PSYCHOSOCIAL MODELS FOR PREVENTION AND WELLBEING:
Addressing Authority-Based Violence in Urban Neighbourhoods

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A praxis paper prepared in collaboration between Balay, CSVR, LAPS and DIGNITY for the Global Alliance

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Foreword

Human rights work, and especially work to combat torture and its effects, is often characterized by unhelpful divisions between rehabilitation and prevention. Rehabilitation is the domain of doctors, psychologists and other highly specialized health professionals. Prevention, on the other hand, is dominated by social scientists and even more by lawyers, who tend to focus on institutional reform and legal frameworks. Much has been achieved over the years in both rehabilitation and prevention. However, this compartmentalization also has adverse effects, especially on the ground where the distinction makes much less sense. Often, state violence is chronic and repetitive. A clear chronology of before, during and after a traumatic event is hard to establish. Hence, there is a need to think out of these professionalized and disciplinary boxes and find a better language — a new language — to discuss and reflect on this middle ground between rehabilitation and prevention.

The paper is the product of the collaboration between four like-minded organizations: BALAY Rehabilitation Centre in the Philippines, The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa (CSVR), The Liberia Association of Psycho-social Services (LAPS) in Liberia and DIGNITY-Danish Institute Against Torture in Denmark. The collaboration has been formalised under the heading ‘The Global Alliance Against Authority-based Violence’, established in 2014.

The basic premise of the Alliance is that around the world and across different contexts, groups of people are deemed victimizable by the powers that be — either state or non-state — and hence legitimate targets of order-maintaining — or authority-based — violence. The risk groups might include young, indigent and criminalized men in slum areas, suspects of terrorism, migrants and refugees, sexual minorities or alleged carriers of disease. Their alleged transgressions might be based in a legal framework (like drug peddling) or in moral norms (like sexuality). However, all are likely victims of state or non-state violence. At the time of writing, the Philippine ‘War on Drugs’ provides a chilling example of the legitimacy of violence against such groups.

As a central element in the collaboration, we produce a number of cross-cutting analyses of a variety of different issues while employing different methodologies. All topics emerge from our common discussions on our different contexts, and include linking human rights, development models, community organizing, partnership building and social work.
Executive summary

This paper argues for the need to develop psychosocial approaches that focus on combining preventative and healing work through community-led interventions with risk groups, their families, their neighbours and wider communities, and finally the authorities that perpetrate violence to maintain order. While highly specialized (legal) prevention and (health-related) rehabilitation practices have contributed to addressing torture and ill-treatment, they also leave gaps, not least when we begin addressing violence employed to preserve local social, legal and moral orders in poor, urban neighbourhoods, what we term state and non-state authority-based violence. This violence is mundane and chronic rather than sudden traumatic eruptions of violence and has often been normalized, even by its victims. Interventions in such contexts demand that we reconsider some of our basic assumptions about how to go about working against torture and ill-treatment. This paper attempts to reconceptualise human rights work in ways that make sense for a focus on authority-based violence in poor, urban neighbourhoods. The paper does not produce a set of best practices and models to be implemented. Rather it sets out our reflections on how to understand the contexts of violence, identify the target groups of interventions and spell out the theories of change relevant in the different contexts.

The patterns of violence must be understood thoroughly. Authority-based violence in context takes many forms but it must arguably conform to certain underlying criteria in order for it to be legitimate: it needs to be construed as self-defence and it must be proportionate to the threat that it purports to counter. This form of violence does not exist in isolation and the paper outlines the relation between different forms of violence including youth violence, intimate violence, communal violence, state violence and revolutionary violence. This analysis of violence enables a reconsideration of target and risk groups. In much anti-torture work, torture is considered to be an extraordinary event. Focusing on the mundane nature of torture and ill-treatment, new risk groups emerge like young men or children in conflict with the law and the community they inhabit; sexual minorities, refugees and migrants or, as has been the case in both South Africa and Liberia, survivors or victims of diseases (HIV or Ebola). These groups, and others like them, are seen as affronts to public morality, sometimes because of their actions and sometimes because of what danger they are seen to represent (crime, drugs, terror, moral decay, threats to livelihoods, economic burdens etc.) and they are vulnerable to attacks from state officials, communities and even their own families who consider them in need of disciplining.
While focusing on legal rights of children, women, migrants and the rights not to be tortured or killed as important benchmarks, legal and health related approaches are not sufficiently responsive to these. Our work demonstrates the importance of relations as both protective and perpetrative. This suggests theories of change which focus on relations between risk groups, their families, the communities in which they live and the local public officials. Importantly, families, communities and public officials might constitute the most important protective networks that risk groups have. However, they might also perpetrate violence or allow it to take place. If families are not willing to protect their children, for instance because of drug abuse, those children are much more at risk of being harmed by community members and by the state.

This entails working with the young people themselves – to deal with the violence perpetrated against them, and often the violence they perpetrate on others, as well as to attend to the relations they have with families, peers, communities and public officials. This might include the following elements:

a) Improved self-esteem, ability to deal with trauma, healing, awareness of the psychosocial impact of torture among risk groups in general and among victims in particular;
b) Improved understanding among victims and risk groups of the issues that put them at risk and the ability to deal with the risk constructively;
c) Improved skills to engage in meaningful social activities in relation to the labour market, education and other social arenas; and
d) Victims and risk groups that are mobilized and organized for prevention and for engaging in meaningful relationships with authorities, communities and families.

Work with risk groups must be complemented with interventions in relation to families, communities and public officials. In the Global Alliance, not all organizations work equally with all levels. For example, while it is true that LAPS and CSVR target all levels, DIGNITY works more with public officials, community members and volunteers whereas BALAY works more with families and young people. Depending on the context and the organization, the following elements may be relevant:

The families:

a) Improved family cohesion and functioning to establish rehabilitative and healthy relations, including with risk groups and target groups;
b) Improved social protection and prevention of violence by supporting families in their relationships with neighbours and state authorities; and
c) Families mobilized to engage in advocacy for non-violent and healthy relationships with state authorities, and in advocacy for state authorities to assume their role as duty bearers.

The community:

a) The community, mapped through stakeholder analysis and treated as potential partners, should be part of an alliance to prevent violence against risk groups based on a solid analysis of violence;
b) Overall community efficacy improves where there are fewer incidents of violence and conflicts, and where conflicts may be addressed in constructive ways; and
c) Improved ability to identify possible areas of collaboration and create inclusive communal projects (especially those that promote pro-social behaviours), and to seek support for them both inside and outside the community.

The state and public officials:

a) State authorities could be mapped through stakeholder analysis, and potential partners inside the state could be mobilized based on an analysis of the patterns of violence;
b) Important state officials need to reflect attitudes towards risk groups that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups;
c) State authorities need to assume their responsibilities as duty bearers towards risk groups, families and communities; and
d) State authorities could engage in welfare activities and programmes in partnerships with families and communities that enable them to participate in society as full citizens.
The paper begins with a critical analysis on how we conceptually understand the violence to be addressed and prevented by the psychosocial approach. It then explores possible elements of a framework. The purpose of this paper is to engage such an interrogative framework, see which of the different things we are discussing are applicable and are not applicable, and show how we understand the processes of change—what do we hypothesize will happen when we do something?

In the introduction, it is noted that the violence that we aim to prevent and the elements we aim to address are different from rural to urban areas and within different contexts. The paper explores community-led approaches to violence prevention and healing, which have often been heralded as a panacea for social inclusion and poverty and violence. The assumption is that only through a combination of preventive and healing work through community-led interventions with risk groups can we understand and target the violence that we aim to prevent and the effects we aim to address.

Across the world in poor, urban neighbourhoods, both state and non-state authorities use violence against those they consider to be in opposition to them. Whether to control their constituencies, to impose their own moral norms, or to impose their own form of order, the form of violence that is being exercised by state authorities, sexual minorities, outsiders or migrants. Sometimes violence is exercise by state authorities; sometimes it is exercise by state authorities, or by groups acting on behalf of state authorities, or by groups acting on behalf of state authorities, or by groups acting on behalf of state authorities.

The violence that we aim to prevent is often considered legitimate by the majority of the parties involved. For instance, what puts youth or other groups at risk because no one is willing to protect them, as they are seen to transgress moral boundaries, and it often escapes human rights interventions as they are usually focused on legislative reform alone. In contexts of urban violence, we note the lack of recognition of the potential of the psychosocial field to influence prevention and rehabilitation. This means that the practices that they engage in are driven by fear, what they symbolize moral corruption, and how they are perceived by people and communities. We also note that in contexts of urban violence, it is difficult to differentiate among victims and perpetrators in many instances, as the face of the victim and perpetrator is the same (e.g., someone who is perceived by some as a perpetrator of interpersonal violence may be a victim of police torture).

Hence, the paper explores four different contexts of authority-based violence, each illustrated by one of our four cases. Next, it details who ends up at risk in the four contexts. As we shall see, who that is might shift drastically whilst still looking surprisingly similar. Finally, we explore how we often understand the violence to be addressed and the elements we aim to address.

A different approach to addressing authority-based violence: The Global Alliance

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A different approach to addressing authority-based violence: The Global Alliance
Understanding contexts of violence

When aiming to prevent violence and address its implications for risk groups, two of the first questions to ask are what kind of violence we are addressing and how different forms of violence relate to each other. Although our account is not exhaustive, we identify the following forms of violence as relevant to the four different project intervention sites:

1) **Youth violence** including gang violence, criminality, school violence and violence related to drug consumption;

2) **Collective violence** including vigilantism, xenophobic attacks, hate crimes, service delivery related violence, protest against forced evictions and violence against victims of disease (e.g. HIV and Ebola). Collective violence is usually legitimized by referring to some kind of moral community that protects local morals or a moral order;

3) **Intimate and interpersonal violence** including child abuse, domestic violence, and conflicts between neighbours and community members related to alcohol consumption, debts, resources, land or humiliations. In other contexts, these are called ‘social fabric’ crimes;

4) **State violence** involving teachers, police, military, health staff, prison staff, politicians and welfare officials;

5) **Extractive violence** involving maintaining and creating economic resources including strike breakers, mining guards and landlords; and

6) **Revolutionary violence** including regime-toppling activities locally or globally.

These forms of violence exist in different ways and to different degrees in all four countries. It serves no purpose to go through all forms of violence in the four different places, but a few examples might illustrate the point. Collective violence, a term that derives very much from the South African context (Von Holdt et al, 2013) exists in all four contexts. In South Africa it appears in forms such as violent service delivery protests, vigilante activities, and xenophobic attacks on foreigners. In Liberia, the primary targets of violence were young ex-combatants (often talked about as the motorcycle boys). Furthermore, in the wake of the Ebola crisis, new targets were those that were seen to bring in disease and death. In the intervention sites in the Philippines, collective violence often takes the form of vigilante activities but in other places around the country, collective violence might relate to revolutionary, extractive and state violence. In Danish housing estates young people, or poor, young people – do not consider the violence they experience as violence because it is what it is – just normal life. In the Philippines, the term ‘Ok lang’ or ‘just ok’ captures the sense of violence that is to be expected and hence not ‘real violence’, even if victims are hurt or humiliated by it (Jensen, Hapal and Modvig, 2013). Torture is a category of violence that is most often associated with specific events or regimes like the apartheid regime in South Africa or the martial law period in the Philippines. Few people are willing talk about the current, everyday violence perpetrated by police as relevant to the Convention Against Torture. In these instances, what defines violence is who the victim is. Violence perpetrated by the police against activists is perceived as real violence, yet the same violence, when perpetrated against young men in trouble with the law is not considered violence. Likewise, the repressive powers of the Danish state are rarely spoken about as violence.

Violence seems to be relevant only in relation to excess, as the French philosopher Etienne Balibar (1998) suggests. His analysis closely follows the legal requirements of jus bellum or just war. Under these requirements, violence can be legitimate only if it is perpetrated in self-defence and if it is proportionate to the threat. This model is implicitly in operation in almost all discourses on violence. Take for instance the war on terror, which is legitimized as pre-emptive strikes against a threat that will materialize in the future. Even attacks like these draw on the idea of self-defence, as do many preventative criminal justice interventions. The discussions on sentencing are an example of how...
proportionally a constant element – how long should a criminal stay in prison for a certain category of crime? This question is treated in Chapter 6. Hence, when violence is legitimate or not is constantly negotiated and contested by those involved. Hence, while American military personnel might consider drone attacks legitimate residents in the tribal areas of Pakistan clearly do not agree. The same can be said about the so-called foreign fighters in Denmark travelling to Syria to topple a regime that goes untreated or unresolved it will manifest itself in several ways. One way for a collective to relieve and undo the trauma (Bloom, 1996). According to Bloom in these instances history repeats itself. This is seen in instances like violent service delivery protests in South Africa, where some of the experience of apartheid is repeated. Galtung and Lederach suggest that collective trauma memories are by acting by creating a society where there has been severe trauma the trauma is psychic of its own, and consequently just as with an individual’s trauma, a collective trauma goes unaddressed or unresolved. The trauma is created by individuals who perpetrate authority-based violence. Concepts from the emerging field of collective trauma might help us understand some of the factors for the perpetration of authority-based violence. Some of the risk factors have been identified in the four communities included legitimation and conditioning of the community.

The public health model further identifies traumas as a risk factor for perpetration of violence. The German philosopher Walter Benjamin’s analysis is a useful distinction between law-preserving and law-making violence. For Benjamin, law and order is constitutive for law and order. Hence, if violence is not only productive with what the community holds law and order, it is constitutive for that law and order. Hence, we should not only be productive with what law and order does to a society, but also productive with what law and order does to the society. This is seen in the use of violent crowd control mechanisms that were used during apartheid violence. The public health and trauma approaches assist individual psychological drivers for individuals who perpetrate authority-based violence. Concepts from the emerging field of collective trauma might help us understand some of the factors for the perpetration of authority-based violence. Some of the risk factors have been identified in the four communities included legitimation and conditioning of the community.

On the other hand, according to Benjamin’s analysis, law-making violence relates to war making regimes. Violence like law-making violence is legal violence against the perpetrator. While it might be restrictive, it is often portrayed as gateway violence. For example, the “youth violence” in dysfunctional families and communities, that is, the ecological and the public health model (Ward, van der Merwe and Dawes, 2012). Here the focus is less on the productive than the destructive side of violence. This clearly is relevant violence that can be prevented (Lederach, 1998; Galtung, 1996).

The third question is: What drives this violence? The public health and trauma approaches assist in answering this question. The public health approach looks at violence as those indicators where risk factors are those that protect one from perpetrating violence or being victims of violence. Risk factors are all those risk factors where risk factors are those factors that predict protection from perpetuating violence or being victims of violence. Risk factors are those factors that predict protection from perpetuating violence. Risk factors are those factors that predict protection from perpetuating violence. Risk factors are those factors that predict protection from perpetuating violence.

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This is also seen in countries with unresolved histories of violent repressive states where state institutions such as the police once used violence to deal with ‘activists’ or people the state considered ‘terrorist’. Even if such countries now have democratic states, the institutions that used violence during the oppression still use similar tactics to address ‘at risk’ groups today. In these countries, traditional human rights approaches such as pro-human rights laws, policies and practices have not been effective in transforming these institutions. We argue that part of the reason for the lack of success of these traditional human rights approaches is that they do not deal with the collective trauma that exists in these institutions. The memories linked with the collective trauma are transferred from one generation of the police to the next, and the narratives used against activists in the past are transposed onto the ‘problematic individuals’ in the present. Psychosocially informed violence prevention thus involves addressing this institutional trauma and not just training on human rights.

In the account above, we introduce three different models for understanding violence. In the public health model violence is akin to a disease that needs to be cured and prevented. In the trauma model, violence is a symptom and there is a need to address both the symptom and the underlying causes. Finally, in the more anthropological approach, implicitly inspired by Benjamin, violence is constitutive and always there. It is not a by-product of unfortunate structures but central to law itself. All three models – violence as destructive, as symptom and as productive – are relevant for interventions we discuss, as we shall see below, and not necessarily contradictory. We can see this if we consider the question: Why should we intervene in different forms of violence?

**Why intervene in relation to violence?**

If we accept that both modes of explanation are relevant – i.e. that violence is both a disease and constitutive to society – the next question is why we should intervene and try to prevent it at all. Let us briefly go through some of the different forms of violence identified above that seem most relevant for our work in poor urban neighbourhoods: youth violence, interpersonal violence, collective violence and state violence.

**Youth violence should be prevented because:**

1. It harms and it hurts. The territoriality of much youth violence prevents the full life and movement of young people and residents. It prevents the building of relationships, community and the full realization of potential;
2. It has the potential to escalate from interpersonal violence to collective violence, even into regional wars and international criminal networks, as we have seen in many of the wars in West Africa and Liberia where ex-combatants have participated in international migration, mercenary activities and drug trading (Vigh, 2016);
3. Youth violence invites other forms of violence – especially collective and state violence – to counter its effects, for example vigilante activities, wars on gangs and counterinsurgency measures;
4. Preventing youth violence might break the cycle of violence – the culture, the psyche, the history – that sees violence perpetuate itself from one generation to the next;
5. Youth violence adds to and legitimizes the marginalization of youth and reproduces its ‘victimizability’. In that sense, youth violence is a predictor of other forms of violence;
6. Preventing youth violence reduces the potential for police corruption;
7. Preventing youth violence may work to improve relationships between children and parents and between young people and the general neighbourhood; and
8. Youth violence clogs public health and criminal justice systems.

**Interpersonal violence (intimate, intergenerational and gender violence) should be prevented because:**

1. Addressing it may address the unequal and vertical relations of power in intimate and interpersonal spheres as a central part of cultures that perpetuate violence locally – gender (men above women), intergenerational (old before young) and communal (ethnic, racial, national, etc.);
2. Preventing it may prevent escalations into collective and state violence;
3. Interpersonal violence is a proxy and a predictor for violence in a society as it often feeds and enables other forms of violence, as when a child is punished and carries this violence with him or her into their own practice;
Interpersonal violence can be transmitted unconsciously in situations of domestic violence, wherein the violent behaviour of a parent surfaces in domestic situations of the children once they are adults.

Individual human rights violations can create collective trauma, which can, in turn, fuel additional human rights violations and other forms of violence.

Collective violence should be addressed because:

1) It hurts and harms and destroys the livelihood and social fabric of the most vulnerable groups of society – those who are seen as a threat to a given moral community;

2) Addressing collective violence may address the vertical lines of power of the moral community that perpetuates the violence. This may take the form of xenophobic violence, intergenerational violence, hate crimes and violence against victims of disease; and

3) Collective violence often escalates into state violence and intra-communal struggle.

State violence (carried out by teachers, prison guards, police and other state officials) should be prevented because:

1) It harms and destroys the lives and livelihood of the poor and wrecks individual and communal trust;

2) It undermines the belief in justice and the rule of law;

3) It is intimately connected to violent extortionist and informal state practices;

4) It escalates into collective violence and often propels youth violence, even if they are obliged by law to protect the dignity of people;

5) It prevents meaningful change from occurring as people are frightened to engage in civil action; and

6) It perpetuates mistrust between citizens and state actors, which is crucial for effective violence prevention and strengthening of democracies.

Victims, and risk and target groups

From the lists of violence and reasons for intervening above we may deduce risk groups of authority-based violence, as well as target groups for intervention. In our work we distinguish between five different target groups for our psychosocial approach to addressing authority-based violence. They comprise victims of violence, risk groups of violence, families of victims and risk groups, the communities in which they live and institutions wielding authority (state or non-state) in the given context. In different ways these five groups populate the field in which authority-based violence is a central problem. While they all inhabit the field, the psychosocial approach distinguishes between victims and risk groups on the one side and families, communities and authorities on the other.

Victims and risk groups comprise those groups that in different ways are seen as an affront or threat to a locally endorsed moral community. As we can see from above, these groups might be constituted by young people, migrants, suspected terrorists, sexual minorities, victims of disease, or any other group that is marginalized by the moral community. Who they are must be determined in the specific context. However, for all our four contexts, young people (mostly men but also women) are generally understood as both a risk and at risk. Often authorities – state and non-state – perceive them as inherently criminal or violent and out of control; as members of gangs and drug abusers. These perceptions legitimize intervention and often disciplinary or retributive violence against young people. While these perceptions to some extent have little relation to the reality of young people, young people are objectively at risk and often their own practices invite retribution and disciplinary action. Thus we may usefully refer to young people as victim-perpetrators where it is to some extent their own practices that invite violence. Hence, protection must include working both with the perceptions of society and the practices of young people. These remarks suggest that while we can establish a first distinction between victims and risk groups of authority-based violence, both are central target groups for intervention. Any project must describe in detail both victim and risk groups in relation to the structures of violence. Finally, when it comes to interventions it is crucial to distinguish between victims who have actually experienced violence, ill-treatment and even
disrespected by another during oppressive regimes, and this is mostly in the hands of the state.

A second order of target groups can also be deducted from the above. They comprise families, communities and state officials. These groups are characterized by being both potential perpetrators of violence against risk groups – either as direct perpetrators or as condoning the law-preserving violence through violent acts and indirect perpetration of violence – and as potential target groups of intervention. For the families, their vulnerability is their embeddedness in direct collective violence against their own members, and the real or perceived threat posed by risk groups. Hence, parents or family members may fear that their children or family members will become victims of collective violence against their own members. This fear of becoming victims is generally the cause of collective violence against their own members. Hence, parents or family members may endorse or have a chance of being involved in the collective violence against their own members, and the real or perceived threat posed by risk groups. Hence, parents or family members may endorse or have a chance of being involved in the collective violence against their own members, and the real or perceived threat posed by risk groups.

This fear of becoming victims is generally the cause of collective violence against their own members. Hence, parents or family members may endorse or have a chance of being involved in the collective violence against their own members, and the real or perceived threat posed by risk groups.

While contextually determined, interventions should focus on creating the following outcomes.

- Improved self-esteem, ability to deal with trauma, healing, awareness of the psychosocial impact of torture on the one hand and risk groups on the other, while risk groups may be engaged in meaningful relationships with authorities, communities and families.
- Improved skills to engage in meaningful social activities in relation to the labour market, and in other social arenas; and
- Education and other social activities in relation to the labour market, and in other social arenas; and
- Education and other social activities in relation to the labour market, and in other social arenas.
Families: Promoting families as support structures rather than as perpetrators or risk groups

Families can be at risk; they can suffer the collective impact of violence against their members. They can also be crucial partners in preventing violence and creating an enabling environment. Families in the poor, urban neighborhoods we work in are often subjected to exorcising pressure from poverty, marginalization and exploitation. On top of this, they are often caught between their own expectations, the expectations of the surrounding community, and the state on the one hand, and the practices of their communities on the other. This can be particularly challenging in conflictual communities. Our work must focus on advancing family empowerment and strengthening the role of family members in advocating for their rights. It is imperative to work on improving the family's capacity to protect itself from violence by empowering the family to engage productively with both surroundings and their own family members who are targeted violently by authorities. Assisting families to become the best possible families is crucial for preventing violence and creating an enabling environment.

Psychosocial models for prevention and well-being

Some of the psychosocial models for prevention and well-being include the following considerations:

- **Community: Promoting communities as support structures rather than perpetrators or risk groups**
- **Families: Promoting families as support structures rather than as perpetrators or risk groups**
- **State authorities: Perpetrators or duty bearers**

**While outcomes are contextually determined, they should include the following considerations:**

- **a)** A community needs to be part of an alliance to prevent violence against risk groups.
- **b)** Improved ability to identify possible areas of collaboration and create inclusive community projects (especially those that promote pro-social behaviors), and to seek support for them both inside and outside the community.
- **c)** Improved social cohesion and functioning to establish an environment of healthy relationships, including with risk groups and target groups.

**State authorities: Perpetrators or duty bearers**

As our remarks above suggest, it is imperative to factor in state and non-state authorities for any psychosocial approach. State authorities are especially important as they often function as duty bearers and rights bearers. They are often involved in the delivery of social services and in the provision of justice. They also play a crucial role in preventing violence. State authorities need to be part of an alliance to prevent violence against risk groups.

**While outcomes are contextually determined, they should include the following considerations:**

- **a)** Overall community efficacy improves where there are fewer incidents of violence and conflicts, and where conflicts may be addressed in constructive ways, and community work does not necessarily relate to the entire community. It is often unrealistic to imagine harmonious, conflict-free communities within the community. It is all too often unrealistic to imagine harmonious, conflict-free communities within the community.
- **b)** Improved ability to identify possible areas of collaboration and create inclusive community projects (especially those that promote pro-social behaviors), and to seek support for them both inside and outside the community.
- **c)** Improved social protection and prevention of violence by supporting families in their relationships with neighbours and state authorities, and in advocacy for state authorities to assume their role as duty bearers.
- **d)** Families mobilized to engage in advocacy for non-violent and healthy relationships with state authorities, and in advocacy for state authorities to assume their role as duty bearers.

**Community: Promoting communities as support structures rather than as perpetrators or risk groups**

As is evident in our remarks above, we cannot assume that communities are inherently peaceful and/or cohesive. In many ways, they are often divided and violent. The community around the definition of community varies, and the definition of community is often broad and inclusive. It is need to explore how the use of violence is instrumental in producing and maintaining the politics around the definition of community. The political and social processes within and societies must be enabled and supported positively.
The document discusses the role of non-state forms of authority in maintaining and preserving order, often through violence. It highlights the gaps in understanding when addressing authority-based groups and the communities they live in, their families, and the authorities that perpetrate violence. The paper argues for the development of psychosocial approaches that focus on the communities in which these groups live, their families, and the authorities that perpetrate violence.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

A) **State authorities should be engaged in welfare activities and programmes**. This includes working with communities and families to prevent violence and support initiatives that ease the pressure on protective networks that risk groups have. Important state officials need to reflect on attitudes towards risk groups that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups rather than stereotypical notions of danger and moral contamination.

B) **State authorities should engage in welfare activities and support activities**. This includes working with communities and families to prevent violence and support initiatives that ease the pressure on protective networks that risk groups have. Important state officials need to reflect on attitudes towards risk groups that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups rather than stereotypical notions of danger and moral contamination.

C) **State authorities should assume their responsibilities as duty bearers towards**. This includes working with communities and families to prevent violence and support initiatives that ease the pressure on protective networks that risk groups have. Important state officials need to reflect on attitudes towards risk groups that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups rather than stereotypical notions of danger and moral contamination.

D) **State authorities should engage in welfare activities and support activities**. This includes working with communities and families to prevent violence and support initiatives that ease the pressure on protective networks that risk groups have. Important state officials need to reflect on attitudes towards risk groups that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups rather than stereotypical notions of danger and moral contamination.

E) **While focusing on legal rights of children, women, migrants and the rights to heal**. This includes working with communities and families to prevent violence and support initiatives that ease the pressure on protective networks that risk groups have. Important state officials need to reflect on attitudes towards risk groups that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups rather than stereotypical notions of danger and moral contamination.

**Key points**

- Violence is not only destructive and violates legal norms; it is also considered productive of social relations.
- Violence is often normalized, even by its victims, and can be considered productive of social relations.
- The paper argues for the need to develop psychosocial approaches that focus on the communities in which these groups live, their families, and the authorities that perpetrate violence.
- The paper emphasizes the importance of addressing the attitudes towards risk groups that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups rather than stereotypical notions of danger and moral contamination.

**References**


**Further reading**

a. Improved self-esteem, ability to deal with trauma, healing, awareness of the psychosocial impact of torture among risk groups in general and among victims in particular;
b. Improved understanding among victims and risk groups of the issues that put them at risk and the ability to deal with the risk constructively;
c. Improved skills to engage in meaningful social activities in relation to the labour market, education and other social arenas; and
d. Victims and at-risk groups who are mobilized and organized for prevention and for engaging in meaningful relationships with authorities, communities and families.

Work with risk groups must be complemented with interventions in relation to families, communities and public officials. In the Global Alliance, not all organizations work equally with all levels. For example, DIGNITY works more with public officials, community members and voluntaries, whereas BALAY works more with families and young people. Depending on the context and the organization, the following elements may be relevant:

The families:

a) Improved family cohesion and functioning to establish rehabilitative and healthy relations, including with risk groups and target groups;
b) Improved social protection and prevention of violence by supporting families in their relationships with neighbours and state authorities; and
c) Families mobilized to engage in advocacy for non-violent and healthy relationships with state authorities, and in advocacy for state authorities to assume their role as duty bearers.

The community:

a) The relevant community mapped through stakeholder analysis and potential partners should be part of an alliance to prevent violence against risk groups;
b) Improved community efficacy, where there are fewer incidents of violence and conflicts, and where conflicts may be addressed in constructive ways; and
c) Improved ability to identify possible areas of collaboration and create inclusive communal projects (especially those that promote pro-social behaviours), and to seek support for them both inside and outside the community.

The state and public officials:

a) State authorities are mapped through stakeholder analysis and potential partners inside the state mobilized;
b) Important state officials should reflect attitudes towards risk groups that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups;
c) State authorities should assume their responsibilities as duty bearers towards risk groups, families and communities; and
d) State authorities should engage in welfare activities and programmes in partnerships with families and communities and enable them to participate in society as full citizens.
References


Garberino, James. 2015. Listening to Killers: Lessons Learned from my 20 Years as a Psychological Expert Witness in Murder Cases. Chicago University Press.


The Global Alliance is a strategic alliance established in 2014 between likeminded civil society organisations working towards building a global alliance of communities against torture and urban violence. We conduct country-based, as well as collaborative intervention and knowledge generating projects across partners, focusing on countering authority-based violence in poor urban neighbourhoods.

The Global Alliance consists of four partner organizations from four different countries:

- CSVR - The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, South Africa; [www.csvr.org.za](http://www.csvr.org.za)
- Balay Rehabilitation Center, the Philippines; [www.balayph.net](http://www.balayph.net)
- LAPS – Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services, Liberia; [www.lapsliberia.com](http://www.lapsliberia.com)
- DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture, Denmark; [www.dignityinstitute.org](http://www.dignityinstitute.org)