OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS LATIN AMERICA PROGRAM

**Citizen Security & Justice Presidential Portfolio Review – Outcomes Summary**

**November 11, 2015**

1. **Introduction**

The Latin America Program citizen security and justice field focuses on supporting organizations working nationally and regionally with a demonstrated ability to stimulate debate on improving police and justice sector institutions, constructively engage with law enforcement and justice institutions, and effectively advocate for policy reforms to reduce violence. Our support in this field has been concentrated in: a) a small group of citizen security organizations committed to improving public safety and reducing violence; and b) human rights organizations focused on improving citizen security, particularly focusing on the relationship between public safety policies and criminal justice systems.

Over the last four years, we have consolidated and narrowed the focus of the portfolio. We concentrated on supporting citizen security grantees committed to building strong organizations and working closely with governments to improve public safety. We maintained support for human rights organizations focused on citizen security issues, but reduced the level of support to such organizations as part of the citizen security and justice field to more accurately reflect our assessment of the importance of their role in this field. We also discontinued support for several organizations in the portfolio with serious organizational health challenges or where we had serious questions about the impact of the work. Finally, as part of LAP’s decision in 2014 to make reducing homicides one of two main programmatic goals, we substantially increased our focus on the ability of the citizen security and justice field to help reduce homicides.

In this portfolio review, the discussion focused on: a) the level of support for the more promising grantees in this field and whether LAP should be providing a higher level of support closer to the one-third threshold; b) the theories of change applied by grantees in the portfolio and the extent to which organizations are employing different theories of change; and c) the relative absence of grantees in the portfolio from countries with high levels of violence and limited government and civil society capacity (Northern Triangle and Venezuela), and possible approaches for addressing this gap. A more detailed summary of the main issues discussed, forward looking reflections and outcomes follows.

1. **Main Themes Discussed**

**Level of Support and One-Third-Threshold**. Chris Stone commented that programs often treat the one-third threshold only as a limit we should avoid crossing, and encouraged us to also see it as an opportunity to strengthen the field. He asked whether we should consider investing more in strong organizations in this field, bringing us closer to the one-third threshold, noting that doing so might allow them to be more effective. He suggested some strategies to use the one-third rule to strengthen the field, including starting conversations with grantees about the budget for the following year, and then increasing our support to one-third of their annual expenditures for the previous year. He commented that this approach could help change and deepen relationships with organizations and provide an important incentive for them to grow.

Angélica Zamora commented that the percentage of our funding for these organizations does not always accurately capture the importance of our support. Most grantees depend significantly on government contracts, which are unpredictable and very restrictive, such that our funding, even when it amounts to between 7% and 20% of an organization’s annual expenditures, allows organizations to advance their mission, take advantage of new opportunities, experiment, or create new areas of work. Heloisa Griggs agreed that thinking about our funding level in percentages instead of absolute dollar amounts would be a good idea and that we should figure out a way to carry this out in practice, given the constraints created by the government support these organizations receive.

Chris Stone also noted that, compared to a comparable portfolio in the United States, this portfolio does not include big organizations, with organizational budgets ranging from US$1 to US$2 million. He stated that bigger organizations can make a significant difference in the field and naturally have capacities that small organizations do not, encouraging us to examine whether we would like to increase our level of support for any organizations in the portfolio.

Angélica Zamora commented that given the organizational challenges most actors in the portfolio face, she is not sure that providing them with increased funding would have a positive impact. She acknowledged that, in retrospect, something she would have done sooner is the transition from project to general support. Heloisa Griggs noted LAP had expanded its support for certain strong organizations in the human rights field to allow them to have more impact, but had been more cautious with respect to the citizen security field, which generally demonstrates more organizational limitations. She said Instituto Sou da Paz is an organization we might want to increase our level of funding for to allow them to accomplish more. She also commented that there are a few new grantees, such as Igarape and Mexico Evalua, we might want to consider increasing support for, but would need to get to know better first..

**Theory of Change**. Chris Stone asked whether we had considered the similarities or differences in grantees’ theories of change when deciding to fund organizations in this field, and whether we had chosen to back different theories of change in the same country. He noted that he was persuaded by LAP’s decision to support both citizen security organizations working collaboratively with government and human rights organizations that are criticizing misconduct and pressing for accountability for abuses from the outside, as well as other organizations trying to balance the two approaches. He highlighted the risks of supporting several organizations with the same approach, and recommended that we consider backing diverse theories of change when supporting organizations in the same country.

Angélica Zamora noted that LAP considered diversity in theories of change and how grantees complement each other in some countries, especially in terms of the balance between the citizen security and human rights organizations. She stressed that although these organizations are more similar than different when it comes to theories of change, they have different capacities, skills levels, are based in different cities within diverse and complex countries (e.g. Brazil), and work with different types of actors and with different structures (e.g. the Brazilian Forum, Instituto Sou da Paz, and CESeC).

Heloisa Griggs commented that organizations in the citizen security and justice field adopt three main approaches to bringing about change: a) an inside track approach focused on providing technical assistance to law enforcement and justice sector organizations, utilized primarily by citizen security organizations; b) advocacy efforts to bring about public policy reforms to reduce violence, utilized by both human rights and citizen security organizations; and c) efforts to engage and shape public opinion on citizen security issues, which is a newer, still underdeveloped approach for the field that should be strengthened.

Heloisa Griggs and Pedro Abramovay noted that this field remains dominated by more elite organizations, and that a positive aspect of the homicide reduction concept is that it has led us to seek out new more grassroots, diverse partners working in and as part of communities disproportionately affected by violence and repressive policing, such as Cauce Ciudadano in Mexico, Casa de las Estrategias in Colombia, and Observatorio de Favelas in Brazil. Heloisa Griggs said it would have been preferable to start including these types of organizations in the citizen security field sooner, and Pedro Abramovay stated that this field should include this more diverse mix of organizations going forward.

**Lack of grantees in contexts with high levels of violence and limited government and civil society capacity (Northern Triangle and Venezuela)**. Given the challenges LAP has experienced in identifying promising civil society organizations working to reduce violence in the Northern Triangle and Venezuela, Chris Stone asked about possible approaches to address this gap and whether we should encourage the creation of new organizations. Heloisa Griggs noted that by focusing our support on stronger, more effective organizations in this field, we moved away from supporting weaker organizations and were less willing to take risks with organizations without a proven track record. In retrospect, perhaps we should have approached support for this field differently in complicated contexts like the Northern Triangle. She added that LAP’s efforts to implement the three components of the homicide reduction concept in the Northern Triangle and Venezuela, which are priority countries for that concept, have forced us to address the issue of limited civil society capacity in this area in the Northern Triangle and Venezuela, and to start taking some risks. Angélica Zamora mentioned that more recently we have started adjusting our standards and approaches in these more challenging contexts, supporting work in these countries that we might not back in other countries.

Analyzing an example of an organization created recently in Venezuela by a group of academics, Chris Stone noted that we should examine diverse organizational models, many of which may not exist in Latin America, in thinking about how to create stronger organizations and fields. He asked whether LAP should develop a concrete strategy to create new and stronger organizations, or should instead continue to look only for existing opportunities. He noted that international donors play an important role in cross-fertilizing ambitions and that there are inexpensive ways to create this type of cross-fertilization.

1. **Forward looking reflections**

Chris Stone and Pedro Abramovay noted that the relationship between this field and the homicide reduction concept provide an important opportunity to strengthen the citizen security field by identifying new organizations with different approaches, and developing a fresh vision for the field over the next few years. Chris Stone suggested that providing general support to some of the new grantees in the homicide reduction concept might be a good idea in some cases. He also suggested exploring increasing funding for Instituto Sou da Paz and other organizations in the citizen security and justice field with the ability to put these resources to good use.

Chris Stone noted that LAP should look at the possibilities for seeking out new organizations and leadership in this field in the Northern Triangle countries. This could include using individual grant-making to seed the creation of organizations, as well as relying on stronger organizations to serve as incubators for other organizations in the region.

1. **Outcomes Statement**

Based on the significant accomplishments and potential of core grantees in the citizen security and justice field, LAP will continue to backorganizations stimulating debate on improving police and justice sector institutions, constructively engaging with law enforcement and justice institutions, and advocating for policy reforms to reduce violence. To increase representation of marginalized communities disproportionately affected by violence and repressive policing in this portfolio, the program plans to add new organizations working with or as part of such communities. In more challenging contexts with high levels of violence and limited civil society capacity (the Northern Triangle and Venezuela), we will seek to identify promising leadership and foster new organizations.