



**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MAJOR DIVISION**

**Observatory of Best Police Practices**

# **POLICE INTERVENTION: SECURITY BUILDING WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

**1<sup>st</sup> POLICE UNIT OF SAN FERNANDO**

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**GOBIERNO DE CHILE**  
**SUBSECRETARÍA DE CARABINEROS**



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**SUMMARY:****1.-Scanning**

In the year 2008, Cape 1<sup>st</sup> , Marcela Pérez was serving as a School Agent of the Inmaculada Concepción School. The role of the school agent is to prevent traffic accidents on roads around schools. The school authorities informed her that their students had been victims of robbery crimes in the vicinity of the school, events that had not been formerly reported to the police.

**2.- Analysis:** Cape 1st Marcela Pérez decided to collect more data on these incidents which included personal interviews with the students; analysis of student behavior patterns, development of an offender profile and observations of the environmental characteristics of the school vicinity.

She concluded that mentioned facts constituted crimes of robberies with the use of violence to obtain the student's belongings, robbery with intimidation and thefts; that affected persons were the students; and these crimes occurred in the vicinity of School. She also identified two variables that were the direct reasons of the occurrence of these crimes. The first of them was the lack of protective measures and self-care of the students and the second one had to do with the physical space adjacent to the school. That is, roads that had little traffic and poor lighting, among others.

**3.- Response:** Cape 1<sup>st</sup> Pérez developed an intervention plan which sought to address the three dimensions revealed in the problem analysis: Environmental variables, characteristics of the victims, characteristics of the offenders.

She designed workshops that included a presentation to graphically explain to the students, their parents and school guardians which were the most risky



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places in the vicinity of the school and measures that could be taken to avoid being victims of this type of crime.

4.- **Assessment:** After the completion of these workshops, the proposed objective was fully achieved: to effectively prevent robberies to the students. Thus, during the year 2008 and after the completion of these workshops there were no robberies reported by students.

Other unexpected results were achieved. Other schools and school communities that knew of this project requested the advisory and help of *Carabineros de Chile* on these matters to tackle similar problems around their schools.



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## **DESCRIPTION**

### **1.- CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM DEVELOPMENT:**

#### **1.1 Characteristics of San Fernando Commune**

The commune of San Fernando is located south of the VI Region of the Libertador General Bernardo O'Higgins. It has a population of 67,732 people, of which 79.06% corresponds to the urban population and 20.94% to the rural population.

This commune is the capital of Colchagua Province, highlighting as urban space the neighboring communes of Santa Cruz, Lolol, Chaimbarongo, and Placilla, among others. This area is predominantly agricultural, with the primary crops consisting of sugar beet, fruit, tobacco, wheat and vineyards.

In the urban center of San Fernando is located the private Inmaculada Concepción College, one of the largest of the area which has an enrollment of 1,100 students. Of the total number of students there are a significant number of them coming from neighboring communes. These students make a daily commute from their homes to attend school in San Fernando mostly through use of public transportation systems. From the bus terminal to the school they have to walk approximately six blocks to get to their school. It became commonplace for students to be robbed during this commute.

On March 2008, the 1<sup>st</sup> Police Unit of San Fernando assigned Cape 1<sup>st</sup>, Marcela Pérez, to a police preventive service, "school traffic", with the main objective of preventing traffic accidents in the nearby roads that lead to the schools.



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The daily work carried out by this police officer in the vicinity of the school generated a professional bond of closeness and trust between her and the school community; that is, students, teachers, parents and Cape Pérez.

One product of this working relationship came about on May of that year. Officer Perez learned about a robbery that occurred in the vicinity of the school from the school counselor who told her about the anxiety and concern of the elementary education student that had been the victim.

To face this situation they decided to informally interview the rest of the students as to whether there were similar victimizations. It was learned that almost twenty other students, mainly of high school level had also been victims of robbery, and/or thefts in the vicinity of the school. Additionally, it was learned that these crimes occurred at different hours before the entrance of the students to the school or after they left the school.

### **1.2.- Characteristics of the perpetrator**

In this case, the offenders could not be identified, because affected students did not report the incidents to any of the authorities: Public Ministry, *Carabineros de Chile* and /or to the Police Department.

Nevertheless, through the process of data collection carried out by Cape 1<sup>st</sup> Marcela Pérez, it was established that the perpetrators were young subjects (presumably minors), male and were acting alone.

It should be noted that this description can be checked and approved with the statistical antecedents obtained at national level, because on one hand,



statistical data registered by *Gendarmería de Chile*<sup>1</sup> indicated that the prison population whether arrested, condemned or under process for robbery crimes whether by violence, intimidation or force has significantly increased during the last few years among the age groups ranging from 14 to 17 years of age. The statistics also indicate that young people often act alone in these robberies by violence, intimidation or force and/or thefts<sup>2</sup> because their objective is to obtain any type of goods that can be easily and quickly turned into money.

Furthermore, it is necessary to clarify that 100% of young offenders in our country have already been under arrest, convicted and/or processed and that more than 50% percent of them are drug consumers<sup>3</sup>, all of which has a direct relation with the objective of the crime: to rob individuals with products that can be easily be reduced to money in order to buy drugs<sup>4</sup>.

## **1.2 Characteristics of the victim**

Under this problem, **direct victims** are the students of the private college Inmaculada Concepción of San Fernando commune. In general, the crimes that involved the school children had a negative impact on the security perception of citizens, because the entire school community felt vulnerable<sup>5</sup> to these crimes. In this case, the students that were not the victims of this crime, parents, school guardians, teachers and the school authorities are the **indirect victims**<sup>6</sup> as the information regarding the assaults that had

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<sup>1</sup> 2002 Year Book of Gendarmería de Chile, Gendarmeria de Chile 2003

<sup>2</sup> Giddens, Anthony. Sociology. Editorial Alianza, Primera Reimpresión. 2004.

<sup>3</sup> F. Werth "Law Offenders, the problem of drug consumers and intervention possibilities" [www.sename.cl/wsename/otros/observador2/obs2\\_9-26.pdf](http://www.sename.cl/wsename/otros/observador2/obs2_9-26.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The dependence of drug use makes up a combination of elements that easily define subjects in conflict problems with justice. Consumption of these substances uninhibited behavior, provoke aggressiveness damage family relationships, and their educational and professional development. ((Frühling, Hugo. "Public Policies and Citizens Security in a Peace Process: The Need of Order" B.I.D.)

<sup>5</sup> In the results of the National Survey of Urban Public Safety 2008, the commune of San Fernando presents a victimization rate of 27,94%.

<sup>6</sup> Although our legal body defines the victim as the person offended or aggrieved by the commission of any crime (Art.8 C.P.P.), there is a consensus among professionals of this area



happened made them feel that their children were in a permanent state of risk.

The exact number of victims could not be reliably established because no formal complaints were made. It should be noted that the school advisor personally asked the children's parents and affected guardians to formally report these incidents to the competent authorities; however, these facts were not reported to the formal judicial system to seek an appropriate solution to this problem<sup>7</sup>. Accordingly, parents and guardians chose to find a way to a faster and timely intervention.

## **2.- DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM**

When reporting to Cape 1<sup>st</sup> Pérez, the occurrence of these events, she decided to collect more data by conducting personal interviews with the students and thus she observed in an analytical form the student's behaviors as a consequence of which she defined this security problem as "the occurrence of crimes: violent robberies of personal belongings of the students, robberies with intimidation or thefts, in the vicinity of the Inmaculada Concepción College of San Fernando". At first, facilitators could uncover the variables of the security problem presented at the Inmaculada Concepción College and these were:

- 1.- The lack of protective measures and self-care by the students of the college.
- 2.- The existence of risk factors in the environment (Situational Prevention<sup>8</sup>), of

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that together with the person directly affected are those persons that form part of victim's close social environment that are also affected by this fact, These persons are the so called indirect victims.

<sup>7</sup> In the results of the National Survey of Urban Public Safety 2008, the commune of San Fernando presents a rate of not denouncing crimes which rate is 49,50%.

<sup>8</sup> Among the duties developed by *Carabineros de Chile* there are four distinct areas of operation, one of which is **Crime Prevention**, this action has three dimensions: a) Social Prevention, designed to analyze the social protection and risk, b) Situational Prevention, this is intended to anticipate and reduce violent or criminal acts, and c) Police Prevention, which seeks to give effect to the provisions of law. .



the school surrounding sector.

After defining the problem and the variables that favored their occurrence, it was analyzed how the above security issue affected the students:

- a) Most of minors who had reported being victims of the crime of robbery had actually been victims of the crimes of robbery with violence of their belongings, robbery by surprise and thefts in the public road<sup>9</sup>. This conclusion was reached when analyzing the way these crimes had occurred, the *modus operandi* of perpetrators and the value of robbed items.
- b) Additionally, during the three months of work performed by Cape Pérez, she observed the behavior of the students when going back from school to their homes, and in relation to this same fact, she concluded that the girls had neglected behaviors with their belongings (backbags, mp3, pendrives, etc), so there were many risk factors that facilitated the probabilities of being victims of this kind of crimes.
- c) There were also structural factors that favored the occurrence of these events, such as unoccupied sites in the vicinity of the school and poor street lighting, among other factors.

### **3.- POLICE INTERVENTION**

With all these antecedents at hand, the school agent of the 1<sup>st</sup> Police Unit of San Fernando decided to look for more detailed information to strengthen the analysis and to design a police intervention plan.

The objectives of this plan were:

- To prevent the occurrence of robbery crimes to the students of the Inmaculada Concepción College.

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<sup>9</sup> In the results of the National Survey of Urban Public Safety 2008, the commune of San Fernando indicate that a 23.33% of denounced crimes correspond to thefts, (11.30%) to robberies of species with violence, (6.48%) to robberies with force and (5.55%) to robberies by surprise.



- To inform the students of the Inmaculada Concepción College, to their parents, guardians and to the school community in general, regarding the environmental variables that favored the occurrence of these crimes.
- To build on the students of the Inmaculada Concepción College self-care behaviors in security matters.

To achieve proposed objectives Cape 1<sup>st</sup> Marcela Pérez decided to visit and study these places that showed to be perilous for the students, in order to make a deeper social diagnosis of it and of the environment that accounted for the variables that involved the security of the students. Firstly she analyzed the structural variables that facilitated the commission of these crimes in the vicinity of the school, then she identified the specific places and/or their characteristics that generated the highest probabilities that these students could be the victims of these crimes; for examples low frequented streets, little or no lighting in these streets, poor visibility due to trees that hindered it, etc. and she took photographs to attach them for a presentation she made to the school community.

She used the same approach to collect information that would account for the limited self-care measures in matters of security showed by the students. In this regard, she had already observed the negligence of the minors with their valuable personal belongings while they moved from the school to the bus station and vice versa. With this information at hand she described those behaviors that increased the probabilities of being victims of crimes; for example, the careless use of mobile phones in the public road, to walk through dangerous and lonely places, the use of the mp3 and other trendy technological devices also in a very careless form. She also took some pictures of the students that clearly depicted these negligent behaviors. These pictures formed part of the lecture she gave to the school community.

As described above, one of the main objectives of the police intervention prepared by Cape 1<sup>st</sup> Marcela Pérez was to conduct some workshops to the school community of the Inmaculada Concepción College to show the



environmental variables that allowed these crimes to occur. The decision to perform this intervention technique was based on the educational and preventive<sup>10</sup>roles, indicated in the Institutional Mission of *Carabineros de Chile*.

These workshops were different according to the age of the participants and comprised the following:

- \* A workshop for students, parents and school guardians of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary level.
- \* A workshop for students, parents and school guardians of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> high level grades.
- \* A workshop for students, parents and school guardians of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> high level grades.

These workshops addressed issues of security, self-care and prevention, and in them it was clearly and explicitly shown to the attendants where the nearby places that facilitated the occurrence of such crimes were and which behaviors of the students were careless and negligent. To explain this information she used the photographs she had taken during the study of the problem.

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<sup>10</sup> The Mission of *Carabineros de Chile* identifies seven roles that police officers must fulfil. These are: **Preventive**: Work carried out by the Institution through its presence in the community, protecting property and people's lives, **Control of Public Order**: activities performed to restore disturbed public order, **Educational**: activities with the community in order to create in people a willingness to comply adequately with the Constitution and laws, **Public Convenience**: actions in which the Institution provides collaboration and information of general practical interest and utility, **Social Solidarity**: activities undertaken to benefit the national community, in emergencies such as fires, floods and theft., **National Integration**: This feature aims to ensure national sovereignty. **Investigative**: This is done to comply with the work requested by the Public Ministry and the Judiciary bodies, in order to clarify criminal acts



## **4.- RESULTS**

With the efforts and work done by Cape 1<sup>st</sup> Marcela Pérez of the 1<sup>st</sup> Police Unit of San Fernando, the expected effects and results were achieved through this intervention:

1. The school community (students, parents, guardians and teachers), began to take necessary precaution measures and self-care measures in the security area to avoid being victims of robbery crimes.
2. During the year 2008 and after completion of the different workshops given by *Carabineros*, there were no reports of robberies by the students.

In addition, this work generated unexpected and unintended effects that further demonstrate the success of this police intervention. These effects are:

- a) Other schools and school communities, who learned of this good practice, requested the advisory of *Carabineros* on this matter. In each school where this practice was implemented, the same methodology was used in the diagnosis and intervention.
- b) The Head of the Inmaculada Concepción College, together with the teachers and *Carabineros de Chile*, decided to tackle a new challenge and school problem to face cases of bullying and to this end they are conducting preventive workshops to the school community.
- c) With all these best police practices, carried out by *Carabineros* and the school community, an ongoing relationship has been established between them, through which a joint work has been strengthened.



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## **AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION**

### **KEY PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS**

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