

Pacifying Police Units

RIO DE
JANEIRO,
BRAZIL

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's most famous city, is the country's second largest metropolis. Once the nation's political, cultural and financial hub, the city entered a steep decline following the establishment of the new political capital in Brasilia in 1960. Faced with chronic underinvestment in infrastructure and housing, immigrants arriving to the city from the north-east of Brazil were forced to set up shacks on the hillside – known as favelas. High levels of unemployment, coupled with corruption and loose policing resulted in the take-over of many of these favela communities by drug-traffickers and gangs. The so called 'rotten part' of the police soon became corrupted and an array of rival fractions appeared. The violence of the favelas spread to other areas of the city, leading to alarming rates of crime and homicide across Rio de Janeiro.

Project overview

Introduced in 2009, the Pacifying Police Unit Programme (*Unidades de Policia Pacificadora*) has been hailed as transformational in reducing violence, cutting crime and increasing security in the city's *favelas*. Focused on reclaiming territories controlled by drug dealing gangs, the programme is run by the State government of Rio de Janeiro and forms the backbone of the city's Security Policy (2011–2014). Once pacification has been secured, UPP Social and other urban programmes are delivered by the Municipal Government, seeking to re-integrate residents of the *favelas* through the coordination of, and improved access to, public and private services.

Results and impact

Overall, the implementation of the Programme has had a remarkable effect on the city's *favelas*, with 75 percent of *favela* residents approving the UPPs in 2013. On crime, the units appear to have had a significant impact with reported murders in pacified *favelas* declining by 65 percent between 2008 and 2012 and significant reductions in robberies, car thefts and other crimes reported. Through enabling better access to public services, the programme has also had broader impacts including improving the standardisation of health care provision for *favela* residents. Improvements in school attendance and education have also been reported, with a 28 percent increase in matriculation seen across 15 schools located in UPP communities between 2011 and 2012.

However, the programme remains controversial and there have been challenges around convincing many of the city's residents that the UPPs are here to stay after the Olympics and World Cup events have been and gone. The government has ambitious plans for the further roll-out of the UPP but there is much work to do in extending the UPPs to the rest of the city's communities which are still under the control of drug or militia gangs. The programme has also raised deeper questions about how to achieve true economic and social integration within Rio, tackling some of the deeper inequalities that have existed between residents of the city for so long.

Enablers

Supporting the ambitious roll-out of the UPPs across Rio's *favelas*, a number of critical enablers can be identified. Firstly, the full political alignment of Municipal, State and Federal government in Rio helped to enable greater consensus for change while different parts of government demonstrated that they were able to work effectively together in implementing various parts of the strategy. Secondly, establishing early credibility and momentum of the programme was critical to ensuring its continuation, in comparison with so many earlier government policies that had fallen by the wayside. Here, the ordering of the pacification of the *favelas*, although controversial, was important in getting the media and middle-class on side. Thirdly, investment in capacity building, particularly in the re-training and support provided to UPP policeman was important. The UPP programme required a completely new concept of community policing to work and this required breaking down many hard barriers. Fourthly, the leadership and charisma of key individuals has been crucial in building the trust of various stakeholders who have remained skeptical about the programme at different times. Beltrame, the Security of public safety, had a reputation for fairness and getting things done and was able to get the public on side. At the operational level, the choice of leaders was used to motivate and engage UPP police officers at key periods while at the local level, officers such as Pricilla Arzevedo, were critical to brokering trust between community police and *favela* residents.

