CRIME PREVENTION IN THE CARIBBEAN
LESSONS LEARNED

RESISTANCE AND PREVENTION PROGRAM (RAPP)
PADF’s Resistance and Prevention Program (RAPP) promotes the use of social crime prevention methodologies in The Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname. This program is funded by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

RAPP utilizes four mechanisms to achieve its objectives:

- **Capacity building courses** provide law enforcement, the judicial sector and other officials with training on social crime prevention methodologies.

- **Experiential learning activities** for at-risk youth including mock courts and job shadowing allow them to better understand the criminal justice system.

- **Youth and community dialogues** provide a safe space for conversations between law enforcement agencies and local stakeholders.

- **Community Action Plans (CAPs)** are small projects that generate opportunities for law enforcement, community members and youth to work together to promote security and improve their own neighborhoods.
CONTENTS

08  Chapter 1: Overcoming the Great Divide: “Soft Policing” vs. “Strong Policing”
11  Chapter 2: Thinking Local: Tailored Content Relevant to the Local Context
17  Chapter 3: Reaching Out: Breaking away from the “Silo Mentality”
20  Chapter 4: Connecting Efforts: Engaging Middle Management for Lasting Results
23  Chapter 5: Bringing Knowledge to the Table: Building a Common Youth Development Understanding
28  Chapter 6: Capitalizing on Concerns: Crime Prevention Efforts through Community Engagement
31  Chapter 7: Long-Term Impact: Achieving Sustainability through Partnerships
36  Chapter 8: Beyond the International Agenda: Focusing on Local Crime Concerns
39  Chapter 9: Boosting Decision Making: Making Data Work for You
42  Chapter 10: Educating At-Risk Youth about the Law Enforcement System: Selling the Experiential Learning Idea
crime prevention policing police officers culture enforcement school community engagement leaders leadership facilitators training curriculum courses youthpositive knowledge development objectives dialogues capitalizing effective supportive enthusiastic sustainability action plan valuable education Padf Rapp
In 2013, the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) began implementing the Resistance and Prevention Program (RAPP), with funding from the US Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

RAPP aims to build a strong and positive relationship between community members — particularly at-risk youth — and law enforcement agencies in The Bahamas, Trinidad & Tobago and Suriname. The program uses a multi-agency approach to promote closer and more effective cooperation among law enforcement, the justice sector, government, civil society, and communities to work together to address challenges related to crime and violence.

PADF presents the following ten lessons learned through the implementation of the Resistance and Prevention Program (RAPP) in Trinidad & Tobago, The Bahamas, and Suriname. PADF hopes that projects under a similar implementation context may find very useful the following insights.
OVERCOMING THE GREAT DIVIDE: “SOFT POLICING” VS. “STRONG POLICING”

There is pervasive belief that police officers engaged in social crime prevention, community policing, and citizenship engagement play a “second class” role. It is imperative to raise awareness through training, success stories and advocacy at all levels of law enforcement to combat this stereotype. Through a collaborative approach between stakeholders, the current organizational culture among law enforcement personnel has the potential to shift, focusing on crime prevention instead of only on investigation and prosecution.
It’s not easy to bridge the gap between “soft policing” and “strong policing.” The Caribbean is no exception.

For decades, most senior police officers were trained to have a mindset that privileged the more investigative, repressive and prosecutorial role of the officers. Those young cadets who wanted to rise through the ranks had to be involved in tactical units, be effective at apprehending criminals, and be feared by those at-risk youth in the neighborhoods.

During the RAPP implementation, a significant amount of progress has been noted in the level of implementation of social crime prevention techniques by law enforcement. PADF staff has collected numerous testimonies from police officers, school administrators, teachers and community leaders regarding how law enforcement has become more effective at preventing crime, instead of solely working on prosecuting crimes already committed. However, some police circles still hold the belief that crime prevention techniques are the responsibility of social workers, instead of police officers (Lurigio, 1994).

BELOW: A police officer offers his assistance to a young person in Port of Spain, Trinidad.
It has been noted (Giancomatino, 2012) that “police actors are concerned with the disposition of identifiable work task, in large part due to the ways in which their performance is evaluated and rewards such as promotion and prestige are subsequently doled out.” Through consistent training and by showcasing evidence-based policies that have worked elsewhere, both in developed and developing countries, PADF has showcased that working in crime prevention does not translate into reducing the authority of police officers but instead seeks to improve their effectiveness. RAPP continues to work towards embedding crime prevention strategies in the daily routines of hundreds of police officers in Trinidad & Tobago, The Bahamas and Suriname.

**ABOVE:** Police officers in Trinidad & Tobago have actively engaged in courses provided through the RAPP program.
THINKING LOCAL: TAILORED CONTENT RELEVANT TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT

When training is tailored to local needs, the program’s impact is multiplied. Videos and webinars are very useful tools that enhanced RAPP’s training efforts and its overall impact. Some things to keep in mind include the time restrictions when it comes to training high ranking officials, and the challenge of replicating the courses after the “Training of Trainers” program ended. Having a separate training program focusing on teaching techniques for local facilitators in order to replicate the curriculum can provide sustainability and ownership of the program.
Training is an essential component of law enforcement agencies. Throughout the world, most officers join the police after a rigorous training program that could take months or even years.

The countries of Trinidad & Tobago, Bahamas and Suriname all have training programs for law enforcement officers not only prior to their enrollment, but also continuing education programs to make them better at the different roles and responsibilities that are required. Nevertheless, none of these law enforcement agencies utilized a training program with the exact and unique characteristics of RAPP. In fact, after conducting RAPP training, participants have talked frankly about the benefits of this training. The first thing worth establishing is that the most successful training sessions conducted by RAPP were the ones in which a diverse set of participants from different organizations attended. The possibility of networking with colleagues from other government agencies during the training course allows participants to develop joint interventions in the future. Yet this was not always the case, as in some instances, police authorities preferred the training to be provided exclusively to officers. While PADF was conscious and responsive to the needs of national authorities when they requested training courses targeted exclusively to officers from a particular agency, it has been proven that there is certainly an added value in a courses that incorporates a wide variety of stakeholders.

BELOW: Accreditation ceremony of police officers in Paramaribo, Suriname, on October 2016.
In addition to the technical aspects of the content of the RAPP curriculum, the program always aimed to create a positive atmosphere and allowed the facilitators to be clear about the expectations about how the class would be conducted. This is key when engaging in adult and professional education. The sessions were most effective when facilitators spoke naturally, taught interactively rather than simply reading from the instructor’s manual and when they always took control of the class to keep it moving. An important lesson to be learned when it comes to teaching law enforcement officials is that trainers need to be aware of the potential risk of losing control of the session. Some disruptive (or, said in other terms, “extremely enthusiastic”) trainees may sidetrack the training due to their interest in discussing particular issues based on their prior experience or beliefs. At times these issues may not have a clear connection with the topic of the course. In those cases, facilitators were able to redirect the conversation to ensure that the actual contents of the RAPP curriculum.

One of the crucial lessons learned from the training course is that there is a tremendous importance on the message that facilitators convey regarding the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies, and it is crucial that through their training, they demonstrate they have experienced the benefits of this approach firsthand. This makes it easier to deal with skeptics. Police are practical people, not always very enthusiastic about discussing or engaging in theoretical discussions, philosophy, or abstract concepts.

Participants are not reticent to voice skepticism if they have not experienced the cause-and-effect postulated by a new program, thus it is crucial to always devote time to practical examples that feel closer to the daily reality that officers face.

The RAPP program aims to create a positive atmosphere and provides facilitators with clear expectations about how the class will be conducted.

**ABOVE:** Former Detective (retired) Mary K. Wheat serves as lead facilitator of a RAPP course in the Trinidad & Tobago Police Academy.
Another important lesson from the course is the need to constantly pursue different alternatives to deliver content, particularly for participants with very limited time. Although senior level commanders have expressed interest in attending training provided by RAPP, the length of the curriculum made it difficult for many of them to fully participate. Also, it was noted that it was important to recruit trainers that understand and connect with the daily duties that law enforcement agents carry out. Many law enforcement officers were pleased to know that the RAPP facilitators were officers in their home country (USA). The trainees related much better to the RAPP facilitators when they saw the same commonalities between each other: stories about patrolling the streets, apprehending suspects, collaborating with forensic experts or providing testimony in court. While it is true that other professionals such as sociologists, lawyers and educators could become great facilitators, the RAPP experience highlights the benefits of using peers to convey the need for police officers to embrace the new concept of “social crime prevention.”

**DO** continuously provide law enforcement agencies and community organizations with relevant information about how to partner with one another in crime prevention activities.

**ABOVE:** Using a “Training of Trainers” methodology, RAPP has accredited police officers from each of the target countries to become facilitators who go on to train their fellow officers.
Evaluations submitted by program participants have confirmed that RAPP training has produced outstanding results. When asked about how useful the content of the program was in improving the daily activities that participants do in the organizations where they work, 87% of them responded that the course was very useful. Upon completion of the course, attendees re-enter their daily duties and beats with new approaches, a positive attitude towards the communities and possible ways to collaborate with government agencies, and problem-solving skills that were rarely seen before the RAPP training occurred. The course also teaches officers about the need for them to display leadership and increase their willingness to work as partners with the local community to fight crime and disorder problems.

It is obvious that better trained and therefore better qualified police officers will increase the police department’s efficiency and effectiveness. Still, it is important to recognize that such training needs to be constant, consistent and comprehensive. One of the lessons learned from RAPP is that relatively new training courses take a lot of time to be embedded into the core competencies that police training academies are devoted to developing.

PADF is continuing to work with government agencies on each of the targeted countries to ensure that the content of the RAPP curriculum is fully embedded into the daily training practices of the police academy.

One of the lessons learned from RAPP is that relatively new training courses take a lot of time to be embedded into the core competencies that police training academies are devoted to developing.
RAPP training ensures that participants from different government agencies have the same understanding of how to make streets, communities and cities safer.

The RAPP training is a 5-day course that teaches the fundamental aspects of social crime prevention and the need to address the root causes of crime through inter-agency collaboration. The curriculum was one of the first of its kind in the Caribbean context, and was designed in partnership and through close collaboration between PADF, police and law enforcement experts from the United States, and national police academies in Trinidad & Tobago, The Bahamas and Suriname.

The content of the handbooks incorporates the promotion of lawfulness, ethics and professionalism in law enforcement, historical approaches to reducing crime, community policing, communication skills, conflict resolution, and techniques on how to implement evidence-based crime prevention policies. The curriculum also includes lessons to teach participants about risk and protective factors, the root causes of youth crime and violence, domestic violence, teen dating abuse, cyber-bullying, and other common criminal offenses. Finally, the curriculum teaches participants practical ways to address the challenges they face in their daily work. The course has practical sessions that allow students to conduct problem solving analysis, crime prevention through environmental design, and skills necessary to lead community action plans to address crime and violence at the local level.

The training incorporates contemporary methods of adult education, including problem-based learning. Most importantly, the RAPP training ensures that participants from the police and different government organizations with roles relevant to citizen security and justice issues have the same understanding of how to make streets, communities and cities safer places.

The program was tailored to each country and agency’s unique needs. Researchers and community policing experts and practitioners from the United States were in charge of the curriculum design, receiving permanent input from local experts in the countries. The flexibility of the curriculum has allowed for minor changes that have been easily incorporated when the audience includes representatives from civil society organizations and other stakeholders at the local level. An important long-term benefit of the training is that it furthers institutionalization of social crime prevention, community policing and problem-oriented policing.

**ABOVE:** A police officer uses the SARA model to prevent violence in a crime-ridden neighborhood in Nickerie, Suriname.
REACHING OUT: BREAKING AWAY FROM THE “SILO MENTALITY”

In order to address the root causes of crime, partnerships, multi-agency collaboration and hands-on efforts from stakeholders are needed. Bringing together agencies to sign MOUs or put together written directives is not enough to overcome a “silo mentality.” Effective and strong multi-agency partnerships are built over time, through patience, energy and resources. In order to guarantee a high level of involvement, all stakeholders must recognize they have a shared responsibility when it comes to crime prevention.
The “silo mentality” refers to the organizational culture prevalent in government agencies that perceive and execute their responsibilities, areas of intervention and daily duties as belonging only to themselves and with total disregard for any interconnection or collaboration with other agencies that may have something to contribute to the overall task of social progress or good governance for the country.

The causes of such practices are beyond the scope of this document, but it is enough to say that such organizational phenomenon is very common throughout the Caribbean region. At early stages of the implementation of the project, PADF staff was confronted with different variants of this idea coming from different agencies: from law enforcement, to education officers, to youth ministries and social services agencies. Phrases like “that is not my responsibility” or “they should do their job and I do mine” were commonplace at early stages of program implementation and highlighted the need for a program like RAPP that promotes effective inter-agency collaboration to address the root causes of crime.

In some instances, agencies signed MOUs or their authorities put in place written directives. To the novice eye, this seems to solve all the issues, but reality is much more complex.

While those tools play an important role and signal commitment to better cooperate among different agencies, the truth is that additional time, energy, and resources need to be devoted to ensure effective and strong multi-agency partnerships.

PADF has brought together technical staff from multiple agencies to attend joint training sessions. Those learning spaces allow the participants to better interact with one another, become aware of the projects in which each of them is involved and see the similarities and/or the synergies that could potentially benefit everyone if tighter collaboration is achieved. Additionally, RAPP promotes a collaborative process: namely, that each “Community Action Plan” should be drafted ensuring multi-agency representation.

**ABOVE:** University lecturer Detective Jason Jones serves as lead facilitator of a RAPP course provided to the Korps Politie Suriname, in Paramaribo.
The project also conducts youth and community dialogues where the attendees can share their concerns and challenges related to crime and violence in their communities, schools and even their own homes (Dougherty, 2013). By actively engaging in these dialogues, authorities can fully understand that no single agency has all the tools, resources or even mandate to solve these issues, but instead that it requires profound collaboration between different agencies, including, but not limited to, the police. These dialogues provided input to conduct “Community Action Plans.” After many dialogues, RAPP facilitators approached the top officials in their respective agencies and discussed strategies to solve the issues identified by the community as catalysts of crime (Bohm, 2000). Finally, through experiential learning activities at-risk youth is exposed to the daily working processes of law enforcement agencies. These activities not only benefit the so-called “legal socialization” of youth, but also allows the agencies to have positive interactions with youth, which eventually make it easier to collaborate in small scale crime prevention projects on the ground. The use of mock courts allowed judges, district attorneys, bailiffs and correctional officers to fully engage with their peers from other government agencies, sharing experiences with at-risk youth and better understanding how each other’s role affects one another (Tyler, 2008).
CONNECTING EFFORTS: ENGAGING MIDDLE MANAGEMENT FOR LASTING RESULTS

Beyond the enthusiasm and support that RAPP has received from top agency leadership, a compelling effort has been made to link middle management with the program’s implementation. This strategic approach exposes middle managers to future reform initiatives, increasing opportunities for continued, lasting results.
Since the beginning of the project, the top leadership at various agencies has been enthusiastic and supportive of RAPP.

A few examples of such support was the Cabinet approval granted to RAPP by the Parliament of Trinidad & Tobago to facilitate program implementation, the directive of the Chief Justice of Trinidad to instruct magistrates to participate in mock trials attended by youth, the authorization in Suriname by the Ministry of Justice to work in a very complex and not very open environment such as the juvenile detention center, and the commitment in the Bahamas from the Royal Police Force to have police officers from the Urban Renewal Centers to become the leaders at implementing community action plans devoted to increase public safety.

Buy-in from the top leadership is crucial. PADF was able to secure it and is grateful to those at the highest level of power in their national governments who saw the value that a program like RAPP could add to their daily operations. However, it needs to be said that law enforcement officers throughout the world follow a very hierarchical pattern of command. Most of the officers do not report to the national authorities or national headquarters, but instead they are placed under supervision of high ranking officers in charge of units based on geographic delimitation or thematic/tactical expertise.

While, in general terms, the experience of PADF collaborating with such middle managers has been positive, there might exist the possibility of friction if goals and expectations between project staff, regular officers and middle managers are not fully shared among these three groups. Internationally-funded projects need to work diligently to get the buy-in from those middle managers whose personal background and professional experience may not be as receptive to such innovative projects as compared to those of high level officials (Vito, 2005). The role of the middle managers is key because most of the time they are the ones who can determine whether officers will be allowed to take time off their daily duties to participate in training, which officers will be working in the different crime-ridden neighborhoods, whether or not officers should engage with other governmental organizations that work in such neighborhoods, and other important decisions that likely effect a project such as RAPP.

BELOW: Former U.S. Ambassador to Suriname Jay Anania (right) attends a ceremony honoring RAPP trainees.
PADF’s work in the Caribbean has confirmed that a major factor that law enforcement middle managers confront is the changing workforce and the expectations of newly appointed officers within the organization.

According to testimonies collected by PADF’s staff, there are striking differences between police officers today and those of a generation ago: it seems that there are distinct working styles, differences in terms of organizational culture, limited training in both scope and length compared to previous generations of police officers, and a weaker sense of belonging and discipline as opposed to those who enrolled in past decades. While it was beyond the scope of RAPP to assess difference in skills between older and younger police officers, the results of the training were quite beneficial for both groups.

According to a study by the National Institute of Justice, middle managements’ power to catalyze change can be harnessed to advance social crime prevention strategies and community policing objectives by including those managers in planning, acknowledging their legitimate self-interests, and motivating their investment in long-range solutions that enhance community safety and security. RAPP’s emphasis on inter-agency collaboration and problem solving requires that middle managers draw on their familiarity with the bureaucracy to secure, maintain, and use authority to empower their subordinates. Recognizing the occasional need for strict top-down operational control, RAPP has worked diligently to ensure middle managers’ buy-in with the program to provide an enabling environment in which lower rank officers feel comfortable reaching out to the communities where they serve.
BRINGING KNOWLEDGE TO THE TABLE: BUILDING A COMMON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT UNDERSTANDING

RAPP works to improve the attitude of at-risk youth toward police. But it’s equally important to bring the police closer to at-risk youth. In many cases, the lack of knowledge and skills from police officers leads to negative experiences with adolescents. Through training, RAPP has focused on shifting negative perceptions police officers often have about youth into more positive ones. As a result, police officers who have been part of RAPP now feel much more confident about their skills to reach out the youth in crime-ridden communities.
One of the objectives of the RAPP program is to increase trust and collaboration between at-risk youth and law enforcement agencies.

Based on that premise, RAPP has found that one of the major obstacles that prevent such trust from developing is the lack of knowledge among law enforcement officers regarding youth behavior and strategies for interacting effectively with youth.

PADF’s approach is built upon the evidence that shows that by providing officers with such body of knowledge, this will improve police attitudes toward young people, particularly those at-risk or who live in crime-ridden neighborhoods. During the RAPP training, participants are exposed to different theories related to the root causes of adolescent crime. Consequently, this increases the likelihood that police/youth interactions will have positive outcomes for youth, and increases the likelihood that youth will respond positively toward police officers if approach by them (Anderson, 2007).

Throughout the implementation of RAPP, it has been confirmed that law enforcement and justice sector officials need to permanently receive scientific information about behavioral characteristics on youth and adolescents. Youth cannot be perceived primarily as the source of potential violent or criminal behavior, but also as powerful actors that can bring positive change in their communities.
Upon training completion, using data collected from surveys applied to course participants, PADF’s staff found out that participants have changed their attitudes toward working with youth. Most notably, participants in the training were significantly more likely than before to feel that they can lead a group conversation with youth they don’t know. Participation in the RAPP training boosted their confidence in having the skills necessary for interacting with youth in a non-confrontational setting, and validated their commitment to the idea that law enforcement officers can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their other enforcement activities.

By teaching law enforcement officers how to conduct RAPP activities such as youth dialogues, implementation of community action plans or participation in mock courts, PADF has learned many valuable things. First of all, it is fundamental for law enforcement to develop a good rapport with youth. Adolescents are not likely to open up if they feel uncomfortable. In order to have such rapport, it is important for officers to listen openly and non-judgmentally (Munoz, 1994). RAPP activities have taught law enforcement officers not to expect a long attention span from adolescents; through the training they are encouraged to keep all their presentations short, precise and interactive. During the work carried out with at-risk youth in the targeted countries, PADF staff has been able to witness the deep sense of disenfranchisement that exists among them. Consequently, RAPP activities are an important tool to empower them through choices and through their voices and actions. Through RAPP activities, law enforcement officers can create an environment where those adolescents feel they have choice and control over their thoughts and actions, and fully collaborate with them in making their communities safer (Thurau, 2009).

It is fundamental for law enforcement to develop a good rapport with youth.

It is never a good thing to act hurried, as if there are time limitations while talking to youth members, because this makes them feel used. Sometimes, RAPP originally had planned an activity for 2 hours and 4 hours later the activity may still be going on. The reason is that very seldom have those at-risk youth had, in the past, the chance to engage one-on-one in a positive way with a police officer, a magistrate, or an important government official. The RAPP staff has learned that on each activity, it is advisable to give the youth a chance to ask questions so they feel that they are a relevant stakeholder in the project. The bottom line is that facilitators from law enforcement agencies need to convey not only the messages that they want to say, but also the responses and themes that the youth want to hear and listen to what teenagers have to say.

BELOW: At Laventille Success Secondary School in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, RAPP has helped law enforcement personnel develop closer connections with youth.
CAPITALIZING ON CONCERNS: CRIME PREVENTION EFFORTS THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

High rates of crime in neighborhoods do not automatically translate into civic action to respond to such challenges. It is crucial to empower communities to bring about change on issues of public safety. Community concern about crime is a first step, but it is not enough. Community engagement takes significant time to emerge, particularly when different aspects of crime (burglaries, sexual assault, drug trafficking, etc.) affect diverse subsets of the community. Through the implementation of community action plans and community dialogues, RAPP has focused on making the most out of community concerns.
While police play an important role in crime control, the vast majority of crime control actually results from the everyday activities of law-abiding citizens.

An effective crime control strategy is one that not only acknowledges and embraces the importance of regular citizens in preventing crime but also seeks to enhance their ability to do so (Uchida et al., 2009). On issues related to crime prevention, community engagement takes significant time to emerge, particularly when different aspects of crime affect the diverse subsets of the population of each community differently. Based upon the experience of RAPP, it has been confirmed that high rates of crime and community concern about violent neighborhoods do not automatically translate into civic action to bring change needed in those communities. For this reason, it is important to think outside the box and work diligently to mobilize stakeholders by bringing in diverse partners throughout the project cycle (Walker, 1990).

While the need to partner with local police precincts or local school boards is evident, PADF has broadened this scope and has developed strong partnerships with women’s groups, universities, internationally-funded projects from other donors and small businesses who are located in crime-ridden neighborhoods.

BELOW: Police officers in Bahamas regularly visit secondary schools in targeted communities and positively engage with students and teachers.
It is important to note that private sector engagement in crime prevention is definitely imperative, but it is also difficult to obtain. RAPP has had different results engaging the private sector for crime prevention. Regrettably, many businesses see the context of crime and violence that exist in the neighborhoods where they are located as some external phenomenon that only affects their business at the micro level. Such beliefs then translate into individualized solutions, such as installing video cameras, building protective fences or hiring extra security guards. PADF began to reach out to business owners to engage them into broader crime prevention activities, such as the implementation of community action plans. In some instances, the private sector has donated supplies to complete those activities, while in other cases they have allowed RAPP to conduct training and awareness sessions in their facilities and devoted time of their employees.

Community engagement is a key feature of effective crime prevention (Camina 2004; Mistry 2007). Involvement and commitment to the project by different stakeholders are have also been important factors in the successful implementation of the RAPP program. In general, when it comes to crime, violence and disorderly conduct, communities organize themselves because they are facing a common need. Based on the RAPP implementation, it was concluded that it is crucial to combine any citizen security strategy with a civil society strengthening process to make community groups in the Caribbean stronger and better prepared to effectively collaborate with the police and other government agencies.

Working in very difficult communities, PADF staff confirmed that prolonged periods of economic challenges, poverty, and lack of resources have taken a toll on social cohesion, which makes it more difficult to address factors leading to community disorganization. Through community dialogues and community action plans, RAPP has sought to empower communities to participate in decision-making processes, increase resources, provide services and economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities, and address low level physical or social disorder that may be a precursor to more serious problems (Sampson, 2004).

The experience implementing RAPP has revealed that the most successful interventions are those where members of the community are enthusiastic and supportive of the initiative. But for this to happen, the implementation experience has also shown that it is important to begin working with the community as early as possible. The RAPP activities were always intended to involve the community in both the design and implementation of a strategy to address the roots of crime. However, there were instances in which the police took the lead without significant community engagement, which produced mixed results.

ABOVE: RAPP facilitator Regilio Hardjopawiro was a gang member a few years ago. He now works at the juvenile detention center in Suriname and provided his testimony during a RAPP youth dialogue.
Private sector engagement in crime prevention is very important, but it is also difficult to obtain. Project staff encountered many challenges while trying to develop public-private partnerships. Many businesses see citizen security as a “government responsibility.” However, with a clear and consistent message, diverse alliances can be established and the results can be extraordinary in their sustainability.
Another challenge that RAPP had to overcome was the pervasive idea that “crime and violence is the sole responsibility of the government” (Grinc, 1994). Most of the community leaders are well aware of the need to collaborate with government agencies in environmental education and health campaigns. It is not uncommon to see how the NGOs support efforts against infectious diseases. However, when the subject of collective action is crime and violence, usually the community feels rattled. “How are we supposed to fight crime?” many have asked. “We are not police officers.” The RAPP facilitators have devoted time and energy to ensure that the communities being addressed see the connection between their engagement or lack thereof and the context of violence that affects their surroundings (Burton, 2004). PADF’s experience implementing RAPP shows how necessary it is to establish appropriate consultation mechanisms at the beginning of the project to get input from universities, churches, local NGOs, business operators, local service providers and others about the development of strategies that are likely to require their involvement and that will impact upon them (Peterson et. al., 2000).
This was particularly true when implementing the Community Action Plans (CAPs). While the importance of mobilizing and engaging community seems obvious, the challenge is deciding whom to approach. The term “community” is broadly used to define groups of people, whether stakeholders, interest groups, citizen groups, or others. A community may be a geographic location, a community of similar interests (such as faith-based or business groups), or a community around a particular activity, like sports. In the context of the Bahamas, Trinidad & Tobago and Suriname, PADF conducted community assessments and stakeholder mapping to identify solid partners for collaboration.

**DO** devote time and energy to identify community assets and resources such as community space, in-kind and financial donations, likely sources of volunteers, and other assets.
EFFECTIVE POLICE WORK

The training provided by RAPP has become a valuable asset for police, justice sector and government organizations to embed crime prevention strategies and inter-agency collaboration.

53%

Proportion of female participation in RAPP activities

87%

Average satisfaction with the RAPP training among police officers, law enforcement personnel and justice sector officials

9,790

At-risk youth and community members from crime-ridden neighborhoods have actively participated in dialogues
Hand in Hand with the Youth

RAPP promotes positive interaction between at-risk youth, law enforcement and justice sector officials.

2,007
Police, law enforcement personnel and justice sector officials trained

5,810
At-risk youth have participated in experiential learning activities, that promote understanding of the criminal justice system

21
Community action plans (CAPS) have been implemented and improved the conditions of public safety in the targeted neighborhoods
Don’t focus solely on crimes that make national or international news, such as homicide, gun and gang violence and drug trafficking. In many countries and for many audiences, issues of teen dating abuse, domestic violence, cyber bullying and other criminal offenses are more relevant to the audience than extreme violence. Crime varies greatly from country to country, and even from community to community within a country, thus a “one size fits all” strategy does not work. The RAPP program effectively identified local crime concerns, extending the program’s reach.
For many years crime prevention and citizen security programs have worked hard to reduce homicides, drug trafficking, and illegal possession of guns and firearms.

While it is true that those high-profile, high-visibility, high-profiting criminal activities are a major threat to the public safety of any community; it is also true that crime and violence comes in many forms. Specific issues of teen dating abuse, domestic violence, and cyberbullying could be much more relevant to the targeted audiences than broad categories of burglary or homicide. The prevalence of different categories of crime varies greatly from country to country, thus a "one size fits all" strategy does not work.

In many of the youth dialogues conducted by PADF the participants talked openly about their public safety concerns. Many of the girls and young women described in detail that their fear of victimization does not come from the possibility of getting murdered, but instead from the daily harassment that they can suffer when they do not accept romantic advances from fellow classmates or neighbors. They also described how prevalent is the fact that older men date younger women or even adolescents, which in itself constitutes a crime or could become one due to the excessive control that the male partner usually exercises on such types of relationships (Cops, 2010).

DO partner with local “crime observatory” or violence monitoring centers that collect data, information and best practices.

BELOW: A police officer provides insights and recommendations to youth at a secondary school in New Providence, Bahamas.
Male students have different concerns: many are targeted by gangs, while others are victims of school bullying. The practice of “taxing,” which is how they describe the practice of taking other people’s lunch money by violence or threat, is more common than anyone can imagine. The RAPP staff even heard testimonies of students who said their own parents send them to school without lunch or transportation money and explicitly instructed them to “figure out a way” of getting what they needed.

At the neighborhood level, residents perceive the deterioration of public safety, even if homicides are not as common as they may be in more violent countries. Some of their main concerns relate to the use of public space, such as the bad shape of neighborhood/community parks, which prevents young people from using them in a positive way and create “no-man’s land” that could be used by criminal groups. Additionally, the lack of enforcement by authorities regarding semi-destroyed buildings, cars, garbage sites and other infrastructure problems increases insecurity and fear of victimization.

For all these reasons, RAPP was perceived as a valuable program, as it addressed the real issues that were commonplace. These issues were taken into account in the program design and implementation (Hinds, 2009).

**RAPP** was perceived as a valuable program that addressed the real issues most commonly faced by communities.

**ABOVE:** During the mock trials organized by RAPP, youth display their leadership skills and become familiar with the criminal justice system.
BOOST DECISION MAKING: MAKING DATA WORK FOR YOU

The RAPP program captures information in order to improve program performance. All data collection has been tailored to participants. The data collection system must be easily managed. It’s a common mistake to implement tedious data collection instruments that aren’t used for improving program implementation.
In the international development community, projects need **clear mechanisms** that show whether results are achieved. Thus, it is recommended to tailor your M&E system to your **audience**.

Throughout the RAPP implementation one of the main lessons learned is that it is crucial to have a comprehensive and relevant, but at the same time easy to manage, data collection system. It was found over and over that complicated and long surveys are not usually completed by youth who are participants in program activities. The data collected needs to be useful, reliable, and it needs to enrich the decision-making process. It is important that the data is used to make the program better (Love-day, 2000). Also, there needs to be a data collection mechanism in place prior to the beginning of the activities. This is not always easy to do, as the project timeline is usually too short to wait for weeks and/or months to develop the data collection system without having other activities simultaneously happening at the local level.

Another element of a data collection system is that any project may accumulate a vast number of forms, surveys, responses, testimo-

ny or recorded interviews with project beneficiaries, but this data needs to be available in a timely manner, otherwise its relevance and usefulness becomes minimal. In many instances, the RAPP staff was able to analyze the surveys completed by trainees or youth whom participated in the different activities the very next day. Such analysis allowed the program to make corrections and adjustments in future iterations and greatly supported the decision making process. In other instances, particularly when there was transition between staff, the evaluation forms accumulated and did not allow for immediate analysis. One of the lessons learned about this is the usefulness of a technology-based system, which would provide seamless integration of data collection, data analysis and reporting, without the need for local staff to devote too much time to this task.

A good data management system and sound analysis improve project implementation and produce better results.
Obtaining crime and violence data from government sources poses numerous challenges. On one hand, in most of the countries, government data is certainly the most comprehensive and nationally available source of the data. On the other hand, due to political and organizational pressures, it is easily manipulated or restricted. In many Caribbean countries, comprehensive data collection and management is still being developed. Many participants of RAPP trainings do great work in the different organizations (police, judiciary, education, social services, NGOs, etc.) but they do that work almost by intuition, blindfolded. A project like RAPP would certainly benefit from having access to more comprehensive datasets that are usually only available to high level government authorities. PADF believes that having access to more data will certainly strengthen RAPP and any other similar programs (Braga, 2005). To overcome such challenges, RAPP has strengthened its work at the individual level. Teachers, social workers, community leaders and police officers can describe first hand why a particular community is being affected by crime, even in the absence of formal statistics. At the same time, testimonies from students and teachers can show RAPP staff the tremendous impact that youth dialogues have had in the school population, even if the statistics of “school discipline incidents” are not open to the public, or are not recorded by school administrators, due to the fact that those reports may trigger negative consequences for funding within the hierarchical organization of the school districts (Di Napoli, 2015).

BELOW: In Trinidad & Tobago, RAPP has provided training to government officials and representatives from civil society organizations to promote community engagement and partnership development.
EDUCATING AT-RISK YOUTH ABOUT THE LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM: SELLING THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IDEA

Research has proven how useful programs such as mock courts and job shadowing are to enhance the cooperation between law enforcement and at-risk youth and reducing the stigma that some of them face. Despite their proven usefulness, law-related education programs are a “tough sell” in some countries or communities. Law enforcement and justice sector agencies can be reluctant to devote time for these types of exercises. This challenge stems not only from the size of the judicial docket that most magistrates have, but also from a lack of understanding of the benefits in reducing future violence and crime.
The use of experiential learning is a proven tool to bridge the gap between law enforcement and at-risk youth.

In the context of the United States, it has been demonstrated for over two decades that law-related education and experiential learning activities linked to the criminal justice system are useful tools to enhance the cooperation and trust between law enforcement and at-risk youth. Through the use of interactive teaching strategies, such as cooperative learning, mock court trials, job shadowing and others, this teaching methodology has the potential to increase academic achievement and promote more favorable attitudes toward school and law enforcement (Slavin & Madden, 1989), increase academic performance, and reduce the likelihood of becoming delinquent (Hawkins, Doucek, & Lishner, 1998; Browning, Thornberry, & Porter, 1999).

Conversely, in Caribbean countries, these types of activities are somewhat foreign to the school system and to law enforcement and justice sector agencies. Administrators and teachers usually never consider them as a feasible alternative to more traditional extracurricular activities, such as sports or field trips. Moreover, law enforcement and justice sector agencies in the Caribbean are somewhat reluctant to devote time for these type of exercises due to the high volume of cases that they have to process on a daily basis.

In order to overcome these challenges, PADF has worked tirelessly to promote the use of experiential learning to target at-risk youth. Teachers and school administrators stated that without an external partner like the RAPP program that provided the necessary funding and technical expertise on how to develop mock trials and job shadowing activities, these would have never happened. According to these testimonies, the lack of resources and even lack of creativity from many school authorities would have prevented these exercises in the absence of PADF.

**BELOW:** RAPP works in schools located in “hotspot” areas affected by crime and violence.
For the purposes of RAPP, at-risk youth are those who have been subject to a combination of interrelated factors at the individual, family or community level that result in a greater likelihood for the development of delinquency, substance abuse, or other related anti-social and self-destructive behaviors. It is important to recognize that in most cases these at-risk youth are not current members of gangs. They are not necessarily overtly aggressive, or what many may consider the “stereotypical” juvenile delinquents. In fact, most at-risk youth are quiet, withdrawn, and passive adolescents. They are not limited to one geographical area or socio-economic or ethnic group in a particular country. As one of the Magistrates who presided over a mock court organized by RAPP in Trinidad & Tobago said once: “At-risk youth are present in every classroom in every school, even private schools. My own son may be considered an at-risk youth”.

PADF has seen how experiential learning has the potential to increase academic achievement, promote more favorable attitudes toward law enforcement, and even inspire some students to become police officers, judges, prosecutors or defense lawyers. The experiential learning activities conducted by RAPP have effectively taught students the need to comply by the rules governing behavior in the classroom, school, and community by demonstrating that rules and laws merit compliance when they are reasonable and fairly applied.

By talking to participants of job shadowing and mock courts, the PADF staff has compiled a list of the benefits derived from them, including the following: improvements in the levels of empathy toward victims of crimes, increase in their communication skills, better problem solving and critical-reasoning skills; better understanding of the consequences of poor decision making; increase feelings of autonomy and self-esteem; sense of purpose and future. One of the lessons learned from RAPP is that these activities do improve the dispute resolution skills that students have, by teaching them socially acceptable means for handling conflict.

Additionally, having a positive interaction with law enforcement officers in a position of real authority creates high expectations for good behavior, clear rules of conduct, and appreciation for the rewards for appropriate behavior in at-risk youth.

PADF has seen how experiential learning has the potential to increase academic achievement, promote favorable attitudes toward law enforcement and even inspire students to careers in civil service.
Those successes do not come without tremendous challenges. Organizing mock courts or job shadowing in a country where these types of activities have never happened do not occur easily. In the case of the police and the judiciary, the main challenge is to get buy-in and authorization from the top management. A big part of the successes of RAPP organizing mock courts in Trinidad and Tobago comes from the fact that the Chief Justice is a firm believer in the benefits of these activities. Authorization to expose at-risk youth to the daily operations of the criminal justice system is not easy to obtain. Police officers may feel that the precincts do not have good space to accommodate such large groups of students that are visiting the police station. They may also see that this activity provides little value added to their core business of apprehending suspects or patrolling the neighborhoods. Juvenile justice magistrates and prosecutors may also face legal restrictions that prevent adolescents from visiting the courthouses. In some countries, correctional facilities are also very restrictive in terms of access.

PADF has been able to build partnerships with the aforementioned stakeholders of each country to facilitate the implementation of these activities. It may come as a surprise to many, but one of the most difficult groups to engage in these experiential learning activities, particularly mock courts, are the law schools and the bar associations. The value that such organizations can provide to any law-related education to at-risk youth is evident. Still, their engagement has not been easy to obtain.

Another challenge that RAPP has faced is the delicate balance that needs to be obtained between the regular priorities of the school system and extracurricular activities, such as those provided by RAPP. School principals and teachers do their best to fulfill the academic calendar of regular classes, such as language, math, chemistry, history, social sciences; and the introduction of extracurricular activities such as mock courts and job shadowing may be difficult. Nationwide testing poses additional restrictions on what type of activities teachers and school administrators may implement. Other restrictions have to do with available school personnel, lack of infrastructure, transportation, and other inputs that may be taken for granted by those who are not familiar with the context of those small Caribbean countries. Many schools close their buildings as soon as the day ends, which makes it difficult for school groups to get developed or for activities to be organized after hours.

ABOVE: Female adolescents are also affected by crime and violence or can become recruited by gangs. Gender has been a cross-cutting theme of RAPP throughout implementation.
**DOs**

**DO** have a comprehensive baseline assessment prior to the deployment of project activities.

**DO** make training materials country-specific. The course is much more effective when participants can relate to the examples, the videos, the statistics and the context provided by a facilitator that is using a manual drafted for that particular country.

**DO** develop a clear and consistent communications strategy. This should be an integral part of a crime prevention action plan because it is an essential part of mobilizing local communities and helping make the right connections to build partnerships.

**DO** use the media as an important crime prevention partner. For most of the public, the media can be their only source of information about the criminal justice system. Their perceptions and attitudes are shaped by what they hear, read and see. Media can help promote crime prevention efforts and they can also help deliver important messages related to community safety.

**DO** have a clear process for the mapping of community assets that can provide the program with information on resources or skills that are available at the community level to ensure project sustainability.

**DO** be aware of gender issues. Crime and violence affect boys and girls differently than adults.
DOs

DO have a comprehensive baseline assessment prior to the deployment of project activities.

DO make training materials country-specific. The course is much more effective when participants can relate to the examples, the videos, the statistics and the context provided by a facilitator that is using a manual drafted for that particular country.

DO develop a clear and consistent communications strategy. This should be an integral part of a crime prevention action plan because it is an essential part of mobilizing local communities and helping make the right connections to build partnerships.

DO use the media as an important crime prevention partner. For most of the public, the media can be their only source of information about the criminal justice system. Their perceptions and attitudes are shaped by what they hear, read and see. Media can help promote crime prevention efforts and they can also help deliver important messages related to community safety.

DO have a clear process for the mapping of community assets that can provide the program with information on resources or skills that are available at the community level to ensure project sustainability.

DON’Ts

DON’T expect, as implementer of an internationally-funded project, that just because you are offering training, everyone will automatically and enthusiastically enroll in such courses.

DON’T expect law enforcement agencies to embed social crime prevention techniques and community-policing practices solely by delivering training courses. Additional efforts need to be made to get buy in from the law enforcement authorities, their staff at the police academies and the instructors.

DON’T work only in highly populated areas. While it is obvious that such geographic districts are key for any crime prevention program, it is also crucial to reach out to more isolated areas of each targeted country.

DON’T get discouraged by the presence of “iron fist” policy proposals in the public discourse. Countries experiencing very high rates of crime and violence often resort, perhaps not surprisingly, to increasingly repressive measures. They are less likely to invest time or resources in crime prevention strategies, but do not lose hope and continue spreading your message of social crime prevention.

DON’T be aware of gender issues. Crime and violence affect boys and girls differently than adults.
REFERENCES


The Pan American Development Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, brings together many stakeholders to improve livelihoods, empower communities, strengthen civil society, support human rights, protect the environment and respond to natural disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean. Established by the Organization of American States in 1962, PADF has worked in every country in the region. In the last decade, PADF has reached more than 92 million people, investing more than $600 million in development resources throughout the region.

Roberto Obando
Project Director
202.458.6351 | riobando@padf.org

Pan American Development Foundation
1889 F Street, NW, 2nd Floor Washington, D.C. 20006
202.458.3969 | padf.org