

# 10 Things to Know about



## Groundwork for Peace

1



Jamaica's extraordinary level of homicide is a function of the prevalence of organized criminal gangs, which is itself a function of the prevalence of informal communities that serve as safe havens for these violent groups. Around 90 percent of all murders annually are directly or indirectly linked to organised violence.

2



The country's gang problem resembles a decentralised insurgency, a recognition that underpins the adoption of a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy as detailed in the 2013 National Security Policy and implemented via the Clear, Hold, and Build approach of the Zones of Special Operations. The strategy aims to win the "hearts and minds" of communities harbouring armed groups through social services, development initiatives, and security.

3



The appeal of the population-centric counterinsurgency strategy is reinforced by views entrenched in the state bureaucracy and non-state development organisations that the "root causes" of violence are socio-economic deficits in marginalised communities, warranting interventions aimed at behaviour modification and social development.

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The population-centric or "hearts and minds" counterinsurgency strategy has shown little success internationally, notably failing in Afghanistan and in Rio de Janeiro's attempt to use it to displace gangs in a Jamaican-like scenario, which raises concerns about its effectiveness in Jamaica.

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The efficacy of social interventions is questionable, as evidence shows that socio-economic deficits bear little relationship to the motivations driving armed violence. Focusing on individual behaviour change—be it of active perpetrators or potential ones—does not effectively address the sources of armed violence in Jamaica.

8



While there are infrastructure renewal efforts ongoing in ZOSOs, more comprehensive work needs to be done to rationalize the haphazard layouts of, and lack of accessibility to, informal communities that offer strategic advantages to gangs.

6



Armed violence in Jamaica is organised, driven by strategic decisions within structured groups. Informal communities are the hubs of this organised violence, concentrated in and around these areas. Organised violent groups incubate and maintain control in urban areas with weak state presence, regardless of the economic, educational, or healthcare opportunities available to residents.

9



Land tenure regularisation is essential to integrating informal communities, dismantling gang safe havens, reducing violence, and enhancing national security. Although included in listed ZOSO activities, it is not a priority, with only two land titling initiatives started out of over a hundred other activities like zinc fence replacement, civil registration, and business support, none of which are completed. Land tenure regularisation should receive more resources and be central to ZOSO and other measures aimed at bringing peace to volatile communities, lowering the murder rate, and improving citizen security in Jamaica.

7



The current framework of ZOSOs provides for temporary gang displacement in the Clear and Hold phases, with a view to subsequently changing the communities through infrastructure works, social development projects, and behaviour-change interventions in the Build phase. However, the transformative potential of ZOSOs is limited without a focus on land tenure regularization and infrastructure upgrading.

10



Based on the experience of other countries, the available technology, and the existing bureaucracy and policy framework with regard to ZOSOs and to the administration's stated goal of providing housing and reducing violence, the only factors preventing the prioritisation of land tenure regularisation are a failure to recognise its transformative potential and lack of political will.