10
Mar 21

POLICY BRIEF

THE URBAN SAFETY & GOVERNANCE

SCOFIELD ASSOCIATES
Horn of Africa Research Partner

A Review of the UNODC
Project Methodology

OVERVIEW:

There are enormous challenges in the urban setup. These include; providing adequate urban services and amenities, alleviating urban poverty, designing new infrastructure, establishing systems of governance, and revitalizing slum neighborhoods. These challenges are multiplied when growth is rapid and continuous, where there are critical shortages of capital, skills, and information, and where levels of poverty and inequality are extreme.

Additionally, the presence of illicit flows provides insecurity as a challenge to urban safety. Access to the critical elements to achieve urban safety and governance in a city significantly depends on the extent of how the city governance functions, the local political processes, capacity of the government to respond, and the influence of the civil society organizations and other development partners.

The UNODC has just launched a wonderful program to achieve this purpose; in three pilot cities across the globe. Nairobi - Kenya, serves as one of the cities chosen to be beneficiaries from the project. While an assessment was carried out in one of the informal settlements in the city, the methodology used to select the area leaves gaps resulting in inconclusive results for the project.

While the project exudes confidence based on the experience from UNODC, reliance on the current methods of activity application and assessment will not achieve the four objectives of the project. This policy brief provides a review of the methods proposed for the project and offers recommendations to each of the four objectives included in the project.

INTRODUCTION:

Urban governance refers to how government (local, regional and national) and stakeholders decide how to plan, finance and manage urban areas. It involves a continuous process of negotiation and contestation over the allocation of social and material resources and political power. It is politically influenced by the creation and operation of political institutions of government that have the capacity to make and implement decisions.

Furthermore, it encompasses a host of economic and social forces, and relationships. These include labor markets, goods and services; household, social relationships, basic infrastructure, and safety (Devas et al., 2004: 1). Large gaps often exist between poor and better-off urban residents in terms of access to social, economic and political opportunities and the ability to participate in, and leverage, the benefits associated with urban living (Slack and Côté, 2014:7). However, the relationships between the poor and the well off, determine how urban safety and governance will be achieved in any urban setting.

There are various answers to the question of what constitutes a safe urban setting. A safe urban setting may be considered as an affluent city; or an efficient and just city. A safe urban setting can also be considered as one that is sustainable. As a complex and large adaptive system, a safe urban setting is a place where the number of problems is kept at a minimum (Lai, 2019). In managing urban transformations, government (at all levels) need to play a strategic role in forging partnerships with and among key stakeholders (UNESCAP & UN-Habitat, 2010: 211–12; 2015).

While the government is the largest and most visible urban governance actor, much of what affects the life chances of the urban poor lies outside the control of city administrations. Instead, it is the market and private businesses, agencies of the central state or the collective voluntary action of civil society that determine the daily experiences of urban dwellers. The well-being of the urban community can be improved by access to economic opportunities, supportive social networks and greater access to assets, infrastructure and services (Devas et al., 2004:3).

Increasingly, the impact of governance is acknowledged as critical for unleashing national energies for poverty reduction. Good governance in all its dimensions i.e. functioning democratic institutions, rule of law, transparency and accountability, effective service delivery, participatory decision-making; can significantly increase the impact of urban safety and governance. Effective relationships between institutions at national and sub-national levels undoubtedly improve responsiveness of the public sector (Simone, 2002:5).

As identified by the UNHABITAT (2002), the larger critical questions that are applicable to generating new normative urban practices include: How do various institutions construct particular economic spaces that are amenable to a certain set of interventions and practices? What kinds of forces and what kinds of intersections among them make possible or impede links and collaborations among different communities and networks?How can urban residents extend their skills beyond survival level livelihoods in order to increase the overall productivity of households, communities, and cities as a whole?

4

The urban safety governance approach provides an in-depth understanding of how a wider set of localized risk factors interact with the illicit internal and external flows to give rise to the safety challenges. This understanding is articulated in the UNODC concept document that shares four objectives for providing proper options to urban safety. While the theory of change is sound, the method of achieving the results included in the four objectives requires some review. This review will ensure the continuous availability of data, analysis of the data for use in development of policy, activation of project activities and measurement of the results over the 24-month program period.

The urban safety governance project concept (2019 – 2022) provides an opportunity for UNODC to apply its vast knowledge in tackling various challenges affecting the urban setting. It includes the intention to make the urban environment safe, inclusive and resilient by addressing multi-causal factors of violence, crime and insecurity. As proposed in the concept documents, the activities to be included should be tailored to meet the grassroot needs and take into account the interface between the global crime threat and the local vulnerabilities.

The project emphasizes on building resilience of communities by addressing structural issues such as corruption and lack of transparency, while providing a space of drug use, crime and terrorism. To achieve these ideals, the project includes four objectives in the concept document including; identification of the local challenges and the priority areas of intervention for each beneficiary city through a dedicated urban safety assessment, provision of strategy and policy development for better planning, enhancing institutional capacity and officials at the local and national level, and offering greater coordination and partnerships particularly between local and national authorities.

The project will be piloted in three urban cities across the globe. Its implementation will commence with a pilot assessment to understand the local challenges and need in the selected cities. In Kenya, the pilot assessment was carried out in Mathare - Nairobi. This is one of the informal settlements facing a lot of the challenges while hosting most of the residents in Nairobi.

5 THE ASSESSMENT IN MATHARE:

The study was conducted by UNODC selected consultants working in Mathate. The assessment utilized the UNODC assessment guide to develop the tool for questioning in the community. While COVID-19 was identified as a challenge, the team was able to collect data from the community. However, one overarching summary from the finding, was the mention that there is limited data from the field for specific thematic areas.

The pilot assessment of Mathare evidenced a link between powerful figures, influential political figures, and alcohol brewing and/or drug dealing within and outside Mathare, citing a lack of political will as a key barrier in holding drug dealers to account. This finding was compounded by availability of and access to firearms (UNODC, 2021). These findings show the involvement of illegal stakeholders in the urban governance process.

Most research on urban planning, policy and development only considers legal practices and actors, and treats illegal ones as insignificant anomalies, unable to structurally affect the governance of urban space. However, this approach is inadequate for explaining urban governance in contexts where illegal practices such as corruption and organized crime infiltration are widespread in many public and economic sectors (Chiodelli and Gentili, 2021).

The findings show the existence of shades of 'gray urban governance'. The presence of a dark urban regime, centered on a criminal organization and parallel to the 'regular' one. Additionally, the use of corruption as a customary practice involving access to arms and drug peddling paints a different stakeholder contributor to the urban governance in these areas.
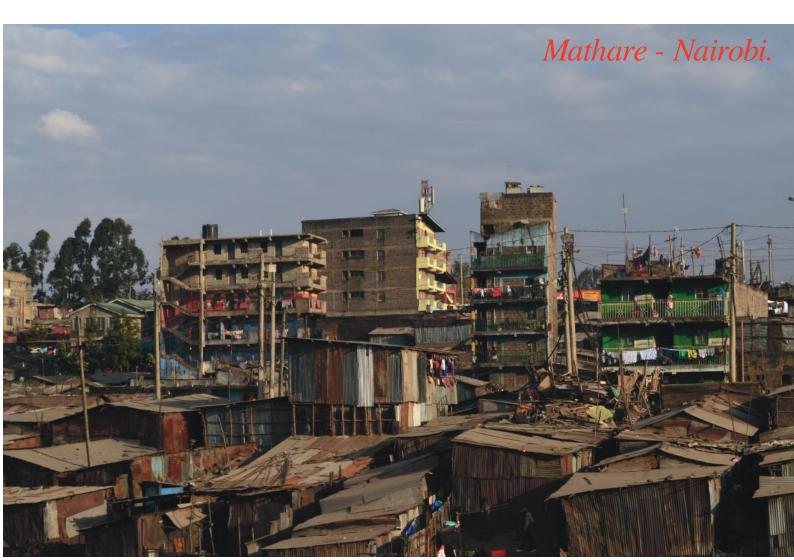
These shades of gray may also be evident in the other pilot areas where the urban safety governance pilot project will be implemented. While thinking about the overall theory of change, it is therefore critical for the project to move away from a rhetoric of 'gentlemanly' urban capitalism and politics, and be aware of the role of, and impact from the illegal actors and practices in the urban governance process.

IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL CHALLENGES AND PRIORITY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

A broader appreciation and understanding of local knowledge and economic resources on the part of local institutions is necessary in order to make the urban safety and governance norms a dynamic reality in people's everyday lives. Such understanding permits not only governance norms to influence and be transmitted through the practices that make cultural sense in specific urban contexts. It also allows local institutions to discover local ways in which such norms are already being used and identify critical areas of intervention.

The successes of the program is dependent on the first objective that covers an urban safety assessment. To that end, the UNODC team has developed an assessment guide with thematic areas of questioning to be used in the three priority cities where the project will be piloted (Mathare - Nairobi, Iztapalapa - Mexico, Taschkent - Uzbekistan). As indicated in the guide, the priority areas as demarcated by tier 1 assessment (focusing on rapid response to an emergency situation), and tier 2 assessments focusing on data collection on issues emerging from the emergency situation.

While the provision of a guide to support the collection of data provides uniformity and the anticipation of local engagement, it also brings to the fore methodological flaws that would affect the other objectives in the project and lead to poor reporting and inconclusive outcomes.

Mathare - Nairobi.

Overall, the areas indicated as pilots in the concept document have diverse sample frames. For example, Tashkent is selected as the capital city of Uzbekistan. The assessment here will be based on the city as the domain demarcation. In Mexico, Iztapalapa is demarcated as a municipality to be used as the assessment frame.

The selection of the sample frame of Mathare - Nairobi, is based on assumptions that are not clear and may not be a representation of all the illicit flows to the city. The findings cannot be generalized for the city.

While UNODC acknowledges that some low-end categories are better suited to deal with the flows and challenges that the earlier assumed middle class, the selection of Mathare as a sample frame lacks the representation or the justification for the level of impact and influence to urban governance, compared to other areas including Eastleigh, Majengo, Kibra or Kangemi (Chelagat, 2019).

A better proposal would be to have a shared justification for the selection of the domain areas in the three cities, or an understanding of the local sampling challenges based on the resources, time and realities of data collection. For the selected city of Nairobi, other assessments should be carried out to complement the findings from Mathare.

One agreement on the report is the lack of data, and the inconsistencies in available data; as shown in the Mathare report (UNODC, 2021). These inconsistencies may replicate as the data from the report will not be a representation of the realities in Nairobi.
For example, while the findings identify the challenges of police brutality, non reporting, corruption and assault, it does not provide analysis for an explanation and linkage to available policies, operational assumptions and community realities across the city.

Additionally, while emerging trends including terrorism and violent extremism are identified as part of the tier - 2 question area in the guide (UNODC Assessment Guide), the report remains mute on these issues, choosing otherwise to remain aligned to the qualitative responses that focus on petty crimes. As a positive however, the report details avenues for auxiliary data covering the area but remains basic on analysis; choosing not to interface the analysis.

The proposal on sampling and data collection would include a review of the sampling frame for Nairobi to use the Small Area Estimation Technique (ADB, 2020) for collection of the data from the communities in the county. This technique is cost-effective and combines multiple data sources.

The process is granular and uses disaggregated estimates by including primary and auxiliary data from a wider coverage. Small Area Estimation focuses on a "Small Domain" for review with the agreement that the area selected as the sample frame represents the smallest representation of the data to be collected and by extension, the realities to be responded to.

The guide to the urban safety governance project should therefore focus on providing a harmonized justification of a "Small Domain" to be based on definitions like; slum, estate, or the national government demarcations that include; ward, sub-county, county, province or municipality, to allow for the collection of the primary data and utilization of auxiliary data (Gosh and Rao 1994).

STRATEGY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Data may be collected by different agencies in a variety of often incompatible forms and without the knowledge of other parties; duplication of effort is common. As evidenced by the assessment from Nairobi, the policy linkages have not been addressed. This assessment fits into a category of expensive statistical collections undertaken with minimal use because the key information and linkage to policy developer, is rarely collected (Westfall & de Vil, 2001). In other cases, an "information glut" occurs, where large quantities of data sit is not linked to the policy chain due to the incapacity to identify the best uses of the data.

To ensure that the urban safety governance project addressed the shortfalls as indicated in the project objective two; there is an urgent need to build indicators capacity from the local area based on the small domain area, to the regional and national levels of government engagement (Cochran, 1977). The urban safety governance assessments, require a growth in local capacity and a move from central control towards monitoring and accountability under agreed local-to-national targets and priorities. As a use case, the assessment of Mathare may not achieve this process unless the policy priorities are not only understood but also aligned to the realities at the local and national level (or in this case, county level).
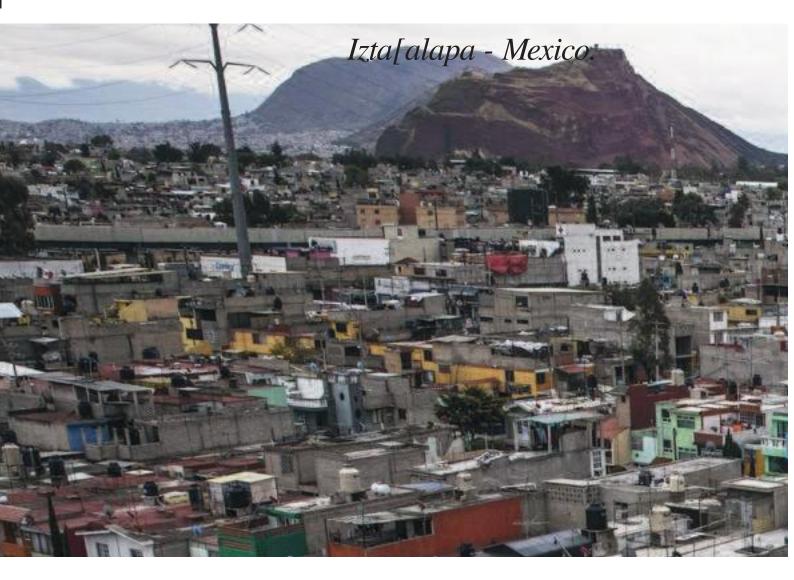
9 ENHANCING THE CAPACITY OF INSTITUTIONS AND OFFICIALS AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

Indicators interface between policy and data. Through the use of indicators, models can be simplified to understand the subject that is urban safety and governance. Each indicator is therefore a small model on its own; implying the elements' cause and effect of social norms, can contribute to progress, action and outcome from policy. Indicator development can be based on performance, emerging issues and pressing needs.

The assessment of Mathare provides recommendations from a sample on an area that requires addressing. However, it lacks the linkage to the policy priorities and the realities at the sub-national levels. It includes most of the thematic question areas in the assessment guide document provided for the project.

The question areas in the assessment guide are based on the recognition that a reduction of conflict, crime and violence as included in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, can provide safe, inclusive and resilient cities as shown in SDG 11.

While the arguments provided in the guide and the program concept remain valid, the development of the city indicators should not only respond to the local needs of the community. These indicators should align to the policymakers in the city.

Izta[alapa - Mexico.

and national capacities can only achieve alignment based on a clear understanding of the priorities of the policymakers while assessing the needs in the communities. There are over twenty-two governance frameworks (Biswas et al., 2019) that the UNODC can borrow from to develop a robust indicator table for the urban safety governance project.

Additionally, since the urban safety governance project will be involved in advocacy in the complex world of policy change (Funnell and Rogers, 2011). Policy influence and advocacy will be increasingly regarded as a means of creating sustainable policy change in international development. While it remains a difficult area to monitor and evaluate. Building institutional capacity and learning from existing frameworks provides options for monitoring, evaluating and learning.

GREATER COHESION AND PARTNERSHIPS

There are a number of criteria to evaluate governance structures in urban areas. The starting point is economic efficiency that is based on the "decentralization theorem". This acknowledges that efficient provision of services requires the decision-making to be carried out by the level of government closest to the individual citizen, so that resources will be allocated with the greatest efficiency (Oates 1972).

The second can be based on the economies of scale; where the per-unit cost of producing a particular service falls as the quantity of the service provided increases. This criterion points to the need for larger government units that can capture economies of scale. Other criteria include; regional coordination, access and accountability, and equity. From the

urban safety governance concept document, the evaluation will anticipate a mix of the three while ensuring success and continuity.

Such evaluations depend on a greater cohesion between government structures and partnerships with interested stakeholders. The urban safety governance thematic outcomes from the assessments can vary according to the specific city context and the priorities identified by the local partners.

The model developed stresses on four components including resilience building, engagement, enforcement of the policies and the regulation. Greater coordination and partnership is based on a sound monitoring and evaluation process that is aware of the reporting processes and the stakeholders involved.

For the outcomes in objective four to be a reality, the process has to be driven by an explicit and commonly understood purpose. The process should show in advance; who the users of the M&E data are, and how the analysis and findings will influence policy and action. Additionally, a definition of what success looks like should be clear to ensure the indicators accommodate the right assumptions.

It also means defining the strategies, the activities, the outputs and the intended outcomes. While a logical frame is provided in the urban safety governance project, an overarching theory of change that links to the local realities should be articulated and revised based on the findings from the assessments.

This process should also include the impact pathways, understanding of change, barriers and supporters of change, assumptions and the causal steps for attribution.

CONCLUSION:

The recommendations to the objectives as provided in the policy brief depend on a global review of urban safety and governance projects, and a myriad of assessments conducted. The Mathare report for example falls short of a clear understanding of the policy priorities for the "small domain" area where the project will be applied. While the brief applies the realities to the context in Nairobi, the methodological proposals should be utilized across the three pilot areas where the project will be implemented.

There is no doubt that the conditions for and expectations of the urban safety governance project will influence some change over the next 24 - months. However, based on available research as an evidence from the past, many of the changes in urban areas -whether social, economic, technological, environmental or political; are largely disruptive, and take more time than the anticipated period. Its success should also be pegged on the identification of trends and challenges through an assessment that has a sound method of application. Such a process will influence the nature and direction of urban safety governance and the remaining three objectives identified in the project.

The guide provides some road map towards achievement. However, what happens if urban governance arrangements developed in the three pilot cities fail to adapt? Longer conversations should be covered on the avenues of resilience and intentional capacity building. These should be added to the use of financial and other incentives at the local level. Incentive models can be effective in nudging reform if they do not place limits on local autonomy and innovation. The right balance will need to be found in steering the process for the urban safety governance project. These discussions should also cover the illegal governance frameworks that thrive within the cities.

The management and evolution of relationships between the national governments and local governance actors remains critical; as identified in the urban safety governance project concept. In a system with traditionally high levels of centralization of authority and frequent episodes of centrally-imposed reform (as seen in Nairobi), building trust and effective working relationships will take time. The same also applies to the lack of continuity in policy from one national government to the next. The urban safety governance project requires a critical review of the associated challenges resulting from electoral cycles.

March 2021

REFERENCES:

Asian Development Bank. (2020, 05). Introduction to small area estimation techniques: A practical guide for national stastistics offices. Mandaluyong City, 1550 Metro Manila, Philippines.

Chelagat, R. (2019). Barriers to implementing urban plans in Kenya. Walden University Scholar. Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=8512&context=dissertations.

Chiodelli, F., & Gentili, M. (2021). The many shades of grey in urban governance: How illegality shapes urban planning, policy and development, JOURNAL OF POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY, Volume 84, 2021, 102309, ISSN 0962-6298, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2020.102309.

Cochran, W. (1977). Sampling Techniques, 3rd Edition. John Wiley & Sons.

Ghosh, M. and Rao, J. (1994). Small Area Estimation: An Appraisal. STATISTICAL SCIENCE. Volume 9: Issue 1: Pages: 55-93, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2246284.

Lai, S-K. (2019). Planning for city safety, JOURNAL OF URBAN MANAGEMENT, Volume 8, Issue 2, Pages: 179-181, ISSN 2226-5856, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jum.2019.07.001.

Nick, D. (E.d). (2004). Urban Governance, Voice and Povety in the Developing World. London - UK: EarthSan Publications.

Panman, A. (2019, 10 13). Surveys and the City: Three Challenges to Quality Data Collection in Urban Areas, Oxford Urbanist, Retrieved from https://www.oxfordurbanists.com/magazine/2019/4/17/surveys-and-the-city-three-challenges-to-quality-data-collection-in-urban-areas.

Rathin, B., Arnab, J., Kavi A., & Krithi R. (2019). A good-governance framework for urban management, JOURNAL OF URBAN MANAGEMENT, Volume 8, Issue 2, Pages: 225-236, ISSN 2226-5856, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jum.2018.12.009.

Simone, A. (2002). Principles and Realities of Urban Governance in Africa: Global Campaign on Urban Governance. UNHABITAT. Nairobi: Kenya.

Slack. E., & Côté, A. (2014). Comparative urban governance. UK Government's Foresight Future of Cities Project. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/360420/14-810-urban-governance.pdf.

UNESCAP & UNHABITAT, (2010). The State of Asian Cities 2010/11. Fukuoka, Japan. Retrieved from https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/The%20State%20of%20Asian%20Cities%20201011.pdf.

UNODC, Safety Governance Approach in Urban Environments for Safe, Inclusive and Resilient Cities, A Global Programme implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/documents/Urban-security/USGA_2-pager_final.pdf.

UNODC. (2020). Safety Governance approach in Urban Environments for Safe, Inclusive and Resilient Cities. Report on the Urban Safety Governance Assessment in Mathare, Nairobi City. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/UrbanSafety/Report/USGA_UNODCity_Nairobi_Final_Report.pdf.

Urban Safety Governance Assessments – conducting rapid assessments in emergency contexts, https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/UrbanSafety/201105_USG_Rapid_Assessment_Guide_EN.pdf.

Westfall, M., S., & de Villa, V. (Eds). (2001). Urban Indicators for Managing Cities, Asian Development Bank, Manila, Philippines.

HORN OF AFRICA RESEARCH PARTNER

GIVE US A CALL TODAY!

Scofield Associates is a private research consultancy firm that focuses on Conflict Management Consulting, Market Research, Big Data Analytics and Monitoring and Evaluation. We operate in the Larger Horn of Africa Region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROJECTS FOR SCOFIELD ASSOCIATES VISIT SCOFIELDASSOCIATES.CO.KE OR CALL US ON (+254) 020 7868306

SCOFIELD
ASSOCIATES LIMITED