

COAV Cities Project

n International Comparisons

- Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)
- Medellin (Colombia)
- Zacatecoluca (El Salvador)
- Cape Town (South Africa)



Main Objectives (1/2)

- To build on completed research and existing practical knowledge to treat the problem of COAV
- To exchange knowledge on good practice for prevention and rehabilitation interventions from both situations of organised armed violence and post conflict



Main Objectives (2/2)

- To develop local policy plans for prevention and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of COAV, based on complete diagnosis of the problem and building on the integration of local government and civil society mechanisms
- To advocate for the implementation of local policy plans through government and civil society partnership





Methodology (1/3)

- Formation of a group composed by government and civil society key actors
 - Local government actors
 - NGO members
 - Academics
 - Church members
 - Police officers
 - Civil society representatives
 - Youth (separate meetings)



Methodology (2/3)

- Elaboration of a rapid assessment of the situation of COAV in each locality
- Identification of main thematic areas to be discussed during the meetings
 - Every group has chosen themes most relevant to the reality of their locality
- Material to be used during the meetings:

Methodology (3/3)

- Thematic Papers
 - General and global vision of the problem
 - Local vision of the problem
 - Conclusions from Neither War nor Peace
 - Examples of good practices around the world
- Outcomes included in a final report
 - available at www.coav.org.br
- Proposals developed into policy papers by local partners

Common features found in all 4 localities

- Most affected population - Profile of aggressor and victims
 - Mostly composed by male (however a growing direct and indirect participation of women was found)
 - Afro descendents
 - 15 to 25 years old (the recruitment of new members of younger ages was detected)
- Educational situation - drop outs from elementary school
- Family situation - often, families headed by single woman
- High unemployment rates
- High social inequality

Common features

- Little access to schooling
 - Low quality of education offered
- Disbelief in positive future perspectives by COAV
- Poverty – not as a main reason but as an existent risk factor
- Ongoing exposure to gangs led children being familiar with elements of gang culture and activities – violence as a means of addressing conflict



Cross Cultural Themes (1/3)

- Drug trafficking and drug consumption
- Family involvement or participation in the rehabilitation process - little or none
- Widespread presence of influences conducing to involvement in gangs in the environment where children live
 - Lack of alternatives / counter influences in the areas where gangs act

Cross Cultural Themes (2/3)

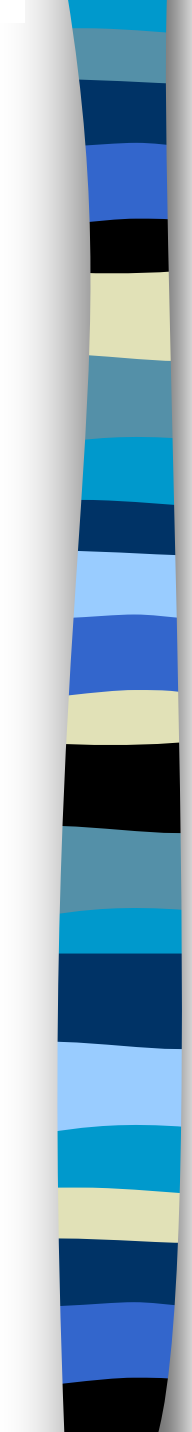
n Arms

- The symbolism of the gun
 - Feeling of inclusion, power, virility
 - Arms control & Youth at risk
- Easy access to guns = increase of violence
- Necessity of a stricter control of arms production and commerce, traffic and its use
- Necessity of new legislation
- Public security aimed at inhibiting the use of armed violence (rather than falling into it)



Cross Cultural Themes (3/3)

- Education
 - Necessity of coordinated actions and policies between schools and other crucial institutions dealing with children and youth at risk
 - Include in the educational programme actions directed to the prevention of violence
 - Identify and provide individual attendance in coordination with other institutions to youth who are involved with gangs
 - Rethink the traditional school model
 - Design program, pedagogy and materials specifically aimed at youth at risk and drop outs (example: Tele Course Program by Viva Rio)



Common problems and recommendations identified in the COAV Cities Project

- **Problems / Recommendations**



Juvenile Justice System

- Lack of alternative sentencing for children / youth
- Placement of children and youth in institutions where gangs are present
- Creation of alternative sentencing and diversion programmes
- Avoid keeping children and youth in custody, mainly together with other gang members



Juvenile Justice System

- Lack of adequate training for employees of correctional institutions
- Lack of proper infrastructure in the correctional institutions
- Need of specialized training for employees who deal with youth in custody
- Improvement of the infrastructure of the correctional institutions

Family Participation

- Little or no family participation in the process of rehabilitation and reintegration
- Preparation of family members, encouraging them to take greater responsibility
- Need to create reintegration programmes combining education, culture, work focusing also in the family as part of the process of reintegration
- Families are often directly or indirectly part of the problem, thus, they need to be involved in the reintegration programme



Drugs

- Children and youth as drug users
 - Lack of institutions that can provide proper treatment to drug users
- Drug addiction has to be seen and treated as a public health problem
 - Design and implementation of preventive (at schools) and treatment programmes



Drugs

- Family members as drug users or alcohol dependents – children are exposed daily to this reality
- Early prevention - creation of programmes focusing on parenting and on the family as the unit that needs assistance



Other priorities identified by the working groups

- Necessity to reduce the marginalization and stigmatization of the “young, black, poor” group
- Improve the relation between police forces and poor communities
- Let children and adolescents participate as the protagonists of their own story
- Necessity to develop a workable conflict mediation strategy between gangs



Key steps in 2007 (1/2)

- Public presentation of the proposals comprised in a Policy Paper to local authorities and civil society
- Main objectives
 - Implement an advocacy strategy for the consolidation of COAV
 - Generate awareness and consolidate the theme in the municipality



Key steps in 2007 (2/2)

- Introduce the theme / proposals in the public agenda
- Consolidation of the proposal
- Gather political support and definition of a concrete commitment by local authorities
- Maintenance of the working groups and regular meetings in order to discuss further actions, difficulties, successes and new ideas

**Let's work towards a new
reality for COAV ?**





Thank you!

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