

## ● VIOLENCE PREVENTION: THE INVESTMENT THAT SAVES LIVES

Violence has been prevented in the United States and across the world through rigorous testing of programs and ideas. Yet these programs remain little known and under-funded. Global Violence Prevention publishes case studies of programs that have been tested and shown to work. If public and private funders would support these programs and ones like them on a broader scale, many lives would be saved and people would suffer less from self-directed and interpersonal violence.

# Reducing Homicide in Diadema, Brazil

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**A** community-based, public health intervention reduced the murder rate in the town of Diadema, Brazil by more than 44 percent in 2002. Prior to the study, Diadema experienced one of the highest homicide rates in Brazil. Research indicated that 60 percent of homicides and 45 percent of complaints about violence against women occurred between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. in neighborhoods with a high concentration of bars and were highly associated with alcohol consumption.

In 2002 the mayor of Diadema adopted a new municipal code prohibiting the sale of alcohol after 11 p.m. in the city's bars. In addition to restricting alcohol sales, Diadema officials developed an intervention strategy featuring:

**Public Education and Support** A public opinion poll conducted prior to the adoption of the new policy showed that 83 percent of the community would support it. Officials circulated a brochure to every household in the city describing the need for and the content of the law. Radio and news announcements and meetings with local officials were used to educate. Surveys conducted after the law's implementation revealed that 98 percent of Diadema residents were aware of the law and 93 percent supported it.

**Alcohol Retailer Education** Success of the new law was largely dependent on the participation and cooperation of alcohol retailers. To garner their support, civil guard members visited retailers six months prior to the law's adoption to talk to them about the program. Three months prior to the law's adoption, retailers were again visited by civil guard members and asked to sign a declaration that they were aware of the law as well as its consequences.

**Strong Enforcement** A daily enforcement program was created to monitor retailer compliance and ensure that the new law was being enforced. Each day the Secretary of Social Defense selected a unit to conduct an evening enforcement operation. The area was not disclosed until the team deployed. Additionally, meetings were held and reports were provided to officials regarding effectiveness and enforcement of the policy as well as reports of violence.

**Progressive Administrative Penalties** Tough but fair penalties were established for violators. A retailer's first violation of the law resulted in a warning; the second violation yielded a fine; the third violation resulted in a fine and a temporary license suspension; and the fourth violation yielded a permanent revocation of the retailer's license.

**Diadema, Brazil reduced homicide 44 percent, saving an estimated 319 lives over three years.**

Duailibi S et al. The effect of restricting opening hours on alcohol-related violence. *Am J Public Health.* 2007;97:2276-2280.

## EVIDENCE-BASED RESULTS

Evidence demonstrates that the intervention made important improvements in public safety and health by preventing significant injury and loss of life. Homicides fell from an average of 22 per month before the intervention to 12 per month during the three years after the program went into effect. Evidence suggests that 319 homicides were prevented during the first three years of the new law, a 44 percent decline from what was expected without the law. The law prevented an estimated 1,051 assaults against women between July 2002 and July 2005, a reduction of 56 percent from predicted assaults.

## APPLYING THE PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO REDUCE VIOLENCE

Research has long demonstrated a link between alcohol and violence. The Diadema intervention provides strong evidence that several factors in a community-based program can be effective in preventing alcohol-related violence.

Since the Diadema law was enacted, at least 120 municipalities have adopted similar policies and Brazil's federal government is encouraging these prevention efforts by offering additional funding for law enforcement to towns that restrict drinking. In addition to saving lives, the public health intervention is also having a positive economic impact, breathing new life into the once downtrodden city of Diadema. According to a 2006 article in *Time*, "For 20 consecutive months, Diadema led the state—Brazil's industrial heartland—in the number of jobs created, and it is gaining a reputation as a model of abstinence and urban renewal."

To prevent homicide globally, adequate funding from both public and private sources is critical. With funding, a body of evidence-based research will identify practical interventions and achieve lasting progress in reducing violence.

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**GLOBAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION** is a network of U.S. researchers and practitioners of violence prevention, working to bring resources to low-income and middle-income countries for evidence-based prevention of self-directed, interpersonal, and collective violence.