

REPORT

INTERNATIONAL FORUM

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN CITIZEN SECURITY AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

APRIL 26-27, 2023
PLACENCIA, BELIZE



Belize International Forum in Figures

- 80 in-person participants from the technical teams of the Ministries of Security and Justice of the countries of the region, representatives of USAID and UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean
- 9 countries
- 4 UNDP initiatives: [InfoSegura](#), [CariSECURE](#), [SIGOB](#), and [Salient](#).
- [Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean \(UNLIREC\)](#)
- 17 innovative experiences in citizen security and justice
- 23 specialists from Belize, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Granada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and Mexico

Introduction

With a view to contributing to an exchange of experiences as a basis for analyzing the situation of citizen security in the region, the UNDP InfoSegura Regional Project partnered with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to organize the **International Forum on Innovative Solutions to Strengthen Citizen Security and Access to Justice in Central America and the Dominican Republic** in the Belizean city of Placencia on April 26 and 27, 2023.

The **International Forum** provided a venue for exchanges of information and best practices on enhancing citizen security and access to justice in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Effective governance was also discussed, all in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for Peace, Security and Justice. Among others, the topics included innovative solutions to reinforce access to justice, the use of technology in legal processes, territorial analysis and managing citizen security, armed violence, security, and justice, as well as youth, security and peace.

The event brought together public officials and the technical teams from ministries of security and justice in different countries in the region. The host, the Minister of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries of Belize, joined national specialists, experts from across Latin America and the Caribbean, and representatives of UNDP and USAID.

Thematic sessions:

- 1. Innovative Solutions to Strengthen Access to Justice**
- 2. Territorial Analysis and Managing Citizen Security**
- 3. Armed Violence, Security and Justice**
- 4. Youth, Security and Peace**

Day 1

April 26.

Opening ceremony

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Belize Ian King gave the welcoming remarks and thanked attendants for their presence at the first UNDP InfoSegura regional gathering held in Belize to foster creative ideas, share best practices and emerging lessons. Mr. King noted that evidence-based data provide fundamental input for decision-makers to use in strategic interventions in legal, policy and operational matters, in order to make Belize a safer place for everyone.



Ian King, Deputy Resident Representative at UNDP Belize

Minister of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries of Belize Kareem Musa added during his own intervention, “the innovative model that the UNDP InfoSegura Regional Project deploys is a leap forward in the way information on citizen security and justice has been managed in the region.”



Kareem Musa, Minister of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries of Belize

For his part, USAID Regional Director for Central America and Mexico Programs Christopher M. Cushing said, “this forum demonstrates the fact that joint work and sharing experiences and knowledge leads us to greater citizen security and access to justice in Central America and the Dominican Republic.”



Christopher M. Cushing, USAID Regional Director for Central America and Mexico Programs

The International Forum started with a discussion on innovative initiatives for access to justice.

Table 1: Innovative Solutions to Strengthen Access to Justice

The objective was to showcase innovative justice-sector experiences in order to inform the community of practice. Access to justice is one of the central elements of *Objective 16: Promoting just, peaceful, and inclusive societies*, in response to the serious threat that limited access poses for sustainable development. In the view of the UNDP, mechanisms and systems need to be put in place for conflict resolution, reparations and accountability for human rights violations, in order to ensure all people, have real access to justice. People need to be aware of their rights to be able to claim them and make informed decisions during legal processes.

At the first table during the International Forum, the following topics were discussed:

[Building and integrating justice information through the Belize Crime Observatory](#)

The objective of the Belize Crime Observatory (BCO) is to encourage policies that address public safety and national security by compiling, analyzing and disseminating good quality, timely and multidimensional data on the country's crime and violence trends. This is the background of the Integrated Information Management Platform, the interconnected system that quickly and safely transmits information for use in decision-making processes.



Dawn Mitchell, Staff Officer, and Interim Coordinator of the Belize Crime Observatory

[Electronic Center for Judicial Documentation](#)

This tool has been designed to hold information on judicial statistics on admissions, resolutions, records, and judicial facilitators in the 454 jurisdiction branches from around the country: Supreme Court of Justice chambers, appeals courts, sentencing courts, special courts, enforcement courts, courts of peace, mobile courts of peace and national judicial facilitator service in Honduras.



Nohelia Suyapa Alejandra Vásquez, Technician in the Statistics Unit at the Electronic Center for Judicial Documentation and Information in Honduras (CEDIJ).

[National Public Defense Office the Dominican Republic](#)

A presentation on the Dominican Republic's National Public Defense Office institutional strategy, covering key challenges and current opportunities in terms of access to information, particularly as regards institutional strengthening and user services.



Yurissan Candelario, Coordinator of the Department of Career development, National Public Defense Office.

[Diverting Youths in Conflict with the Law through Community Policing and Courts](#)

Complex factors centered on economic, social, and family dynamics have an impact on crime in Belize. This is a problem that stems from different roots and requires a multidimensional approach. The Leadership Intervention Unit and its stakeholders presented a prevention-based strategy designed to prevent and fight crime.





Anthony Rosado and Howell Gillett, Belize Police Department.

During the afternoon, the first day of activities continued with an interesting analysis of citizen security in the territory.

Table 2: Territorial Analysis and Managing Citizen Security

The objective of *Territorial Analysis and Managing Citizen Security* was to share innovative experiences and practices that generated significant evidence to inform decision making processes for public policy. Territorial anchoring of citizen security policies is achieved when they are informed by appropriate and timely information that emerges from the real situation in context and the demographic populations that live there. This exercise involves moving forward with a set of tools and conceptual, methodological, and technical developments that make it possible to understand the territory, its dynamics, issues and alternative ways to address it with results that are made available for use in decision-making processes at every phase of the public policy cycle.

At the second table of the International Forum, the following topics were discussed:

[Territorial Prioritization Index on Violence against women and girls in Guatemala](#)

This is a tool to target public policies in the territory to prevent violence against women and girls in Guatemala. It makes it possible to rank and cluster municipalities according to the levels of violence in the territory that pose a threat to life, physical integrity, property, as well as risk factors associated with violence against women and girls.



Silvia Mendoza, UNDP InfoSegura Analyst in Guatemala

[Pilot program to identify human trafficking hotspots](#)

Identifying hotspots for human trafficking in Belize in the following cities: San Pedro, Bella Vista, Orange Walk, Santa Cruz, Belize City. Human trafficking primarily affects female minors under 18 years of age. Authorities in Belize have identified cases of sexual exploitation, work exploitation, and some cases involving both.



Juanna Murillo, Ministry of Human Development, Belize.

The case of Granada

The Grenada Police Records Information Management System (PRMIS) is designed to manage the flow of information on security. As the PRMIS is web-based, it enables different police stations to store documents and exchange information with each other.



Andre Waterman, UNDP Barbados.

National system of Municipal Coexistence and Citizen Security Observatories in Honduras

Presenting an operational model of citizen security observatories in Honduras. These intersectorial and interdisciplinary spaces follow an information management and analysis strategy that allows for evidence-based profiles and decision making.

¿Qué es un Observatorio?

Espacio intersectorial e interdisciplinario, que tiene como estrategia la gestión de información, orientado al análisis de información necesaria, relevante y confiable.

1 Disponer de información transparente, confiable, oportuna y representativa en el nivel local, que permita la Caracterización y oriente la toma de decisiones

objetivo

2 Diseñar y poner en práctica estrategias, políticas y programa efectivos que contribuyan a la convivencia y seguridad ciudadana

¡Es una herramienta de Gobernabilidad!

Logos: Seguridad Democrática, Municipalidad de Tegucigalpa, InfoSEGURA, USAID, PNUD

Video call participant: Selena Aguilar

Selena Aguilar, Municipal Technical staff at the Technical Inter-Institutional Coordination Unit (UTECI).

Machine learning in intermediary cities. The case of Bucaramanga

The purpose of the lecture was to share the results of using a machine learning model to predict crime in the city of Bucaramanga, Colombia. Crime prediction models were analyzed to measure their usefulness in building prevention strategies, as well as taking into account the constraints to their use when little information is available.



Juan David Gelvez, University of Maryland.

Day 2 April 27

The second day, activities got started with a discussion on armed violence.

Table 3: Armed Violence, Security and Justice

The objective of the discussion on *Armed Violence, Security and Justice* was to consider the components of the context, their relationship with the homicide rates and their relationship with the justice processes. Armed violence in Central America and the Caribbean comprises a complex network of diverse actors that dispute territories, lives, and resources with each other. Criminal activities in the region are made possible by the availability of firearms as a strategic element to consolidate and expand crime and violence in the territory. Illegal arms trafficking has become consolidated in this vulnerable context, where borders are porous and options for control and supervision are limited.

The third table during the International Forum looked into the following topics:

Civil Society uses Data Visualization to tackle Violent Incidents

Over a million people were murdered in Brazil over the last 20 years, with seven in 10 murdered by gunfire! The *Fogo Cruzado* institute produces data on armed violence using technology that is used to preserve lives. By expanding the options for information on armed violence, we can change narratives and drive cultural change fostering a citizen security debate that is more democratic, participatory, citizen-inclusive, and human rights-based.



Maria Isabel Couto, Director of Data and Transparency at Fogo Cruzado Institute.

Documenting and Registering Incidents involving Armed Violence in Guatemala

This was an overview of the evolution of violence and the use of weapons, the main victims of armed violence, the trade in illegal weapons and their use in the commission of other crimes in Guatemala



Sonia Barrera, Advisor to the Third Vice Ministry of the Ministry of Governance of Guatemala



Sonia Barrera and Eliezer Mejia, Advisors to the Third Vice Ministry of the Ministry of Governance of Guatemala

[Gender-Based violence with firearms in Mexico](#)

In Mexico, five in 10 transexual women were murdered with a firearm. Trans women that are in a vulnerable situation and sex workers lead the figures on lethal violence perpetrated with firearms. Victims and activists corroborate their exposure to this type of violence and, although not all of them, the most disadvantaged are the most vulnerable to this type of violence.



Aranza Gamboa, Projects Officer in the Public Policy area at EQUIS, Justice for Women, Mexico.

[Firearms in Schools in Latin America and the Caribbean: Approaches, Challenges and Responses.](#)
[Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

An approach to the issue of firearms in schools that seeks to understand the nature, manifestations, causes and impacts. Lists prevention initiatives implemented in some countries in the region, for reference.



Mercedes Allerbon, Project Advisor at UNLIREC.

[SALIENT Project in Jamaica](#)

Description of the SALIENT Project based on its approach to the proliferation of illegal small and light weapons in Jamaica, as well as the social and specifically behavior-related factors directly related to the prevalence of violence and violent crime in vulnerable populations.



Jamaro Marville, Program Analyst at UNDP Jamaica.

The last discussion during the International Forum drew attention to interventions that promote safe spaces for youth in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Table 4. Youth, Security and Peace

The objective of the discussion of *Youth, Security and Peace* was to share experiences and describe possible alternatives or proposals to address preventive security and access to justice for youth in violent settings with public policies informed by a perspective of citizen security and a human rights approach. Most of the population in Central America and the Caribbean is of a young age. A large percentage live in complex contexts of deprivation and shortages, with few possibilities, few opportunities and few spaces for training and improving their living conditions. The panel analyzed how petty crime and organized crime have become the aspirational outlet that explains early entry into criminal activity, the homicide rates among young people, the short life expectancy and the victim-victimizer dynamics that characterize this demographic.

During the final discussion at the International Forum, the following were covered:

[Implementation of the violence reduction model *Cure Violence* in Cali](#)

Presentation of the social strategy for interrupting youth- and territorial violence, contributing to the creation of safe, violence-free spaces for young people living in marginal- and historically violent areas of the cities of Cali, Palmira, and Buenaventura in Colombia.



Alejandra Vidal, Manager of the Abriendo Caminos Project (Alvarallice Foundation, Colombia).

[Learning about social reintegration: Experience in integration in El Salvador](#)

Described the implementation of the *Pionero en Insercion Social* project in El Salvador, which was an experimental exercise in designing, implementing, and evaluating a social integration model for adolescents, youth and adults who had served a sentence and had a history of gang affiliation.



Lissette Miranda, Project Coordinator, UNDP El Salvador



Sergio Álvarez, Coordinator for Social Reintegration, Directorate for Social Fabric Reconstruction, El Salvador.

[Gap Mapping analysis on the participation of youths in violent events in the Caribbean](#)

Description of the area of analysis in Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines with a methodology based on 54 semi-structured interviews with agencies including prisons, probation departments, youth ministries, social services and rehabilitation services. It also included interviews with civil society organizations working specifically with vulnerable youth, as well as academicians, business representatives and the media, regarding crime and youth violence.



Juliet Solomon, Regional Specialist for Rule of Law, Justice, Security and Human Rights at UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean.

Closing ceremony

The Forum closed with remarks by Jairo Acuña-Alfaro, Regional Team Leader for Governance at UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean; Ian King, Deputy Resident Representative at UNDP Belize and Dawn Mitchell of the Belize Crime Observatory, who took the opportunity to note the excellent venue the Forum provided for sharing best practices and methodologies to provide data that informs decision making processes and public policies throughout the region.



Jairo Acuña-Alfaro, Regional Team Leader, Governance for UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean



Ian King, Deputy Resident Representative at UNDP Belize



Dawn Mitchell, Interim Coordinator of the Belize Crime Observatory

Video Recap

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TO STRENGTHEN CITIZEN SECURITY AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE



<https://www.dropbox.com/s/taqn859wum43e3f/InfoSegura%20International%20Forum%20Ad.mp4?dl=0>

Photo Gallery



Group picture of participants at the Belize International Forum



Attendees at International Forum in Belize



Marcela Smutt, Coordinator, UNDP InfoSegura Regional Project



Attendees at International Forum in Belize



Amlin Méndez, Inclusive Growth and Digitalization Program Analyst at UNDP Belize



Attendees at International Forum in Belize



Elvia Tapia-Santamaría, UNDP Infosegura Knowledge Management Specialist



Attendees at International Forum in Belize



Gerald Mora, UNDP InfoSegura Citizen Safety and Social Cohesion Specialist



Gabriela Pérez García, UNDP InfoSegura Justice and Rule of Law Specialist