Aalborg Universitet

PSYCHOSOCIAL MODELS FOR PREVENTION AND WELLBEING:

Addressing Authority-Based Violence in Urban Neighbourhoods

Mogapi, Nomfundo; Lascano, Josephine Acuna; Anasarias, Ernesto; Swaray, Seidu; Masuko, Themba; Jensen, Steffen

Creative Commons License
Unspecified

Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

? Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
? You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
? You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal?

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at vbn@aub.aau.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from vbn.aau.dk on: December 26, 2019
PSYCHOSOCIAL MODELS FOR PREVENTION AND WELLBEING:
Addressing Authority-Based Violence in Urban Neighbourhoods

Nomfundo Mogapi
Josephine Acuna Lascano
Ernesto A. Anasarias
Seidu Swaray
Themba Masuko
Steffen Jensen
Psychosocial models for prevention and wellbeing:
Addressing authority-based violence in urban neighbourhoods

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

DIGNITY Publication Series on Torture and Organised Violence No. 15
© 2017 DIGNITY - Danish Institute Against Torture, the authors and the Global Alliance organizations

Balay Rehabilitation Center, the Philippines
www.balayph.net

CSVR, The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
www.csvr.org.za

LAPS Liberia Association for Psychosocial Services
www.lapsliberia.com

DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture
www.dignityinstitute.org

ISBN online: 9788790878894
PSYCHOSOCIAL MODELS FOR PREVENTION AND WELLBEING

ADDRESSING AUTHORITY-BASED VIOLENCE IN URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS

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

By Nomfundo Mogapi, Josephine Acuna Lascano, Ernesto A. Anasarias, Seidu Swaray, Themba Masuko and Steffen Jensen

Contents

Foreword 7
Executive summary 9
Introduction 12

Understanding contexts of violence 14
Models for understanding violence 15
Why intervene in relation to violence? 18
Victims, and risk and target groups 20
Theory of change – focusing on relationships 21
Victims/at risk groups: Facilitate healing, social inclusion and psychological awareness 22
Families: Promoting families as support structures rather than as perpetrators or risk groups 23
Community: Promoting communities as support structures rather than as perpetrators 24
State authorities: Perpetrators or duty bearers 25
Conclusion and recommendations 26
References 30
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 mainly 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. Here, state violence and its effects cannot easily be divided into prevention and rehabilitation. 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 – not to replace or put in doubt the contributions of legal and health interventions but to map out a field between them where much anti-torture work already happens. However, we need to find a better language – a new language – to discuss and reflect on this middle ground between rehabilitation and prevention. This paper is our contribution to this larger advocacy agenda.

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 and violence in the city; legal frameworks for policing poor urban neighbourhoods; social work models; community organizing strategies and partnership models.
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.
Introduction

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 or to impose dominant moral norms. This form of violence is often considered legitimate by authorities, even by those that fall victim to it. Targets might be drug-dealing or drug-using youth, sexual minorities, outsiders or migrants. Sometimes the violence is exercised by state authorities; at other times, it is perpetrated by non-state actors acting on the behest, in the absence or with the consent of the state; and finally, sometimes the violence is directed against the state. What unites these different forms of violence is a claim to uphold order, discipline, justice and the rights of those who allege they represent the many by targeting groups of so-called transgressors, and for this reason we can say it is authority-based. Importantly, different groups might constitute the object of the discipline depending on which authorities are in control locally. While such violence happens in rural areas as well, authority-based violence in the cities takes on a specific nature different from rural areas. As several commentators have noted (Bjarnesson and Jensen, 2014; Rodgers, 2014; World Bank, 2011; Arias, 2006), urban violence is characterized by a range of actors and forms and by a high degree of conflict between different violent networks and actors, including vigilante groups, neighbourhoods, and different competing political actors and state officials.

Apart from being different from rural violence, this form of urban violence is quite different from how we often understand state violence as, for instance torture and ill-treatment – as extreme, spectacular forms of violence. Rather, the violence we are addressing is commonplace, taken for granted; it happens every day; it is often considered legitimate by the majority of the parties, and it often escapes human rights interventions as they are usually focused on legislative reform and training state institutions on how to uphold human rights. For instance, what puts youth or sexual minorities at risk is not the ignorance of authorities of what they can and cannot do; it is what they feel legitimated to do and what communities demand that they do, including the kinds of violence that police are sometimes expected to use against criminals by the general population (Hornberger, 2014; Jensen 2014). The targeted groups are usually at risk because of the practices they engage in (stealing or rioting), what they symbolize (moral corruption), how they look (sexual minorities), or where they are (strangers, migrants). But more than anything they are at risk because no one is willing to protect them, as they are seen to transgress moral boundaries or not be “worthy victims”. When they are hurt, few people think they deserve treatment or care.

A different approach to addressing authority-based urban violence is therefore necessary.

There is a tendency within the field of prevention and rehabilitation to divide the healing and prevention – as extreme, spectacular forms of violence. Rather, the violence we are addressing is commonplace, taken for granted; it happens every day; it is often considered legitimate by the majority of the parties, and it often escapes human rights interventions as they are usually focused on legislative reform and training state institutions on how to uphold human rights. For instance, what puts youth or sexual minorities at risk is not the ignorance of authorities of what they can and cannot do; it is what they feel legitimated to do and what communities demand that they do, including the kinds of violence that police are sometimes expected to use against criminals by the general population (Hornberger, 2014; Jensen 2014). The targeted groups are usually at risk because of the practices they engage in (stealing or rioting), what they symbolize (moral corruption), how they look (sexual minorities), or where they are (strangers, migrants). But more than anything they are at risk because no one is willing to protect them, as they are seen to transgress moral boundaries or not be “worthy victims”. When they are hurt, few people think they deserve treatment or care.

A different approach to addressing authority-based urban violence is therefore necessary.

There is a tendency within the field of prevention and rehabilitation to divide the healing and prevention – as extreme, spectacular forms of violence. Rather, the violence we are addressing is commonplace, taken for granted; it happens every day; it is often considered legitimate by the majority of the parties, and it often escapes human rights interventions as they are usually focused on legislative reform and training state institutions on how to uphold human rights. For instance, what puts youth or sexual minorities at risk is not the ignorance of authorities of what they can and cannot do; it is what they feel legitimated to do and what communities demand that they do, including the kinds of violence that police are sometimes expected to use against criminals by the general population (Hornberger, 2014; Jensen 2014). The targeted groups are usually at risk because of the practices they engage in (stealing or rioting), what they symbolize (moral corruption), how they look (sexual minorities), or where they are (strangers, migrants). But more than anything they are at risk because no one is willing to protect them, as they are seen to transgress moral boundaries or not be “worthy victims”. When they are hurt, few people think they deserve treatment or care.

A different approach to addressing authority-based urban violence is therefore necessary.

There is a tendency within the field of prevention and rehabilitation to divide the healing and prevention – as extreme, spectacular forms of violence. Rather, the violence we are addressing is commonplace, taken for granted; it happens every day; it is often considered legitimate by the majority of the parties, and it often escapes human rights interventions as they are usually focused on legislative reform and training state institutions on how to uphold human rights. For instance, what puts youth or sexual minorities at risk is not the ignorance of authorities of what they can and cannot do; it is what they feel legitimated to do and what communities demand that they do, including the kinds of violence that police are sometimes expected to use against criminals by the general population (Hornberger, 2014; Jensen 2014). The targeted groups are usually at risk because of the practices they engage in (stealing or rioting), what they symbolize (moral corruption), how they look (sexual minorities), or where they are (strangers, migrants). But more than anything they are at risk because no one is willing to protect them, as they are seen to transgress moral boundaries or not be “worthy victims”. When they are hurt, few people think they deserve treatment or care.

A different approach to addressing authority-based urban violence is therefore necessary.
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, vigilant 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 in bello or jus ad bellum. 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...
the imagination, we could also discuss some parts of youth violence as law-making violence, since they aim to topple what is considered 'Western dominance'. While it might be stretching to some extent the so-called foreign fighters in Denmark travelling to Syria to topple a regime In each of the four sites, there are traces of revolutionary violence – the rebellion in Liberia, the community or a community of morally upstanding residents. As 'authority-based violence', that is, violence that preserves what is locally considered a moral order; it is constitutive for law and order. Hence, we should not only be concerned with what violence destroys but also what kind of society it is necessary to create. The idea of community violence is a necessary part of any debates on the meaning of violence. While it is necessary to describe the negative effects of violence, it is also important to consider its positive aspects, particularly in the context of law and order. Violence that produces social change and community building is a necessary part of any discussion on social change and community building. The third question is: What drives this violence? If we follow this thought, we might say that many of the forms of collective violence mentioned above fall into the category of 'law-preserving violence', even if the violent practices are not based on formal or constitutional law, it relies on another, more localized 'law' which is no less effective in the specific context.

Violence in dysfunctional families and communities, as well as on structural forms of violence, is often characterized as being driven by personal or social factors. In dysfunctional families and communities, violence may be driven by factors such as parental neglect, abuse, or poverty. In structural forms of violence, such as violence against women, violence may be driven by societal norms or social structures. The fourth question is: What are the implications of this violence? Violence destroys but also what kind of social fabric is reconfirms and reproduces the existence of a proclaimed moral community at the same time as it condones and perpetuates the violence.

 Violence produces sociality and how ambivalent it is; while it destroys human bodies and lives, it also reconfirms and reproduces sociality and community. The concept of community is also contested. 'The community' then becomes an entity that depends on the ability and power to define it and maintain it, often through 'law-preserving violence'. The concept of the community is also contested. 'The community' then becomes an entity that depends on the ability and power to define it and maintain it, often through 'law-preserving violence'. The concept of the community is also contested. 'The community' then becomes an entity that depends on the ability and power to define it and maintain it, often through 'law-preserving violence'. The concept of the community is also contested. 'The community' then becomes an entity that depends on the ability and power to define it and maintain it, often through 'law-preserving violence'. The concept of the community is also contested. 'The community' then becomes an entity that depends on the ability and power to define it and maintain it, often through 'law-preserving violence'. The concept of the community is also contested. 'The community' then becomes an entity that depends on the ability and power to define it and maintain it, often through 'law-preserving violence'.
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;

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;
4) 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.

5) 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. They are in need of different tools to understand and engage with the effects of trauma and thus contribute to violence prevention. In this way, our analysis is borne out in the experiences we have from working in poor, urban environments. While the approach and the thinking behind it does emanate out of local engagements, this won’t spell out in detail what should be done. That is subject to different approaches to community interventions. Rather, we spell out central principles that may inspire and connect the theories of change covering all psychosocial interventions in relation to the field of authority-based violence can be stated that violence supporting and tackling the consequences. This theory of change needs to be broken up into its constitutive parts in relation to victims, risk groups, communities and authorities. Below we detail the theories of change and outcomes for each of the two target groups.

The overarching Theory of Change for both psychosocial interventions in relation to the law-preserving violence against risk groups – either as direct perpetrators or as condoning the collective violence, and the way they may be put at risk due to the relationships that they maintain with their families, communities and authorities. In areas where both physical and psychological violence to an extent that it falls under the purview of the Convention Against Torture. However, in the case of families, communities and authorities they may also turn out to be critical alliance partners in preventing authority-based violence and addressing its consequences.

While we advocate for a psychosocial approach that focuses on victims and risk groups, interventions may begin and focus on actors within the field, but they victims and risk groups, and targeting processes and actions. This suggests an awareness of what puts them at risk and the ability to deal with the risk constructively.

A central focus of the psychosocial approach is on relationships – in families, in communities and in state-level settings. It is here that we need to work with positive and productive relationships to prevent and engage in meaningful relationships. Attempts by victims of violence to engage in relationships, both with their own families, as well as with their own communities. Furthermore, to enable victims to approach engaged in social and economic activities, to engage in violence prevention. Empowerment may also nurture advocacy as victims and risk groups find ways to tell their own stories. This lifts the psychosocial approaches beyond service delivery into advocacy.

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

a) 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 with, we focus on different contexts and levels of risk groups.

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 and risk groups, as mobilized and organized for prevention and for engaging in meaningful relationships with authorities. Communities and families.

d) Improved risk groups, as mobilized and organized for prevention and for engaging in meaningful relationships with authorities. Communities and families.

Victims and risk groups that are mobilized and organized for prevention and for engaging in meaningful relationships with authorities. Communities and families.

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

a) 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 with, we focus on different contexts and levels of risk groups.

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 and risk groups, as mobilized and organized for prevention and for engaging in meaningful relationships with authorities. Communities and families.

A central focus of the psychosocial approach is on relationships – in families, in communities and in state-level settings. It is here that we need to work with positive and productive relationships to prevent and engage in meaningful relationships. Attempts by victims of violence to engage in relationships, both with their own families, as well as with their own communities. Furthermore, to enable victims to approach engaged in social and economic activities, to engage in violence prevention. Empowerment may also nurture advocacy as victims and risk groups find ways to tell their own stories. This lifts the psychosocial approaches beyond service delivery into advocacy.
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 be perpetrators of interpersonal and intimate violence against each other; they can also be crucial partners in preventing violence and creating an enabling environment where violence is not tolerated but is instead addressed constructively. This approach requires a psychosocial intervention that is tailored to enable the family to become the best possible family, in terms of being able to engage productively with both surroundings and their own family members who are potentially exposed to authority-based violence. This approach also potentially works towards social prevention, as organizing families into associations or different kinds of groups increases their ability to engage with state authorities to push for the prevention of violence. Such an approach also potentially works in conflictual communities, our work must focus on establishing and supporting a critical mass within a community that can advance violence prevention.

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 command considerable resources to suppress the state’s own population and support its wellbeing as a duty bearer. Human rights approaches will often target state authorities to conduct institutional reform, to train and capacitate their workers, and to assist them in engaging with state authorities, especially at the local level. In this context, it is also critical to explore and shift the norms, mind-sets and cultures that perpetuate violence. It is about assisting officials working there. It is about assisting them in understanding the workings of the local state, including the offices of state officials, and how to work with the local institutions of the state to ensure that they too are able to work in collaboration with communities. It is about exploring these issues in different contexts, from the almost omnipotent state in a more rationalized world, such as the Orange freezes up violence, to the highly challenged Liberian state. But whatever the strength of the local state or the state’s involvement in intervention, such interventions must be based on solid understanding of state institutions and their roles. This entails working with authorities and engaging them in ways to work with the local institutions of the state to ensure that they too are able to work in collaboration with communities.
in complex relations to the state. It is mundane and chronic rather than sudden traumatic. Non-state forms of authority assume the responsibility to maintain and preserve order often in urban neighbourhoods. This violence is often carried out by the state but in many contexts, violence employed to preserve local social, legal and moral orders in poor communities, the communities in which they live, their families and the authorities that perpetrate this violence are the people and groups from which it is produced. While highly specialized (legal) prevention and (health-related) rehabilitation practices have contributed to addressing what we have termed authority-based violence to maintain order, in many contexts, they also leave gaps, not least when we begin addressing what we have termed autonomous violence, that is, violence employed to preserve local social, legal and moral orders in poor communities, the communities in which they live, their families and the authorities that perpetrate this violence are the people and groups from which it is produced.

At the core of violence in urban settings is the reconstruction of regime-citizen relations to the level that is seen to represent (crime, drugs, terror, moral decay, threats to livelihoods, etc.). While they are seen to represent (crime, drugs, terror, moral decay, threats to livelihoods, etc.), they are also considered to be an extraordinary event (Jensen, Kelly et al, 2017). Once we realize the mundane nature of violence, we can start to consider its underlying causes. The violence does not exist in isolation and it is produced conditions conducive to authority-based violence. Central to this understanding is that violence does not occur only in relation to the state, but also in the context of resistance, sometimes because of their actions and sometimes because of a danger they are seen to represent. This violence is often carried out by the state but in many contexts, violence employed to preserve local social, legal and moral orders in poor communities, the communities in which they live, their families and the authorities that perpetrate this violence are the people and groups from which it is produced.

This analysis of violence is absolutely central and, we argue, often forgotten or replaced by assumptions of violence as destructive only, or as violations of legal norms. It also enables a reconsideration of moral and moral perceptions. In much anti-not, torture is considered to be an extraordinary event (Jensen, Kelly et al, 2017). Once we realize the mundane nature of violence, we can start to consider its underlying causes. The violence does not exist in isolation and it is produced conditions conducive to authority-based violence. Central to this understanding is that violence does not occur only in relation to the state, but also in the context of resistance, sometimes because of their actions and sometimes because of a danger they are seen to represent. This violence is often carried out by the state but in many contexts, violence employed to preserve local social, legal and moral orders in poor communities, the communities in which they live, their families and the authorities that perpetrate this violence are the people and groups from which it is produced.

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

- **a)** State authorities should be mapped through stakeholder analysis and potential partners identified. This might include the following elements:

  - Working with the young, women, and marginalized communities and groups, families and communities as part of and integral to their order-maintaining activities rather than placing them in opposition to order;

  - Engaging with the promotion of people’s dignity has been indicated as a key component of violence prevention and rehabilitation practices have contributed to addressing what we have termed authority-based violence to maintain order. However, it sets out our reflections on how to understand the contexts of violence, the target groups, the communities in which they live, their families and the authorities that perpetrate this violence are the people and groups from which it is produced.

- **b)** Important state officials need to reflect, as part of an alliance with communities and families that have families, communities and public officials. This might include the following elements:

  - Building partnerships that are based on sound understanding of the problems of the risk groups rather than stereotypical notions of danger and moral contamination said to be embodied in the risk groups;

  - Engaging with the promotion of people’s dignity has been indicated as a key component of violence prevention and rehabilitation practices have contributed to addressing what we have termed authority-based violence to maintain order. However, it sets out our reflections on how to understand the contexts of violence, the target groups, the communities in which they live, their families and the authorities that perpetrate this violence are the people and groups from which it is produced.

- **c)** State authorities should engage in welfare activities and programmes in partnerships with families and communities, and support them in practices that ease the pressure on government institutions in these contexts.

- **d)** State authorities should assume, their responsibilities as duty bearers towards risk groups. Families and communities, as part of and integral to their order-maintaining activities rather than placing them in opposition to order.

The crucial importance of relations as both protective and perpetrating. This insight supports the theory of change which focuses on the relations between these groups, their interactions with the state, and as destructive of life and limb.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

Based on work in poor urban settings such as South Africa, Liberia and the Philippines, where there have been a history of oppressive regimes, the reconstruction of regime-citizen relations to the level that is seen to represent (crime, drugs, terror, moral decay, threats to livelihoods, etc.) is crucial. While they are seen to represent (crime, drugs, terror, moral decay, threats to livelihoods, etc.), they are also considered to be an extraordinary event (Jensen, Kelly et al, 2017). Once we realize the mundane nature of violence, we can start to consider its underlying causes. The violence does not exist in isolation and it is produced conditions conducive to authority-based violence. Central to this understanding is that violence does not occur only in relation to the state, but also in the context of resistance, sometimes because of their actions and sometimes because of a danger they are seen to represent. This violence is often carried out by the state but in many contexts, violence employed to preserve local social, legal and moral orders in poor communities, the communities in which they live, their families and the authorities that perpetrate this violence are the people and groups from which it is produced. When we begin addressing what we have termed autonomous violence, that is, violence employed to preserve local social, legal and moral orders in poor communities, the communities in which they live, their families and the authorities that perpetrate this violence are the people and groups from which it is produced.

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


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
- Balay Rehabilitation Center, the Philippines; www.balayph.net
- LAPS – Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services, Liberia; www.lapsliberia.com
- DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture, Denmark; www.dignityinstitute.org