



CRIME IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: TRENDS AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: Crime represents a substantial development challenge in the Caribbean region. In Trinidad and Tobago, crime is a high priority issue that consumes public and government attention. Consequently, the government is confronted with increasing pressure to implement effective policy to respond to the escalating crime. This paper attempts to explore the changing nature and trends in crime in Trinidad and Tobago. It particularly focuses on the upsurge in violent (serious) crimes, with special emphasis on homicides and its 'juvenisation'. The paper also discusses the implications of these demographic changes and proposes appropriate crime reduction strategies.

Keywords: *Crime, homicide, youth, crime reduction strategies, Trinidad and Tobago*

INTRODUCTION

Trinidad and Tobago, one of the leading economies in the Caribbean, is a major regional producer of oil and gas and the single largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to the United States¹. This country also has one of the highest growth rates and per capita incomes in Latin America² and in 2009 its 64th ranking on the Human Development Index (HDI) placed it in the category of high human development³. However, as the country progresses towards developed nation status, its inability to successfully apprehend the destabilising forces of crime and violence has impacted negatively on the country's image and development agenda. Trinidad and Tobago's overall crime rate has escalated significantly within the last decade and according to the results of successive

opinion polls crime is the 'single most important issue facing the nation'⁴.

Moreover, there has been a surge in murders during the last few years which have been attributed to a proliferation of illegal guns, drugs and gangs. Consequently, the government is confronted with increasing pressure to expeditiously implement effective policies to arrest the crime situation, particularly as it pertains to the escalating homicide rates.

This paper will, therefore, discuss the current crime trends in Trinidad and Tobago and identify some of the main characteristics of homicides within the country for the period 2000–2010. It will also provide some strategic recommendations for the effective design of crime and violence reduction interventions.

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**BRIEF REVIEW—HISTORICAL
BACKGROUND, DEFINITION
AND THEORY**

Comparable to other Caribbean societies, Trinidad and Tobago's historical underpinning is characterised by violence rooted in its legacy of colonialism, slavery and indentureship⁵. The sustained levels of violence and mortality during this era meant that by the end of the 19th century a 'culture of violence' had become well entrenched in the Caribbean colonies (Brereton, 2010) and according to Youseff (2010) it transformed into an implosive and self-perpetuating force that conditions contemporary human social interaction.

In the post-independence era, crime rose to the national agenda in the early 1980s following the sharp contraction of the economy after the oil boom of the 1970s. Crime was largely explained as an outcome of the economic recession, which increased levels of unemployment and poverty. Comparatively, crime remained relatively steady in the 1990s and exhibited a declining murder rate by mid-1990s (Sookram et al., 2009).

At the dawn of the 21st century, the widespread concern of crime and violence surfaced again at the top of the national governance agenda. Regionally, it became priority in 2001 with the establishment of the CARICOM Task Force on Crime and Security. Today, the Caribbean, along with Latin America, now ranks amongst the most violent regions in the world. In fact, the English-speaking Caribbean has one of the highest murder rates in the world at 30 per 100,000 persons (UNODC, 2007).

Crime can be defined as an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law (statutory or case law), committed without defence or justification, and sanctioned

by the state as a felony or misdemeanor (Tappan, 1960)⁶.

Multiple theoretical frameworks have been advanced to explain criminal behaviour in the Caribbean. Montoute and Anyanwu (2009), for example, pointed to the 'social change' model, where crime is explained as a normal offspring of development. This model essentially delineates a relationship between crime and the disintegration of norms and values of the modernisation process. Pryce (2007), on the other hand, posited that it is the type of development model that is relevant, as developing countries have been victims of exploitative models⁷.

Additionally, Strain Models of delinquency have been frequently utilised to explain crime among the region's youth. These models suggest that crime results from an inability to achieve desired goals through conventional means and as such young people resort to innovative means to achieve financial gain, power, status and identity (Hunte, 2006). In the contemporary period, the global, extra-regional context weighs heavily on crime discussions; through the exposition of the drug-crime nexus and 'weaponisation' of the region⁸.

However, in addressing the problem of crime and homicide, sufficient attention must be paid to the youth crime-nexus. Regional and local statistics point to the greater incidence of homicide among the youth, both as victims and offenders, indicating the 'juvenization' of homicide.

Regionally, WHO (2001), discovered that homicides was the second leading cause of death among young males in the Americas aged 15–24, in 10 out of the 21 countries that they reviewed with populations greater than 1 million. For instance, in Jamaica

young men between the ages 16 and 30 committed over 70% of the homicides in 2005, a year that the country had the highest global homicide rate (UNODC and World Bank, 2007). Similarly, in the Dominican Republic 62% of the prison population arrested for homicide were between 16 and 29 years old at the time of arrest (UNODC and World Bank, 2007).

In Trinidad and Tobago, on the other hand, research has shown that youth and young men, particularly, were also major victims of violent crimes. One study identified that from 2000 to 2006 the victims of homicidal crimes predominantly involved men between the ages of 15-24 (Agozino et al., 2009) while another highlighted that the age group 15-34 accounted for 64.8% of the murders in the country (Montoute and Anyanwu, 2009).

Furthermore, it is a widely held view that adolescents and youth are prone to deviant behaviour which, in several instances, eventually tempts into criminal activities. This conjecture has been reinforced by the early work of Wilson and Hernstein (1985), Blumstein (1986) and Goring (1993), all of whom found that from 15 to 16 years there was a rapid increase in criminal involvement, which usually spirals until age 24, and then

slowly declines. Additionally, these authors observed that from 29 years onwards there was a marked reduction in criminal involvement. Accordingly, they established that an increase in young people would produce an increase in aggregate crime rates. Addressing the needs and concerns of youth must, therefore, essentially form a significant part of government's crime reduction strategy.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMICIDES IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

This section intends to examine the current situation of homicides in Trinidad and Tobago through an analysis of key demographic data on perpetrators and victims of this crime in Trinidad and Tobago, for the period 2000-2010.

Serious crime

Serious crimes refer to violent crimes (i.e., offences against person, e.g., murder, wounding, kidnapping), property crimes (such as burglary and larcenies), dangerous drug offences and other serious offences (such as arson)⁹. Consequently, this category of crime tends to attract the greatest public concern (Figure 1).

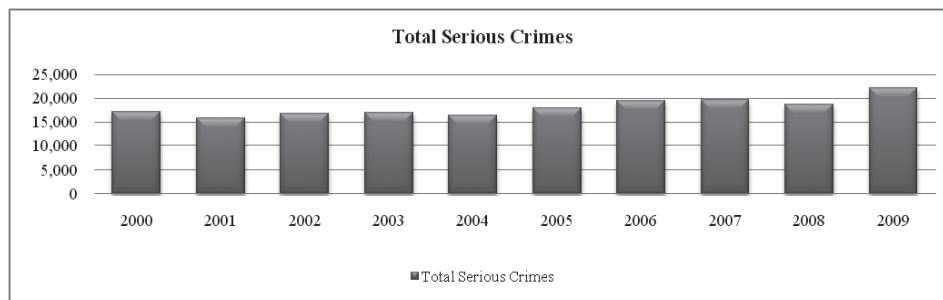


Figure 1 Number of serious crimes reported to police in Trinidad and Tobago, 2000-2009

Source: Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit

A total of 181,039 serious crimes were reported over the period 2000–2009; with the highest number of cases 22,161, being reported in 2009. Overall, there has been a 29% increase of serious crimes reported over the last decade. A total of 8,315 serious crimes have been reported for the period January to May 2010; however, this represents a 1.89% decrease over the corresponding period for 2009. Nevertheless, in spite of the prevalence of these crimes the detection rate for serious crime has been extremely low, as in 2009 it amounted to 17%.

Homicide

Homicide is regarded as the most noteworthy of all serious crimes since it is a fairly reliable barometer of all violent crimes. Moreover, at the national level, no other crime is measured as accurate and precise (Fox et al., 2010).

The number of reported cases of murder has climbed steadily since 2000 (Figure 2). Trinidad and Tobago is now identified as having the second highest homicide rate in the Caribbean, after Jamaica. In 2000, the homicide rate was 9.5 per 100,000 citizens; it has since jumped to 40.1 in 2009¹⁰.

For the period 2000–2009, there have been 3,130 cases of homicide with an annual mean of 313. However, 2008 was recognised as the most murderous year, because it recorded a national high of 544 murders; a significant increase of 153 cases over the previous year (Table 1). As of May 2010, there have been 220 murders a decrease of 8 cases over the corresponding period for 2009.

For the period 2001–2009, a dramatic increase in the rate of firearm fatalities has been noted. During this period, firearms accounted for 94.5% of the total homicides and produced an annual average rate of 69%. Before 2000, firearms were responsible for less than one-third of all homicides (UNODC and World Bank, 2007). Several explanations have been offered for the trend in homicide, but it has been largely attributed to the geographic vulnerability of the Caribbean to the drug trade and trafficking of weapons (Table 2).

The rising violence of the society is further exposed by a review of the other weapons used in homicide and the probable cause of the event. Blunt objects and sharp instruments appear to be the popular choices of weapons, as after firearms they account for 18% of weapons used for 2004–2009 (Table 3). Gang-related and



Figure 2 Number of homicides reported to police in Trinidad and Tobago: 2000–2009

Source: Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit

Table 1 Number of murders committed in Trinidad and Tobago using a firearm, 2000–2009

Year	Number of murders committed with firearms	Total number of murders	Percent murders committed with firearms (%)
2001	82	151	54
2002	102	171	60
2003	158	229	69
2004	182	260	70
2005	272	389	70
2006	268	370	72
2007	303	388	78
2008	430	543	79
2009	362	503	72

Source: Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit¹¹

Table 2 Type of weapons used to commit murder and probable causes

Type of weapons	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Blunt objects	20	31	28	25	20	26	150
Sharp instruments	31	54	48	41	55	64	293
Other	24	24	22	13	17	34	134
Unknown	3	8	4	6	21	17	59
Probable cause							
Altercation	28	37	34	27	28	40	194
Domestic violence	9	12	19	10	33	18	101
Drug related	7	5	16	15	27	45	115
Gang related	25	51	37	29	224	137	503
Robbery	45	25	22	27	55	59	233
Other	9	13	20	4	25	65	136
Unknown	137	246	222	276	151	139	1171

Source: Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit¹²

robbery-related incidents were recorded as the most common causes of homicide accounting for 21% and 10%, respectively. Gang-related murders have also shown a drastic increase from 2004 to 2009, an increase of over 400%.

Data for the period 2004–2009 indicate that approximately 2,453 persons were

victims of murder. Of this group, males were disproportionately represented as both homicide victims and offenders (Table 4). Males account for 90.5% of victims and 94.5% of offenders. In terms of ethnicity, persons of African descent represent 76.7% of homicide victims and 65.5% offenders; whereas persons of East Indian and mixed decent account for 16% and 5.5%

Table 3 Demographic characteristics of detected homicide offenders in Trinidad and Tobago

Offenders	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Detected offenders	79	106	96	78	79	127
Offender age						
Under 15	1	1	2	0	1	0
15-19	12	21	12	22	10	17
20-24	14	29	26	16	18	39
25-29	14	15	19	15	19	25
30-39	16	18	25	10	17	22
40-49	2	4	6	6	4	8
Over 50	6	4	2	5	3	7
Offender Sex						
Male	77	101	88	75	73	125
Female	2	5	8	3	6	1
Offender ethnicity						
African	53	70	51	49	56	91
East Indian	21	23	31	27	16	29
Mixed	4	12	13	2	7	2
Other						

Source: Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit¹³

of victims, respectively, and 26% and 7% of offenders, respectively (Figure 3).

For the period 2004–2009, 49% of victims were under the age of 30 years; with 20% falling within the age group 15–19 years old. However, it should be noted that overall the majority of the victims were between the ages 20 and 34 years (51%). Ten percent (10%) of victims were over the age of 50 years. Based on the data, 61% of the detected offenders fall within the age range 15–29 years; however, of this group 41% were between the ages of 20 and 24 years.

From this analysis, it is apparent that victims and offenders belong to the same demographic group, i.e., under the age 30, thus reinforcing the notion of the

‘juvenisation’ of homicides in the country. It also represents a significant loss to the development of the society.

Homicides were found to be geographically concentrated in the northern part of the country as the following areas registered the greater number of homicidal activity—Port of Spain, north, north-eastern and western police divisions. This reveals that murder is predominantly an urban occurrence, situated heavily at the lower economic strata, given that many of the cases are located in the poor areas of the capital city. This is evident by cases from the Besson Street Police District; where for example, 19.9% of reported murder cases in 2009 were derived from this station.

Table 4 Demographic characteristics of homicide victims in Trinidad and Tobago

Victims	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
All Victims	260	389	370	388	543	503
Victim's age						
Under 15	3	11	8	1	9	9
15-19	31	39	38	34	48	56
20-24	50	95	67	76	103	93
25-29	41	60	57	69	105	92
30-39	58	83	99	92	115	95
40-49	38	57	63	57	70	78
Over 50	36	38	33	36	56	53
Victim's Sex						
Male	233	350	326	360	489	463
Female	27	39	44	28	51	37
Victim's ethnicity						
African	203	297	268	308	422	384
East Indian	42	67	64	62	80	80
Mixed	12	19	35	16	29	23
Other	3	5	3	2	5	10

Source: Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit¹⁴

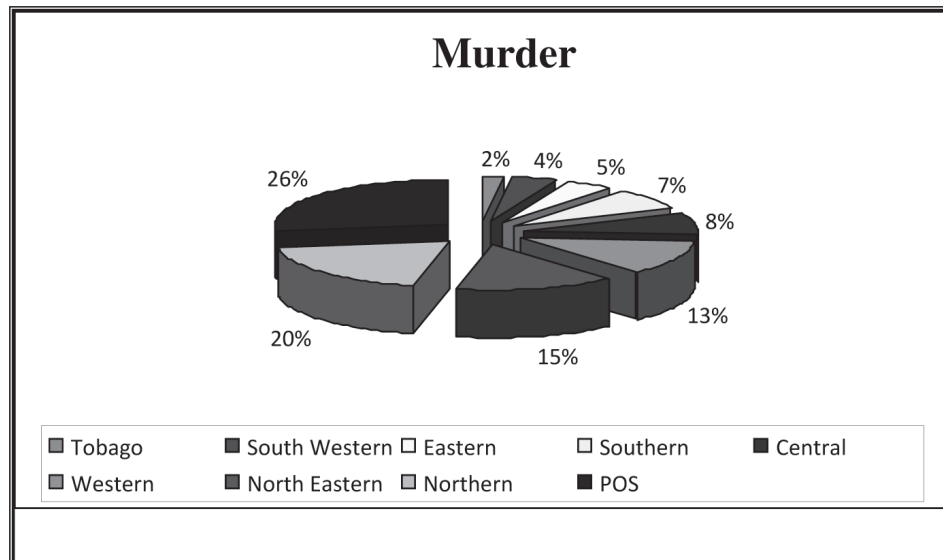


Figure 3 Geographic concentration of murders in Trinidad and Tobago

Source: Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit

Key trends

The following is a list of critical findings on homicides in Trinidad and Tobago, which was informed by the above section data:

- 1 Increased use of firearms in homicide—it was discovered that notwithstanding governmental efforts to control and monitor the small arms trade, firearms have grown to become a popular instrument of homicide over the last decade and gun related violence can now be considered a national crisis¹⁵.
- 2 Increased episodes of gang-related homicides—data showed that gang-related homicides have significantly outpaced other types of probable causes of homicides. Within the Port of Spain and environs area alone, Townsend (2009) highlighted that there were 29 gangs, which mainly comprised of high school drop outs from low-income and socially disorganised families. However, although youth gangs have increasingly characterised the landscape of crime and violence within this country it has been difficult to quantify the exact amount of criminal and violent activity that can be directly attributed to these gangs. Nonetheless, there is a view that these gangs are major contributors to the crime problem, thus understanding gang behaviour and their associated violence must form a part of crime reduction strategies (Rodgers, 1999).
- 3 Increased youth involvement in homicides—statistics on homicides indicated that there was a steady and significant rise in youth¹⁶ involvement in homicides, as both offenders and victims.
- 4 Increased male participation in homicides—statistics revealed that there was a notable increase in male participation in homicides as both victims and offenders¹⁷.
- 5 Increased African participation in homicides—data reflected that although there was an increase in many ethnic groups, participation in homicides as both victims and offenders for the period under review this rise was most significant among those of African origin.
- 6 Geographic concentration of homicides in the northern sphere of the country—it was observed that a vast majority of homicides occurred in the Port of Spain, North, North-eastern and Western police divisions.

Implications of crime trends and homicides in Trinidad and Tobago

In the wake of spiraling crime and violence levels Trinidad and Tobago is now beleaguered with a host of developmental challenges. According to ACUNS (2009) the estimates of the costs of crime and violence, range from costs associated with death, injury and loss of productivity, to the increased burden on law enforcement and the justice sector, the disruption of social services, economic and investment opportunities, tourism, as well as the diversion of government expenditure/resources to address the crime situation. In addition, crime impedes the quality of life of citizens through the destruction of lives and livelihoods and the generation of a culture of fear and terror¹⁸. Moreover, it erodes good governance and core social structures such as families and communities. It has, therefore, become imperative that the government seizes command over this wonton scourge that endangers the basic right for peace, security, dignity and well-being of its citizens.

Current crime reduction measures

In an effort to stem the increasing incidents of criminality the Government of Trinidad

and Tobago has adopted a holistic, multi-pronged approach that relies heavily on partnerships and agreements with both the regional and international community.

The Ministry of National Security is mandated to provide citizens with reliable access to security services, protection of the country's borders, rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, as well as security from impeding natural disasters¹⁹. The government has sought to achieve these objectives through the following initiatives²⁰:

- The transformation of the Trinidad and Tobago police and prison service.
- The modernisation and expansion of the Coast Guard.
- Strengthening of the legislative framework and enactment of anti-crime legislation.
- The implementation of a national strategy to eliminate illicit drugs and the introduction of stringent control measures.
- Institutional strengthening and infrastructural improvement.
- The establishment of units such as Specialist Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT) and Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit.
- The implementation of community-based initiatives such as Crime Stoppers 555 Hotline and the Citizen's Security Programme (CSP).
- The introduction of various youth-oriented initiatives, such as training programmes targetting disadvantaged and at risk youth—such as CCC, MILAT and MYPART²¹.

However, in spite of these measures, the war on crime has been severely debilitated

by understaffing in the police service, perceived police corruption, lack of resources for border control and deficiencies in the criminal justice system, which includes backlog in the courts and unimplemented legislation (Refworld, 2009).

It should also be noted that the government has implemented a host of social programmes, which indirectly have an impact on crime and violence. In fact, there is a strong belief that crime reduction efforts should seek to incorporate more social strategies since research has shown that some crimes are spurred by socio-economic problems (Jenson and Howard, 1999).

The way forward—recommended interventions and strategies

Although there was an increase in serious crimes between 2000 and 2009, the enormous leap in homicides for the same period has wrested national attention and propelled this type of crime to the fore of most discussions. This section would, therefore, review major trends emerging out of the analysis and propose recommendations that can be employed by the government to effectively address them and their overall impact on homicides and crime.

Based on the key trends identified in a previous section, homicides in Trinidad and Tobago appear to be a predominantly gang-based phenomenon that involves to a great extent the use of firearms by and on young males of African descent within the northern corner of the country.

As such strategies geared towards attacking the problem of crime and particularly homicides must incorporate approaches that would specifically attend these dynamics. Accordingly, a multi-faceted, inter-disciplinary approach is therefore required. Cognizant of

this reality, the following interventions and options are proposed:

1 *Strategies to address firearm homicides*

- a Cate Buchanan of the Human Security and Small Arms Programme, Geneva in arguing that men are the majority of users and victims of small arms violence, highlighted that there was a relationship between masculinity and weapons use and misuse (IRIN, 2006) and as such interventions should be designed to tackle this complex relationship.
- b U.S. Department of Justice in the 1990s identified three points of intervention that were key to any strategy or programme designed to reduce firearm violence: Interrupt sources of illegal guns, deter illegal possession and carrying of guns and respond to illegal gun use.
- c Given the vulnerability of youth to the use of firearms, an emphasis on at-risk or gun involved youth must be a focus of firearm reduction initiatives. Reducing the demand for firearms among young men is important (McIntyre and Weiss, 2003²²); along with their opportunities to access guns. Moreover, those who have already been immersed into a gun culture should also be targeted (Shaw, 2005). Programmes must, therefore, seek to introduce positive alternatives to the streets and an opportunity to engage in purposeful activity. There is also international consensus that policies and programmes that invest in and support youth through preventative approaches are more effective than incarceration or exclusion. As part of a long-term solution, there must also be an emphasis on reducing those factors that have also placed this group at risk, and protective factors should

be strengthened. At risk youth involvement in programme planning and delivery is also increasingly recognised as an effective intervention strategy (Shaw, 2005).

- d A comprehensive gun reduction strategy requires a partnership with the community, law enforcement, the court system and social service agencies and the adoption of a public health and community safety perspective²³. Critical to success of this partnership is the level of awareness of the public on firearm use and abuse. The government must seek to promote public awareness on illegal fire arm use and its contribution to spiraling murder rate in Trinidad and Tobago, the importance of controlling firearms and an understanding of the relationship between gun crime and illegal firearms on the streets. Awareness-raising does not simply contribute to the success of gun control initiatives, since it facilitates attitudinal changes towards gun use and is based on the recognition that law enforcement cannot do it alone. Notwithstanding this, the government must also be committed to an aggressive enforcement of existing and future firearm laws.

2 *Strategies to address gang-related homicides*

- a Strategies to address gang-related violence should encourage alternative lifestyles, prevent young people from joining gangs, and advocate zero tolerance enforcement activity towards gangs, community policing, education programmes, peer mentoring and youth outreach services (Bellis, 2010).
- b Strategies that focus solely on repressing or incarcerating gang members have not proven successful in preventing or reducing gang violence²⁴,

particularly in areas such as Central America. Based on U.S. experience, certain key elements for tackling gang-related violence has been identified (i.e., the OJJDP²⁵ or Spiegel model). These strategies include: community mobilisation, provision of opportunities (i.e., in education, training and employment,) social intervention, suppression and organisational change and development (i.e., the development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of resources within and across agencies) (Levine, 2006). It has been found that comprehensive, multi-sectoral and community-orientated approaches have been successful (Bellis, 2010).

- c Young children who are still impressionable and not yet seduced by guns, gangs and crimes should be targeted through 'pre-fix' prevention programmes, since these types of intervention have great and long lasting impacts (Fox and Swatt, 2008).

3 Community-based strategies

- a Community mobilisation is increasingly recognised as an important strategy that provides a framework to encourage participation, cooperation and collaboration in tackling debilitating community issues (Kim-Ju et al., 2008). Therefore crime and homicide reduction strategies should be rooted in the community. Additionally, law enforcement agencies must engage high risk communities and partner with them in the fight against community crime. Mobilizing communities to prevent violence involves engaging communities in supporting, developing and implementing prevention strategies that motivate change. Possible

strategies include community education and building support among key stakeholders for prevention efforts. The community mobilization approach is neither top down nor bottom up, rather it seeks to bring resources into the community, and mobilize and reorganize existing community assets. This approach therefore facilitates the development of culturally appropriate and sensitive interventions that meet the needs of the community (Kim-Ju et al., 2008). A few examples of this type of arrangement can be found in the United States in form of programmes such as High Point Intervention, Project Safe Neighborhoods and Operation Ceasefire, all of which have adopted a multi-agency approach that relied on both federal and community level partnerships. However, it has been noted that efforts to create safe and peaceful communities must be accompanied by other community development activities, such as increased access to employment and housing opportunities²⁶.

- b Community dialogue 'is an approach of community development that emphasises the various voices in the community and how these voices can impact the community'.²⁷ It is also a useful process to ensure better decisions and community action and it embraces the basic principles of shared responsibility, participatory decision making and a just public sphere²⁸. Communities should, therefore, be provided with opportunities to speak openly on the crime and violence. These sessions would provide ideal platforms for the community to gather in conjunction with civil society organisations, policy makers and government practitioners to identify and reflect upon the major

causes of crime and violence in the community; draw on lessons and experiences and encourage joint and mutually beneficial community activities that strengthen interaction and enhance social cohesion²⁹. Community dialogue is, therefore, integral to finding practical and effective solutions to deal with community-based crime and violence.

4 *Social programmes/strategies*

- a Although various political directorates have implemented a tremendous number of anti-social initiatives, many of these programmes are not sustainable because they are either conducted for a short duration or fail to offer sustainable opportunities for young people to engage in positive or pro-social behaviours. Furthermore, governments have boasted of the successes of these programmes, but there is a gross lack of continuous monitoring and evaluation of such social programmes. Very few tracer studies or impact evaluations are conducted to determine the effectiveness of these programmes, whether they have met their expressed objectives or the extent to which they have facilitated their desired social outcomes. Some participants also tend to hop from programme to programme without any real demonstration that new skills and competencies have been acquired. There is, therefore, a great need to improve the monitoring and evaluative capacity of social interventions and design programmes towards a more sustainable outcome. Such evaluations would also inform future policy and programme development (Gonzales, 2009).
- b Programmes that are designed to address the particular issues confronting at risk, young men in the society should also be encouraged since homicides have been found to be a predominantly young male enterprise. Moreover, young men must be empowered to make positive lifestyle decisions and youth should not be seen simply as part of the problem, but instead they should be given an opportunity to contribute to turning the tide of crime and violence in the society. Brown (1998) argued that youth must be given the space to legitimise their voice in the delinquency discourse³⁰. Such an approach encourages meaningful youth participation in the development of effective youth programmes, policies and services (Beyond Border, 2008).
- c There is also a need to shift towards resilience building of both youth and their families. Traditionally, the focus has been on reducing or eliminating the problem behaviour of youth, but there should also be a simultaneous focus on strengthening that which is positive in the life of the at risk youth. Accordingly, an overemphasis on deficits should be replaced with a focus on capacities and strengths (i.e., adopt a strength-based approach) (Bernard, 1997).
- d Government's crime and homicide reduction strategies must be based on 'evidence-based practices'. Research over the last decade has demonstrated the reliability and effectiveness of a variety of programmes, once implemented correctly, produce results (Seave, 2010³¹). Identifying successful programmes that are relevant and appropriate to our social and cultural context has extreme value for national investments in reduction strategies. Once again, this will call for a rigorous assessment of current programmes to determine their quality and effectiveness. Programmes may have to be revamped or tweaked to replicate

initiatives that have been proven successful in the regional and international arenas. Ineffective or harmful programmes are simply a waste of scarce prevention funding and resources³². Adopting evidence-based programmes, however, may require challenging the status quo because often what works is at odds with politics and 'tough on crime' campaigns³³.

- e Traditionally, the criminal justice system has focused its attention on offenders while negligible attention has been paid to victims of violent crime and their families. Punishment of the offender is simply one requirement for victim justice. Victims argue that they also need financial assistance, information, social support, etc. (Sullivan, 2010). In spite of the fact that the Trinidad and Tobago government currently provides financial compensation for victims of violent crime through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1999, much more needs to be done. Appropriate resources at varying levels (i.e., psychological, financial, social and medical) should be made available to victims of crime and their families for them to improve and rebuild their lives, in both the short-term and the long-term. It, therefore, calls for a shift from an offender-oriented approach to a victim-oriented approach where the needs of all victims can be met. Herman (2004) argues for parallel justice for victims and greater victim-oriented policies.

CONCLUSION

Trinidad and Tobago in the midst of economic wealth and prosperity is witnessing an unprecedented escalation in homicides that has shattered the security of its citizenry and continues to undermine the

social and developmental goals of this twin island state.

It has, therefore, become imperative that the government of the day acts with great expediency to stem the proliferation of this and other types of crimes that have been strongly associated with youth gangs, gun violence and drugs.

Crime and violence must, therefore, be recognised as a public health problem that must be attacked through an inclusive and participatory approach. Interventions are likely to be effective if they are evidence-based, tailored to and supported by the local community, multi-pronged and sustainable. Primary prevention must also be a paramount priority in the government's strategic approach. Responding to the development challenges posed by increasing crime and violence also requires strong government will and determination, as well as continuity (Shaw, 2007).

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NOTES

- ¹ <http://www.traveldocs.com/tt/economy.htm>
- ² http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/trinidad-and-tobago/
- ³ Barbados is the only Caribbean country categorised as very high human development ranked as 37 on the HDI, 2009.
- ⁴ Opinion Leaders' Panel 2009 Wave 14 Report.
- ⁵ The complexity of this historical legacy has been analysed in other works and so will not be repeated here.
- ⁶ Cited in Brodeur and Geneviève Ouellet, 2004.
- ⁷ Cited in Montoute and Anyanwu, 2009.
- ⁸ Agozino et al., 2009.
- ⁹ Strategic Services Agency, Annual Report 2007.
- ¹⁰ Calculated using the 2000 census population of 1,262,366.
- ¹¹ Please note, figures are provisional and subject to revision.
- ¹² Please note, figures are provisional and subject to revision.
- ¹³ Please note: figures are provisional and subject to revision.
- ¹⁴ Please note: figures are provisional and subject to revision.
- ¹⁵ According to the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs, over 600 million small arms and light weapons circulate worldwide. Hence, the ease of availability of small arms has made crime more violent and fatal. The Small Arms Survey estimates that 300,000 people worldwide are shot dead over the course of a year and gun homicide accounts for 200,000 of these deaths, the majority occurring in Latin America and the Caribbean (IRIN, 2006).
- ¹⁶ This trend was noted particularly in the age group 15–29.
- ¹⁷ Globally, men are identified as the primary perpetrators and victims of armed violence. But armed violence has a disproportionate impact on women and children, where as a result of their vulnerability, they often have the greatest burden to bear (IRIN, 2006).
- ¹⁸ Geneva Declaration Secretariat, June 2008.
- ¹⁹ Martin Joseph, 2006.
- ²⁰ Taken from public addresses of the Minister of National Security.
- ²¹ CCC – Civilian Conservation Corps, MILAT – Military Led Academic Training, MYPART – Military Youth programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training.
- ²² Cited in Shaw, 2005.
- ²³ U.S. National Institute of Justice; Shaw, 2005.
- ²⁴ Justice Policy Institute www.justicepolicy.org
- ²⁵ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice.
- ²⁶ University of Richmond. 2003. Neighborhood Crime Prevention and Safety; www.solutionsforamerica.org
- ²⁷ Jerusalem Inter-Cultural Centre.
- ²⁸ Jerusalem Inter-Cultural Centre.
- ²⁹ Institute of Healing and Memories.
- ³⁰ Cited in Hunte, 2006.
- ³¹ Paul Seave is Director of Governor's Office of Gang and Youth Violence Policy, California.
- ³² Blueprints, Centre for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Colorado.
- ³³ The Future of Children, www.futureofchildren.org