

MEXICO: CIUDAD JUÁREZ

February 2015

Mexico: Ciudad Juárez

I. Introduction*¹

Ciudad Juárez endured an explosion of criminal violence after 2007. Killings rose fifteen-fold in three years, from less than 200 a year to more than 3,000 in 2010, a homicide rate above 200 per 100,000 residents.² That was over ten times the rate in Mexico as a whole and 30 times the global average, earning the city the label “murder capital of the world”.³ It also endured a surge in kidnappings, extortion and robberies. Then, in 2011, the bloodshed began to fall almost as abruptly. In 2014, there were 424 homicides in the city, about 31 per 100,000 residents.⁴ Juárez still has about twice as many murders as ten years ago, but it is no longer breaking homicide records. Normalcy seems to have returned, as restaurants and night clubs reopen downtown, factories resume hiring, and local police (not troops) patrol the streets.⁵

Juárez was not the only city whose homicides increased dramatically: the national rate more than doubled between 2007 and 2010, though killings were concentrated in certain municipalities, such as (in addition to Juárez) Tijuana, Culiacán, Chihuahua and Acapulco, along key drug trafficking corridors and/or close to drug production zones.⁶ All remain among Mexico’s most violent cities.⁷ But in none has criminal violence risen as rapidly, then fallen as far as in Juárez, where other high impact crimes, such as car thefts and burglaries, have likewise dropped. The city also bucked the national trend on

¹ * Plusec-Pluralism, Human Security and Sustainability Centre/Plusec-Centre de pluralism de la sécurité humaine et du développement durable (Plusec) retained the International Crisis Group to conduct this research and analysis and to prepare this report.

² Crisis Group calculations from homicide rates compiled by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) and population data from the National System of Health Information (SINAIS). INEGI’s figures, which are based on death registries, tend to be higher than those of the Secretariat of Government, the federal ministry that handles security, which counts only cases under investigation. For different estimates of homicides by year, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°48, *Peña Nieto’s Challenge: Criminal Cartels and Rule of Law in Mexico*, 19 March 2013, Appendix C, p. 47.

³ According to the Citizen’s Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice, an NGO that monitors security issues, Ciudad Juárez had the world’s highest murder rate in 2008, 2009 and 2010. “Ciudad Juárez, por tercer año consecutivo, la urbe más violenta del planeta”, *Seguridad Justicia y Paz*, 12 January 2011. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the global average homicide rate was 6.9 per 100,000. “Global Study on Homicide 2011”, UNODC, p. 9.

⁴ Comité de Indicadores, Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia, Ciudad Juárez, December 2014. These numbers differ from those collected by INEGI, as discussed in fn 1.

⁵ On the city’s return to normalcy, see Tracy Wilkinson, “In Mexico, Ciudad Juárez re-emerging from grip of violence”, *Los Angeles Times*, 4 May 2014; Damien Cave, “Ciudad Juárez, a border city known for killing, gets back to living”, *The New York Times*, 14 December 2013.

⁶ For background on Mexican drug cartels, see Crisis Group Report, *Peña Nieto’s Challenge*, op. cit., pp. 5-10. Regarding crime’s impact on certain communities, see Eric L. Olson, David A. Shirk, Duncan Wood (eds.), “Building Resilient Communities in Mexico: Civic Responses to Crime and Violence”, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Justice in Mexico Project (University of San Diego), March 2014, pp. 3-8.

⁷ According to the Citizens’ Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice, the most violent city in the world in 2013 was San Pedro Sula, Honduras, followed by Caracas, Venezuela. Mexico remained the country with the greatest number of cities on its top 50 list: Acapulco (no. 3), Culiacán (no. 16), Torreón (no. 18), Chihuahua (no. 21), Ciudad Victoria (no. 22), Nuevo Laredo (no. 30), Ciudad Juárez (no. 37), Cuernavaca (no. 43) and Tijuana (no. 47). “Por tercer año consecutivo, San Pedro Sula es la ciudad más violenta del mundo”, www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx, 15 January 2014.

kidnappings, which rose by about 20 per cent nationally in 2013. Juárez averaged 1.5 per month that year, down from a monthly average of about seven in 2010-2011. Since September 2013, there have been no reported kidnappings.⁸

Why did violence surge and then subside so dramatically in this sprawling industrial city on the Río Bravo (Rio Grande in the U.S.) across from El Paso, Texas? Can the trend be sustained and broadened, so that there is sufficient security, confidence in police and mutual trust to prevent another outbreak? Can the model of citizen participation used in Juárez be replicated in other, quite different regions still struggling with criminal violence and local corruption? The answers are complicated but crucial, as Mexico tries to move from a strategy based on battling organised crime to one that also addresses the socio-economic risk factors and institutional weaknesses behind criminal violence.

The surge's immediate cause was a battle between transnational drug cartels over a market and a smuggling route.⁹ Local gang members, including young drop-outs and ex-inmates deported from the U.S., further fuelled the violence, becoming cannon fodder in a brutal struggle for local criminal markets.¹⁰ The backdrop was a city with a history of drug smuggling, where criminals had corrupted or intimidated local authorities. Many Juárez neighbourhoods had problems often associated with youth violence or delinquency: transiency, family disruption, diminished economic opportunities, limited access to secondary or higher education and a lack of citizen participation or community cohesion. Teens and young adults often lacked positive adult supervision and had little hope for the future.¹¹ The 2008 global financial crisis hit the vital export-processing industry hard, costing tens of thousands of workers their jobs and further fracturing fragile communities.¹²

This report analyses security in Ciudad Juárez before, during and after the 2008 crisis. It is based largely on field work there, including dozens of interviews with experts, local officials, business people and activists. The next section provides a brief socio-economic profile of the industrial border city and its long history of organised crime. It then looks at the achievements and legacy of Todos Somos Juárez (We are all Juárez, TSJ), the violence prevention program under President Calderón, and how these efforts were modified and expanded into the National Program for Social Prevention of Violence and Crime under President Peña Nieto. The final section looks at the Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia, a security and justice working group composed of volunteer business people, professionals, academics and activists plus local authorities, which has inspired similar efforts in citizen participation across the country.

The report is the first of a series of field-based investigations to analyse the evolution of violent crime and how government, business and civil society have responded. The objective is to better understand the shifting dynamics of violence and encourage the sharing of lessons learned and obstacles

⁸ The federal government says kidnappings fell in 2014, though others dispute this. José A. Ortega, "El secuestro crece sin cesar porque no se actúa debidamente contra los grandes grupos criminales", *Seguridad Justicia y Paz*, 28 September 2014. This NGO argues that the official numbers are of pre-trial investigations, not of victims.

⁹ On the war between the Juárez and Sinaloa cartels, see Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, *Historia del Narcotráfico en México* (Mexico, 2013), pp. 310-313; and Ricardo Ainslie, *The Fight to Save Juárez: Life in the Heart of Mexico's Drug War* (Austin, 2013).

¹⁰ Alma Eunice Rendón Cárdenas, "Determinantes Sociales y Juventud: Situación de las pandillas en Ciudad Juárez", in *Pandillas en el Siglo XXI: El reto de su inclusión en el desarrollo nacional*, co-ordinated by Manuel Balcázar Villarreal (Mexico, 2012), published by the federal police's Centro de Investigación y Estudios en Seguridad, pp. 105-144.

¹¹ Crisis Group interviews, Carmen Álvarez, professor, Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez, 21 April 2014, and Julián Cardona, a photo-journalist who has covered Juárez for many years, 25 March 2014, both Ciudad Juárez. A summary of individual, family and community factors is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a U.S. government agency: "Youth Violence: Risk and Protective Factors". See also Alma Eunice Rendón Cárdenas, "Determinantes Sociales y Juventud" op. cit, pp. 121-129.

¹² Crisis Group interview, Jorge Contreras, Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia, Ciudad Juárez, 15 August 2014.

overcome (or not), though Mexico's vast social, economic and cultural differences, both within and between regions, make it difficult to devise a one-size-fits-all model for violence prevention.

II. Border City

A. Explosive Growth

Juárez is a success story in many ways. In 2010, per capita income was nearly \$16,800, above Chihuahua state (\$9,900) and Mexico nationally (\$8,000). Average school attendance (8.8 years) was longer than in the rest of the state (6.1 years) or country (5.8 years).¹³ But the numbers mask severe inequalities. About 38 per cent of *Juarenses* -- nearly 500,000 people -- qualified in 2010 as poor, 33 per cent as moderately poor and 5 per cent as extremely poor.¹⁴ About 8 per cent were considered "highly marginalised", lacking such basic services as education, clean water and electricity. That is low relative to other areas in Mexico but translates into 100,000 people living in substandard conditions.¹⁵ "Poverty in Juárez is not necessarily linked to income", said a professor. "If three family members work in the *maquila*, they might have a good income but still not water, sanitation and other services".¹⁶

The rapid growth and geography of Juárez make provision of services especially challenging. From 1980 to 2000, population more than doubled, from 567,000 to about 1.2 million, as migrants poured in from the rest of the country to take jobs at *maquiladoras*.¹⁷ Over the same period the city's area expanded five times, making it one of the least densely populated in Mexico. "With such sprawl, no budget is sufficient to provide either security or quality public service, a study of cities concluded".¹⁸

Juárez is a young city: about half of its inhabitants are under the age of 30, and one quarter are between fifteen and 29.¹⁹ It's "a city of youths, but it doesn't invest in its youths", said the head of an NGO that works with at-risk teenagers. Prior to 2005, criminal youth gangs were largely unknown; young people in marginal areas formed neighbourhood groups as a source of identity in a society that excluded them from opportunity and privilege.²⁰ Gang members might commit petty crimes but did not

¹³ Índice de Desarrollo Humano Municipal, 2010, Programa de las Naciones Unidas para El Desarrollo en México. The office of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Mexico provided the municipal data base to Crisis Group, which used it to calculate state and national per capital income.

¹⁴ Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL) www.coneval.gob.mx/Medicion/Paginas/Medici%C3%B3n/Informacion-por-Municipio.aspx. CONEVAL defines poverty as lacking sufficient income to buy a basic basket of goods and services.

¹⁵ "OECD Territorial Reviews: Chihuahua, Mexico, 2012", Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, p. 173. For the definition of marginalisation, see Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO), www.conapo.gob.mx.

¹⁶ Crisis Group interview, César Fuentes, Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Ciudad Juárez, 14 August 2014. A *maquila* or *maquiladora* is a factory that imports components duty free, assembles them and then exports the final product. Most are located along the U.S.-Mexican border.

¹⁷ National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

¹⁸ OECD Territorial Reviews, op. cit., p. 38. "Índice de Competitividad Urbana 2012. El municipio: una institución diseñada para el fracaso. Propuestas para la gestión profesional de las ciudades", Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad (IMCO), pp. 7, 96.

¹⁹ Population in 2014 based on projections by the Consejo Nacional de Población (www.conapo.gob.mx).

²⁰ Crisis Group interview, María Teresa Almada, director, Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Juvenil A.C (CASA), Ciudad Juárez, 23 April 2014.

engage in violent extortion rackets, like the *maras* of Central America, or hire out as gunmen, like Colombia's *sicarios*.²¹ Although the city had long been an important drug route, traffickers generally did not recruit local youths as hitmen.²²

By 2008, however, the Juárez economy was struggling with the second global recession in less than ten years. The illegal drug industry was undergoing changes that made it more competitive and more deadly. The recession increased the number of unemployed youths open to recruitment as gunmen by criminal groups. Cartels that used to wield power discreetly and kill enemies strategically broke into open war.

B. *The Storm*

Ciudad Juárez has served as an entrepôt for contraband since at least the 1920s, when U.S. Prohibition proved a bonanza for smugglers who ferried liquor across the Rio Grande. Home-grown opium (processed into heroin) and marijuana also helped create a lucrative illegal economy.²³ But it was cocaine grown in South America for U.S. consumption that fuelled the creation of transnational drug trafficking organisations. Mexican cartels emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s, when Colombian groups sought alternative routes to avoid U.S. interdiction in the Caribbean. Among the most notorious was the Juárez cartel's Amado Carrillo Fuentes (*"el señor de los cielos"*, lord of the skies), who pioneered use of cargo jets to ship cocaine from South America to clandestine landing strips in northern Mexico.

The secret of Amado Carrillo's success was his skill at forging alliances with other criminal organisations and, more importantly, "a network of political, police and military protection at the highest levels".²⁴ His most notorious alleged ally, General José de Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, became the federal government's anti-drug "czar", partly by capturing the Juárez cartel's rivals. Amado Carrillo's federation of trafficking groups did not need hitmen as enforcers; according to ex-intelligence chief Guillermo Valdés, it could rely on its military and police network.²⁵

How many died in cartel-related violence in the 1990s and 2000s is unclear; many simply disappeared, as the cartels and their allies within government security forces tried to eliminate challengers quietly without attracting undue attention.²⁶ After 2008, however, the violence that exploded in Ciudad Juárez and other border areas went beyond past mafia-style retaliation.

By the end of the decade, drug cartels were highly militarised, with well-armed teams of hitmen, following the lead of the Gulf Cartel, which in 1998 had formed the Zetas, recruiting ex-Special Forces

²¹ *Mara* is a term used for transnational gangs in Central America, many of whose members were deported from the U.S. *Sicario* means hitman, especially one hired by a drug cartel.

²² Crisis Group interview, María Teresa Almada, director, Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Juvenil (CASA), Ciudad Juárez, 23 April 2014.

²³ On prohibition, see Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs: Elites and Politics in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1910-1940* (Durham and London, 1993), pp. 132-134. On the history of heroin smuggling, see Howard Campbell, *Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juárez*, (Austin, 2009), pp. 40-52.

²⁴ Valdés, *Historia del Narcotráfico*, op. cit., p. 239.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 241. Gutiérrez Rebollo was arrested in 1997 and sentenced to 40 years in prison, where he died from complications of cancer. Tracy Wilkinson, "Jose de Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo dies at 79; disgraced Mexican general", *Los Angeles Times*, 20 December 2013.

²⁶ See Angelica Durán-Martínez, "Criminals, Cops and Politicians: Dynamics of Drug Violence in Colombia and Mexico", Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 2013, pp. 276-282.

who worked as enforcers until breaking away and attacking their former allies in 2010.²⁷ The two major criminal groups that operated in Chihuahua created paramilitary wings: the Juárez cartel had “La Línea” (The Line), made up of ex-police; Sinaloa had “Gente Nueva” (New People), which in January 2008 sent hundreds of gunmen to Juárez to fight for control of the plaza.²⁸

Law enforcement became militarised as well. Previously the Attorney General’s office (Procuraduría General de la República, PGR) had directed most counter-narcotics operations. But under President Calderón’s Joint Operation Chihuahua, soldiers, marines and federal agents took over, displacing or disarming local police, who were viewed as cowed or captured by organised crime. The tacit agreement between local officials and criminals -- under which the latter avoided overt acts that might disturb public order in return for selective enforcement of the law against Juárez cartel rivals -- broke down. With the new militarisation and fragmentation of security, criminals had more difficulty buying protection and therefore less incentive to restrain their gunmen.²⁹

The militarisation of law enforcement resulted in a “dramatic increase in human rights abuse”.³⁰ “Nowhere is the military prepared for dealing with civilians, except in humanitarian operations”, said a human rights official. “They aren’t trained to prevent crime; they’re trained to kill”.³¹ Mexico was also buffeted by changes in the drugs and arms markets: the U.S. eliminated its ban on assault rifles in 2004, and cocaine prices spiked in 2007-2008, possibly due to interdiction and eradication in Colombia.³²

Meanwhile, the U.S. also stepped up deportations of ex-convicts during the 2000s -- many of whom remained in border towns -- while adding border control agents, making it harder to move people or contraband. Drugs thus stayed in border towns longer, adding to danger of heists by rival groups, or were sold in the growing domestic market. In sum, by the decade’s end, political and economic changes had created conditions for a “perfect storm” of violence: more criminals with more weapons fighting over tighter illicit markets, with high risks but also high returns.³³

An additional factor made Juárez the city where violence spiked faster and higher than elsewhere: recruitment and arming of local youth gangs in a city reeling from financial crises that had cost tens of thousands of jobs.³⁴ Hundreds of small neighbourhood gangs were recruited by larger gangs, which were recruited in turn as enforcers by the larger cartels: La Línea (Juárez cartel) used Los Aztecas and Barrio Azteca; Gente Nueva (Sinaloa) allied with Los Mexicles and Artistas Asesinos. The gangs brought

²⁷ On the Zetas and their rivalry with the Sinaloa Cartel, see Crisis Group Report, *Peña Nieto’s Challenge*, op. cit., pp. 10-13.

²⁸ “Capturan al fundador de ‘Gente Nueva’”, *Proceso*, 5 October 2011.

²⁹ See Durán-Martínez, op. cit., pp. 284-292, and Richard Snyder and Angelica Durán-Martínez, “Does illegality breed violence? Drug trafficking and state-sponsored protection rackets”, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, vol. 52 (2009), pp. 253-273.

³⁰ “Abused and Afraid in Ciudad Juárez: An Analysis of Human Rights Violations by the Military in Mexico”, Washington Office on Latin America, October 2010, p.12.

³¹ Crisis Group interview, Adolfo Castro, Chihuahua State Commission for Human Rights, Ciudad Juárez, 13 August 2014.

³² Alejandro Hope, “Violencia 2007-2011. La tormenta perfecta”, *Nexos*, 1 November 2013.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Lourdes Ampudia Rueda, “Empleo y estructura económica en el contexto de la crisis de ciudad Juárez: las amenazas de la pobreza y la violencia”, in “Diagnóstico sobre la realidad social, económica y cultural de los entornos locales para el diseño de intervenciones en materia de prevención y erradicación de la violencia en la región norte: el caso de Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua”, coordinated by Laurencio Barraza, Secretaría de Gobernación, 2009, p. 31. On gang involvement, see Duran-Martínez, “Criminals, Cops and Politicians”, pp. 274, 292.

violence out of the underground. As territorial conflicts intensified, gang members flaunting high-powered weaponry become more visible.³⁵ In addition to controlling local drug retail markets, they branched into other illegal enterprises: extortionists targeted small- and medium-sized businesses and professionals, such as doctors. Kidnappings rose, though how high is hard to estimate, since many relatives feared alerting authorities.³⁶

Killings became indiscriminate, because gang involvement made it “difficult for warring factions to identify their opponents”.³⁷ The suspicion that rival gang members might be present was enough to trigger mass killings, such as those at three drug treatment centres in 2008-2009 in which about 36 died.³⁸ The most notorious massacre, however, took place at a teenagers’ party in January 2010 in the working class neighbourhood of Villas de Salvárcar (see below). The confessed mastermind, a Juárez cartel enforcer, said he ordered it after hearing that “*doblados*”, members of the Artistas Asesinos gang working for the Sinaloa cartel, were among the students.³⁹

III. Todos Somos Juárez

A. The Massacre

Villas de Salvárcar is a neighbourhood of tiny, government-subsidised cement-block homes in southern Juárez built to house *maquila* workers. On 30 January 2010, young people gathered for a birthday party at one of many homes vacant since the 2008 economic crisis. Most were students, including athletes from Los Jaguares, a U.S.-style high school football team. Shortly before midnight, more than a dozen men with assault weapons stormed out of several vehicles. Within minutes, fifteen people lay dead or dying, several shot in the street or next door.⁴⁰

Gunmen had killed indiscriminately before. What was unique about the Villas de Salvárcar massacre was the local and national outrage it triggered. The killings came to symbolise not only the brutality of the *sicarios*, but also the incompetence and apparent indifference of authorities. Heavily-armed men had been able to commit mass murder, then disappear in a city under military occupation with numerous checkpoints. Though a hospital and police post were within blocks, emergency personnel and law enforcement took more than half an hour to arrive, despite repeated calls for help.⁴¹

³⁵ Crisis Group interview, Enrique Villarreal, head of the state prosecutor’s office in Ciudad Juárez, 15 August 2014. See also Alma Eunice Rendón Cárdenas, “Determinantes Sociales”, op. cit., p. 131.

³⁶ Crisis Group interviews, Dr. Arturo Valenzuela, Ciudad Juárez, 26 May 2014; and Jorge Contreras, 27 May 2014. Valenzuela, a medical doctor, and Contreras, a businessman, are founding members of the Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia.

³⁷ Durán-Martínez, “Criminals, Cops and Politicians”, op. cit., p. 296.

³⁸ For a list of massacres in Juárez, see Martín Orquíz, “La muerte aún tiene memoria”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 20 July 2014.

³⁹ José Antonio Acosta Hernández (“El Diego”), confessed to participating in or ordering hundreds of homicides as a La Línea leader. Arrested in July 2011, he was extradited to the U.S. on drugs, weapons and murder charges (killing a U.S. consulate employee and her husband). “Juarez Drug Cartel Leader Pleads Guilty to Charges Related to U.S. Consulate Murders and Is Sentenced to Life in Prison”, U.S. Department of Justice, 5 April 2012.

⁴⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Villas de Salvárcar, Ciudad Juárez, 25 April 2014 and 27 May 2014. Ainslie, *Fight to Save Juárez*, op. cit., chapter 23. Lorena Figueroa, “Juárez families, neighbourhood scarred by 2010 massacre”, *El Paso Times*, 29 January 2013.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews, Villas de Salvárcar, Ciudad Juárez, 25 April 2014 and 27 May 2014; and Gustavo De la Rosa, human rights activist, Ciudad Juárez, 24 April 2014.

President Calderón unwittingly added insult to injury by suggesting the victims might be gang members.⁴² The government quickly retracted his remarks, but he faced an enraged community when he visited Juárez a few days later, accompanied by the public security, health and education secretaries. Though he ignored calls to immediately demilitarise the city, he promised the government was ready to “review what we are doing”. “We need a more integrated approach”, he said, including “social” initiatives. The president, who had announced his offensive against the cartels in 2006 wearing army fatigues, now stated that “military action alone is not enough”.⁴³ In the face of mounting protests in Juárez and elsewhere, the president had already ordered work on a social strategy to complement military operations. The idea was to create a model that could be extended across the country. After the killings in Villas de Salvácar, officials went into emergency mode, with orders to prepare their projects for an immediate launch.⁴⁴

B. *Citizens Mobilise*

Ciudad Juárez had an advantage: experience with civic activism. The human rights community had been fighting impunity since the 1990s, when Juárez became infamous for a series of femicides. NGOs took the lead in giving emotional and legal support to victims’ mothers, mostly factory workers with little education, time or resources.⁴⁵ These local NGOs focused national and international attention on violence against women: from marches and symbolic acts, such as planting pink crosses where women had been killed or bodies found, to following specific cases, even to the Inter-American Human Rights Court (IAHRC).⁴⁶ In the late 2000s, many spearheaded a new movement against impunity, focussed on disappearances and extra-judicial killings by security forces.⁴⁷

Doctors were among the preferred targets of extortion and kidnapping and one of the first professional groups to mobilise against criminal violence, both as victims and witnesses to the carnage.⁴⁸ “Surgeries were full at all hours. The blood banks were running out of blood”, one recalled. Many friends, relatives and colleagues were leaving the city. “We could either join the stampede to El Paso or do something ourselves”.⁴⁹ They organised marches and strikes to draw attention to the dangers they faced; the

⁴² The government minister apologised on the president’s behalf, citing a miscommunication. Rubén Villalpando, “Gómez Mont ofrece disculpas por palabras equivocadas de Calderón”, *La Jornada*, 9 February 2010.

⁴³ Tracy Wilkinson, “Calderon visits Ciudad Juárez”, *Los Angeles Times*, 12 February 2010. See also Crisis Group Report, *Peña Nieto’s Challenge*, op. cit., p. 16.

⁴⁴ Crisis Group Skype interview, Enrique Betancourt, 16 September 2014. Betancourt worked for the Social Development Secretariat (SEDESOL) in 2010 and later became executive director at the National Centre for Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation and deputy general director of social policy in the Office of the President.

⁴⁵ Martha Estela Pérez García, “Las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales en Ciudad Juárez y su lucha contra la violencia de género”, *Nóesis: Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, vol. 15, no. 28, July-December, 2005, p. 151.

⁴⁶ Activists had been drawing attention to the unsolved killings for years, when in 2001 the bodies of eight women were found in a former Juárez cotton field. The “cotton field case” reached the IAHRC, which ruled that the state had failed to adequately investigate or prosecute and therefore owed reparations to family members. See *González et al. v. Mexico*, judgment, 16 November 2009.

⁴⁷ Crisis Group interviews, Gustavo De la Rosa, human rights activist, 13 August 2014, and Imelda Marrufo, co-founder, Red Mesa de Mujeres, 11 August 2014, both in Ciudad Juárez.

⁴⁸ In 2010 alone, there were 100 reported kidnappings of doctors; probably many more went unreported. Ignacio Alvarado Álvarez, “Ciudad Juárez, paraíso de los extorsionadores”, *El Universal*, 6 December 2009. Crisis Group interview, Leticia Chavarría, Comité Médico Ciudadano, Ciudad Juárez, 28 May 2014.

⁴⁹ Crisis Group interview, Dr. Arturo Valenzuela, Ciudad Juárez, 26 May 2014. He is a founder of the Citizens’ Medical Committee and a member of the Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia.

Citizens' Medical Committee encouraged broader civic action against criminal violence. Because many extortion and kidnapping victims feared calling the police, they set up a call-in number staffed by doctors that provided a bridge to authorities, advice or simply comfort.

Certain business and civic leaders had also long been concerned about the city's chaotic development, including founders of the Strategic Plan of Juárez (Plan Estratégico de Juárez), which sought participatory urban planning.⁵⁰ The plan's 2007 manifesto called for not only greater transparency and accountability, but also an end to the "halo of impunity that envelops the city, leaving the strange impression that those who despise legality are those who benefit most from the system".⁵¹ As violence escalated, the plan advocated security reform, calling for a police career law, a citizens' council and access to crime statistics.⁵²

Juarenses por la Paz (Juárez Residents for Peace), largely business people and professionals, emerged in 2009, combining activism with policy advocacy. With the help of the Association of Maquiladoras and the Autonomous University of Juárez, these NGOs created an observatory to track crimes and use the information to pressure police and prosecutors for action.⁵³ In December 2009, eight weeks before the Villas del Salvárcar massacre, about 2,000 demonstrators demanded a "government-civic" assembly to draw up a rescue plan for the city, including restructuring of security forces, overhaul of the justice system and social programs to attack the causes of violence.⁵⁴

C. *The Rescue Plan*

By late 2009, experts from six ministries had already been working for months on a rescue plan for Juárez, with projects to improve public spaces, expand access to education and promote public health, including treatment of drug addiction. "The focus was Juárez", said Enrique Betancourt, an urban planner heading the National Centre for Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation under Calderón. "But the idea was to develop a collective impact approach that could be used throughout the country."⁵⁵ Three key principles guided the planning: the approach should be multi-sectorial, addressing economic and social risk factors in an integrated manner; participatory, giving civil society a role in design, implementation and monitoring; and coordinated, with the involvement of multiple ministries, agencies and offices within the federal, state and local governments.⁵⁶

The national wave of anger and frustration over Villas de Salvárcar forced the government to accelerate. Local working groups (*mesas*) convened to devise specific proposals on security, health, education, employment and economic and social development. Sub-groups discussed human rights, public spaces and aid for small business. "It was a massive exercise in citizen participation to get ideas", said

⁵⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Sergio Meza, director, Plan Estratégico de Juárez, Ciudad Juárez, 26 March 2014, and by telephone, 12 September 2014.

⁵¹ "Manifiesto por la Gobernabilidad de Juárez", Plan Estratégico de Juárez (2007), p. 12.

⁵² "Los pendientes de Juárez", Plan Estratégico de Juárez, [2009], slide 10.

⁵³ Crisis Group interview, Dr. Arturo Valenzuela, Ciudad Juárez, 16 May 2014.

⁵⁴ "Miles de personas reclaman justicia en Ciudad Juárez", *El Mundo*, 7 December 2009. See also Lucy Conger, "The Private Sector and Public Security: The Cases of Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey", in "Building Resilient Communities in Mexico: Civic Responses to Crime and Violence", edited by David A. Shirk, Duncan Wood, and Eric Olson, Wilson Center and the Justice in Mexico Project, University of California, San Diego, March 2014, pp.173-189.

⁵⁵ Crisis Group telephone interview, Enrique Betancourt, 16 September 2014.

⁵⁶ See the brief case study of TSJ in "Seguridad Ciudadana con Rostro Humano: Diagnóstico y propuestas para América Latina", *Informe Regional de Desarrollo Humano 2013-2014*, Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2013, pp. 193-195.

Betancourt, “completely hectic but necessary”.⁵⁷ On the eve of a second presidential visit, cabinet members met with the working groups and received proposals.

The government promised that in 2010 it would carry out 160 “concrete actions” designed to break the “vicious circle of violence”.⁵⁸ Many actions involved extending existing programs to Juárez, such as enrolling beneficiaries in public health insurance and providing scholarships through “Opportunities” (Oportunidades), the federal anti-poverty program.⁵⁹ Others were construction projects, such as building or renovating schools and community centres, completing a psychiatric hospital and renovating or re-equipping the general, children’s and women’s hospitals. Museums, theatres and libraries were promised makeovers; parks and sports facilities were to be built or rehabilitated.⁶⁰

The federal government invested more than \$380 million in Juárez in 2010–2011, about three fourths of which went to public health and education plus programs to promote culture, sports and development.⁶¹ Economic commitments included financing to create or modernise businesses, lower micro-enterprise interest rates, offer advice and training for small business owners and workshops for young entrepreneurs. Training workshops and a labour exchange were promised, as well as 4,000 temporary jobs in park rehabilitation, reforestation and trash clean-up along roads and waterways. School safety programs were expanded, as well as those to give drop-out risks academic help, keep schools open for activities during vacations and create youth orchestras. About one fourth was budgeted for security, such as satellite location devices in police cars, more extortion and kidnapping investigators and crisis advisers for victims and nine traffic corridors with 24/7 security. The federal government promised to vet and professionalise local police forces and increase the number of state and federal investigative police.⁶²

The U.S. formally embraced community crime-prevention programs within the Merida Initiative, a multi-year package of security assistance first funded in 2008. Focused initially on disrupting drug trafficking by providing equipment and training to security forces, it expanded after 2010 to include three more “pillars”: strengthening human rights and rule of law; modernising the border; and building resilient communities. Nine target communities, including three in Juárez, were slated to receive about \$15 million over three years to support crime prevention and community policing initiatives. Local civil society groups received an additional \$10 million in grants for projects targeting at-risk youths.⁶³

D. *Recovery*

According to ex-President Calderón, the dramatic fall in homicides in Juárez from 2010 to 2012 was the combined result of the federal government’s deployment of police and troops, massive funding of social

⁵⁷ Crisis Group telephone interviews, consultant, 15 September 2014, and Enrique Betancourt, 16 September 2014.

⁵⁸ “Estrategia Todos Somos Juárez”, Presidencia de la República, Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 17 March 2010. See also “Estrategia Todos Somos Juárez, Reconstruyamos la Ciudad: avances a los cien días”, 28 June 2010, available at www.conadic.salud.gob.mx.

⁵⁹ Oportunidades is an anti-poverty program that provides cash transfers linked to school attendance. It began as the National Solidarity Program (*Pronasol*) under President Carlos Salinas, became *Progres*a (Progress) under Ernesto Zedillo and Oportunidades under Vicente Fox. President Peña Nieto rebranded it in 2014 as *Prospera* (Prosper). “Peña Nieto transforma el programa Oportunidades en Prospera”, CNN, 2 September 2014.

⁶⁰ For the goals and achievements during the first 100 days see “Estrategia Todos Somos Juárez, Reconstruyamos la Ciudad: avances a los cien días”, at calderon.presidencia.gob.mx.

⁶¹ Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, *Los Retos que Enfrentamos* (Mexico, 2014), p. 62.

⁶² Estrategia Todos Somos Juárez, op. cit.

⁶³ See Claire Ribando Seelke and Kristin Finklea, “U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Merida Initiative and Beyond”, Congressional Research Service, U.S. Congress, 8 April 2014, p. 24.

and economic programs and support for state prosecutors and local police. In a book assessing his presidency, he argued that Todos Somos Juárez demonstrated the importance of “coordination” between federal, state and local authorities, which he admitted was a “challenge” in democratic Mexico.⁶⁴

Some analysts depict the fragile peace in Juárez as a victory for the Sinaloa cartel, led (until his capture in February 2014) by Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán.⁶⁵ After outgunning its rivals, Sinaloa allegedly imposed a truce on local groups to ensure a clear corridor to the U.S. for illegal drugs.⁶⁶ Officials deny that Sinaloa now controls the Juárez plaza, especially the implication that authorities targeted the cartel’s opponents. “The only group that won is the government”, said the state prosecutor in Juárez, “because the government is finally doing its job”.⁶⁷

Economic revival also helped, spurred in part by the expansion of cash-transfer programs such as Opportunities to previously ineligible urban households.⁶⁸ U.S. economic recovery returned jobs lost in the *maquila* industry. Employment in Juárez fell to its lowest the year after the 2008 global crisis, rose slightly in 2009 and 2010 and markedly after 2011. By 2014, the *maquiladora* industry association said it had recovered most of the jobs lost over the previous six years, though formal employment remains well below its 2000 peak.⁶⁹

The crisis also prompted institutional reforms. State and municipal governments overhauled justice and law enforcement with legislative and administrative measures: the state penal code was stiffened, including the establishment of a maximum sentence of life in prison for kidnapping, extortion, multiple homicides and murder of police or journalists.⁷⁰ State prosecutors and investigative police were purged, subjected to periodic vetting and given better training and work conditions.⁷¹ “Before the bad guys were both inside and outside [of law enforcement]. The prosecutors’ office was infiltrated”, said the chief Juárez prosecutor.⁷²

Chihuahua is among only four states to fully implement the 2008 judicial reforms, moving from an inquisitorial system with largely closed-door proceedings to an adversarial system of public trials. Studies suggest that states that have put the reforms into effect are decreasing the number of pre-trial prisoners, reducing case back-logs and increasing the number of convictions for serious crimes, while using alternative procedures for less serious infractions.⁷³

⁶⁴ Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, *Los Retos que Enfrentamos* (Mexico, 2014), pp. 61-63.

⁶⁵ William Booth, “In Mexico’s Murder City, the war appears over”, *The Washington Post*, 19 August 2012.

⁶⁶ J. Jesús Esquivel, “El narcopacto de Ciudad Juárez”, *Proceso*, 23 May 2014.

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interview, Enrique Villarreal, Ciudad Juárez, 15 August 2014. In 2011, after fighting between rival gangs resulted in eighteen deaths, Chihuahua state removed prison management from the city. Lorena Figueroa, “Infamous Juárez prison, Cereso, changing image”, *El Paso Times*, 13 September 2014.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview, Hugo Almada, psychologist, university professor and member of the Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia, 1 October 2014. Previously, owning a refrigerator, for example, made many poor Juárez families ineligible for Opportunities.

⁶⁹ Rubén Villalpando, “Recupera Ciudad Juárez plazas perdidas”, *La Jornada*, 16 August 2014. For overall employment over the past seventeen years, see “Recuperación económica de Ciudad Juárez vista a través del crecimiento de empleo formal: datos desde 1997”, *Gaceta Caseem* (www.caseem.com), March 2013.

⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, Javier González Mocken, deputy mayor, and other municipal authorities, Ciudad Juárez, 28 May 2014. These get-tough measures are controversial and now being modified. The penalty for extortion was reduced in November 2014 from life to 30 to 70 years. B. Carmona, L. Sosa, P. Mayorga “Anulación de prisión vitalicia a extorsionadores será retroactiva”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 7 November 2014.

⁷¹ Crisis Group interview, Fiscalía de la Zona Norte prosecutors, Ciudad Juárez, 28 May 2014.

⁷² Crisis Group interview, Enrique Villarreal, Ciudad Juárez, 15 August 2014.

⁷³ See Guillermo Zepeda Lecuona, “¿Están funcionando los juicios orales en México?”, *Folios*, no. 24, Fall 2011, pp. 5-13. For a progress report, see “Reporte de hallazgos 2014: Sobre los avances de la implementación y operación de la reforma penal en México”, Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo (CIDAC), 2014.

Prosecutors say they have increased the homicide resolution rate in Chihuahua state from less than 1 per cent four years ago (when violence was at its height) to about 40 per cent in 2014.⁷⁴ In Ciudad Juárez, about 44 per cent of reported murders were solved in 2014. However, Crisis Group was unable to obtain official statistics showing trends over time.⁷⁵

The municipal police were also overhauled. During the 2011-2013 tenure of Chief Julián Leyzaola, a former army lieutenant colonel, more than half the agents and officers on the municipal force were fired or resigned. Leyzaola also applied his “iron fist” approach to suspected gang members, rounding up as many as several hundred a day, sometimes simply for failing to carry identification. A state human rights official said complaints against police – for theft, beatings, torture and even disappearances -- rose from about three a month at the beginning of Leyzaola’s tenure to about 45 a month in 2012.⁷⁶

Business leaders and officials who repudiate Leyzaola’s tactics nonetheless credit him with kicking out those linked to criminals, while instilling discipline and pride: he did “good things and bad things, but at that time you had to bring crime under control. There weren’t many options”.⁷⁷ Others say the mass arrests had a deterrence effect but at too-high a cost: his tactics undermined trust in police, especially among the young.⁷⁸

Today’s police are less abusive than their criminally-infiltrated predecessors, residents say. The current chief, César Muñoz, says building stronger community relations is a top priority: officers visit schools regularly and are encouraged to talk to residents, rather than remain in their patrol cars. More than 90 per cent of state and municipal security forces in Chihuahua have been certified, having passed background checks and polygraph tests, slightly higher than the national average of 88 per cent.⁷⁹

But the police are still overstretched: state and municipal forces in the city number about 2,500, 190 per 100,000 inhabitants, below the national rate of 280 per 100,000.⁸⁰ Lack of adequate policing means that residents and business owners in some neighbourhoods still must pay local gangs for protection.⁸¹

⁷⁴ “Heriberto Barrientos Márquez, “Queda sin resolver, 54% de los homicidios en Ciudad Juárez”, *El Diario de Juárez*; Power Point Presentation, Fiscalía General del Estado de Chihuahua, December 2014.

⁷⁵ These resolution or clearance rates – generally defined as meaning a suspect has been identified and charged – are slightly lower than the average of eleven countries in the Americas (about 50 per cent), “Global Study on Homicide 2013”, UNODC, p. 92. Whether investigators are solving more murder cases than before homicides began to surge in 2008 is unclear. Crisis Group made official information requests for trends in homicide clearances and convictions to both the state prosecutor’s office and the state judicial system, without success. Nor did the prosecutor’s office in Ciudad Juárez send promised data on homicide convictions.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview, Adolfo Castro, State Commission for Human Rights, Ciudad Juárez, 13 August 2014. Few dared to formalise these complaints, Castro said, for fear of police reprisals. The state prosecutor’s office said it could not provide information on the number of former police facing abuse charges. See also Marcela Turati, “La violenta ‘pacificación’ de Juárez”, *Proceso*, no. 1842, 18 February 2012. Leyzaola, who has not been charged with any crimes, maintains that he always acted according to law. The Tijuana municipal prosecutor banned him from holding office for eight years, however, because of alleged human rights abuses. “Tijuana inhabilita a Julián Leyzaola por ocho años por actos de tortura”, CNN Mexico, 30 August 2013.

⁷⁷ Crisis Group interview, Jorge Contreras, co-ordinator, Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia, Ciudad Juárez, 27 May 2014

⁷⁸ Crisis Group telephone interview, Enrique Betancourt, 16 September 2014.

⁷⁹ Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, updated as of 30 October 2014.

⁸⁰ Per capita rates calculated by Crisis Group. There are 1,850 municipal police and 674 state police stationed in Juárez. Crisis Group telephone interview, municipal police spokesman, Adrián Sánchez Contreras, 16 December, and email from Pablo Espino Portillo, Chihuahua State police, 13 January 2015. National numbers for municipal and state police are: 136,741 and 199,369, respectively. These numbers do not include federal police.

⁸¹ According to Gustavo de la Rosa, the human rights activist, paying local gangs for protection, common well before violence exploded in 2010, continues in much of the city. Crisis Group telephone interview, 15 January 2015. Others also confirmed that the practice continues, especially for small shops or businesses in working class neighbourhoods.

“Residents still don’t know their local police; there is more respect, but no reconciliation”, said a community organiser.⁸² According to a survey of city residents conducted in early 2014, a majority was unaware of enhanced police patrolling or other crime prevention programs. More than 90 per cent were unaware of neighbourhood policing initiatives.⁸³

TSJ ended with the Calderón presidency in 2012, and its long-term impact remains unclear. Projects were designed and implemented on an emergency basis, with little planning or strategy. “The idea was to do as much as you could as fast as you could”, said a former official. “We did everything without a script”, said another. “There was a fire in Juárez, and we had to put it out”.⁸⁴ Though the government reported after the first 100 days that 90 per cent of promised actions had been completed, it never issued a final assessment.⁸⁵ Funding could not be sustained, especially as violence flared elsewhere. Some scholarships and after-school activities were cut, and many cultural and recreational programs disappeared.⁸⁶ TSJ was a large intervention, but its impact was small, said a veteran activist working with at-risk youths; one or two years isn’t enough to eradicate cultural problems.⁸⁷

Some of the most visible projects fell short for lack of specialised staff or equipment. Parents complained that the children’s hospital was unable to treat cancer patients or do complex surgeries. The new mental health hospital stood unused for three years, finally opening in 2014.⁸⁸ Among the most tangible benefits of TSJ were new or renovated schools and community centres. The largest are in the neighbourhoods of Francisco I. Madero and Felipe Ángeles, inaugurated in 2011, and Riberas del Bravo and Anapra, started under TSJ but opened in 2013. Painted white with colourful louvers for ventilation, the multi-story complexes stand out amid the cement-block homes and metal-roofed shacks in some of the poorest areas. Many have playgrounds, playing fields, basketball courts, boxing facilities or dance studios, plus space for classes, workshops and medical clinics.⁸⁹

TSJ also reflected an important shift in government policy: due to the city’s protests and a growing victims’ movement nationally, Calderón changed his security discourse. Instead of focusing largely on fighting cartels and capturing kingpins, the government shifted to violence prevention through social programs; in addition to TSJ, it established a national centre for crime prevention within the federal government and identified target zones impacted by violent crime. His successor, Enrique Peña Nieto, made prevention a stated priority of his security policy upon taking office in December 2012.

⁸² Crisis Group telephone interview, Oscar Domínguez, Fundación del Empresariado Chihuahuense (FECHAC), 14 January 2015.

⁸³ “Resultados del Estudio Poblacional, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua”. The survey was conducted 13 January-10 February 2014, by Explora, a research firm and financed by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a non-profit created by the U.S. government. Provided to Crisis Group by NDI.

⁸⁴ Crisis Group phone interviews, consultant, 15 September 2014, and Enrique Betancourt, 16 September 2014.

⁸⁵ “Estrategia Todos Somos Juárez,” op.cit. Crisis Group interview, Alma Eunice Rendón Cárdenas, Comisión Intersecretarial para la Prevención Social de la Violencia y la Delincuencia, 8 January 2015. Rendón also worked on TSJ under the Calderón government.

⁸⁶ Crisis Group phone interviews, Hugo Almada, university professor and member, Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia, 1 October 2014. María Teresa Almada, director, Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Juvenil (CASA), 9 February 2015.

⁸⁷ Crisis Group interview, Laurencio Barraza, Consejo Ciudadano de Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Juárez, 25 April 2014.

⁸⁸ Luz del Carmen Sosa, “Peligran niños enfermos por carencias del Hospital Infantil”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 28 August 2013. Alejandro Pacheco, “Abandonan proyecto de hospital de salud mental en Ciudad Juárez”, SDP Noticias.com, 3 February 2014. “Inaugura César Duarte Hospital de Salud Mental en Juárez”, *Juarez Noticias*, 21 August 2014.

⁸⁹ Information about Francisco I. Madero and Felipe Ángeles can be found on their Facebook pages. See also Araly Castañón, “Tiene Riberas del Bravo el más grande Centro Comunitario”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 6 August 2013; Araly Castañón, “Inauguran en Anapra Centro Comunitario”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 10 September 2013. There are about 50 community centres in Juárez. Crisis Group interview, Antonio González, director, Centros Comunitarios, Ciudad Juárez, 28 May 2014.

IV. Social Prevention

A. The National Plan

During the 2012 presidential campaign, Peña Nieto promised to “reformulate” security strategy to address the “origins of violence”.⁹⁰ Among his first decisions was to order his cabinet to craft a crime prevention program. “First of all, Mexico demands to live in peace”, he said in his inaugural address. “I am convinced that crime cannot be combated only with force. It is essential that the State embark on an integrated effort to reconstruct the social fabric”.⁹¹ The next day Peña Nieto and the leaders of the three main parties signed the “Pact for Mexico”: 95 promises, including a new energy policy, education reform, universal social security and a national violence prevention plan.⁹²

The plan presented in February 2013 embraced many of the same principles as TSJ: a multi-sectoral, integrated approach to social and economic risk factors based on a coordinated effort involving federal, state and local authorities plus civil society.⁹³ An Inter-secretarial Commission, headed by the Secretariat of Government (SEGOB) and with representatives from eight other ministries, was charged with coordinating the national program.⁹⁴ The budget designated for prevention programs was about \$9 billion in 2013, about \$10 billion in 2014 and \$11 billion in 2015, though declining revenues from oil exports forced the government to slash federal expenditures in early 2015, including prevention programs by up to one fourth.⁹⁵

Like TSJ, Peña Nieto’s national prevention plan combines a range of existing social programs: budget lines include money for food subsidies, scholarships, mother and infant health, microfinance, human rights, secure schools, sports, housing and temporary employment. Among the most innovative aspects is the National Program for Crime Prevention (PRONAPRED for its Spanish initials), which provides about \$200 million to state governments, which then give subsidies to municipalities and non-profit organisations for specific projects.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ “Estrategia de seguridad de Calderón ha sido ‘fallida’: Peña”, *ADN Político*, 28 April 2012.

⁹¹ “Discurso íntegro del presidente Peña Nieto a la Nación”, *Excelsior*, 1 December 2012.

⁹² “Mexico’s new government: With a little help from my friends”, *The Economist*, 8 December 2012. For all the proposed reforms and actions, see pactopormexico.org.

⁹³ See “Bases del Programa Nacional para la Prevención Social de la Violencia y la Delincuencia e Instalación de la Comisión Intersecretarial”, Comisión Intersecretarial para la Prevención Social de la Violencia y la Delincuencia”, February 2013.

⁹⁴ The nine ministries participating in the commission that oversees the national program are: government, treasury, social development, economy, commerce and transportation, public education, health, work and social security, and agricultural, territorial and urban development. See “Programa Nacional para la Prevención Social de la Violencia y la Delincuencia, 2014-2018”, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, 30 April 2014.

⁹⁵ Budget provided by the Comisión Intersecretarial para a Prevención Social de la Violencia y la Delincuencia. Pesos converted to dollars using an exchange rate of U.S.\$1.00 = thirteen Mexican pesos. On the budget cuts, see Elisabeth Malkin, “With Oil Revenue Dropping, Mexico Announces Budget Cuts”, *The New York Times*, 30 January 2015; “Recortan presupuesto del programa nacional para prevenir la violencia y delincuencia”, *Animal Político*, 16 February 2015.

⁹⁶ For PRONAPRED’s budget, see the annual guidelines published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, 15 February 2013, 14 February 2014 and 26 December 2014. The government in 2013 spent only 70 per cent of the amount budgeted. See “Segundo Informe de Labores”, Secretaría de Gobernación, 2013-2014, p. 81.

Funding is channelled to certain municipalities according to a formula that takes into account crime rates plus social-risk factors.⁹⁷ Within these municipalities (or “priority demarcations”, including several districts of Mexico City), efforts are further concentrated within high-risk polygons, containing 10,000-15,000 inhabitants.⁹⁸ The idea is to perform “socio-urban acupuncture”, small-scale but catalytic interventions that will relieve stress throughout the affected region.⁹⁹ During 2013, the plan’s first year, there were 57 priority demarcations (municipalities and districts); in 2014, there were 74, and in 2015, more than 80 are slated to receive funding.¹⁰⁰

Official plans require all projects to include a discussion of risk factors and specific indicators of impact. But there is a gap between theory and actual practice. According to a public policy think tank that in 2014 studied 200 projects in fifteen municipalities, only 21 per cent included a clear diagnosis of the risk factor, based on qualitative analysis or quantitative information such as crime reports or surveys. It also found that only 28 per cent of the projects included impact indicators -- such as before-and-after questionnaires or evaluations and follow-up with students to see if they stayed in school or found jobs -- rather than just numbers of participants or classes.¹⁰¹ Monitoring and evaluation is “where the rubber hits the road”, wrote another analyst, and its lack “exposes the nebulous quality of the effort”.

¹⁰²

Roberto Campa, SEGOB undersecretary in charge of prevention programs, stresses the need for evidence-based programs and said his office is developing clear indicators based on publicly available statistics. Officials say homicides have already fallen in three-quarters of the jurisdictions receiving prevention funds.¹⁰³ The program is also spending about \$6.5 million on a survey of more than 82,000 households within priority municipalities and districts to gain a baseline for assessing community conditions and perceptions, he said. It will gauge attitudes of adults and youths (twelve to 29), including the latter’s views on violence, their capacity for empathy and self-control and their social and individual development in school. It will further examine households (composition, stress and management of conflict) and communities (interactions, confidence among neighbours, and citizen participation), as well as attitudes toward police. Results are expected in April 2015.¹⁰⁴

B. PRONAPRED

Ciudad Juárez has received about \$6 million per year in PRONAPRED subsidies since 2013. The only municipality receiving more under this program is Acapulco, now Mexico’s most violent city.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ “Bases del Programa Nacional”, op. cit., p. 24.

⁹⁸ Crisis Group interview, Alma Eunice Rendón Cárdenas, Comisión Intersecretarial, Mexico City, 8 January 2015. The polygons are chosen by state and municipal governments.

⁹⁹ See “Bases del Programa Nacional”, op. cit., pp. 24, 29.

¹⁰⁰ See PRONAPRED guidelines, *Diario de la Federación*, op. cit.

¹⁰¹ “Prevención del delito en México ¿Dónde quedó la evidencia?”, México Evalúa: Centro de Análisis de Políticas Públicas, 2014, pp. 33-40.

¹⁰² Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Changing the Game or Dropping the Ball? Mexico’s Security and Anti-Crime Strategy under President Enrique Peña Nieto”, Brookings Institution, November 2014.

¹⁰³ Power point presentation provided by SEGOB, 8 January 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Undersecretary Roberto Campa, Mexico City, 29 April, 2 May, 2014; and Alma Eunice Rendón Cárdenas, Comisión Intersecretarial para la Prevención Social de la Violencia y la Delincuencia, 8 January 2015. “Talking Points ECOPRED 2014”, provided to Crisis Group by the violence prevention under-secretariat. ECOPRED (Encuesta de Cohesión Social para la Prevención de la Violencia y la Delincuencia, Social Cohesion Survey for Prevention of Violence and Crime) was done by the National Institute for Statistics and Geography (INEGI), with the Secretariat of Government.

¹⁰⁵ PRONAPRED “guidelines, op.cit., *Diario Oficial*, 14 February 2014. Some metropolitan areas that include more than one municipality or district, such as Guadalajara, Monterrey and the Federal District, received more funding.

Violence-prevention programs in Juárez focus on three polygons with about 57,000 residents (4 per cent of the population).¹⁰⁶ Approximately one third of the money has gone to the municipality for equipping three public libraries, creating a youth orchestra, financing a drug addiction treatment centre for children and teenagers and for campaigns against drunk driving and bullying. The largest non-infrastructure project administered by the city was a campaign to provide “didactic” toys to thousands of children in exchange for guns and toys that would encourage them to mimic violent behaviour.¹⁰⁷

Most NGO projects were workshops or classes aimed at children, youths or women: to prevent drug use or bullying, encourage self-control, learn job skills or promote non-violence through dance or theatre. One showed movies designed to advance family and community values; another brought police to elementary schools to perform puppet shows against drug use and domestic violence.¹⁰⁸

The last was the only project involving police, though promoting “reconciliation between police and society” is among the federal initiative’s “guiding principles”.¹⁰⁹ Nor did the projects contain clear means of monitoring and evaluation; individual indicators were measurements of activity, not impact: number of events, classes, visits, parks and libraries built, equipped or renovated. PRONAPRED provides only short-term subsidies that must be re-approved each year, making continuity or follow-up difficult. The program in Juárez was also affected by delays and confusion over how to apply for the subsidies. NGOs said there was no public call for proposals with clear deadlines. The proposals were not approved until July, but subsequently had to be resubmitted after the municipal official for managing the projects was forced to resign amid allegations of mismanagement.¹¹⁰

Project evaluation, selection and review was then turned over to the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez, which approved many of them again in August 2014.¹¹¹ Fund distribution began in September, meaning NGOs had to scramble for staff and space in order to finish by 31 December, compressing projects meant to last at least six months into less than four. Some began work without complete funding, dipping into their own reserves or asking staff and suppliers to accept IOUs.¹¹²

Shortening projects to a few months meant there was no time to evaluate impact or provide follow-up assistance. Training programs for at-risk youths should include coaching to keep teens in school or connect them with jobs, said an experienced program officer; otherwise, participants may still succumb to the easy money offered by gangs engaged in drug dealing, robbery or protection rackets. Without

¹⁰⁶ Details, including population on the polygons, are contained in the 31 March 2014 agreement between the State of Chihuahua and the federal government (“Anexo Único”). This document and other program information is available on the website, “México: Nos Mueve la Paz” (nosmuevelapaz.org).

¹⁰⁷ Claudia Sánchez, “Concentra Municipio 30% de recursos de PRONAPRED”, *Nortedigital*, 18 August 2014. The total cost of the toy distribution campaign was \$215,000, which comes to about \$23 per toy.

¹⁰⁸ Anexo Único, op. cit. (nosmuevelapaz.org). See also Antonio Rebolledo, “Difunden proyectos que recibirán recursos del Pronapred en Juárez”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 14 August 2014.

¹⁰⁹ “Bases del Programa Nacional”, op.cit., p.30.

¹¹⁰ Crisis Group telephone interviews, Red de Mujeres, 8 December 2014 and with two other NGOs that preferred not to be named, 10 December 2014. Juan de Dios Olivas, “Tras escándalo por manejo de subsidios, cae Alva Almazán”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 23 July 2014.

¹¹¹ Juan de Dios Olivas, “Tras escándalo por manejo de subsidios, cae Alva Almazán”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 23 July 2014. Alejandra Gómez, “Recibió UACJ presupuesto de Pronapred ya reducido”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 5 August 2014.

¹¹² Crisis Group telephone interviews, Red de Mujeres, 8 December 2014 and with another NGO that preferred not to be named, 10 December 2014. See also Josefina Martínez, “Falta de recursos frena programas de Pronapred aquí”, *El Diario de Juárez*, 17 November 2014.

follow up, projects amount to little more than fleeting handouts.¹¹³ Education and employment levels remain especially low in poor or working class districts to the west and south of the city.¹¹⁴

The lack of transparency in choosing projects has raised accusations of cronyism or political clientelism. Although some experienced NGOs participate, others in the program appear to have little background in community work, critics say.¹¹⁵ The largest subsidy (for workshops against bullying) went to the National Council of Social Leaders of Mexico (CONAL), an organisation allegedly affiliated with the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which was constituted in November 2012 shortly after the national elections. Critics contend other beneficiaries also had ties to the PRI, including one reportedly run by a city council member.¹¹⁶

Analysts say neither TSJ nor PRONAPRED laid the groundwork for a long-term strategy based on evidence, open to outside evaluation and with clear benchmarks. “I have a lot of doubts that these resources are really being used to prevent violence”, said Hugo Almada, a university psychology professor and activist. “I don’t see a blueprint with a clear definition of what prevention is. I don’t see knowledgeable people in charge. I see problems of too much [government] discretion in the distribution of resources”. Despite embracing the “Juárez model”, he added, PRONAPRED has eliminated that initiative’s core: citizen participation. The “space for collegial participation” in prevention initiatives has largely closed.¹¹⁷

C. *The Juárez Model*

Citizen participation is the best-known legacy of Todos Somos Juárez. Of the multiple working groups (*mesas*) created to propose violence-prevention ideas for TSJ in 2010, only one is still active: the Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia (Security and Justice Working Group). Although social spending improved lives and helped spur economic recovery, Juárez has no signature infrastructure projects, such as the public libraries and aerial cable cars of Medellín, Colombia or the parks and rapid bus corridors of Curitiba, Brazil.¹¹⁸ But the business-civil society-state partnership forged during TSJ has persisted, even as the sense of crisis fades.

The *mesa* is independent and voluntary.¹¹⁹ Fourteen organisations belong, including business associations, professional groups, the human rights commission, a youth association and the local university. Though not fully representative, members say it strives to be inclusive and encourage diverse viewpoints.¹²⁰ The working group meets about twice a month, in committees tasked with specific issues and

¹¹³ Crisis Group telephone interview, Rubén Acosta, International Youth Foundation, 13 January 2015. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funds the foundation’s programs in Juárez.

¹¹⁴ See “Bienestar y Seguridad en Ciudad Juárez”, Observatorio Ciudadano, 2014, pp. 33-34.

¹¹⁵ Crisis Group telephone interview, Sergio Meza, Plan Estratégico de Juárez, 12 September 2014.

¹¹⁶ “Constituyen en Chihuahua el Consejo Nacional de Líderes Sociales Acuerdan promover un pacto social por la restauración de México”, www.xepl.com.mx, 16 November 2012; Paola Gamboa, “Se llevan mayor tajada de pastel grupos ligados al PRI”, *Norte Digital*, 7 September 2014, via www.planjuarez.org; and Francisco Luján, “Revela Municipio lista de las OSC beneficiadas”, *Norte Digital*, 3 July 2014, via www.planjuarez.org.

¹¹⁷ Crisis Group telephone interview, Professor Hugo Almada, also a member of the Mesa de Seguridad, 1 October 2014.

¹¹⁸ Simon Romero, “Medellín’s Nonconformist Mayor Turns Blight to Beauty”, *The New York Times*, 15 July 2007. Arthur Lubow, “The Road to Curitiba”, *The New York Times* 20 May 2007.

¹¹⁹ Funding is provided by FICOSEC (Fideicomiso de Competitividad y Seguridad), a trust set up and run by the business community in Chihuahua and financed by a payroll surtax. FICOSEC also funds violence observatories, recreational facilities for police and youth programs. See www.ficosec.org.

¹²⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Hugo Almada and Jorge Contreras, members of the Mesa de Seguridad, 1 October 2010 and 15 August 2015. See the website www.mesadesseguridad.org for the associations represented.

again in plenary sessions with municipal, federal and state authorities, including the mayor, heads of the municipal and transit police, the local commanders of the state and federal police and the state prosecutor for the Juárez district.

The *mesa*'s primary objective is to cut crime rates, monitored monthly through six indicators: the number of homicides, car robberies, car jackings, kidnappings, extortion and business robberies. All declined in 2014 from the previous year, and zero kidnappings were reported.¹²¹ But the group does more than monitor crimes: "The *mesa* has no formal authority", said a founding member, "but it acts as an executive body: agreements are made, someone takes responsibility ... and in the next meeting progress is reviewed".¹²² In August, for example, the *mesa* discussed how to combat car theft by cracking down on the sale of stolen parts in junkyards. It agreed to explore a registration system that would protect honest dealers and buyers. Committees reported on crime rates, while authorities explained progress made and problems encountered.¹²³

About a dozen other cities have created similar working groups.¹²⁴ Some are active in areas threatened by organised crime, such as the *mesa* in Córdoba, Veracruz, a stronghold of the Zetas drug cartel.¹²⁵ Others, such as the group in Los Cabos, Baja California, a resort town with relatively little crime, emphasise prevention. "The *mesa* is elastic; it can be adapted to different circumstances", said Orlando Camacho, director of SOS, a Mexico City-based NGO working to promote the idea in different cities. "The core idea is co-responsibility, bringing authorities who make decisions together with a multi-disciplinary group of citizen leaders".¹²⁶

SOS is engaged with civic leaders and authorities in south-western Mexico, where criminal groups have infiltrated municipal governments throughout Tierra Caliente (the "Hot Lands"), in the states of Michoacán, Guerrero and México. President Peña Nieto sent troops to Michoacán in May 2013 after armed citizens organised "self-defence" militias that set up roadblocks and took over security from allegedly corrupt local police and mayors.¹²⁷ A *mesa* in Morelia, state capital of Michoacán, held its first monthly meeting in November 2014. Another is expected to begin work in Apatzingán, once a stronghold of the Knights Templar cartel, in March 2015.¹²⁸

Establishing working groups in the neighbouring state of Guerrero is a greater challenge. Guerrero is not only one of Mexico's poorest states, but also among its most violent, with the highest homicide rate and fourth highest rate of reported kidnappings.¹²⁹ In October 2014, federal forces took over security in twelve municipalities in the state, following the kidnapping and, as it turned out, murder of 43

¹²¹ These indicators, collected every month, can be viewed on the website www.mesadesseguridad.org. Mesa homicide totals differ from those published by INEGI, cited elsewhere in this report.

¹²² Crisis Group telephone interview, Hugo Almada, member, Mesa de Seguridad, 1 October 2010.

¹²³ Crisis Group attended the 11 August 2014 plenary.

¹²⁴ Martín Orquiz, "Crean aquí Red Nacional de Mesas de Seguridad", *El Diario de Juárez*, 5 November 2014.

¹²⁵ Sayda Chiñas Córdova y Agencias, "Alza en secuestros en el estado, por la división del crimen organizado", *La Jornada Veracruz*, 28 August 2014. Marguerite Crawley, "Zetas Fuel Veracruz Security Crisis in South East Mexico", *Insight Crime*, 8 July 2014.

¹²⁶ Crisis Group interview, Orlando Camacho, director, México SOS, Mexico City, 9 January 2015. Businessman Alejandro Martí founded SOS-Mexico in 2008 to advocate for more effective security and justice following the 2008 kidnapping and killing of his teenage son.

¹²⁷ Tracy Wilkinson, "Mexico launches military push to restore order in Michoacan state", *Los Angeles Times*, 21 May 2013. For more on the rise of self-defence militias, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°29, *Justice at the Barrel of a Gun: Vigilante Militias in Mexico*, 28 May 2013.

¹²⁸ Crisis Group telephone interview, Orlando Camacho, director, Mexico SOS, 6 February 2015.

¹²⁹ "Guerrero, el estado con más homicidios en 2014; Tamaulipas, el de más secuestros: SNSP", *Sin Embargo*, 21 January 2015.

students allegedly by criminals working with local police.¹³⁰ The mutual distrust between citizens and authorities in a politically polarised region makes it difficult to form the basic consensus needed to create a working group, says Camacho. Nonetheless, the group is in discussions with authorities and citizens to set up a *mesa* in the resort city of Acapulco, now the city with the highest murder rate in Mexico.

¹³¹

Even in Juárez, the *mesa* has critics who believe the group represents the interests of the business elite, though supporters say academics and activists form a critical counterweight.¹³² De la Rosa, the human rights activist and *mesa* member, hopes to expand the model to the neighbourhood level. Community groups would hold not only regular meetings, but also social events to “lower the defensive walls that separate citizens from police”.¹³³ Such efforts are especially important in a city where more than 40 per cent surveyed in 2014 said municipal police performance was bad or very bad, and more than 60 per cent said they felt afraid or worried when they met local law enforcement.¹³⁴

A program by the Fundación del Empresariado Chihuahuense (Foundation of Chihuahua Entrepreneurs, FECHAC) shows that citizen participation can be extended to some of the most disadvantaged areas of Juárez. FECHAC has helped establish about 50 neighbourhood groups that run cultural and recreational programs, job training and health workshops plus other projects. The groups are largely self-sustaining, providing one third or more of the resources needed in work, materials or cash. FECHAC first helps small “base groups” of about ten residents to diagnose local needs; then the neighbourhood meets in an open assembly to discuss solutions. “The initiative comes from the community itself”, said program coordinator Oscar Domínguez.¹³⁵

Promoting wider citizen participation, moreover, should help overcome the pessimism many Juarenses still feel about their city’s future, despite falling crime rates. There is an apparent disconnect between the perceptions of elites and the general population. A poll of 65 opinion leaders and journalists in early 2014 found that nearly three quarters believed the city was “on the right track”; four fifths said security had improved over the past year. In contrast, a city-wide survey by the same pollsters found that six of ten thought Juárez was “on the wrong track”, though about the same proportion said security had improved.¹³⁶

Some perceive both the security gains and the public investments as superficial. In Villas de Salvárcar, survivors and relatives of the mostly teenagers killed in the January 2010 massacre said their lives have improved little, despite construction of a new park in the neighbourhood. Streets are still unpaved; housing continues to deteriorate; low incomes combined with inadequate transportation make it difficult for local youths to stay in school. “The park was a way of shutting us up”, said a youth whose father died in the massacre. “The violence is just on pause”, said the mother of another victim.¹³⁷

¹³⁰ The army and federal police also took over a municipality in the neighbouring state of Mexico. “Fuerzas federales toman 13 municipios en México por vínculos con cárteles”, Univisión (www.univision.com), 19 October 2014.

¹³¹ Crisis Group telephone interview, 6 February 2015.

¹³² Crisis Group interview, Jorge Contreras, Ciudad Juárez, 15 August 2014; Orlando Camacho, director, México SOS, Mexico City, 9 January 2015.

¹³³ Crisis Group telephone interview, Gustavo de la Rosa, 15 January 2015. This neighbourhood effort is still in the planning stages.

¹³⁴ “Resultados del Estudio Poblacional, Ciudad Juárez”, Explora for NDI, op. cit.

¹³⁵ Crisis Group telephone interview, 14 January 2015.

¹³⁶ “Resultados del Estudio Poblacional, Ciudad Juárez”, Explora for NDI, op. cit.; “Estudio de Opinión: Seguridad Ciudadana, Prevención, Derechos Humanos y Sistema de Justicia Penal en Ciudad Juárez”, PowerPoint presentation based on a poll of opinion leaders by Explora for NDI, provided by the Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia.

¹³⁷ Crisis Group interviews in Villas de Salvárcar, Ciudad Juárez, 27 May 2014 and with Gustavo de la Rosa, Ciudad Juárez, 24 April 2014. Relatives of those killed in the massacre are suing the federal government for compensation under the 2013

V. Conclusion

Juárez has largely returned to normalcy after an unprecedented explosion of bloodshed. The crucial *maquila* industry is recovering; professionals and business people who fled across the border have returned. Murder rates, however, are still twice as high as they were ten years ago, and many of the risk factors believed to fuel violent crime persist. Juárez is not only an important domestic drug market, but also an entrepôt for illegal drugs and undocumented migrants heading north and for guns coming south. Many poor districts still suffer low levels of education and high rates of unemployment. Impoverished youths -- with few opportunities to pursue higher education or good jobs -- are still vulnerable to recruitment by criminal gangs.

The massive social investment program known as Todos Somos Juárez ended with the Calderón government, leaving behind an expanded social-safety net and new or renovated schools, parks and community centres in long-neglected neighbourhoods. But officials never evaluated its real impact or developed sustainable projects. Peña Nieto then launched his own national crime-prevention program in 2013, promising to promote citizen participation, address social-risk factors, create and reclaim public spaces and strengthen institutional capacity. In Juárez, however, the effort has been undermined by delays, concerns about clientelism and a general lack of transparency. Officials are still developing indicators or benchmarks to measure overall progress in target zones. They should also open government-funded projects to public scrutiny, gathering the evidence needed to sustain and strengthen efforts that show the most promise.

Juárez has an important resource: the business people, professionals and activists whose persistence has helped transform the city from a murder capital to a model for citizen participation. It now faces the challenge of extending this model to historically marginalised areas. To move from crisis mode into sustainable violence prevention -- and thus forestall another surge in crime -- requires empowering the residents of impoverished neighbourhoods through proactive, problem-solving partnerships with local authorities, especially police. Returning to the status quo ante would not be good enough.

The recovery, albeit fragile, of Ciudad Juárez holds hope for other regions of Mexico now facing similar challenges. Like the state of Chihuahua four years ago, Guerrero and Michoacán in the south west and Tamaulipas in the north east are struggling to confront powerful criminal gangs. Federal forces patrol areas where local authorities cannot or will not confront organised crime, while the federal government promises to invest in social programs. These measures are necessary but not sufficient. Recovery also requires restoring citizens' confidence in government by engaging local communities themselves in a long-term effort to address the social inequities that can turn youths into criminals and the institutional weaknesses that allow them to kill with impunity.

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