

Working Group on Victimization Surveys for Latin America and the Caribbean

# VICLAC-LACSI

Iniciativa para la encuesta de victimización delictiva en  
Latinoamérica y el Caribe

Latin America and the Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey  
Initiative

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

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March 2018

*In terms of victimization surveys and within the current world, it makes no sense to speak of national surveys. International comparability is a necessity. Although many countries have national surveys, we do not have a regional instrument that can be applied to all countries of the region. The main pillar of a common methodology is a common questionnaire. The development of this questionnaire is a challenge but it is possible. To achieve this goal, we need to produce something that is politically relevant and with a solid methodology. It must be a joint effort among countries, multilateral organizations, academic institutions and national institutes of statistics.*

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Regional Meeting on Victimization Surveys (Mexico City, 2013)*

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## Background

The decade of 2000 was characterized by an outbreak in the consolidation of victimization surveys in the Latin American and the Caribbean region<sup>1</sup> (CoE, 2014). Even if it is true that the beginning of those regional efforts began earlier (Birbeck, 1983, 1991; Aebi & Linde, 2012), it was not until that decade when it was possible to notice an indisputable political support and a real “institutionalization” of the victimization surveys as instruments to measure crime, as in the cases of Chile and Mexico.

In this context, the Center of Excellence in Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice (CoE)<sup>2</sup> together with the System of Standardized Indicators in Peaceful Coexistence and Citizen Security project (SES)<sup>3</sup> carried out, in the second half of 2013, a compendium that collected information about the victimization surveys developed in 17 countries and 2 cities of Latin America and the Caribbean. The purpose of the analysis was to answer to basic questions about victimization surveys in the region. Among many other conclusions, it was possible to notice that surveys carried out in the region considerably change from one country to another. It was not found a systematized questionnaire for different countries. On the contrary, those countries that implemented victimization surveys used different methodology. This implied that it was incredibly difficult to use the results in a comparative way. It was also possible to find differences in the sample, the interview method, the crime coverage and how the questions were asked. Similarly, it was possible to find out that more than half of the surveys of the region are carried out sporadically and in many cases it is unknown if they will be carried out again in the future.

### **A regional initiative to develop a common methodology for victimization surveys**

Faced with this reality and under the auspices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the CoE and the SES project organized the Regional Meeting on Victimization Surveys which took place in Mexico City from 9 to 11 October 2013. This meeting was framed within the activities of the “Roadmap to improve the quality and availability of crime statistics at the national and international levels” (E/CN.3/2013/11), adopted by the

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Statistics Division of the United Nations, the countries that are part of the Latin American and Caribbean region are the following. Central America: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama. South America: Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. Caribbean: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Bonaire, Saint Eustatius, Saba, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Barthelemy, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Martin (French part), Saint Martin (Dutch part), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and Virgin Islands of the United States of America.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.iadb.org/es/project/rg-t1265>

United Nations Statistical Commission at its 44<sup>th</sup> session and the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its 22<sup>nd</sup> session.

In this meeting took part representatives of 20 countries<sup>4</sup> mainly from National Statistical Offices, from the States or governments security bodies and forces. Likewise, also took part international and regional organizations such as the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the Observatory and Index of Democratic Security (OBSICA), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the National Institute of Statistics of Italy (ISTAT) and the University of Lausanne in Switzerland.

During the meeting, household victimization surveys were deepened in different aspects, providing experiential and dynamic learning to all participants. Taking as reference the questionnaire of the International Crime Victims Survey<sup>5</sup> (ICVS) in its 2004-2005 version, workshops were developed to provide explanations and feedbacks favoring a space conducive to reflection.

The meeting ended with the approval and adoption of an Action Plan, which included, among other things, the creation of a Working Group to develop a questionnaire and a common methodology to optimize the implementation and subsequent comparability of victimization surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since that meeting, the Working Group has met on five occasions:

1. March 2014, in Cali (Colombia)
2. June 2014, at the Headquarters of the Secretary of Foreign Relations in Mexico City
3. February 2015, in Panama City
4. May 2015, at the Headquarters of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography in Mexico City
5. June 2016, in Merida (Mexico)
6. September 2017, in Mexico City

It is expected that the following meeting will be held in the second half of 2018.

To refer to this initiative, the Working Group agreed to call it “VICLAC-LACSI Initiative”<sup>6</sup>. The Working Group is led by representatives of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Center of Excellence in Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice (CoE) which serves as the Technical Secretariat. The initiative also has the support of three international allies:

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<sup>4</sup> The countries participating were: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

<sup>5</sup> Internationally known by its acronym in English: ICVS or by its acronym in Spanish ENICRIV

<sup>6</sup> Iniciativa para la Encuesta de Victimización Delictiva en Latinoamérica y el Caribe (VICLAC) in Spanish and *Latin America and the Caribbean Crime Victimization Initiative* (LACSI) in English.

the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The core of this initiative is formed by 12 countries in the region: Argentina, Belize, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru and the Dominican Republic. The participants of each country have a multidisciplinary character, being part of either the National Statistical Office of the country they represent, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Public Security, the Observatory of Violence or similar.

**Objectives of the Initiative VICLAC-LACSI**

The objective of having a regional questionnaire is due to the need to enable reliable and comparable measurements on the impact that crime has on different jurisdictions in the region. In line with the ICVS philosophy<sup>7</sup>, attempts are made to obtain comparable regional data on experiences of victimization, perceived security and people appreciation of the criminal justice system.

Likewise, following the technical meetings of Cali and Panama, it was agreed that the primary objective of the Initiative is that the countries should collect information for the calculation of the following indicators:

<b>Prevalence of crime</b>	<i>It is the proportion of people or households which have experienced one or more crimes during the reference period.</i>
<b>Crime incidence</b>	<i>It is the number of individual criminal victimization events reported during a specific period within the reference period.</i>
<b>Dark figure</b>	<i>Criminal acts that are not reported to the police or competent authority or that are not subjected to an investigation and therefore, do not appear in any statistics.</i>
<b>Perception of security</b>	<i>Proportion of people who experience a sense of insecurity according to their subjective appreciation of security conditions in their surroundings, as well as the perceived vulnerability of being a victim of crime, framed in their life context.</i>

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1, for the history of ICVS.

## **The crimes included in the questionnaire**

The experience of the respondents represents the heart of victimization surveys. It is important to highlight that this type of surveys cover a wide range of crimes. Nevertheless there is a set of offences that have always been measured and that are consequently more easily comparable.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Technical Meeting of the Working Group on Victimization Surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean (Cali, 2014) it was agreed that there are two categories of crimes: core crimes and optional crimes. The former refer to a set of crimes that are a priority to be measured, and the latter to those crimes whose inclusion is entirely discretionary and highly dependent on the reality and resources assigned to carry out the survey.

Later, in the development of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Technical Meeting (Mexico City 2014) the discussion followed on which crimes are core and which are optional. The discussion also concerned the measurement of any aggression of a sexual nature but the participants ended agreeing in only measuring only physical aggression, for the moment. Finally, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Technical Meeting (Panama, February 2015) the list of crimes to be measured was slightly modified, and was agreed that countries will have to generate information on at least 11 core crimes and 7 optional crimes. During the 6<sup>th</sup> Technical Meeting (Mexico City, 2017), it was agreed to consider the crime of bribery as a core crime, derived from the fact that indicator 16.5.1 asks the countries for information about it. It was also considered to add cybercrime to the list of optional crimes.

Up to date, the 12 (twelve) core crimes are the following:

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Vehicle, truck or pick-up theft          | 7. Bank fraud                  |
| 2. Theft of vehicle, truck or pick-up parts | 8. Consumer fraud/swindling    |
| 3. Motorcycle/moped theft                   | 9. Bribery (active or passive) |
| 4. Domestic burglary                        | 10. Assault and injury         |
| 5. Robbery                                  | 11. Threats                    |
| 6. Theft (larceny)                          | 12. Extortion                  |

While the 7 (seven) optional crimes are the following:

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Theft of personal property from vehicle | 5. Kidnapping                     |
| 2. Bicycle theft                           | 6. Illegal possession of firearms |
| 3. Vandalism                               | 7. Cybercrime                     |
| 4. Homicide                                |                                   |

## **The best methodological criteria for victimization surveys**

Throughout all technical meetings of the Working Group on the VICLAC-LACSI Initiative, a need for a methodological guide to help countries to implement their Victimization Surveys has been discussed. It is clear that the success of a survey does not lie only in its questionnaire, but in a long and complicated process that includes design, training, fieldwork, information processing and analysis, as well as dissemination of results.

Collecting the best methodological practices to prepare a technical-methodological guide to orientate in an easy and pedagogic way those technicians responsible for implementing victimization surveys in the region, was among the objectives achieved in the 4<sup>th</sup> Technical Meeting of the Working Group (Mexico City 2014).

Such methodological guide is not intended to be an analytical, nor a descriptive document of victimization surveys. This is an issue that has already been extensively addressed in other published documents such as the Manual on Victimization Surveys of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010)<sup>8</sup>, the Inventory of Victimization Surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013)<sup>9</sup>, or the Final report on the study on crime victimization carried out by Van Dijk, Meyhew, van Kesteren, Aebi & Linde (2010). Rather, it is a practical tool whose ultimate purpose is to be useful and of direct application for the implementation of surveys at local level.

The fundamental topics to the discussion are the following:

### **1. The sample**

In general, surveys have always adopted stratified random sampling method to achieve representative samples in terms of age, sex and geographical area. Subsequently, imputations can be made to improve representativeness, especially with small samples.

About this point, the discussions made during the Regional Meeting (Mexico City 2013) pointed out that it was not possible to have a periodic regional survey with large samples because of the high costs. Nevertheless, it was clear that if the probability is not calculated in a proper way, then the results would be erroneous. It was said that sample frames should not consider general population but determine the sample according to the probability of finding a victim and if the probability of finding a victim is low, then a large sample would be needed.

### **2. Household identification**

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2010). *Manual on Victimization Surveys*. United Nations. Geneva.

<sup>9</sup> Centro de Excelencia para Información Estadística de Gobierno, Seguridad Pública, Victimización y Justicia (2013). *Inventario de Encuestas de victimización en América Latina y el Caribe*. CdE: México, D. F.(unpublished).

Questionnaires themselves do not clarify very well the difference between household and family. It is important to clearly define “what we mean by households” and “being part of a household” that is quite different from being part of a dwelling. For this reason, it is fundamental to identify the head of the family and his/her relationship with the members of the household.

Different households can coexist within a dwelling. A household is a group of people that is formed by one or more people. The members of this group are not necessarily linked by blood or kinship ties but the income generated among them is used for their subsistence. That is, they share the same expenses.

In the case of household surveys, an appropriate respondent who can report how many households within the dwelling exist is firstly selected and then a household is randomly chosen.

The VICLAC-LACSI Initiative propose a specific section to follow international recommendations: first of all identify the number of people in the dwelling, then the number of households and finally use a table of random numbers where the household can be selected, if there is more than one in the dwelling.

### **3. Respondent selection**

It is important that the person of the household that provides the answer is determined in a standardized way. It has been recommended that the respondent is at least 18 years of age, and chosen according to his/her birthday: it will be chosen the member of the household whose birthday is the one immediately after the date of the interview.

Concerning the age, doubts arise about including minors in victimization surveys since they beforehand will be out of the spectrum of certain crimes, such as, vehicle theft or bank card fraud.

The VICLAC-LACSI Initiative recommends making a list of all the selected household members (if there are more than one) and then choosing the respondent according to the criterion of the immediate birthday after the date of the interview, only taking into account residents who are 18 or older.

### **4. Data collection method**

Even though it is true that it has been internationally recommended to use telephone interviews through CATI technique (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview), it is not always possible to use it in some regions of the world.

In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, it has been observed a phenomenon that would not allow using telephone interviews: extortions through this medium. CoE (2014) found that all the countries of the region conduct in most cases face-to-face

interviews, using the PAPI technique (Paper and Pencil Assisted Personal Interview). Only in two countries of the region they use electronic devices for data collection, but the interview is still face-to-face.

One of the great questions regarding the interview method is whether the telephone interviews and the face-to-face interviews yield different results, as suggested by the Home Office British study carried out by Walby & Allen (2004), or whether there are no significant differences as pointed out by Mayhew & van Dijk (2012), Catalano (2007) o Scherpenzeel (2001).

In any case, the evidence suggests that one of the factors for the generation of good surveys is its quality control. For example, like the sample selection, the respondent selection as well as the training and supervision of interviewers (Mayhew & van Dijk, 2012).

The VICLAG-LACSI Initiative recommends data collection through CAPI technique (Computer Assisted Personal Interview). This technique has several advantages, such as:

- it reduces the cost of the personnel after the survey (typists and data capturers);
- it reduces the imputation error in the survey, since it applies the validation and consistency guidelines automatically, giving the interviewer the opportunity to correct the information without having to return to the dwelling the following days, or even losing the information because he/she cannot contact the selected respondent again;
- it reduces the cost of printed materials (even though electronic devices are expensive in immediate terms, they can be used for subsequent surveys not only for victimization, but of any subject);
- it prevents loss of information through frequent back up;
- it enables use of longer, more complex questionnaires;
- it guarantees the confidentiality of the information provided by the informant by automatically encrypting the answers at the end of the interview.

## **5. Questions about perception**

A fundamental part of victimization surveys is the security perception and the other (although not always) is the opinion that people have about the performance of the institutions responsible for ensuring their safety.

The level of confidence in institutions changes according to different factors. It has been pointed out that due to the difference between the regions of each country, an area can understand the function of an institution, trust it and have a good perception about its functioning given that it is the institution which interact most with the citizens in the area. But the opposite can also occur, being those institutions which most interact the ones that are worst qualified.

In any case, it is suggested to explore the perception that the citizens have about the performance of the institutions responsible for public security, so as the authorities that are part of the system of justice administration. The latter should be analyzed only through the people who have reported and followed the process. It is necessary to be able to understand if the citizens already know the institutions that are qualifying as this gives more weight to the response.

The VICLAC-LACSI Initiative offers a list of questions focused on measuring the respondent perception about the safety in geographic areas and around their dwelling, measuring the change in habits for fear of becoming a victim, protective measures taken for the household to protect against crime and its cost, as well as the identification and perception of public security authorities (confidence, efficiency).

## **6. Crime screening questions**

Questionnaires of victimization surveys must be able to identify those respondents that have been victims of those type of crimes investigated by the survey. This is done through the use of crime screening carried out through the questions that investigate whether the respondent has been victim of a crime or not, that is victim of any crime during the reference period of the survey. In other words, crime screening ensures that only the ones that have been victims of a crime can respond to questions related to them. In the Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010, p. 61) it is highlighted that:

*Most victim surveys address the experience of victimization in two steps, starting by using screeners that describe the incidents to establish which respondents have been victims. The second step is limited to those who have been victims and includes all questions aimed at capturing details of the incident. In general, follow-up questions are asked for each type of crime covered by the survey. Thus, respondents who were victims of more than one type of crime will be asked follow-up questions as many times as the number of crimes they were victims of. Some surveys group all screeners for each type of crime covered by the survey in one section, asking relevant questions in sequence, and going back to details of the incidents only upon completion of the entire series. Other surveys prefer go through all questions related to one particular type of crime at once, thus asking relevant follow-up questions immediately after the screener.*

Perhaps one of the drawbacks of the surveys with screening questions immediately followed by in-depth questions about each particular incident is that the respondent could respond to the first or two sections quite well, but knowing that each section could take a long time, the respondent could not be willing to continue. On the other hand, in the surveys where the crime is screened, and then it follows the follow-up

questions of the crime, it is ensured that the respondent concentrates on a particular crime and forces the respondent to provide the details of each particular incident. It should be noted that the VICLAC-LACSI Initiative is aligned with the definitions of the International Classification of Crimes for Statistical Purposes<sup>10</sup> (ICCS), which is an international tool that homogenizes concepts of crime, focusing on the description of behavior rather than on penal definitions.

## **7. Reference period**

The United Nations Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010) points out that every victimization survey must define a time frame within which to collect the data about the crimes suffered from the population taken into account in the survey.

For example, the ICVS uses multiple time frames and this allows the respondent to be put over time and go through the past experiences that have been left out of the reference period. The ICVS uses “five years” and “one year” for all types of crimes. For a “one year” reference period it must be defined whether the 12 months prior to the survey (previous 12 months) are used or if the last calendar year is used. Regarding the calendar year, it should be taken into account that this reference period must be the closest to the date of the interview to reduce memory errors.

When the reference period is the natural prior year, the interviews must be done at the beginning of the following year, ideally in January or at the latest before March. The reference periods that covers the last twelve months prior to the interview allow a higher flexibility in a way that the field work can be done at any time of the year and be extended for any period of time.

The VICLAC-LACSI Initiative recommends the previous calendar year as the suitable reference period only when it is planned to collect the information in the first quarter of the year. In case it is not possible, it is recommended to use the previous 12 months, without considering the month of the interview.

## **8. Telescoping effect**

The United Nations Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010) defines the telescoping effect as a “phenomenon by which respondents tend to change their recollection of the time when incidents occurred”. In the same sense, the Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods<sup>11</sup>, defines the telescoping effect as “Telescoping describes a phenomenon that threatens the validity of self-reported dates, durations, and frequencies of events. Respondents often are asked in surveys to retrospectively report when something occurred, how long something lasted, or how often something happened within a certain time period.”

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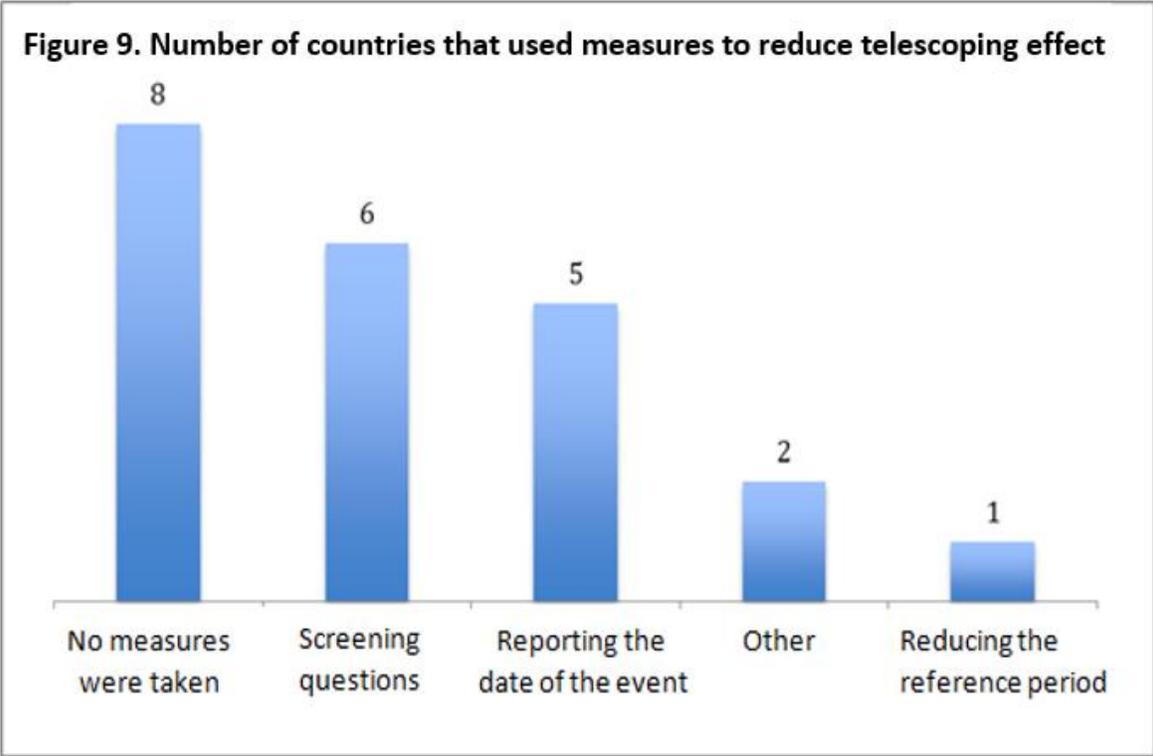
<sup>10</sup> United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime, 2015.

[http://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx/articulos/doc/delito\\_internacional.pdf](http://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx/articulos/doc/delito_internacional.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Ziniel, S. (2008). “Telescoping” in P. Lavrakas (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

The fundamental question about the telescoping effect is the need to understand that the collection of retrospective data, such as those reported in victimization surveys, are characterized by many memory errors which affect the accuracy of the data. Telescoping effect is a very important issue in victimization surveys because it can radically increase the estimated levels of victimization, raising them above the level we think is the real estimate. Therefore, it is extremely important to work to reduce telescoping, in order to prevent surveys from producing distorted results.

In the Inventory of Victimization Surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013), it can be observed a graphic that specifies that only 8 out of 17 countries use telescoping measures to reduce the telescoping effect:



The VICLAC-LACSI Initiative addresses this phenomenon by investigating on its crime screening section by those that occurred in the previous 3 years, and then investigate only on those happened in the previous 12 months in the characterization of the crime.

**9. Follow-up questions**

The follow-up questions of the crimes of which the respondent was a victim is the heart of the survey, since through them it is possible to identify the characteristics of the incident, that is the *modus operandi* (where, how, with what, etc.), the characteristics of the offender/s, as well as cross-referencing the information on the characteristics of the victim. And the most important thing is that through this section

it is possible to identify the dark figure of crime: those crimes that are suffered but that are not reported to the police or that are reported but the process of investigation has not been started and therefore do not appear in administrative records.

In the last years, an important discussion about how many incidents should be characterized in a survey has been generated. Most counties investigate on the last incident suffered for each crime. Some investigations have showed that asking only for the last crime suffered could overestimate the dark figure, since if the respondent has been victim of a crime more than once and his/her first experience of reporting to the authorities has been unsatisfactory, it is very likely that in the following experiences he/she will not want to denounce.

It is for this reason that the number of incidents that the VICLAC-LACSI Initiative promotes is at least the last 3 (three), since this would yield a much more precise dark figure together with other characteristics of crime.

## **10. Interviewers' training**

Training of interviewers is fundamental for a victimization survey. The interviewers must be well-qualified people, focused on the respondent and well aware of the techniques to carry on interviews. In addition, good training produces skilled and motivated interviewers, thus maximizing the possibility of a reliable data collection.

According to the United Nations Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010) training planning should be considered as a very serious matter and should be carried out in several phases or stages. Theoretical knowledge, that is the introduction to the subject, must be imparted according to a correct schedule defining the teaching modules and the objectives of each of them. A correct preparation of the materials for the interviewer should also be done, including tools for the verification of learning (questionnaires, exams) at the end of the training. Once the training is completed, the interviewer must know the questionnaire well and understand the importance of his/her role as an interviewer.

## **11. The term for data dissemination**

The timeliness of the products is a crucial measure for the success of most victimization surveys. This is particularly relevant for those surveys specifically required for the formulation or evaluation of policies. It is worth remembering that timeliness should be specified according to the information required of the survey and to the purpose for which the data is needed. For example, if the need for information is urgent, a survey that produces a very precise measure of the points of interest may be meaningless if it is produced in three years. In some cases, it may be desirable to produce a smaller or less detailed dataset in a shorter time in order to meet the user requirements. In some cases, however, it may be necessary to invest the time needed to obtain detailed, high-quality data. Striking the right balance between product quality and depth, timeliness required for the data to be relevant

and useful to users and the resources required is a tension that survey administrators need to be aware of when establishing the parameters for the survey process (UNODC, 2010).

### **The experience of the implementation of the VICLAC-LACSI questionnaire**

After the 4<sup>th</sup> Technical Meeting (Mexico City 2014), the VICLAC-LACSI Initiative saw its first opportunity to be implemented at national level in 2015. The Republic of Panama undertook the task of conducting a victimization survey within the framework of a cooperation project on security issues, in which the efforts to improve public policies included conducting this exercise. The Center of Excellence provided technical support in all the stages of the survey process through a financing agreement and, thanks to this experience, the VICLAC-LACSI Initiative had its first implementation in the Latin American context, being able to identify areas of opportunity in the questionnaire, as well as proving that the methodology proposed is very feasible to measure the phenomenon of criminal victimization and security perception.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Technical Meeting of the Working Group (Mérida, 2016) was carried out within the framework of this experience, and gave as a result the 2.0 version of the questionnaire. Similarly, this experience in Panama resulted in the creation of an interviewer manual for the Panamanian context, which has served as a basis in the elaboration of subsequent manuals for those countries that adopted this initiative as well. The results of this survey were published by the National Integrated System of Criminal Statistics (SIEC) and the Panama National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) on 24 March 2017<sup>12</sup>; the second round of the ENVI is expected to take place in the second half of 2018.

During 2016, the political context of several countries in the region and the tireless effort of the CoE to implement Victimization Surveys, caused that several countries applied the methodologies proposed by VICLAC-LACSI, like Argentina, Guatemala and Peru. In the case of Argentina, the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of the Republic of Argentina (INDEC) and the Ministry of Security of the Nation (MSN), made the adaptation of the questionnaire autonomously, carrying out its survey in the first semester of 2017, publishing their results in February 2018<sup>13</sup>. In the case of Guatemala, because of the great efforts of the Ministry of Interior (MINGOB) and the National Institute of Statistics (INE), as well as the technical support of the Center of Excellence, in November 2016 it was carried out the pilot test of the National Survey on Perception of Public Safety and Victimization (ENPEVI 2018), the national survey was carried out at the end of 2017 and the results are expected to be published by mid-2018. In the case of Peru, the National Institute of

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.siec.gob.pa/index.php?option=com\\_phocadownload&view=category&id=16&Itemid=239](http://www.siec.gob.pa/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=category&id=16&Itemid=239)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.indec.gob.ar/nivel4\\_default.asp?id\\_tema\\_1=4&id\\_tema\\_2=27&id\\_tema\\_3=137](https://www.indec.gob.ar/nivel4_default.asp?id_tema_1=4&id_tema_2=27&id_tema_3=137)

Statistics and Informatics (INEI) also carried out autonomously the adaptation of the VICLAC questionnaire for the execution of its pilot test 2016 and the national survey in the second semester of 2017; the results are expected to be available in April 2018.

The Initiative is nourished and improved by the experiences of the countries collecting information more efficiently every time, always promoting best practices and international methodologies. The Panama experience resulted in the creation of new supporting materials and the 2.0 version of the questionnaire that could be tested in the field during the pilot test and national survey of the ENPEVI of Guatemala.

The Guatemala experience has not been the exception: during the 6th Technical Meeting of the Task Force (Mexico City, 2017), the acquired knowledge derived from the implementation of the VICLAC Initiative in this country was discussed, as well as proposed changes to the questionnaire that led to an improved version of the instrument, the 3.0 version.

During 2018 it is expected that Brazil, Guyana, Jamaica, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia will adopt the VICLAC-LACSI Initiative, fostering the application of international standards for the measuring of the victimization phenomenon in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

## **Conclusions**

The project of instituting a periodic victimization survey in Latin America and the Caribbean would allow having a set of effective indicators to establish the evolution of crime in the region and compare its levels in different countries.

One of the challenges at regional level is the lack of resources for the implementation of a Victimization Survey, as well as the political barriers that are linked to the uncertainty of the countries of having real data about the violence and crime that happen in their territory. For this reason, it is necessary to make an analysis about the situations that do not allow the implementation of a victimization survey in each country, considering possible resources sustainability solutions to find less costly alternatives. On the other hand, raising the awareness of authorities and relevant actors about the usefulness of investing in a victimization survey is also necessary since it provides essential data to create more effective crime prevention public policies. It is also important to raise the awareness on the fact that a victimization survey complements administrative records. It is also important to explain that the victimization rate will be higher of the one of administrative records because of the nature of the source of information. This is because victimization surveys capture both the victims who reported the crime and those who did not for different reasons.

In addition, with the advent of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and according to its goal 16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”, countries should ideally align their national agendas on producing data that help in reporting their progress in meeting the goals.

The VICLAC-LACSI Initiative provides this solid methodology to those countries that want to have an independent questionnaire and thus be able to continue to advance the understanding of the criminal phenomenon and crime victimization, maintaining an internationally high standard, aligned with the ICCS, the SDG and promoting the production of quality data that are comparable at regional and international level.

Among the next steps of the Working Group to promote the use of this regional standardized questionnaire in Latin America and the Caribbean there are:

- Continue refining the cybercrime measurement proposal; Test the module in the field to evaluate its effectiveness in data collection.
- Propose a specialized module for the measurement of psychological violence.
- The integration of the measurement of sexual crimes as an additional module in the core questionnaire. It is important to notice that this module will not be the same as measuring gender violence, but sexual victimization both in men and women in the different domains where it happens (dwelling, household, workplace, educational institution, street, public transport, etc.). It is suggested to realize an *ad hoc* survey for the measurement of gender violence due to substantial differences in their methodologies and conceptual characterization.
- Exploring the creation of a short version of the regional questionnaire, adopting indicators that can provide the information required for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda: 16.1.3, 16.1.4, 16.3.1, 16.5.1.

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## ANNEX I

### **The antecedent: The International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS)**

Twenty-five years have passed since the first pass of the International Crime Victims Survey of 1989. During the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe held in Barcelona in 1987, Jan van Dijk decided to expose his intention of creating a standardized questionnaire to measure the victimization suffered by households and individuals at international level (Van Dijk, Shapland & Leger, 1987).

Taking advantage of the boost of this conference, a Working Group of European criminologists was created. It was co-ordinated by Jan van Dijk in the Netherlands and made up also by Pat Mayhew in the United Kingdom and Martin Killias in Switzerland (van Dijk, Mayhew & Killias, 1989). In this way, the Working Group accepted the challenge of issuing invitations to countries, designating a company responsible for conducting telephone interviews and not least of all, developing a questionnaire whose main objective was to “obtain internationally comparable information on victimization experiences, perception of fear of crime and the attitude towards the criminal justice system” (Aebi & Linde, 2010, p. 218).

In that first edition of 1989, 14 industrialized countries participated<sup>14</sup>. In order to encourage participation, it was thought on how to reduce costs. Obviously, this substantially determined the size of the sample and the length of the interviews. Samples averaged between 1,500 and 2,000 households per country, although there were countries such as Germany where the sample was more than 5,200 households. It would be useful to point out that samples of this size produce high sample errors and reduce the possibility of making a detailed analysis about the issues in which a small proportion of the sample could yield significant data. This is certainly relevant since talking about sample error means talking about the accuracy of the calculation. The higher the error, the more inaccurate the data will be and the larger the interval in which it can be found the parameter with certain percentage of confidence. For this reason, a correct estimation of the sample is fundamental. We are speaking about national samples that can provide data at provincial level. If the objective is to do comparative analysis between cities, then relatively small samples would be appropriate. Last but not least, it should be noted that the interviews were carried out by telephone with the CATI technique and lasted on average between 10 and 15 minutes depending from the number of victimization experiences of the respondent.

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<sup>14</sup> The countries and their promoters were: Australia (Australian Institute of Criminology), Belgium (Ministry of Justice), Canada (Department of Justice, Research and Development), England and Wales (Home Office), Federal Republic of Germany (Bundeskriminalamt and the Max Planck Institute), Finland (National Institute for Research on Legal Policy), France (Ministry of Justice), Northern Ireland (Ministry of Interior), Norway (Ministry of Justice), Scotland (Scottish Department of Health and Interior), Spain (Ministry of Justice), Switzerland (federal Office of Justice) and United States of America (United States Department of Justice). (Van Dijk, Mayhew & Killias, 1989)

Starting from 1991, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) joined the project with the intention of achieving greater geographic coverage. Some developing countries joined in and, considering that in many of them the telephone network did not reach all households, it was necessary to adopt a specific methodology to carry out the face-to-face interviews. In this way, the second edition of ICVS was carried out in 1992 in a total of 33 countries. In 22 of them, (60%) face-to-face interview was used.

According to Aebi and Linde (2010, p. 219), "...in 1996 the third round was conducted in 48 countries of which 36 used face-to-face interviews. The fourth round was carried out in 2000 and also 48 countries participated, of which 30 conducted face-to-face interviews. In 2004-2005 the fifth round was held with the participation of 30 countries and the inclusion of 33 capitals or major cities". By grouping all the ICVS rounds over a 25-years period, the survey has been conducted on more than 140 occasions in 78 different countries (with national surveys in 37). In addition, it has brought together more than 320,000 respondents and the questionnaire has been translated in more than 30 languages (Mayhew & van Dijk, 2012).

Undoubtedly, the strength of the ICVS is that the same questionnaire and the same methodology have been used over these years. It is true that the questionnaire has incorporated variations (regarding the inclusion of criminal typologies and questions regarding the perception of security or performance of institutions), but these variations have been minimal and have not hindered the carrying out of longitudinal studies (García España, et al., 2010).