNDP, 2002).

Dhaka Metropolitan Police. Weak law enforcement, impunity, and human rights violations are central to the spread of violence. It is clear from our survey that the poor have extremely low expectations of the police. As a result, they generally prefer the intervention of community leaders to resolve conflict among community members, family members, or prefer to not report incidents at all. They will only go to the police as a last resort. Concern is widely expressed about the complicity of the police with the mastaans; torture of suspects in police custody; demanding and taking of bribes for 'protection' or to lodge a complaint; poor level of police responsiveness to the poor; the vulnerability of witnesses, with witnesses complaining of having to pay transport expenses, being subject to police pressure to distort facts, and some being threatened by the other side in the case. There is a lack of any type of special witness protection program.

On the other hand, it is also generally agreed that the size of the police force is too small, that police lack educational qualifications, professional training, and sufficient pay and allowances. Specific recommendation for reform include better training, rationalization of the police staffing structure, monitoring and performance indicators, and reviewing salary structures and incentives. It is found by our and other studies that the poor do want a police presence in certain areas such as markets. The trend towards community policing is welcome and should be the focus of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police to facilitate community participation in crime and violence prevention and to reduce the vulnerability of the poor (UNDP, 2002, Siddiqui, 2000). See Box 5.1 for an interesting and successful example in community policing from Mumbai.

During the last year, the Government formed the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) which is a separate police unit that is mandated to provide immediate response to law and

order incidents. The RAB has been given some extra-judicial powers for combating crime and violence and its officers are better trained and better equipped in terms of weapons and transportation than the police. They are also generally considered to be 'clean' and relatively free of corruption and political influence. The RAB functions, in large part, on 'tip-offs' and over the last year has killed a number of professional criminals or mastaans that were involved in a variety of criminal activities during 'cross-fire'. As a result it appears that the RAB's actions have contributed to some improvement in the overall crime and violence environment as some criminals appear to have gone underground or have become more circumspect about their activities. Consequently, the RAB is popularly well regarded. There are however serious concerns related to the extra-judicial nature of many of the actions taken by the RAB – denying suspects access to the due justice process - and overly relying on 'informants' leaves it open to be easily manipulated.

IV. Addressing Crime and Violence

This chapter has provided a brief review of the main findings of a survey on crime and violence and the urban poor in Dhaka and has shown that urban violence is now widely recognized as a serious development problem. This is, however, a relatively new area of research and intervention, with serious data constraints as well as very limited systematization of information either analytically or operationally.

The traditional response to increasing levels of crime and violence has been one of control or repression. This approach focuses on addressing the problem after the crime or violent act has been committed. It is usually related to 'toughening' up the legal and justice system, increasing policing resources and capacities, and introducing harsher penalties in an effort to deter and repress crime and violence. Under this approach, crime and violence are seen as the responsibility of the police and the courts. Most countries battling high levels of crime and violence, however, find that these measures alone are not sufficient to have a significant impact on crime and violence. This is often accompanied by a loss of confidence in the criminal justice system, whilst public concern about crime and violence remains high (ICPC, 2000).

A second – and complementary - policy response is one of crime and violence prevention. The basic premise is to stop the crime or violent act from occurring in the first place by understanding and addressing the causes of crime and violence, the risk factors associated with them, as well as constructing safer communities by building on their strengths (e.g. level of community organization), rather than exclusively focus on a community's problems. Furthermore, prevention is a much more cost effective option than repression.

Thus while there is no 'silver bullet' to the problem of urban crime and violence and little systematic evaluation to date, international experiences with different policy approaches suggest that an integrated framework combining their various strengths can lead to a successful urban crime and violence prevention/reduction strategy. This

framework for local action should be based on a **participatory and comprehensive diagnostic**, and include some elements of:

- **judicial/policing reform**⁷⁴ - ensuring that order, fairness, and access to due process is maintained in the day to day activities of the community and reducing the public fear of crime;
- **social prevention** - targeted multi-agency (multi-sectoral) and community driven programs that address the causes and risk factors of crime and violence;
- **situational prevention** – measures that reduce opportunities for particular crime and violence problems through urban spatial interventions and slum upgrading.
- Lastly, it requires a **shared local vision, strong leadership, political commitment**, and an **action plan for the short, medium, and long-term**.

From regional and international experience it is evident that one of the most effective entry-points for crime and violence prevention is the **local level**. It is the level of government closest to the people and where projects can be designed to target the specific needs of the local community. This is also where the day-to-day delivery of services happens. These services improve people's quality of life and build better living environments. Many of these services are also the basic elements of crime and violence prevention. However, effective local government action requires all the municipal services to work together, rather than in isolation. It requires support from the different sectors in the community such as justice, health, education, media, police, social services, the private sector, NGOs, and other CBOs such as religious organizations. And importantly, it requires support from higher levels of government and links between the national level, state, region or province. See Table 5.5 for a summary of an interesting example of a local multi-sectoral crime and violence prevention initiative from Capetown, South Africa.

Specific recommendations for crime and violence prevention in Dhaka

- **Adopting a community-based approach.** Working with residents' associations, women's savings and credit groups, CBO's, communities, and NGOs is essential to identify the communities' priorities, problems, and strengths and in order to build the virtually non-existent trust between those agencies responsible for the maintenance of law and order and the prevention of crime and violence (the police) and the communities they are meant to serve. Interesting methodologies in participatory community mapping for crime prevention are being developed and used in South Africa and Latin America and can be adapted for use in Bangladesh. Initial results of these processes indicate that the process allows people to understand that crime does not occur randomly but that it happens in certain and predictable places. The process also has the ability to empower communities and to act together with the police in order to prevent and reduce violence crime (See e.g. Lieberman and Coulson, 2004, World Bank, 2003).

⁷⁴ Whilst the World Bank can not be directly involved in policing issues such as police reform, indirectly it can recognize the importance of the role of police and judicial system, work on judicial reform, and encourage crime and violence prevention partnerships that include the police.

- ***Investing in more research and better information systems:*** Much more information and understanding is needed about the types of crime and violence taking place in Dhaka; associated risk factors; costs and impacts; prevalence rates; and trends. A first step would be to create a “Violence Observatory”, in partnership with Government, the Police, forensic/legal medical institute, public health authorities (injury prevention/surveillance systems), and a research institute. The function of this kind of center is to systematically collect data about crime and violence from different sources and from around the city as well as to carry out periodic victimization surveys. This information is then analyzed and used to inform short-, medium-, and long- term policy decision about ‘hotspots’, crime trends, priorities, targeting of social prevention activities, etc.
- ***Improving inter-institutional coordination:*** crime and violence in Dhaka arises from a complex mix of causes that require a coherent, integral, multi-sectoral approach and the participation of various public/state, and civil society agencies. Crime and violence prevention is not just the role of the police or the judicial sector, and a local champion who will assume leadership and coordination in this area is crucial. There is also much scope for an increased role for NGOs.
- ***Creating public space and implementing integrated slum upgrading approaches.*** There has long been an understanding of the link between ‘crime and grime’ or rather of the link between the incidence of crime and violence and poor infrastructure, poor living conditions, lack of adequate communications technology, poor public lighting, inequitable distribution of facilities and amenities, lack of maintenance, etc. Therefore, one important violence prevention strategy is the regularization and upgrading of slums integrating ‘design for safety’ principles as well as social prevention activities.

Many public spaces in Dhaka and in its slums have lost their traditional function of promoting socialization, recreation, and citizenship as they have been invaded by the informal economy, mastaans, delinquents, drug dealing and consumption activities, etc. There is virtually no public or recreational space available in the slum areas. Physical upgrading of public and slum spaces will promote community appropriation of these spaces and prevent crime and violence from occurring in these places. This would include: i) a selection of ‘hotspot’ areas for intervention; ii) diagnosis of relevant problems and of neighborhood perceptions of public space and insecurity in these areas; iii) assessment of already existing and related programs and new initiatives; iv) creation of a local partnership and strategy that includes the community, residents’ associations, NGOs, community leaders, and state agencies. See box 5.2 for examples of how the World Bank is piloting the integration of a Crime and Violence prevention component in more traditional integrated slum upgrading programs in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- ***Improving trust between the police and the community and improve the judicial system and deal with impunity.*** Community policing should be the focus of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police to facilitate community participation in crime and violence prevention in the slums and to reduce the vulnerability of the poor. In addition, action is needed to address the anti-poor biases in laws and their implementation; speed up judicial processes – possibly through working with shalish informal community courts and community policing programs; and to improve access to legal aid by working with legal aid providing NGOs. Training for police on implementing new approaches such as community policing is also needed.
- ***Implementing programs for the prevention of violence against women.*** Domestic and violence against women needs to be addressed through stepped up programs on introducing legal awareness, literacy and advocacy campaigns, legal aid, and better training of the police and judicial system so that women victims of violence can access the justice system without fear of further victimization. Introducing women complaint officers in police stations could reduce the intimidation to report acts of violence. In addition, programs such as the ‘*One-Stop Crisis Centre*’ are providing valuable experiences in providing integrated services to women and children victims of domestic violence. Further support and engagement of the women’s movement is essential as well as working with and channeling resources for the prevention of domestic violence with community-based women groups such as lending and credit co-operatives. Addressing domestic violence will require an attitude change in society and will take time. Investing in a wide spread public education targeted at specific groups could begin to foster that change.
- ***Focusing attention on the needs of children and youth.*** In order to prevent crime and violence in the medium and long term, much attention and programs are needed that target the needs of children and youth, boys and girls. International experience has shown different violence prevention programs to be effective for different groups, in different types of communities, and in different countries. Still, based on reports, evaluations, and research studies, certain types of efforts seem warranted. These can take the form of school-based, community-based, or family-support programs such as (Guerra, 2005):

Individual level programs

- Universal, high-quality child care and preschool education for young children
- Social skills and problem solving interventions for primary and secondary school children
- Life skills training and civic education for adolescents

Building relationships: programs for families, peers, and mentors

- Home visitation programs for parents of infants and young children

Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor

- Parent school partnerships that encourage parental involvement in children's education and learning
- Programs and policies to prevent child abuse and maltreatment
- Parent training programs, particularly those that help families utilize resources
- Gang prevention programs that combine prevention, intervention, and suppression
- Mentoring programs that provide role models for at-risk youth

School and community programs

- Improving the quality of education, including universalizing primary school
 - Emphasizing cooperative learning and student/family engagement
 - Developing community policing programs that are sensitive to local conditions
 - Building infrastructure within communities to provide opportunities for youth and families to engagement in positive activities (recreation, learning, employment)
 - Building physical and social capital in communities through collaborative efforts
- ***Investing in drug and alcohol abuse prevention/treatment.*** Given the known role of alcohol and drugs as risk factors for violence, both from international evidence as well as coming strongly from our fieldwork in Dhaka - decreasing availability and ease of access to both should contribute to reductions in violence – particularly domestic violence. Although large scale studies are scant, there is evidence that reducing alcohol availability is related to a drop in violence rates. In addition, alcohol and drugs prevention and treatment programs specifically targeting the poor are needed.

Table 5.5: Linking urban spatial and non-spatial interventions: The KfW/ City of Cape Town Khayelitsha Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading Project

Spatial manifestation	Types of violence and manifestations	Spatial and non-spatial violence prevention or reduction interventions
Shebeens	Shebeen Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assault Murder Rape Drug & alcohol-related violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murder; domestic & child abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shebeens (bars) relocated to sites where social & police control is more efficient Alternative opportunities for socializing where alcohol is controlled <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business code of conduct by Shebeen owners' association
Domestic spaces	Domestic Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assault Rape Child abuse Emotional abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More houses of refuge & counseling facilities Police stations equipped with trauma facilities & female officers Facilities for conflict resolution <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police receive training in handling domestic violence cases Awareness-raising campaign on domestic rights
Open public space <i>Open fields</i> <i>Narrow lanes</i> <i>Empty stalls</i>	Gender-Related & Economic Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rape Robbery Assault Murder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved street lighting & visibility Widely spread & functional telephone system Rape-relief centers & self-defense training Safe walkways Vegetable stalls locked at night 24-hour internal public transportation system <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More visible police patrolling & neighborhood watches
Banks & ATMs	Economic Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robbery on long routes to & from banks & ATMs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to banking & safe deposit places <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More visible police patrolling & neighborhood watches Income generation
Informal housing	Economic Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burglary in unsecured homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income generation More & better visible police patrolling & neighborhood watches
Sanitary facilities	Gender-Related & General Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rape on narrow paths to & from outside sanitary facilities Refuse containers used to dump corpses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sewers installed & outside toilets phased out Refuse containers provided with smaller lids so bodies cannot be dumped <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communal sanitary facilities supervised
Schools	School Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theft of property Vandalism and gangsterism Physical violence Possession of drugs & weapons Group rape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools should be declared gun-free zones Schools should be protected against theft & keep out guns by installing better fencing, metal detectors & guard dogs Guarded schools could then double as safe off-street playgrounds after hours
Roads & transport	Road & Transport Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxi-violence-related deaths & injuries Robbery Assault Sexual harassment & assault by drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stations declared gun-free zones (metal detectors & lockers) Jobs & services must be brought closer to residents to reduce excessive transport needs <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trains need to be accompanied by police Conflict management / development programs for taxi-violence

Source: Summarized from KfW/City of Cape Town: 'Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading: Feasibility Study' (2002).

Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor

Box 5.1: Community Police Stations in Mumbai's slum.

The police in Mumbai, India, have started a partnership with community organizations to provide police services in the 'slums', areas that traditionally had received few police services but where they were much needed. By September 2004, 65 slums in Mumbai had 'slum police *panchayats*', each made up of ten representatives from the slum (seven women, three men) and a local police officer. Each community representative is a police *sayayak* (helper), and wears a photo-badge authorized by the Police Commissioner, but they are appointed by residents' associations, not by the police. The community also makes available a room in each slum, where the police are based and which also serves as an office for the police *panchayat*.

These *panchayats* are responsible for policing in their area. They establish a permanent partnership between the police and the slum residents. Residents get to know their local police constables, and this also ensures more police accountability to the local population. In turn, the police know that they have partners working in each slum. The decision to have a majority of women on each police *panchayat* is in recognition of the fact that women are disproportionately the victims of crime, and often face problems of domestic violence. In addition, there are strong savings and credit groups formed by women slum and pavement dwellers and these support the police *panchayats*. Each police *panchayat* is opened with a public celebration.

The community volunteers help patrol the settlement to maintain law and order. They also seek to resolve disputes before they escalate into violence or other crimes. Slum inhabitants can bring disputes to the police *panchayat*, which meets every day, and under the auspices of the local police many complaints and conflicts are resolved. The police *panchayats* have proved to be able to resolve many issues such as domestic quarrels and disputes between neighbors over plot or house boundaries. They also help to prevent disputes from escalating into violence or problems of public order. For slum inhabitants, they are also much quicker and easier to use than going to the police to lodge a formal complaint. They also feel more confident about making complaints, as they know some of the community volunteers and the police. This also frees up police time to allow them to concentrate on serious crimes.

The volunteers are clear that they do not have police powers and that dispute resolutions are undertaken by the group as a committee, with details of all cases discussed being carefully recorded. In some slums, the police volunteers have also brought pressure on local people who are illegally brewing and selling alcohol to close down, as a way of reducing drunkenness and the violence to which it often contributes. The local savings and credit groups have also supported the people who previously made illegal alcohol to develop new livelihoods or have rewarded them with new houses. Without the community volunteers, the police would find it almost impossible to control this.

One of the key characteristics of the police *panchayats* is that they can be implemented on a very large scale without additional resources from the government. They first started because the Police Commissioner promoted the idea, but they are sustained in each locality because they meet the needs of the police: they get free helpers, a safe location within each slum from which to work, and a system that resolves many small disputes without their involvement. They are also rooted in local representative organizations in slums, where the stressors that contribute to violence and crime are obvious – the overcrowded poor quality homes and the lack of infrastructure (e.g. water and sanitation) and civic amenities (schools, open space).

Source: Environment and Urbanization, Vol 16, No 2, October, 2004.

Box 5.2: Crime and Violence Prevention Components in Bank-financed Integrated Slum Upgrading Operations:

The World Bank is **operationalizing** local crime and violence prevention in some of its urban operations through the development of specific project components in the LAC region. These components do not intend to solve the country's or city's overall crime and violence problems, rather they seek to take advantage of the infrastructure and social investments taking place and mainstream prevention at the local level into the overall projects.

The components focus specifically on the reduction of the very high levels of homicide, youth violence, and associated risk factors in the participating neighborhoods. The components adopt a municipal/ urban renewal approach with a *preventive, multi-sectoral, and local strategy* through activities that are complementary to, coordinated with, but go beyond traditional police responses. Particularly important are the synergies between the infra-structure, upgrading, and the 'situational prevention' - and the community-based 'social prevention' activities. The overall objective is a comprehensive intervention at the neighborhood level that is also closely coordinated with other relevant municipal, government, and non-governmental programs addressing crime and violence and their associated risk factors in these neighborhoods. The components generally have six subcomponents:

-Diagnostics: Crime and violence mapping of the micro areas using police statistics and where possible using GIS systems; victimization section in the baseline surveys, willingness-to-pay for increased safety, and; community based and situational diagnostics.

-Situational prevention: measures that reduce opportunities for particular crime and violence problems through spatial interventions such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) methodology and urban renewal. This method is mainstreamed in the infrastructure works of the projects through the training of the architects, engineers and other technical staff. This methodology is very new in Latin America but has been successfully piloted in Chile and in the Bank-financed PROMETROPOLE project in Pernambuco, Brazil.

-Capacity-building, training and technical assistance in multi-sectoral crime and violence prevention to the participating government agencies, municipalities, CBOs..

-Complementary investments and activities: A fund for complementary investments and activities: the neighborhood residents work with the partner agencies and the technical staff of the project to develop a plan for C&V prevention and use these funds to implement the prioritized subprojects and community programs that are not already covered by one of the other project programs or partner programs. The menu for these may include: social infrastructure investments – such as recreation centers, community facilities, and public lighting not financed through the infrastructure works components, and; Social prevention activities – such as life skills, job skills, and parenting skills training, conflict resolution training, homework clubs, sports and arts-based recreational activities, victim support, and domestic violence prevention.

-Community Organizers: The role of these technical experts in community organization and crime and violence prevention is - at the neighborhood level – to: carry out community-based diagnostics; formulate participatory community safety plans and strategies; liaise and coordinate with other relevant agencies and associations, in particular with Community Safety Councils and the Police; coordinate closely with the works to ensure integration of CPTED principles; identify and work with youth at –risk in the community; organize and mobilize the community around the concept of safety through community campaigns (e.g. community clean-up/painting days, community safety festival); initiate additional projects such as summer camp for at-risk youth, etc.

-Monitoring and Evaluation component: Evaluations of the components have been designed and will be carried out Whilst we have as yet no data from these Bank-financed projects, a few similar community-based integrated interventions have yielded dramatic results. The 'Fica Vivo' program in the Morro das Pedras favela in Belo Horizonte, Brazil resulted in a 45 percent reduction in homicide rates in its first year.