



Rosario, Argentina: An Example of a Targeted and Integrated Approach



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“Violent incidents are not independent but rather are linked through time, place, and social relations, whether in the short term or long term (...). By recognizing and addressing the interrelated nature of violence, local governments can develop different responses tailored to the highest-risk individuals, groups, and neighborhoods that produce more substantial effects without an overreliance on punitive measures.”¹

Research Team

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Introduction and overview of the intervention

Argentina is a federal country, which means that each level of government—national, state, and city—has differentiated responsibilities and competencies. The national government is responsible for the prosecution and administration of justice in federal crimes, such as drug trafficking, as well as the management of federal prisons, security forces, and border control. The provincial executive is in charge of prosecuting and administering justice in cases such as homicides, serious injuries, and land usurpations, and also manages the provincial police forces and prisons. Municipal governments do not have specific responsibilities of public security or police power, but are key in maintaining control of public spaces and monitoring public security. Therefore, when establishing public policies for the prevention and reduction of violence locally, coordination across levels of government and the judicial and legislative branches and other sectors is crucial.

Rosario, Argentina, is internationally known both as a cultural and economic hub and as a city that experiences high levels of violence. Since a significant escalation in homicide rates in 2013, violence in the city has been persistently above the national average, with a reported rate of 25 homicides per 100,000 people compared to the national average of 4.2 in 2022.³ As a response, multiple targeted and integrated strategies to address violent

1 Hernán Flom, Guiding Principles and Inspiring Actions: Operationalizing the Resolution to Reduce Urban Violence (Peace in Our Cities, 2022), 13, <https://stanleycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Guiding-Principles-Inspiring-Actions-PiOC.pdf>.

2 Flavia Carbonari and Rachel Locke contributed to the review of the brief.

3 As can be seen, the first significant escalation of highly harmful violence in Rosario occurred in 2013, with a total of 225 intentional homicides, which represented a rate of 23 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, in contrast to the national rate of 7.5 per 100,000 inhabitants. Subsequently, in 2022, a new wave of violence reached an all-time high for intentional homicides, with 252 cases and a rate of 25 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, while the national average fell to 4.2 per 100,000 inhabitants (Observatory of Security and Coexistence; National Criminal Information System-Early Warning System, Ministry of Security of the Nation and INDEC).

crime and behavior were introduced throughout the city through strategic collaboration and mobilization at the national, state, and city levels. After a shift in the approach towards violence reduction and prevention, and as a result of those combined efforts, the city has recently experienced a notable drop in intentional homicide, ending 2024 with a 64.3% decrease in homicides compared to 2023.

The integrated strategies began with a comprehensive diagnosis of the locations and patterns of violence throughout the city. Based on that data, action plans were designed to address both immediate consequences as well as structural causes of violence. These action plans – including tailored neighborhood-level interventions called Focused Neighborhood Interventions (*Intervenciones Barriales Focalizadas*, IBF), in which the state government, the Public Prosecutor’s Office and the municipality take part; the Municipal Program for the Reduction of Violence (*Programa Municipal de Reducción de Violencias*, PMRV); and the national government-led Flagship Plan (*Plan Bandera*) – provided a starting point for Rosario to anticipate and respond to new forms of violence at every level. These strategies aim to strengthen social resilience, allowing Rosario to once again be recognized as a city of peace and as a social, cultural and sports powerhouse.

Background and Rationale

Rosario has gone through various stages of violence, which calls for a sustainable strategy capable of adapting to changing dynamics while simultaneously implementing preventive measures that can disrupt escalating cycles of violence. In 2013, Rosario experienced a surge in conflicts between groups linked to illegal economies, resulting in 225 intentional homicides, mostly concentrated among individuals affiliated with those groups. By 2018, violence—particularly interpersonal armed violence—began to increasingly target the broader society.

This expansion and mutation of violence generated fear and significantly weakened the public perception of safety. The growing sense of insecurity, coupled with the perceived impunity of violent actors, eroded trust both among neighbors and in public institutions. Without that fabric of trust, addressing violence became extremely difficult. In 2022, Rosario reached a historic peak of 25 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, while the national average was 4.2. Shootings, extortion, and attacks aimed at the civilian population rose exponentially. Extortion notes and selective homicides began to be used as instruments to send messages of power and assert territorial control. This positioned Rosario as a critical hotspot demanding urgent attention from all levels of government.

The initial response from the federal and state governments in early 2024 was an increase in punitive measures, with greater police presence, stricter controls in prisons, and harsher sentences. However, rather than quelling violence, this approach generated a reactionary response, manifesting into a series of homicides that targeted public service workers and civilians. Crimes became targeted actions to send a clear message to the state about the power and control of criminal organizations within the city and

to destabilize government control. It became clear that an effective strategy would also require restoring trust in public institutions at every level of government and would require tailored actions responsive to specific conditions of violence occurring at that time in each neighborhood.

Strategic Vision to Adapt to a Changing and Diverse Local Context - *The what*

The various adaptations of violence in Rosario require multi-faceted and integrated solutions. The purely punitive measures failed to disrupt patterns of violence, as they did not address the specific conditions of affected neighborhoods or tackle violence within the context of a broader network. In contexts where criminal economies and territorial family networks have a central weight, an episode of violence is not only an individual aggression, but a message within a network of power relations, loyalties and disputes. If the approach to violence is limited to its criminal dimension, without considering social and community factors, the victim or their community may interpret the inadequate response as an invitation to revenge, creating a cyclical pattern. Therefore, to fully address this issue in Rosario, there was a need for multiple, and also focused, strategies that understood the adaptable and cyclical nature of violence in the city while mobilizing every sector of society. For example:

The IBF (Focused Neighborhood Interventions) strategy encompasses every level of government, coordinates public, private, and international groups to direct efforts of violence prevention that are unique to each neighborhood. Through this coordination, the IBF hones in on the immediate neighborhood experience of violence in the larger context of patterns of violence at various levels. Interdisciplinary teams are mobilized to work directly with parties involved in each violence incident, applying methods that are adapted to each neighborhood. The strategy seeks to integrate data and promote inter institutional cooperation, working to confront illegal economies and promote social inclusion. Young people and families in critical situations are prioritized, especially those affected by serious violence and conflicts with the law. The intervention includes components such as social control, urban planning, housing, culture, and economic development, all coordinated to create a safe environment.⁴

The Municipal Program for the Reduction of Violence (PMRV), on the other hand, stands out as a key initiative for intervention in cases of highly harmful violence. This program articulates different approaches to reducing urban conflict, combining situational prevention strategies, approaches from the health system, generation of evidence-based information and territorial monitoring. Through the PMRV, the city seeks to generate quick and coordinated responses to incidents of violence, strengthening the municipality's capacity to affect the security and well-being of its citizens.

4 Tonerio, I., Latanzi, R., Galassi, R., Santantino, E., Villar, M. V., Navarrete, C., Blotta, M. F., Pullaro, L., Chale, S., & Gianelloni, N. (2024). Política Pública de Intervenciones Barriales Focalizadas (IBF): Un enfoque coordinado para la reducción de la violencia territorial. XVI Congreso Nacional y IX Internacional sobre Democracia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario.

These initiatives are accompanied by and include efforts led by the city government to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring, supervision, early intervention and mediation in conflicts, and to promote actions that contribute to improving coexistence and security in public space. Together, these interventions are a key part of a larger, cohesive framework where immediate, neighborhood-specific responses are aligned with the larger, integrated efforts of violence prevention, as described below.

Intervention Design - *The how*

The execution of all the interventions previously mentioned begins with an understanding of the patterns of violence in the territories with data provided by the Observatory of Coexistence and Security (*Observatorio de Convivencia y Seguridad*). Having a centralized source of data allowed for a common and effective understanding of the patterns of violence across Rosario. For example, violence was found to be strongly concentrated in certain territories, with 44.1% of homicides and injuries with firearms happening in just 5 areas of the city, despite them only occupying 9% of territory. Further, patterns of violence predominantly affect youth aged 15-35, with 45.5% of homicides concentrated among youth. This information was necessary for the development of all interventions previously mentioned, including IBF, PMRV and Plan Bandera.

The selection of neighborhoods to be prioritized by some interventions is carried out in dialogue with government actors at different levels, local organizations, and community leaders. This methodology ensures that the strategies are relevant and contextualized to the specific realities of each area. In addition, the approach makes it possible to identify not only the hotspots, but also the underlying dynamics that perpetuate violence, such as lack of access to basic resources, structural inequalities and the absence of safe spaces for the community. The vulnerability of a neighborhood, therefore, is defined beyond the number of documented intentional homicide or level of economic insecurity. Factors such as social cohesion are considered as indicators of the ability to build preventative and reduction measures to violence. From the identification of neighborhoods, action plans are designed that seek to address immediate consequences of violence and their structural causes, aimed at promoting lasting transformation.

Through the different interventions, the city government aims to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring, oversight, early intervention and mediation of conflicts, and ultimately improve coexistence and citizen security by focusing on three key areas:

- **Monitoring and control of public spaces:** Establishing an effective and centralized monitoring system is crucial to improve government response. The Rosario Integrated Operations Center (*Centro Integrado de Operaciones Rosario*, CIOR) has a centralized monitoring system, security, transportation, lighting and other urban infrastructure devices to improve the response capacity in the territory. This includes cameras, safe urban passenger transport stops, panic buttons in public transit spaces (including taxis and buses), and community alarm buttons, all

managed by the center.

- **Implementing territorial social strategies:** To address root causes and cycles of highly harmful violence, the city combines situational prevention strategies with a public health approach⁵ to violence. In particular, elements of the strategy are outlined by the Territorial Planning and Management team, which is in charge of articulating and executing neighborhood interventions. Further, central to the public health approach is the coordination of a network of municipal health centers and care centers⁶ (institutions dependent on the Secretary of Human Development and Housing) that operate as points of contact in the prioritized neighborhoods, facilitating comprehensive crisis response interventions. In particular, the Clemente Alvarez Emergency Hospital (HECA) acts as a fundamental node, since it receives almost 50% of the cases of gunshot wounds, providing crucial support for families and information about the cycles, dynamics and effects of violence.
 - The PMRV is the flagship effort in this area led by the city, and focuses on:
 - generating rigorous and focused information to guide decision-making, based on the work led by the Observatory for Coexistence and Security;
 - providing assistance and Empowerment of Victims, dedicated to the restitution of rights and comprehensive assistance to people affected by incidents of violence;
 - territorial planning and management, responsible for articulating and executing neighborhood level interventions;
 - assistance and peaceful resolution of conflicts related to land occupations; and
 - crisis response in situations of gun violence, designed to intervene immediately in incidents of armed violence.
- **A comprehensive institutional approach:** The city is divided into 6 Municipal District Centers that operate as a network encompassing 51 Health Centers, 35 Care Centers and 11 Sports Centers. In each area, intervention strategies are proposed that are adapted to the particulars of the area, allowing the resources and knowledge of the central teams to be effectively deployed, guaranteeing a constant flow of information and feedback. In addition, these spaces become meeting points and collaboration with local organizations, promoting joint work that strengthens the social fabric and facilitates the adaptation of strategies to the specific needs of each neighborhood.

Implementation - The who

Because most interventions are carried out at the neighborhood level, policies and programs must be reformulated according to their own local reality, based on their own resources and problems. This requires neighborhood level authorities to be central in the dialogue. While the role of local authorities as leaders, guides, managers and educators is central to prevention in the neighborhood, the role of the local manager or territorial group in charge of carrying out the policy at neighborhood level is equally

5 <https://www.rosario.gob.ar/inicio/salud>

6 <https://www.rosario.gob.ar/inicio/asistir-al-centro-cuidar-mas-cercano-mi-domicilio>

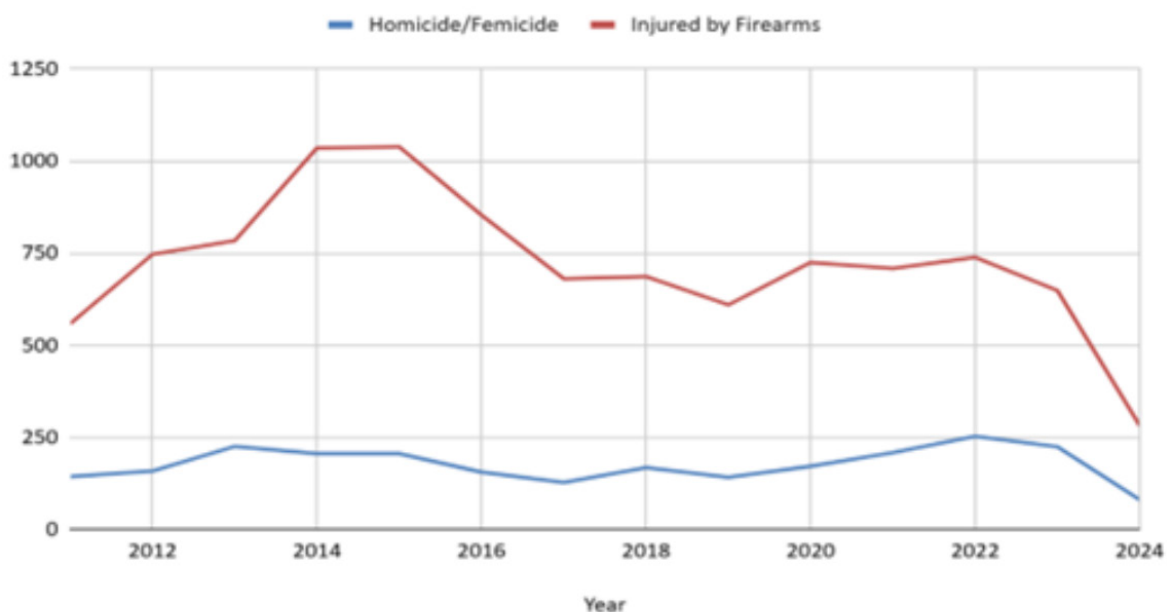
or more important. On the one hand, we are faced with a multi-causal phenomenon where multi-sectorality is fundamental; on the other, there is a need to generate trust and to perceive the different groups and communities, to understand local cultures and languages. The local manager or team must become a true hub that facilitates the work, coordination, communication and relationships between the different parties based on the vision of the program and its objectives.

At other levels of government, similar groups have their own planning and strategy processes. Importantly, spaces of dialogue are created to coordinate efforts of violence reduction and prevention. For example, the Multi-Sectoral Group for Peace is a space created by the organization of trade unions, the University, the city government, and the state government. Technical coordination is also important. The city government has signed agreements to make information collected by the local monitoring infrastructure available to the Ministry of Security at the Provincial Level and the Public Prosecutor's Office. This has made it possible to speed up the investigation processes and resolution of serious cases.

Impact and Results

The integrated, multi-sectoral, and highly coordinated efforts, tailored and targeted within specific neighborhoods, have contributed to improve citizen security. At the end of 2024, Rosario had a historic drop in violent crime, with a 64.3% reduction in homicides and 56.6% in firearm injuries compared to the previous year (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of Homicides + Femicides and Injured by Firearms in Rosario, 2012-2024



Source: Observatory of Security and Coexistence, City of Rosario.

The federal Flagship Plan (*Plan Bandera*), launched at the national level in 2023, was key to the coordinated deployment of federal forces in the city and to achieving synergy with the crime prosecution strategy implemented by the provincial executive and judiciary. This coordination contributed to a reduction in the circulation of firearms and, consequently, a decrease in incidents of highly harmful violence. In addition, agreements for information sharing between the local monitoring system and provincial justice agencies made it possible to expedite investigation processes. In the first year of implementation of the new video surveillance system (2023) alone, 233 judicial communications were carried out.

Lessons Learned and Observations for Replication

The changing dynamics of violence in Rosario shows the need to have a series of public policy actions that involve various actors with the focus of accurately assessing and intervening on cycles of violence, paying attention to the needs, existing resources and realities at the local level. That required an integrated and multi-faceted approach focused on the local dynamics, tailoring highly coordinated interventions to the reality of each neighborhood. These efforts must go beyond immediate and reactive responses to effectively address the wide-reaching scope and root causes of violence.

Conclusion

The city of Rosario is in the spotlight both nationally and internationally. Currently, the strategies articulated between the three levels of government and the comprehensive, strategic and prioritized approach in the government agendas made it possible to significantly reduce acts of highly harmful violence, with the most notorious expression being intentional homicides. Far from thinking that this reduction is a definitive scenario, it represents a new starting point to deepen and strengthen prevention policies in coordination with the other levels and powers of the state so that Rosario can be once again recognized as a city of peace and the vibrant social, cultural and sports hub that it never ceased to be.