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KEY CHALLENGES OF SECURITY PROVISION IN RAPIDLY URBANISING CONTEXTS: EVIDENCE FROM KATHMANDU VALLEY AND TERAI REGIONS OF NEPAL

Addressing and Mitigating Violence

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We know that urban violence not only affects people's health and wellbeing, it has a devastating impact on the social fabric and economic prospects of entire cities (Moser 2005). It can also set recursive cycles of vulnerability in motion – violence-affected individuals find it increasingly harder to be gainfully employed, while poverty is sustained through inter-generational transfers. However, the mechanisms through which violent crime and urbanisation are interconnected are not straightforward. While higher rates of violent crime are generally seen in the larger urban centres, not all urban centres experience similar degrees of violence. That is, the security and insecurity outcomes in a city are the result of a complex range of socioeconomic, political and demographic factors, which can vary temporally, spatially, as well as be significantly different for different individuals or groups. Importantly, rapid urbanisation also brings with it a unique set of challenges, which has the potential to overwhelm key government services, including policing and security provision.

There has been much debate about the role of the state in providing security in urban areas, which are increasingly characterised by a diverse group of actors, and where non-state actors also tangibly deliver security. In this report we use evidence from Nepal to look at *the key challenges for providing security in rapidly urbanising areas.* We base our findings on a review of existing evidence (including, in particular, perceptions surveys amongst youth populations), consultations with key officials and civil society stakeholders, as well as focus group sessions with young offenders, both inside and outside prison.

We find that since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was established in 2006, war-related killings have dramatically reduced. Yet, while these overall trends are improving, there are reasons to be cautious. First, official data is not capturing the true extent of armed violence, particularly criminal activity by gangs concentrated in and around Kathmandu and other fast-growing mid-size cities in Terai. Second, the nature of existing violence – relating to complex social and economic problems and perpetuated by a host of criminal groups – makes it far more difficult for formal policing and security structures to address it on their own. Thus, while the Nepal Police have a significant and often undervalued role to play in the sustainable prevention of violent urban crime, a wider 'developmental' approach involving state, and non-state actors (as well as armed groups themselves) is also needed. Given the demographic shift occurring in Nepal, we find that youth issues are of particular importance, with unemployment and involvement in organised crime being two primary concerns.

We find that (1) youth issues, (2) community-based partnerships, (3) urban planning and design, as well as (4) police capacity, resources and training issues, will need to be kept at the forefront of successful crime reduction strategies in urban Nepal. In particular:

- Being responsive to youth needs entails a multipronged strategy wherein vocational support programmes look to specifically target marginalised urban youth, including those who may have perpetrated violence. Vocational and other support programmes linked to juvenile detention to reach young offenders, particularly those who are at risk of repeat offending should be a key priority.
- Establishing effective partnerships for community-based interventions entails being inclusive of six constellations of actors: civil society peer groups, the police, prosecution, politicians, the prisons system, as well as the media. We suggest pathways along which these six may interact (e.g. through the '6-P Approach').
- Affirming safety and security as an integral part of the urban development strategy, and creating consultation platforms that bring together urban planners, citizen's groups (in particular those that represent youth and women's voices), as well as the police.
- Strengthening police capacity in terms of personnel numbers, urban specific training and resources, as well as infrastructure. While urban police organisational structures have already been established, and are largely in line with regional standards, we

identify a number of entry points for strengthening police capacity including better understanding of urban crime, better data collection and analysis, *ex-post* policing interventions, and *ex-ante* crime reduction strategies. Simultaneously, in the context of rapid urbanisation, we also identify a need to undertake regular neighbourhood level participatory multi-stakeholder assessments to get a clearer picture of urban vulnerabilities.