

## The Information Technology Platform – *speaking a common language to prevent and fight crime*



Standardizing data and integrating statistics from all sources of information is a critical aspect of fighting crime. This includes optimizing sources of information and transforming isolated data into strategies.

In the last decade the information age and ICTs have brought about new opportunities to enhance the delivery of security services and boost governments' efforts to tackle violence and crime. In Guatemala, the Vice-ministry of Information and Communications Technology was created in December 2012 as a pillar of the Government's strategic plan to lead a technological revolution in security affairs.

UNESCO, UNWOMEN, UNFPA, UNODC and UNDP launched a program financed by the UN Peacebuilding Fund to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Interior. The work of the Recipient United Nations Organizations has focused on supporting the establishment of a single technological platform to generate and process data from the various entities in charge of fighting violence and crime.

In the first stage of the project, RUNOs worked with the Ministry of Interior to build the infrastructure required, including reengineering back office servers, installing a PBX for all Ministry of Interior entities, replacing the core LAN, installing a networking cabling system, equipping a situation room for higher command, installing laptops in police cars, creating a data warehouse and acquiring software for the analysis of criminal structures.

The immediate use of the technological platform is to enable instantaneous police background checks on individuals and vehicles from laptops installed in police cars and from telephones through SMS, among other devices, explained that the platform cross-checks information and provides identification data (name, age, address, telephone number, profession, civil status, etc.), criminal records including outstanding warrants, fines and restraining orders, border crossings, among others. The platform integrates all the pieces of a puzzle, which makes it possible to obtain swiftly information critical for criminal investigation.

The Peacebuilding Fund has made it possible to build stronger cases for indictment and conviction. Technology and a prompt response are contributing to building public trust in the national police. Neighbors of district 18 are approaching the police with requests to trace missing family members, items lost in public transport, and all sorts of other situations where they believe that the 'eyes' of the police could have picked up something. *"It is tough to have to turn down many of the requests because of other priorities,"* explained a police agent.

A police officer at the Monitoring Center in precinct 12, district 18, in charge of processing requests from the Public Prosecutor's Office, explained that for 19 consecutive days after the inauguration of the Monitoring Center in July 2014, there were zero homicides in the district thanks to video surveillance and the prompt dispatch of patrols.

All in all, the new police capacity helps bring the institution and the community closer together, which is the bedrock of citizen security. At a police checkpoint in the outskirts of the city, a patrol commander ran routine car registration checks during rush hour, when traffic is intense and a checkpoint risks exacerbating it. *"This technology is helping us do a better job"* he stated. *"In the past it could take up to 30 minutes to get criminal record clearance by phone or radio, now it takes 7 seconds, and this allows us to speed up the process greatly. Checks are so efficient that we can spend more time talking to drivers, inquiring about their day and enforcing safety regulations,"* he added.

### **Highlights:**

- With the support of the Peacebuilding Fund, the Ministry of Interior is implementing a Technological Platform that collects and processes better statistics to fight crime and streamline security responses.
- From September 2012 to June 2015 the Peacebuilding Fund has contributed US\$ 5,660,768.
- The Ministry of Interior is committed to developing the Technological Platform and has invested over US\$100m yearly. It anticipates that the same yearly investment will be made in the next five years.
- Seven entities under the Ministry of Interior have integrated databases, which communicate with the database of the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Judiciary, the National Civil Registry and the Tax Administration.
- Thanks to the platform, key actors in the National Civilian Police, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Judiciary now have immediate access to ID information for criminal investigation.
- Thanks to the close coordination between the National Civilian Police and the Public Prosecutor's Office, the country has made significant progress in improving criminal investigation and prosecution. For instance, impunity rates for crimes against life in the metropolitan area have

dropped from 95% in 2010 to 72% in 2013. Between 2003 and 2009, the homicide rate decreased from 49 to 34 per 100,000, and has remained at that level up to now.

- The platform enables a telematics control system for protecting women victims of violence through electronic bracelets that emit early warnings when the offender is close to the area of protection of the victim.
- A 24-hour hotline for victims of violence prompts a more efficient response from the police.
- The Programme is supporting the installation of 125 laptops in police cars with access to the information technological platform providing real-time data during checks.