Conflict, crime & violence in Colombia

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• Main themes in public policy against violence
• Missing issues
• Available Evidence
• ¿ What to do ?
Main themes in public policy against violence

- Drug trafficking and guerrilla: low contribution to homicide rates
  - Bulk of Violence: Generalized intolerance among ordinary citizens
- Social determinants of crime & violence ("causas objetivas")
  - Government expenditure in high violence areas
- Different treatment for political criminals and “common” criminals
Missing issues

- Armed Groups: war and crime
- Armed Groups and the criminal justice system
Available Evidence

Generalized intolerance among ordinary citizens

- Indicators of interpersonal violence show it decreased as homicide rates went up.
- Cross-section data also suggests a negative relationship between homicides and personal injuries.
Available Evidence

Social determinants of crime & violence

Cross-section: Poverty levels do not contribute to explain differences in homicide rates at the municipal level. Income inequality does (Sarmiento et al (1998))

Available Evidence

Guerrilla influence and Fiscal Resources

Cross-section:
• Fiscal transfers from the central Government help discriminate municipios with guerrilla influence (Rubio (1999))
• Perverse relationship between government expenditure and homicide rate (Sarmiento et al (1998))
Available Evidence

Evolution of Guerrilla influence (1987-1997) and Regional Economic Development
Available Evidence

Evolution of Guerrilla influence (1987-1997) and Poverty

Poverty lost significance as a discriminating variable for guerrilla influence in municipios (Rubio(1999))
Available Evidence

Armed Groups influence and Violence

- 93% of homicides in 1995 took place in a municipio under the influence of guerrilla, paramilitary or drug-traffickers.
- Armed group influence helps explain differences in homicide rates at municipio level (Rubio(1999), Sarmiento el al (1998))
Available Evidence

Armed Groups Influence and Violence

LOW VIOLENCE
1990-1995 average homicide rate < 20

NO ARMED GROUPS
Available Evidence

Armed Groups Influence and Violence

Higher incidence

Different Nature

Household survey in 60 municipios, Cuéllar (1997)
Available Evidence

Armed Groups Influence and Crime

Higher incidence

Household survey in 60 municipios, Cuéllar (1997)
Available Evidence

Armed Groups Influence & Criminal Justice

Crime reporting

Criminal Investigation

Household survey in 60 municipios, Cuéllar (1997)

- The influence of armed groups even affects the quality of the statistics from the judiciary. It increases the probability of under-reporting (Rubio (1997))
**¿ What to do ?**

- Improve basic research
- Improve data gathering
  - About non-urban crime
  - Presence of armed groups
  - Citizens & businesses relationship with armed groups
- Follow up & evaluation of public policy
- Use social costs to set up priorities
- Improve criminal investigation