

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON PROGRAM EVALUATION:  
NEW PARADIGMS FOR EVALUATING  
DIPLOMACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY  
June 8-9, 2010

Democracy and Governance Track

PowerPoint presentation from workshop on  
Improving Democracy and Governance Programs Through Better  
Evaluation; The Impact evaluation of USAID's Merida Initiative  
in Central America

Session transcript:  
<http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/rm/2010/148032.htm>



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# **Merida / Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) Impact Evaluation in Central America**

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## Crime and Violence in Central America

- Most violent region in the world (UNDP, 10/2009)
  - Example: El Salvador
    - 62.4 / 100,000 homicide rate (U.S. = 5.4)
    - 32.2% victims of crime in previous 12 months
    - 15.4% of national budget for justice and security
- Citizen insecurity and support for democracy
  - Negative correlation
  - Victimization or perception of insecurity
    - Decreased support for “the system”
    - Political and societal instability



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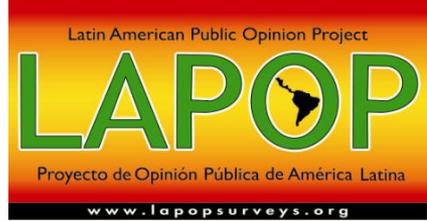


## Merida Initiative/Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI)

- USG response to insecurity in region
  - USG: \$248M in Central America since 2008
  - USAID: \$56.5M
- Evolution from enforcement to include prevention
- USAID: Community-based violence prevention
  - Engages at-risk youth, communities, governments
  - Education, social and economic opportunities



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## Goal of USAID's Crime Prevention Interventions

“Reduce crime rates and improve security in Central America by strengthening *community capacity* to combat crimes and creating education and employment opportunities for at-risk youth”



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## Measuring “Success”

- **Need for impact evaluation**
  - Understand *how well* programs work (or *don't* work) – *why, where and for whom*
  - Defensible results for policymakers, practitioners, academics
    - Tied to funding
  - Inform design of on-going and future programs
- **What is success?**
  - Reduction in crime victimization
  - Increase in sense of security



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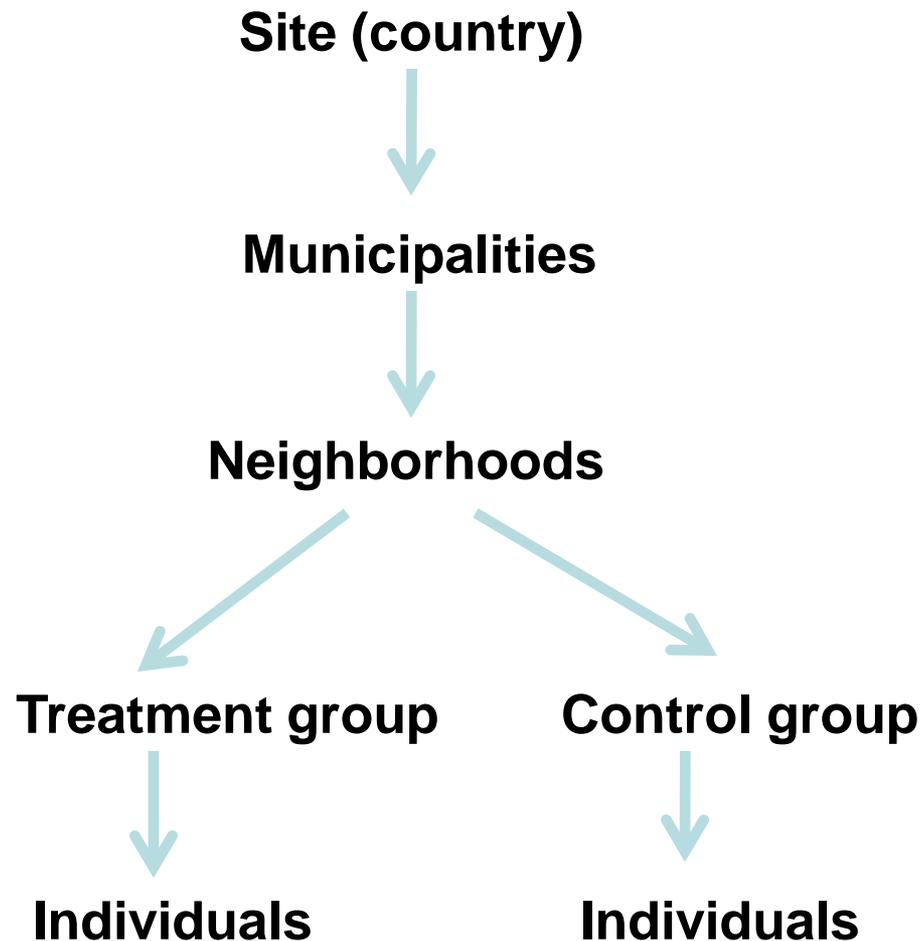


## Research Design

- Methodology: Multi-site “clustered randomized experiment” (CRE)
  - “Unit of assignment is an identifiable group rather than an individual” (Murray 1998, pp. 5-6)
- Unit of assignment: “At risk” neighborhoods
  - El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama
- Main features:
  1. Collection of data *before, during* and *after* program implementation
  2. Units assigned by LAPOP *randomly* to either treatment or control groups



# Multi-level Structure of Field Experiment

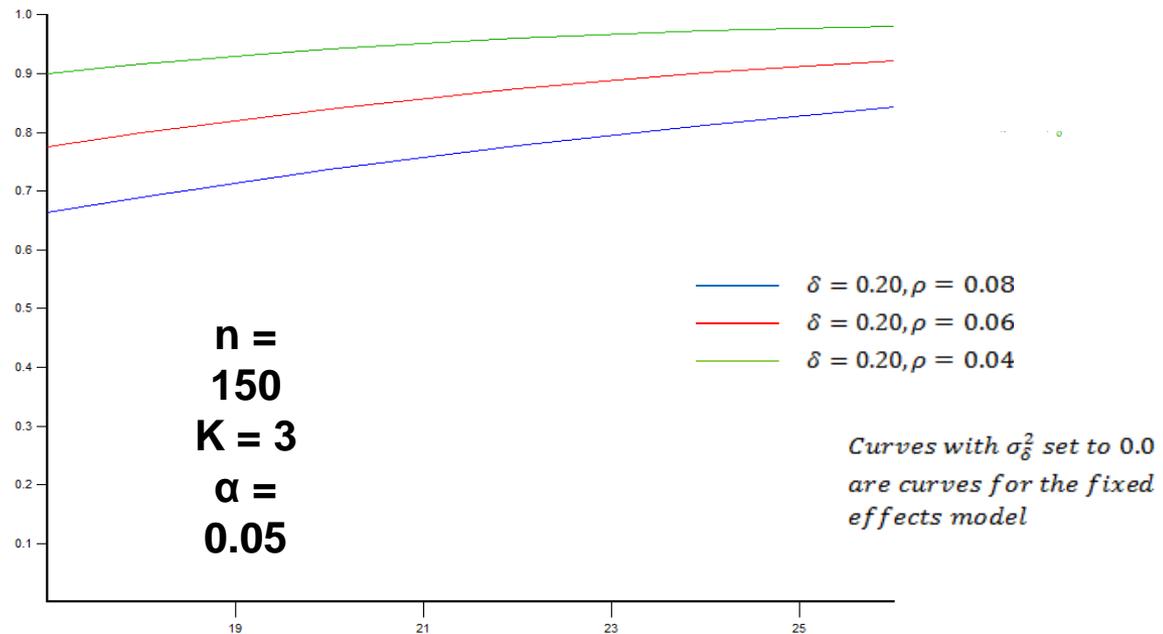




# Neighborhoods (Clusters) and Sample Size: Power Analysis

Power Analysis using Optimal Design Software

A total of 100 clusters or neighborhoods and a sample size of 150 individuals in each neighborhood are anticipated to yield sufficient statistical power to determine the overall effect of interventions.



$n =$   
**150**  
 $K =$   
**3**  
 $\alpha =$   
**0.05**

*Curves with  $\sigma_{\delta}^2$  set to 0.0 are curves for the fixed effects model*

Number of clusters of Neighborhoods per Country



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# Mixed Method Field Experiment

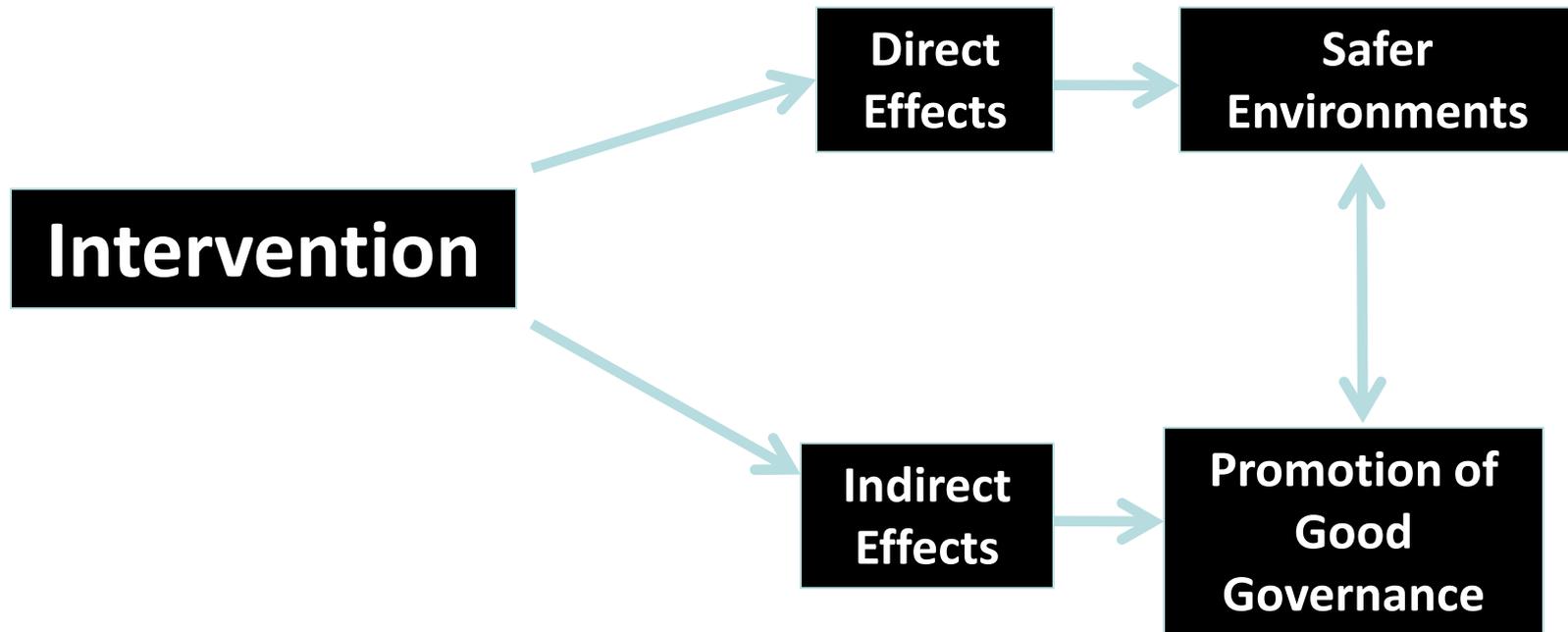
- **Quantitative data**
  - Neighborhood level data
    - Census data
    - Systematic observation of each neighborhood
  - Individual level data
    - LAPOP survey
- **Qualitative data**
  - Focus groups
  - In-depth interviews



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# Prevention Interventions and their Effects





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## Outcome Indicators

- **Safer environments**
  - Crime victimization
  - Fear of crime
- **Good governance**
  - Social cohesion
  - Participation in civic organizations
  - Perceptions of the police
  - Trust in local government
  - Satisfaction with and support for democracy



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## Lessons Learned

- Resource intensive – human and financial
- Sequencing and coordination – start early
  - Funding
  - Design and baseline before program interventions
  - Long-term timeline
- Buy-in – cultivate stakeholders at all levels
  - USAID Missions, Embassies, local communities, host country authorities
- Data – think creatively about sources
- Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good