



Relevant instruments in the field of justice for children

Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime

Adopted by the Economic and Social Council in Resolution 2002/13 of 24 July 2002.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. There is clear evidence that well-planned crime prevention strategies not only prevent crime and victimization, but also promote community safety and contribute to the sustainable development of countries. Effective, responsible crime prevention enhances the quality of life of all citizens. It has long-term benefits in terms of reducing the costs associated with the formal criminal justice system, as well as other social costs that result from crime. Crime prevention offers opportunities for a humane and more cost-effective approach to the problems of crime. The present Guidelines outline the necessary elements for effective crime prevention.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

2. It is the responsibility of all levels of government to create, maintain and promote a context within which relevant governmental institutions and all segments of civil society, including the corporate sector, can better play their part in preventing crime.

3. For the purposes of the present Guidelines, “crime prevention” comprises strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes. The enforcement of laws, sentences and corrections, while also performing preventive functions, falls outside the scope of the Guidelines, given the comprehensive coverage of the subject in other United Nations instruments.

4. The present Guidelines address crime and its effects on victims and society and take into account the growing internationalization of criminal activities.

5. Community involvement and cooperation/partnerships represent important elements of the concept of crime prevention set out herein. While the term “community” may be defined in different ways, its essence in this context is the involvement of civil society at the local level.

6. Crime prevention encompasses a wide range of approaches, including those which:

- (a) Promote the well-being of people and encourage pro-social behaviour through social, economic, health and educational measures, with a particular emphasis on children and

- youth, and focus on the risk and protective factors associated with crime and victimization (prevention through social development or social crime prevention);
- (b) Change the conditions in neighbourhoods that influence offending, victimization and the insecurity that results from crime by building on the initiatives, expertise and commitment of community members (locally based crime prevention);
 - (c) Prevent the occurrence of crimes by reducing opportunities, increasing risks of being apprehended and minimizing benefits, including through environmental design, and by providing assistance and information to potential and actual victims (situational crime prevention);
 - (d) Prevent recidivism by assisting in the social reintegration of offenders and other preventive mechanisms (reintegration programmes).

III. BASIC PRINCIPLES

Government leadership

7. All levels of government should play a leadership role in developing effective and humane crime prevention strategies and in creating and maintaining institutional frameworks for their implementation and review.

Socio-economic development and inclusion

8. Crime prevention considerations should be integrated into all relevant social and economic policies and programmes, including those addressing employment, education, health, housing and urban planning, poverty, social marginalization and exclusion. Particular emphasis should be placed on communities, families, children and youth at risk.

Cooperation/partnerships

9. Cooperation/partnerships should be an integral part of effective crime prevention, given the wide-ranging nature of the causes of crime and the skills and responsibilities required to address them. This includes partnerships working across ministries and between authorities, community organizations, nongovernmental organizations, the business sector and private citizens.

Sustainability/accountability

10. Crime prevention requires adequate resources, including funding for structures and activities, in order to be sustained. There should be clear accountability for funding, implementation and evaluation and for the achievement of planned results.

Knowledge base

11. Crime prevention strategies, policies, programmes and actions should be based on a broad, multidisciplinary foundation of knowledge about crime problems, their multiple causes and promising and proven practices.

Human rights/rule of law/culture of lawfulness

12. The rule of law and those human rights which are recognized in international instruments to which Member States are parties must be respected in all aspects of crime prevention. A culture of lawfulness should be actively promoted in crime prevention.

Interdependency

13. National crime prevention diagnoses and strategies should, where appropriate, take account of links between local criminal problems and international organized crime.

Differentiation

14. Crime prevention strategies should, when appropriate, pay due regard to the different needs of men and women and consider the special needs of vulnerable members of society.

IV. ORGANIZATION, METHODS AND APPROACHES

15. Recognizing that all States have unique governmental structures, this section sets out tools and methodologies that Governments and all segments of civil society should consider in developing strategies to prevent crime and reduce victimization. It draws on international good practice.

16. In some of the areas listed below, Governments bear the primary responsibility. However, the active participation of communities and other segments of civil society is an essential part of effective crime prevention. Communities, in particular, should play an important part in identifying crime prevention priorities, in implementation and evaluation, and in helping to identify a sustainable resource base.

A. Organization

Government structures

17. Governments should include prevention as a permanent part of their structures and programmes for controlling crime, ensuring that clear responsibilities and goals exist within government for the organization of crime prevention, by, inter alia:

- (a) Establishing centres or focal points with expertise and resources;
- (b) Establishing a crime prevention plan with clear priorities and targets;
- (c) Establishing linkages and coordination between relevant government agencies or departments;
- (d) Fostering partnerships with non-governmental organizations, the business, private and professional sectors and the community;
- (e) Seeking the active participation of the public in crime prevention by informing it of the need for and means of action and its role.

Training and capacity-building

18. Governments should support the development of crime prevention skills by:

- (a) Providing professional development for senior officials in relevant agencies;
- (b) Encouraging universities, colleges and other relevant educational agencies to offer basic and advanced courses, including in collaboration with practitioners;
- (c) Working with the educational and professional sectors to develop certification and professional qualifications;
- (d) Promoting the capacity of communities to develop and respond to their needs.

Supporting partnerships

19. Governments and all segments of civil society should support the principle of partnership, where appropriate, including:
- (a) Advancing knowledge of the importance of this principle and the components of successful partnerships, including the need for all of the partners to have clear and transparent roles;
 - (b) Fostering the formation of partnerships at different levels and across sectors;
 - (c) Facilitating the efficient operation of partnerships.

Sustainability

20. Governments and other funding bodies should strive to achieve sustainability of demonstrably effective crime prevention programmes and initiatives through, inter alia:
- (a) Reviewing resource allocation to establish and maintain an appropriate balance between crime prevention and the criminal justice and other systems, to be more effective in preventing crime and victimization;
 - (b) Establishing clear accountability for funding, programming and coordinating crime prevention initiatives;
 - (c) Encouraging community involvement in sustainability.

B. Methods

Knowledge base

21. As appropriate, Governments and/or civil society should facilitate knowledge-based crime prevention by, inter alia:
- (a) Providing the information necessary for communities to address crime problems;
 - (b) Supporting the generation of useful and practically applicable knowledge that is scientifically reliable and valid;
 - (c) Supporting the organization and synthesis of knowledge and identifying and addressing gaps in the knowledge base;
 - (d) Sharing that knowledge, as appropriate, among, inter alia, researchers, policymakers, educators, practitioners from other relevant sectors and the wider community;
 - (e) Applying this knowledge in replicating successful interventions, developing new initiatives and anticipating new crime problems and prevention opportunities;
 - (f) Establishing data systems to help manage crime prevention more cost-effectively, including by conducting regular surveys of victimization and offending;
 - (g) Promoting the application of those data in order to reduce repeat victimization, persistent offending and areas with a high level of crime.

Planning interventions

22. Those planning interventions should promote a process that includes:
- (a) A systematic analysis of crime problems, their causes, risk factors and consequences, in particular at the local level;
 - (b) A plan that draws on the most appropriate approach and adapts interventions to the specific local problem and context;
 - (c) An implementation plan to deliver appropriate interventions that are efficient, effective and sustainable;
 - (d) Mobilizing entities that are able to tackle causes;

- (e) Monitoring and evaluation.

Support evaluation

23. Governments, other funding bodies and those involved in programme development and delivery should:

- (a) Undertake short- and longer-term evaluation to test rigorously what works, where and why;
- (b) Undertake cost-benefit analyses;
- (c) Assess the extent to which action results in a reduction in levels of crime and victimization, in the seriousness of crime and in fear of crime;
- (d) Systematically assess the outcomes and unintended consequences, both positive and negative, of action, such as a decrease in crime rates or the stigmatization of individuals and/or communities.

C. Approaches

24. This section expands upon the social development and situational crime prevention approaches. It also outlines approaches that Governments and civil society should endeavour to follow in order to prevent organized crime.

Social development

25. Governments should address the risk factors of crime and victimization by:

- (a) Promoting protective factors through comprehensive and nonstigmatizing social and economic development programmes, including health, education, housing and employment;
- (b) Promoting activities that redress marginalization and exclusion;
- (c) Promoting positive conflict resolution;
- (d) Using education and public awareness strategies to foster a culture of lawfulness and tolerance while respecting cultural identities.

Situational

26. Governments and civil society, including, where appropriate, the corporate sector, should support the development of situational crime prevention programmes by, inter alia:

- (a) Improved environmental design;
- (b) Appropriate methods of surveillance that are sensitive to the right to privacy;
- (c) Encouraging the design of consumer goods to make them more resistant to crime;
- (d) Target “hardening” without impinging upon the quality of the built environment or limiting free access to public space;
- (e) Implementing strategies to prevent repeat victimization.

Prevention of organized crime

27. Governments and civil society should endeavour to analyse and address the links between transnational organized crime and national and local crime problems by, inter alia:

- (a) Reducing existing and future opportunities for organized criminal groups to participate in lawful markets with the proceeds of crime, through appropriate legislative, administrative or other measures;

- (b) Developing measures to prevent the misuse by organized criminal groups of tender procedures conducted by public authorities and of subsidies and licences granted by public authorities for commercial activity;
- (c) Designing crime prevention strategies, where appropriate, to protect socially marginalized groups, especially women and children, who are vulnerable to the action of organized criminal groups, including trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

V. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Standards and norms

28. In promoting international action in crime prevention, Member States are invited to take into account the main international instruments related to human rights and crime prevention to which they are parties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (General Assembly resolution 48/104), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) (General Assembly resolution 45/112, annex), the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (General Assembly resolution 40/34, annex), the guidelines for cooperation and technical assistance in the field of urban crime prevention (resolution 1995/9, annex), as well as the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century (General Assembly resolution 55/59, annex) and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto (General Assembly resolution 55/25, annexes I-III, and resolution 55/255, annex).

Technical assistance

29. Member States and relevant international funding organizations should provide financial and technical assistance, including capacity-building and training, to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, communities and other relevant organizations for the implementation of effective crime prevention and community safety strategies at the regional, national and local levels. In that context, special attention should be given to research and action on crime prevention through social development.

Networking

30. Member States should strengthen or establish international, regional and national crime prevention networks with a view to exchanging proven and promising practices, identifying elements of their transferability and making such knowledge available to communities throughout the world.

Links between transnational and local crime

31. Member States should collaborate to analyse and address the links between transnational organized crime and national and local crime problems.

Prioritizing crime prevention

32. The Centre for International Crime Prevention of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention of the Secretariat, the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network of institutes and other relevant United Nations entities should include in their priorities crime prevention as set out in these Guidelines, set up a coordination mechanism and establish a roster of experts to undertake needs assessment and to provide technical advice.

Dissemination

33. Relevant United Nations bodies and other organizations should cooperate to produce crime prevention information in as many languages as possible, using both print and electronic media.