

Pan American Development Foundation Response Capabilities for COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean

Justice & Security

Policymakers, experts and citizens are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on justice and security issues. While mandatory quarantines and lockdowns may give the impression that crime and violence have dropped, their root causes still exist and are not being addressed during the crisis. Critical services have come to a halt or have been significantly reduced, such as support to at-risk youth, vulnerable to criminal behaviors; parole and probation supervision; and responses to reports of domestic violence. The funding and availability of crime and violence prevention programs, including sports, arts, community engagement, and substance abuse therapy have been cut.

Human trafficking also increases with a global pandemic. Restrictions on migration combined with higher unemployment and a global economic recession increase pressures to migrate, and the activities of smugglers, traffickers, and other illicit groups surge. As a result of COVID-19, money laundering, contraband, counterfeiting, cybercrimes, and related felonies can escalate.

With nearly 60 years of experience across the region and strong partnerships with community policing, local judiciaries, and correctional management and juvenile justice systems, the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) is **uniquely positioned to offer immediate assistance in the four most urgent justice and security dimensions of the COVID-19 response**. PADF has extensive in-country networks working in open and closed societies and an established track-record of effective project management through on-the ground and virtual collaboration. With sound financial controls, PADF can quickly facilitate remote procurements and payments through mobile and e-vouchers. PADF coordinates its work with UN Agencies, International organization and local and Non-Governmental Organizations.

	Community Level	Institutional Level
Short Term	Support community policing efforts	Identify innovation in courtroom practices and correctional facilities management
Longer Term	Partner with stakeholders to mitigate the negative impact on security conditions and access to justice within communities	Provide technical assistance to expand critical innovations in the judiciary and encourage prosecution to work effectively during crises and emergencies

Community Policing

Law enforcement agencies play a key role in supporting the implementation of public health measures to contain COVID-19 and preventing specific criminal activities arising in response. Police and other equivalent bodies are usually in charge of border control, relaying public health measures to the population, and securing deliveries of large quantities of supplies or equipment, often in military-type convoys. PADF's community-policing expertise in the Latin America and Caribbean region provides a practical framework that enables law enforcement, amplified by community leaders, to play a crucial role by contributing to the efforts to control the disease, promoting safer communities, and fighting criminals who see the outbreak as an opportunity to increase – or diversify – their activities.



PADF provides capacity building and technical assistance to law enforcement in the region, so officers and communities can effectively engage in social crime prevention strategies

Since 2013, PADF has provided capacity building and technical assistance to law enforcement in the region, so officers and communities can effectively engage in social crime prevention strategies. Our framework is based upon a multiagency collaborative approach to prevent crime and violence. By enhancing the capacity of young people, civil society organizations, community leaders, police, justice sector, and government officials to work together on citizen security challenges, PADF helps to build trust and create safer neighborhoods and communities.

Judicial Systems

COVID-19 is complicating the already difficult work of the court systems in the region. Obsolete legal frameworks, archaic judicial proceedings and limited financial resources have produced a case management system that favors in-person hearings. Documents usually need to be submitted in person, requiring the interested party to go from office to office to secure signatures from different authorities. Courthouses

and related facilities are crowded with employees, plaintiffs and visitors. COVID-19 has made the judiciary rethink the way they do business, closed most courthouses and cancelled routine hearings. Most of the judicial caseload will experience serious delays, increasing the already large backlog.

PADF has been working with the judiciary in several countries, providing training and technical assistance to reduce the backlog. With COVID-19, we are committed to expanding critical innovation in courtroom practices, improving case management and incorporating technological advances and creative solutions to the challenges faced by judges and prosecutors during crises and emergencies.

PADF has partnered with justice sector organizations to reduce the barriers that vulnerable populations encounter when accessing justice services and ensure that all citizens have the legal mechanisms to guarantee the full exercise of their rights. Since 2012, PADF projects have helped local judiciaries to effectively deliver justice services in a timely manner, specifically to people living in remote rural areas. Additionally, PADF projects have offered numerous opportunities for grassroots organizations in several countries to engage with justice sector officials to address common challenges and increase trust and collaboration.

Women and Children

Pandemics can exacerbate existing gender inequalities. At PADF, we understand that stay-at-home policies can put women and children who are abused at greater risk, as they have less access to safety networks and resources. Across our targeted COVID-19 responses, we are committed to amplifying women's voices and agenda at this critical time.

Correctional Facilities

Correctional facilities are at high risk for the spread of COVID-19. Prison overcrowding is rampant throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Many of the strategies used in developed countries to reduce transmission – reducing jail admissions, releasing some prisoners, expanding medical visits and testing, or increasing video communications with families and lawyers – are not feasible due to technical and financial limitations or strong public opinion against leniency for “criminals.” As many inmates depend on visits from families and others for food and maintenance, the ability of the authorities to outright cancel visitation rights is very limited.

PADF's technical expertise in correctional management and juvenile justice systems allows us to effectively partner with national authorities to quickly respond to the current challenges and develop new policies and protocols to reduce current and future waves of COVID-19 due to the high infectious rates within prisons and contagion from visitors and families.

Contact

Roberto Obando
Thematic Leader for Peace,
Justice, and Security
Email: riobando@padf.org
Phone Number: 202-560-0619